

CHAPTER III

FORMATION OF THE TULF: A POLITICAL BACKGROUND (1947–1976)

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INTRODUCTION

The Party System in Sri Lanka developed along ethnic lines since colonial times. To represent the interests of the Tamil community G.G. Ponnambalam (popularly known as GG) formed the All Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC) in 1944. This demonstrated the failure of the nationalist movement led by the Ceylon National Congress (CNC) in addressing minority Tamil interests. The United National Party (UNP) emerged on the eve of independence in 1946, to represent the Sinhalese community. It was elected to power in the first parliamentary elections. The ACTC swept the polls in the Northern Province. Contrary to the promise given to the Tamils, UNP leader D.S. Senanayake began implementing anti-Tamil laws and practices against their interests soon after.

Tamils were disappointed with the government and felt that it would treat them as subjects. Even the ACTC went against the mandate and opted to be in power with the government. Tamil community felt betrayed by the ACTC and hence, they shifted their support to the Federal Party (FP), which had broken up from the ACTC. It had great principles and promise for sustainable fight to reinstate equal status of the Tamils by achieving federal system. In a parallel development in the Sinhalese political theatre, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike left the UNP and formed the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) in 1951. Both the FP and the SLFP emerged victorious in the parliamentary election held in 1956 for conflicting interests of manifesto.

Successive governments in Sri Lanka blatantly undermined Tamil interests by refusing greater autonomy and enacting discriminatory laws. The continued denial of Tamil demands addressed by the FP and the suppressive measures of the State against their democratic struggles united them and led them to resolve for a

separation. With the formation of the TULF in 1976, the Sri Lankan Tamil politics reached a radical stage. Not only the party declared itself a 'Liberation Front' but also focused its policy on establishing a 'separate sovereign State'—*Tamil Eelam*—consisting of Northern and Eastern Provinces. The significance of the party lay in the credibility it enjoyed, the responsibility it had been entrusted and the immense task it had to accomplish.

The focus of the chapter is to enquire the mobilisation strategy and the efficacy of addressing the demands by the FP, response of the State to the FP, and the role of the people against the attitude of successive governments and the formation of the TULF, and its policy formulation based on the following five major political events:

- (i) The first parliamentary elections and consequent split of the ACTC;
- (ii) The 1956 Official Language Policy and the Satyagraha Movement led by the FP;
- (iii) Federal Party's participation in the national government;
- (iv) Introduction of republican Constitution and formation of Tamil United Front (TUF); and
- (v) Emergence of militancy and formation of the TULF.

FIRST PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION AND SPLIT OF THE ACTC

The significance of the first parliamentary election lies on three counts. Firstly, the Sri Lankan Tamils decisively rejected the Soulbury Constitution that left the Tamils under the mercy of Sinhalese-dominated governments, forever. Secondly, they gave a strong message that they would reject any prominent Tamil leader who compromises their rights. Finally, they unwaveringly expressed that they needed leadership which could assert the rights and dignity of the Tamils.

Policy of the ACTC in addressing Tamil Issues

The policy of 50:50 stems from the principle of non-domination. However, after many failed efforts, ACTC had last opportunity to reopen the issue of making changes in Constitution. While facing the election, ACTC leadership had two

policy options in mind. Firstly, it was ready to be flexible on the issue of ratio of representation that could effectively put a check on Sinhalese domination.¹ Ponnambalam hoped to pursue the British government for the same by proving the mandate of the people against the Soulbury Constitution. The manifesto asked the people to give mandate to prove that they rejected the Soulbury constitution. Probably to have an alternative approach, manifesto also asked for a mandate, to render responsive cooperation to any progressive party.² This manifesto gave an impression that the ACTC would fight for the change of Soulbury Constitution. If the British government failed to heed, the party would go for the second option: to achieve the same through cooperation with the parties coming to power that could accept for such demand. Secondly, the federal policy option: Chelvanayakam made the federal policy acceptable in the party. Soon after the election, Ponnambalam stated, 'Tamil leaders prepare for partition—co-operation with the Sinhalese in a Federal Constitution is the irrevocable Tamil goal.'³

This policy did not appear in the manifesto, probably, for tactical reasons. Since, the achievement of the first policy of adequate number of Parliament representation would make the passage easier to achieve the second policy of change of Constitution for a federal system. Probably, in this understanding, leaders gave the priority for the first policy option. It seems many leaders of the ACTC, including Chelvanayakam, perceived the manifesto and the future policy in this belief. However, later developments proved that Ponnambalam had tactics for his own interest that was detrimental to these contemplated policy options. Chelvanayakam faithfully saw the policy of federal system a solution to the Tamils. GG saw that the federal slogan was merely a means to his first policy option. This contradiction later led to the split of the two.

¹ See S. Sivasubramaniam, Joint Secretary ACTC letter, addressed to the British Prime Minister, Clement R. Attlee, (Allahabad, Allahabad Law Journal Press, 15 January 1946), pp. 13–14. See also G.G. Ponnambalam, telegram sent to the White Hall, quoted in Chelvanayakam, FP inauguration speech, in *Ilankai Tamil Arasu Katchi Silver Jubilee Volume* (London: Tamil United Liberation Front, 2000), p. 26.

² A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, *S.J.V. Chelvanayakam and the Crisis of Sri Lankan Tamil Nationalism 1947–1977: A Political Biography* (London: Hurts & Co., 1994), p. 15. (Emphasis mine).

³ G.G. Ponnambalam, *The Colombo City News*, (bi-weekly edition), 17 December 1947.

Using the mandate as a tool to reject the Constitution was just the last attempt to gain more representatives to the Tamils. Failing this, he wanted to exercise the mandate for cooperation, to join the government to enjoy the fruit of power that had nothing to do with his stipulated demand or contemplated policy options. Hence, Ponnambalam was not firm with the policy of changing Constitution and did not have any political or working programme to achieve it. Subsequent to the defeat of the Tamil candidates belonging to pro-Soulbury Constitution, Ponnambalam sent an ultimatum to the Whitehall, to exercise the 'right to self-determination'⁴ that created the hope for the Tamils, including some leaders that ACTC would proceed its politics with the federal agenda.⁵ However, later developments proved that it was merely a pressure tactic to make the British government reconsider the Constitution and not a decisive policy.

Mobilisation Strategies Adopted by the ACTC

The strategy of post-independence Tamil politics gave disproportionate emphasis on Tamil nationalism. The demand was more aggressive than the action and strategies adopted. The ACTC campaign in the 1947 elections also projected the UNP and its Tamil collaborators as 'betrayers of the Tamil's cause'.⁶ Many of them contested this election on the UNP ticket and a few as independent candidates with the support of the UNP. It is to be noted here that the notion of the 'traitors' was successfully employed by different Tamil leaders at every stage of political importance in post independence Tamil politics to isolate or even eradicate political opponents.

Ponnambalam's motto during the elections was, '*Thamizhan enru sollada, thalai nimirnthu nillada*'⁷ (Say, you are a Tamizhan and keep your head erect).

⁴ Chelvanayakam, FP inauguration speech, in *Ilankai Tamil Arasu Katchi Silver Jubilee Volume*, (London: Tamil United Liberation Front, 2000), pp. 23–27.

⁵ Federalism was accepted by the party, including G.G. Ponnambalam. However, G.G. Ponnambalam did not have gone to pursue the agenda as he had the interest to be in the power as a minister.

⁶ Those who obtained votes to enter the State Council (SC) from the Jaffna Tamils, but supported the Soulbury Constitution against their interests such as Mahadeva and Nadesan.

⁷ It was popular slogan in almost all the public meetings of the FP until 1970s. Author witnessed many such meetings.

The slogan was appealing at a time when the political future of the Tamils was uncertain⁸. GG successfully concealed his vague and wavering policies and impractical demands like the 50:50 demand.

Those who contested against the ACTC argued that they would bring 'economic development by cooperating with the Sinhalese majority who can come to power.'⁹ Conversely, ACTC did not promise to get any material benefit but pledged to, 'oppose the efforts of the Sinhalese against the rights of the Tamils'.¹⁰ The entire election campaign created a feeling of fight to liberate the Tamils from the Sinhalese-dominated government. This Tamil national assertion and the emotion-filled mobilisation projected the 'ACTC as a highly-spirited organisation for the liberation of Tamils'.¹¹ The reality was entirely different as proved by the later politics of Ponnambalam. ACTC candidates won with big margins and the one who was defeated, lost by merely 322 votes. This reflects the unwavering mandate against the Soulbury Constitution.

The UNP formed the government led by D.S. Senanayake with the agenda of consolidating the transfer of power by obtaining dominion status. The Tamil leadership foresaw some prospect to make inroads in changing the Soulbury Constitution before the formation of the Cabinet. Knowing that the mandate of vast majority of the Sri Lankan Tamils was against the Soulbury Constitution, D.S. Senanayake successfully drew one independent Tamil MP, C. Suntharalingam into the Cabinet to prevent the ACTC from getting the opportunity to convince the British government.¹² Hopes of the ACTC ended with Suntharalingam joining the Senanayake government. With this, Sri Lanka attained dominion status, and the Sinhala leadership consolidated its position.¹³

⁸ The Federal Party (FP) later effectively used this slogan for mobilisation.

⁹ Chelvanayakam, n. 4, pp. 24–25.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 25.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 24.

¹² The pre-condition of the British government for declaring dominion status was to prove the representation of all communities in the Cabinet. Entry of C. Suntharalingam, an independent MP into the D.S. Senanayake government fulfilled the pre-condition that prevented the last opportunity to take up the issue of representation for the ACTC.

¹³ Due to the entry of Suntharalingam into the Cabinet, Sri Lanka was officially declared as 'Dominion of the British Commonwealth of Nations' on 4 February 1948. With the gain of dominion status, Sinhalese leadership successfully replaced the British rule over the Tamils.

D.S. Senanayake as the president of the CNC promising the minorities prior to the independence said, 'on behalf of the Congress and my own behalf I give the minority communities the sincere assurance that no harm need they fear in our hands in a free Lanka.'¹⁴ Once D.S. Senanayake consolidated his power, he introduced the twin laws contrary to his prior promise that there would be no harm to the interests of the minorities after independence. These laws were: (i) The Ceylon Citizenship Act September 1948; and the (ii) Indian and Pakistani Resident Citizenship Act. These Acts deprived the plantation Tamils (who comprised more than half the Tamil population in Sri Lanka) from citizenship and voting rights.¹⁵ These Acts reduced Tamil representation in Parliament by half. At the same time, it disproportionately increased Sinhalese representation in Parliament.¹⁶ Because of these laws, the citizenship of entire Tamil speaking community became questionable overnight. The State acknowledged only the Sinhalese as citizens.¹⁷

Response of the People

The Act directly deprived plantation Tamils from their political and other basic rights. Nevertheless, the Sri Lankan Tamils perceived it as first step to mute the voice of the entire Tamil community of the Island. Thus, it was perceived as an alarm for their dangerous future. Chelvanayakam alerted the Tamils while cautioned the Sri Lankan Tamils that the next assault on Tamils would come

¹⁴ Waltair Schwarz, *Tamil of Sri Lanka* (England, Minority Rights Group, n.d.), quoted in T.S. Rama Rao, 'State Terror as a Response to Terrorism and vice versa: National and International Dimensions', *Indian Journal of International Law* (New Delhi), Vol. 27, No. 2, 1987, p. 188.

¹⁵ British Jurist, Paul Sieghart, described this Act as: 'A wholly arbitrary deprivation of the fundamental rights to the citizens of one's country for a group of people almost all of whom were born there, who have lived their all their lives, who have never been anywhere else and, have no other allegiance, and who have made an immense contribution to that country's wealth while being themselves allotted only a derisory share of it.' Paul Sieghart, (1984), quoted in, S. Sivanayagam. (ed.), "*Sri Lanka Background Briefing 1946-1965 Part I*" (Chennai: TIRU Publication, 1986), p. 6.

¹⁶ The reduction of eight seats by depriving voting rights would naturally increase the tally of representation in favour of the Sinhalese by eight seats. Since the Tamils were deprived of eight seats Sinhalese parties had the advantage of further eight seats to them (Minus eight seats to Tamils and plus eight seats to the Sinhalese).

¹⁷ V. Navaratnam, *The Fall and Rise of the Tamil Nation* (Toronto: Jegan N. Mohan, 1991), pp. 47-50.

through language issue. ACTC protested the Bill in Parliament and demanded to give citizenship to all those living for more than five years in the country. Senanayake assured that he would present a Bill to grant citizenship to the plantation Tamils with the consent of Jawaharlal Nehru.¹⁸ He also offered two ministerial posts to the ACTC for their cooperation to his government. There was no reason to discuss the issue of citizenship with the Prime Minister of another country, considering the fact that the Acts were proposed and passed by him. It was also a shrewd move to mute the voice of Sri Lankan Tamil parliamentarians to represent the issue of their own community. Surprisingly, without raising these questions, a section of the ACTC under the leadership of GG supported the Bill and GG joined the government. But Suntharalingam resigned the Cabinet and came out, his veto portrayed GG a 'tired soldier'. Further, the election campaign of GG proved to be a mere vote catching rhetoric. With his entry into the UNP Cabinet, the second phase of the Tamil national assertion led by GG ended.¹⁹

But Sri Lankan Tamils, especially, the Northern Tamils, had the legacy of non-domination from Arunachalam and JYC to GG. Two different trends emerged within the ACTC, on this issue. A section of the people wanted their leaders to assert their rights. Chelvanayakam wanted to take forward the Tamil issues vigorously with 'Federal System' to further the Tamil course.²⁰ However, majority section of the Tamils seemed to have reconciled themselves as being ethnic minority. They were prepared to give an opportunity to the GG's cooperation with the UNP government. Chelvanayakam concluded that Ponnambalam would not be useful anymore to uphold the interests of the Tamils. He decided to carry the issue forward. This led to the break up of the ACTC and the formation of the Ilankai Thamiz Arasu Kadchi (ITAK) known as Federal Party (FP).

¹⁸ Consequent to the first day debate on the Citizenship Bill all the ACTC members presented to the Parliament had a discussion with D.S. Senanayake at his invitation. See T. Elangovan, *Malayaka Makkazhuku Turokam Seithathu yar?* (Who betrayed Plantation Tamils?) (Jaffna: Thamizhan Publishers, 1970), pp. 12–15; *Times of Ceylon*, 23 August 1948.

¹⁹ The entire politics of the post-independent ACTC was almost as trusted ally of the UNP.

²⁰ See for the details of the opposing perceptions and thoughts regarding Tamils issues between GG and Chelvanayakam; Wilson, n. 2, pp. 23–24.

FEDERAL PARTY AND THE FEDERAL MOVEMENT

Chelvanayakam came out from the ACTC with an commitment to take the struggle forward. However, questions arose regarding his capacity to build his party and furnish it with suitable ideology and working programme to match the majoritarian State. Ultimately, the dedication and efficacy of the FP in addressing the issues at different point of time were questionable.

The Ideology, Structure, and Strategy of the FP

ITAK was launched under the leadership of Chelvanayakam with the goal of, 'Establish one Tamil autonomous province and one Sinhala autonomous province under the apex institution of Central Government.'²¹ Party pledged to continue its stand of five years criteria on the citizenship rights of the plantation Tamils and fight for equal status of the Tamils in all spheres of their life.²² To meet these tasks, it pledged to adopt socialism as its ideology.²³ It has also announced the moral force (Ahimsa) as its path of the struggle to achieve its goals. Party also took a principled stand that those who would pledge not to assume the power until establishing the independent Tamil State only should be in the Party.²⁴

Considering its goal and knowing the character of the government and Sinhala polity, party anticipated a long Ahimsa struggle. Nevertheless, it has failed to focus on building a strong organisation democratically from grassroots, that could bring up hierarchy of leaders and strong organised mass to lead an effective and sustainable movement. Instead, it used to win over some influential personalities in their respective societies that ensure their electoral prospects. Such personalities collectively influenced the party decisions to some extent. However, the party had two-tire hierarchies namely, General Committee (GC) and the Working Committee (WC). Among the influential personalities, 'leaders select

²¹ Chelvanayakam, n. 4, p. 30.

²² Ibid, pp. 30–32.

²³ See for the details, A. Amirthalingam, "Iladchiyapathai", (On the Path to Ideals), in *Silver Jubilee Volume ITAK*, n. 1, pp. 30–41.

²⁴ Chelvanayakam, n. 4, pp. 28–32.

members for GC with the recommendation of the MPs'.²⁵ From the GC members, MPs automatically became the members of WC and for the rest, Eelaventhana said, people whom 'contribute financially and commanding influence over the people also were taken into the WC'.²⁶ Function of these two bodies witnessed the practice of democratic traditions in the decision-making. The youth wing of the FP named *Thamiz Arasu Valipa Munnani* [Federal Party Youth Front (FPYF)] played active role in the movement led by the FP in addressing the Tamil issues until 1970. The system almost was closed to the youth to get into the decision-making bodies. Eelaventhana stated, 'To be honest, majority of them [leaders] were re-elected [to the GC and WC or even to Parliament]'.²⁷

The mobilisation of the FP until 1956, focused on three aspects. Firstly, it articulated the issues and asserted the rights of the Tamils in the Parliament and outside. Outside the Parliament, it adopted the methods of placating against the ministers who visited Tamil areas. Secondly, the FP conducted many public meetings with powerful orators, whose speeches stimulated the Tamil nationalism that frequently reflecting the sense of violent means in undercurrent. Thirdly, to unite the people and to strengthen the party, the FP consistently criticised the ACTC, especially, its leader GG as betrayer.

The mobilisation of the FP began with the party name itself. Officially, the party was registered in Tamil as *Ilankai Tamil Arasu Katchi* (ITAK) (Ceylon Tamil State Party). This name created an outcry among Sinhalese hardliners. However, citing the party Constitution and political agenda, they explained that it means, Federal Party. Nevertheless, in Tamil political theatre the name of the party and the slogans undoubtedly mesmerised the Tamils. According to Ponnambalam, the FP was 'stirring up the emotions of the Tamil people while at the same time seeking through its English designation a resolution of the problem

²⁵ Author's interview with Mangayathkarasi Amirthalingam, London, 14 September 2000.

²⁶ Author's interview with Eelaventhana, Jaffna, 29 April 2003.

²⁷ Ibid.

with the Sinhalese leadership'.²⁸ Endorsing the allegation, Chelvanayakam replied, 'Tamil Arasu meant a *Tamil State*, whether *sovereign* or *autonomous*'.²⁹

While FP demanded a federal system, it also opposed every move of the government that was designed to build up Sri Lanka as a Sinhalese Buddhist country. When successive governments introduced a series of anti-Tamil measures, most of the issues ended with the mere registration of opposition, and failed to achieve favourable solutions, as another issue takes the space. However, addressing every issue based on the spirit of democracy undoubtedly increased its support even among Muslims and plantation Tamils. On the issue of national flag, Chelvanayakam rejected the government proposed lion flag as an insult to the rights and sentiment of the Tamils and instead of lion suggested *Nandhi* and Crescent in the flag to reflect the multi-national character,³⁰ but the government included saffron and green stripes to refer the Hindus and Muslims. FP did not accept this flag, but it did not continue its protest until a desirable change. Muslims welcomed the suggestion of Chelvanayagam and put their trust on the FP. Likewise, asserting the rights on land, Chelvanayagam coined the term to refer the Northern and Eastern Provinces as traditional homeland of the Tamils. The government planned schemes to colonise the Sinhalese in the traditional homeland under the guise of agricultural development schemes. Chelvanayakam exposed the motives of the proposed *Gal Oya* scheme,³¹ and demanded, 'The immediate cessation of colonising the traditionally Tamil-speaking areas with Sinhalese people'.³² On the issue of official language, Chelvanayakam argued parity of

²⁸ Wilson, n. 2, p. 42.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 42.

³⁰ See for details, Chelvanayakam, n. 2, p. 29, and Wilson, n. 2, p. 26.

³¹ During 1949–50, D.S. Senanayake government introduced 'Gal Oya' (government named in Sinhala) scheme. Location of the scheme lies in the Eastern Province. Originally, the river had the Tamil name, 'Manal Aaru' (Sand River). Government propagated that the plan was to erect a bund named 'Senanayake Samuththiram' and to develop the agriculture. However, the hidden agenda was to develop the area and colonise Sinhalese in this land to change the demography to reduce the Tamil representation from the east. The change of Tamil name into Sinhala itself reflected the sinister motive of the government. See Amirthalingam, n. 23, p. 41.

³² 'Resolutions of the Fourth Annual Conference of the FP, 1956', in *Ilankai Tamil Arasu Katchi Silver Jubilee Volume* (London: Tamil United Liberation Front, 2000), pp. 243–44.

status for Tamil with Sinhala in the entire Island. On every one of these issues, the FP asserted the honour and status of the Tamils, and spread a new hope to re-establish their lost glory.

The ideological position of the party was contradictory, since its practices were contrary to socialism. Chelvanayakam, after he won the election in 1947, 'marked himself off distinctly from the Marxists'.³³ However, FP's espousal of socialism as its ideology was rather a tactical move of Chelvanayakam to prevent the conflict between the progressively minded youth and the conservative elders within the party and not from his belief.³⁴ In practice, 'FP opposed the Paddy Land Act, nationalisation of road transport, banks, and estates. They did not have differences with the UNP in the economic policies.'³⁵ Likewise, contrary to its policy against caste system, the FP took non-committal approach on the movement against the untouchability during 1967–68.³⁶ The experiences shows the FP's verbal socialism was a mere rhetoric, but considering its practice, it could be characterised as conservative Tamil nationalist with liberal face. This ideological stance continued all along its history until the TULF. Therefore, the TULF invited the criticism as the Tamil version of the UNP. FP managed to convince the people that achieving federal system would be the solution for many specific social and economic issues. Frequent moves of the State that denigrate the honour and rights of the Tamils always enhanced the FP to keep the common and the specific issues to mobilise people on the issues concerning all the Tamils. The ideological and approach difference among most of the militant organisations could be attributed to the different shades of ideology and practice of FP/TUF and the TULF.

³³ Wilson, n. 2, p. 24.

³⁴ See for the details, Amirthalingam, n. 23, pp.39–40.

³⁵ Author's interview with D.W.E. Gunasekara, General Secretary CCP and Trade Unionist, Colombo, 21 May 2003.

³⁶ Bryan Pfaffenberger, "The Political Construction of Defensive Nationalism: The 1968 Temple-Entry Crisis in Northern Sri Lanka", in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 49, No. 1 (February 1990), pp. 78–96. Also see Vekujanana and Ravana, *Jathieeyamum Atharkethirana Porattangalum (Casteism and Struggles against it)*, (Jaffna: Puthiyapoomi Publishers, 1989), pp. 111–18.

The Official Language Act of 1956 and the Tamil Language Movement

The 'Official Language Act of 1956' brought the ethnic politics to conflicting and contentious stage.³⁷ The Act, declared 'Sinhala Only' the official language of the country, thus popularly referred as Sinhala Only Act. Language is a key factor of any culture, without which no culture can flourish. This Act would adversely affect the education, job prospects, administration as well linguistic identity of the Tamil speaking population of the Island.³⁸ The cycle of anti-Sinhala movement led by the FP and, counter-actions of the governments and the Sinhalese chauvinistic forces created many turn of events that had serious impact in the relations between the Tamils and the Sinhalese. Introduction of Official Language Act shifted the focus of the FP, to the language issue that has overshadowed the main agenda of the federal demand.³⁹ FP, instead of including the language and other issues as part of the demand for federal system, projected the issues such as language and land, diluted the due weight in goal of federal system.

While the FP staged strong peaceful protest in front of the Parliament, the government while introducing the Official Language Bill in the Parliament, unleashed the Sinhalese chauvinistic forces, who staged Island-wide anti-Tamil violence. Around 300 volunteers and the MPs reached the hotel end of the 'Gale-face green' to march to the Parliament that is at the other end of the Gale-face, to begin their campaign.⁴⁰ There was a group of thug numbering around one thousand waiting for the volunteers. The volunteers received brutal attack on them.⁴¹ Demonstrating the spirit of 'Ahimsa', not even a single person retaliated. Volunteers marched to the Parliament end 'under a hail of stones, hoots, and filthy

³⁷ Bandaranaike introduced the Official Language Bill in the Parliament on 5 June 1956.

³⁸ Rao, n. 14, pp. 189-91.

³⁹ All the movements led by the FP were on language issues. Not even a single movement was launched on the demand of federal system.

⁴⁰ Gale-face is around half a kilometre stretch of seaside in front of the Old Parliament of Sri Lanka. Parliament is at the one end, and Gale-face Hotel at the other end in around one kilometre distance. It is an open space so that one can observe activities from one side to the other.

⁴¹ Some leaders were singled out and dragged by their leg or hand from the crowd, and attacked. Many of had their clothes torn away. Thugs used wooden clubs and stones to attack them. Many were wounded. Naganathan was singled out and was chased by a mob. Police officers were present as mere spectators. See for details V. Navaratnam, n. 17, p. 107.

abuse'.⁴² They were stopped at the Parliament end, thus preventing from entering into Parliament steps. Volunteers and leaders sat down the Gale-face green in front of the Parliament. Even there, there was no such organized, disciplined, and willful protest held against the British rulers.

Government was determined to use its iron hand in such a way that Tamil resistance against the Bill breaks at its buds. To avert the international criticism against the government, leaders of the government organised strong bands of thugs to handle their plan freely and prevented the police from taking action on them. The thugs surrounded those, swelled thousands soon. Scattered attacks on FP volunteers and supporters began at the Gale-face zone. Ponniah observed, between 9.30 AM–10 AM, 'Bandaranaike arrived on the scene on his way to Parliament House... looked at the crowds and Satyagrahis, let out a hearty laugh and unconcernedly and without a word he proceeded on his way'.⁴³ Ponniah further states, a police officer asked the Prime Minister, whether any action should be taken against the thugs. Prime Minister told him 'not to interfere, let them [Tamil] have a taste of it'.⁴⁴ Thugs surrounded the Satyagrahis, continuously humiliated and harassed them by stoning and threatening. One stone hit Amirthalingam's head and he started bleeding; many other leaders were attacked cruelly and some were admitted in the hospital. Police asked Chelvanayakm to call off the protest as situation had gone out of hand. Chelvanayagam called off the campaign and members went to the Parliament with bleedings and wounds where ruling party members laughed at them and sarcastically mentioned 'wounds of war'.⁴⁵

With the attacks on the leaders, anti-Tamil violence spread all through the Sinhalese areas. Hundreds of Tamils were brutally killed and wounded, their houses, shops and other properties were burnt. It spread to the Tamils dominated Eastern Province, where more than one hundred Tamil villagers were killed by the

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ S. Ponniah, *Satyagraha: The Freedom Movement of the Tamil in Ceylon* (Valvettithurai-Jaffna: A. Kandiah, 1963), p. 29.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Navaratnam, n. 17, p. 108.

State-supported thugs who carried swords and knives.⁴⁶ Tamil districts demonstrated their protest by organising many protest activities such as hoisting black flags all over Tamil areas, Bandh, special prayers and protest rallies against the attacks on the leaders and their fellow Tamils continuously, until the government restored normalcy.⁴⁷ While the Tamils got killed all over the Island except in the North, Bandaranaike was unaffected by the state of affairs and moved ahead with passing the Bill.

Bandaranaike's speech at the second reading of the Bill reminds of J.R. Jayawardene's speech in 1944 which fuelled the emotions of the Sinhalese chauvinists and thugs. The speech was so cruel that it, meant that the life of the Sinhala language was dependent on the death of Tamil in the Island. Bandaranaike stated:

They [Sinhalese] felt that as the Tamil language was spoken by so many millions in other countries and possessed a much wider literature and as the Tamil-speaking people had every means to propagating literature and culture. It would have an advantage over Sinhalese, which was spoken by a few million people in this country... There were a large number of Tamil people in the Sinhalese provinces... All this would create a situation when the natural tendency would be for the use of Sinhalese to shrink and probably, in course of time almost to reach the point of elimination.⁴⁸

All the left leaders criticised the Bill vehemently and warned the government that it may lead even to division of the country. They equated the action of the government with that of Nazis which was hell bent on eliminating a Tamil culture and language to protect the Sinhala. S.A. Wickramasinghe compared and condemned Bandaranaike's speech by nature as Fascist and would stimulate Sinhalese to annihilate the Tamils. He further stated, 'I was ashamed of the speeches of some of the government party members... We should not turn to the

⁴⁶ Ponniah, n. 43, pp. 30–31.

⁴⁷ *Suthanthiran*, Jaffna, 17 June 1956.

⁴⁸ S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike on 6 June 1956 in Parliament, quoted in Ponniah, n. 43, p.32.

path of Nazism, but to respect the Tamil language and the Tamil culture.⁴⁹ Despite such strong protests, the Bill was adopted by 66 votes to 29. All the Tamil members, LSSP and CP members (largely Sinhalese) voted against the Bill.⁵⁰

The Bandaranaike–Chelvanayakam Pact

The enactment of language law made double loss to the Tamils.⁵¹ Despite their sufferings due to the anti-Tamil violence, the Tamil increasingly laid their trust on the FP as the real protector of their lost pride. Encouraged by the creative support of the people, FP pledged to continue the protest with mass participation until the achieved its cause. However, except V. Navaratnam and Nadarajah, none of the leaders—including Chelvanayakam—had any scheme to take forward the protest.⁵² In absence of a plan of action, FP was confined to the speeches in public meetings.

V. Navaratnam came up with the idea of foot march to Trincomalee on line with Gandhi's Dandi march as the follow-up to anti-language policy protest.⁵³ Chelvanayagam accepted this plan after persuasion.⁵⁴ The march launched from the northern end of Kankesanthurai and the eastern end of Thirukovil towards Trincomalee. The Sinhalese chauvinistic press witnessed the impact of the march and demanded, 'Ban on the march and to stop it from proceeding to Trincomalee'.⁵⁵ At the end of the March, the convention declared, that 'unless the

⁴⁹ S.A. Wickramasinghe, in Parliament on the debate over the Official Language Bill, 7 June 1956.

⁵⁰ Sivanayagam, (ed.), n. 15, p. 12.

⁵¹ One is the loss of lives and properties and the other is the loss of cause.

⁵² Chelvanayakam is not a schemer. His success was largely depended on his skilful colleagues.

⁵³ Since FP had planned to have its annual convention in Trincomalee that is located in the middle of the North and the Eastern Provinces, Navaratnam thought to have 'foot march' of delegates, activist and supporters to the Convention from Kankesanthurai, the northern tip and Thirukkovil, the southern end of the Eastern Province with the intension of involving mass participation. See for details Navaratnam, n. 17, p. 114.

⁵⁴ President of the FP, Vanniyasingam, was enthusiastic of this idea. Chelvanayakam initially ridiculed it as impracticable and waste of energy. Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 244.

Government of Ceylon, take the necessary steps to constitute of a Federal Union of Ceylon by the 20 August 1957, the party will launch *Direct Action* by *non-violent* means for the achievement of this objective.⁵⁶ Navaratnam observes, 'The people had become accustomed to the belief that the Federal Party was always good for its word'.⁵⁷ Presumably, due to the impact of this charging mood of the people, Bandaranaike invited FP for negotiations before the deadline of its ultimatum.⁵⁸

At the beginning of the negotiation, V. Navaratnam reminded Bandaranaike of his old stand for a federal system. Bandaranaike agreed, but said, 'He now have no mandate from his people to establish a federal State'.⁵⁹ However, he expressed his willingness to consider some thing 'short of federal system to allay the Tamil's fear'. Logically, if 'mandate' is the real impediment to talk about federal system, Prime Minister cannot consider any form of federal system. However, the real reason was that he could not easily retreat from the communal stand which he had used to gain power everytime. At the same time, he could not have peaceful government by completely rejecting the interests of the Tamils. Therefore, he needed to end the confrontational politics to consolidate his power.

As Wilson noted, Chelvanayakam's policy was 'little now, later the rest'.⁶⁰ Hence, the parties agreed to continue the negotiation on decentralisation of power.⁶¹ After a number of deliberations, regional council system was agreed upon.⁶² Bandaranaike and Chelvanayagam announced the terms and agreements in a joint press conference. 'Chelvanayagam announced that in view of the agreement he was withdrawing the Federal Party's campaign against the government'.⁶³ Bandaranaike and Chelvanayakam signed the agreement.⁶⁴ The

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Navaratnam, n. 17, p. 124.

⁵⁸ FP delegation consisted of senior leaders Chelvanayakam, Vanniyasingam, V.A. Kandiah, Rajavarothayam, Naganathan, and V. Navaratnam.

⁵⁹ Navaratnam, n. 17, p. 125.

⁶⁰ Wilson, n. 2, p. 105.

⁶¹ The negotiation for the B-C Pact began on 26 June 1957.

⁶² See for details of deliberations Navaratnam, n. 17, pp. 124-131.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 131.

⁶⁴ B-C Pact was signed on 26 July 1957.

agreement envisaged the Northern Province as one and the Eastern Province to be dividing as two or more regional councils. That was mere decentralisation and had no basis for federal system. However, the agreement throws some hope that it would ensure the identity of the Tamils. Along with other subjects, the lands, land development and land alienation was also given to the regional council.

B-C Pact faced threat both from within the government and outside the government. Philip Gunawardene led the anti-Tamil and anti B-C Pact lobby within the MEP government.⁶⁵ GG used the B-C Pact for his anti-FP campaign. He accused the FP as this pact as sell-out of the rights of the Tamils living outside Tamil provinces and surrender of the rights of those willing to live any part of the Island.⁶⁶ Anti B-C Pact stand of Ponnambalam virtually enhanced MEP lobby. From outside, a number of Sinhala Buddhist organisations led by Buddhist monks gave the ultimatum to the Prime Minister to repudiate the pact.⁶⁷ The UNP mounted its campaign, called the people to repudiate the pact, as it was a 'sell-out of the rights of the Sinhalese' and Jayawardene led Kandy march against the pact.⁶⁸ Bandaranaike did not succumb to the pressure of the UNP and still advocated the Pact. At the annual session of the ruling SLFP,⁶⁹ the Prime Minister defended 'the B-C Pact as an 'honourable solution' in keeping with the highest tenets of Buddhism.'⁷⁰ UNP continued the agitation with the support of extreme Sinhalese nationalists, especially, the Monks. The turn of political events shows

⁶⁵ Philip Gunawardene was the leader of the MEP, major coalition partner of the Bandaranaike government. He was the Agriculture Minister in the Cabinet. He refused to delegate any of his powers. Within the MEP, Philip Gunawardene led the extremist nationalists. Even though Bandaranaike propped up the Sinhala nationalist sentiment with anti-Tamil flavour for the mobilisation, Philip Gunawardene demonstrated rather naked and aggressive chauvinism. He led the anti-Tamil and anti B-C Pact lobby within the MEP government. As the coalition partner, Bandaranaike was depended on him to run his government stable. Thus, he was waiting to convince him to implement the B-C Pact. See for details Navaratnam, n. 17, p. 129.

⁶⁶ Navaratnam, n. 17, p. 133.

⁶⁷ Ultimatum of the Buddhist organisations said, 'Unless the agreement is repudiated by 1 October 1957, they would launch a civil disobedience movement in the Sinhala areas'. Sivanayagam, n. 15, p.13.

⁶⁸ UNP leader J.R. Jeyawardene led the famous Kandy march on 4 October 1957. *Ibid*, p. 14.

⁶⁹ SLFP's Annual Session held at Kelania on 1-2 March 1958. *Ibid*.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*.

that Bandaranaike appeared sincere in implementation of the Pact once the opposition voices stopped.

While the matter was under discussion between the Prime Minister and the senior leaders of the FP, buses began appearing with changed number plates with SRI in Sinhala language at the Jaffna Central Bus Stand. It annoyed the Tamils on two grounds: Firstly, it was one of the constructions of the Sinhala nationalists to bring up the Sinhala identity to the Island, against which, the Tamils are protesting for decades.⁷¹ Secondly, according to the B-C Pact, the Registration of the Motor Vehicles, fall under the purview of the proposed regional councils,⁷² hence repudiated the Pact.

It was a tricky situation for the FP, especially, at a time when the forces inimical to the Pact were in full action. Comparing the importance of the implementation of the B-C Pact, SRI in number plates was a trivial issue. Nevertheless, reaction of Amirthalingam fuelled the anti-Pact forces and contributed to the failure of the Pact.

Amirthalingam leading a group of party volunteers went up to the bus and obliterated the Sinhala letter by applying tar on it.⁷³ Buses came one after the other with new number plate; volunteers too appeared batch-by-batch and obliterated the 'Sinhala SRI'.⁷⁴ By this time, all the senior leaders including the party president Vanniyasingam were in Colombo. Vanniyasingam rushed to Jaffna to stop this but the campaign gained momentum and it was a situation that retreat would affect the party and its leaders.⁷⁵ He had no option but to go along with it, posing it as the campaign of the party.

Provoked by anti-SRI campaign, Sinhala chauvinistic forces retaliated in Colombo and other Sinhala areas by smearing tar over Tamil letterings on road signs and on the shops owned by Tamils. Probably to reduce the heat of the Sinhalese, the Registrar of Motor Vehicles announced the change in number

⁷¹ The SRI is the first syllable of the Sinhalese name for the Island. There were no historical antecedents of name with this syllable. Navaratnam, n. 17, p. 134.

⁷² Navaratnam, n. 17, pp. 133-37.

⁷³ Ibid, p. 134.

⁷⁴ Existing practice then was to use two-three letters that constitute the word 'CEYLON', in front of the numbers. Now they introduced 'SRI' in Sinhala letter, in place of the existing letters. Navaratnam, n. 17, p. 133.

⁷⁵ See Navaratnam, n. 17, p. 135

system of all the vehicles. Anti-Pact campaigners, led by the Buddhist monks, demanded the withdrawal of the Pact. Bandaranaike succumbed to the pressure and tore off the Pact in front of them.⁷⁶ The same day Bandaranaike stated in a broadcast to the nation:

The illegal act in defacing the Sinhala SRI symbol in state owned buses 'created a new situation...' I must say that this recent action on the part of the Federal Party has not made it possible to proceed with the implementation of the agreement as contemplated, in view of the feeling created in the country by the federal party's action....⁷⁷

However, FP refuted the charge in open and attributed the pressure of Buddhist monks for the failure of the Pact. Amirthalingam acted on his own will without the consent of the leadership. It was not a matter which affected only the organisation, rather it has failed the aspirations of the Tamil community. There were views expressed by leaders in the party that, 'at the time that the first action should not have been taken without the party considering the situation... particularly as the matter was being discussed at the highest level'.⁷⁸ Later, Amirthalingam himself confessed this, 'B-C Pact was torn due to my inexperience. Many blamed my inexperience for the failure of the Pact.'⁷⁹

One of the strategies of the FP was to convert every anti-Tamil activity taken by the government as added strength and legitimacy to fight out for their demands with increasing vigour. FP was quick to utilise the momentum of the anti-SRI to the mobilisation. To show its protest to the disownment of the Pact, FP aggravated the anti-SRI campaign that spread to the Eastern Province too. Hundreds of Tamils were arrested—including Chelvanayagam, seven other MPs, a Senator, and the wives of two MPs.⁸⁰ All Members of Parliament served short jail terms. Ultimately, the Sinhala-SRI movement benefitted the growth of the party and snatched the opportunity of the Tamils to achieve some of their important aspirations through regional councils.

⁷⁶ The B-C Pact was let down on 9 April 1958. Sivanayagam, n. 15, p. 14.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Navaratnam, n. 17, p. 134

⁷⁹ Amirthalingam, speech in public meeting, *Eelanadu* (Jaffna), 30 December 1977.

⁸⁰ Leaders and activist were arrested between 10–14 April 1958, Sivanayagam, n. 15, p. 14.

Second Anti-Tamil Violence (1958)

FP successfully concealed to the public, knowledge of their contribution to the discard of the Pact. The failure of the B–C Pact and the refusal of the Tamil's demands on the language issues left the Tamils with disappointment and fortitude to carry on the struggle to achieve the goal. The tension between the Sinhala and Tamil polity was rapidly rising, since the enactment of Official Language Bill. The political moves and the activities of the Tamil leadership against the government in essence questioned reputation of the majoritarian rule and the legitimacy of the unitary system. This strategy on the one hand raised the sentiments of the Tamils and at the other hand provoked the Sinhala chauvinist forces.

In a statement, responding to the abrogation of the Pact, FP called upon all Tamil speaking people, to embark on a non-violent civil disobedience movement.⁸¹ It seems the government had contingency plan to meet the peaceful resistance of the Tamils by force. Government let loose the Sinhalese thugs to attack the Tamils. Delegates to the FP's annual convention coming by two trains were attacked. Attacks on Tamils spread to all the Sinhalese provinces and continued for a week.⁸² Hundreds of Tamils were brutally killed, wounded, and their properties were burnt. While Colombo was under fire, Bandaranaike addressed to the nation and said, 'An unfortunate situation has arisen resulting in communal tension. Certain incidents in the Batticaloa district where some people lost their lives, including D.A. Seneviratne, a former Mayor of Nuwara Eliya have resulted in various acts of violence and lawlessness in other areas.'⁸³ His speeches were aimed at further provoking the anti-Tamil forces in action.

⁸¹ Sivanayagam, n. 15, p. 14.

⁸² Second round of violence started on 22 May 1958 and continued till 30 May 1958.

⁸³ Radio speech of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike on 26 May 1958, in Sivanayagam, n. 15, p. 15. There were two Sinhala police officers killed in the Batticaloa train. However, Prime Minister attributed these killings as cause for the anti-Tamil riots, implied that Tamils killed them. It was later proved that Tamils had no hand in this incident. He avoided the issue of the massive killings of Tamils in his speech. Ponniah, n. 43, p. 35.

About 12000 Tamils made refugees in Colombo, were sent to northern and eastern provinces by ship.⁸⁴ Ethnic polarisation further entrenched as the attacks on Tamils increased, regardless of their caste, creed, region, and religion. Sending the Tamil refugees to the Northern and Eastern Provinces gained political significance as the Tamils perceived that government unofficially recognised the northern and eastern provinces as the homeland of the Tamils. This vindicated Chelvanayakam's claim of traditional homeland. Further, despite the availability of the road and rail transport to the northern and eastern provinces, refugees were sent by ships proved that the government had not control over the chauvinistic forces that were unleashed by the government itself. In addition, the government did not have the trust on its security forces in protecting Tamils. In such state of affairs the government lost its moral and legal authority to rule the Tamils. Conversely, Tamils gained the authority to claim for separation. The Prime Minister behaved like leader of Sinhalese and not the leader of all the communities of Sri Lanka. Articulating the changing realities, Suntharalingam moved an amendment in the Parliament, 'The de facto separation of Ceylon has now taken place and should be given due recognition'. He added, 'Partition was the only logical, historical and cultural and economic way out of the problem of Tamil Sinhala conflict'.⁸⁵ Even though his amendment was ruled out by the order of the Speaker, it helped nurture the separatist discourse alive in the Tamil politics.

Annual convention of the FP was held in Vavunia amidst this violence, in an atmosphere of tension and solemnity.⁸⁶ The Convention held under the security cover to Vavunia provided C. Suntharalingam, then independent MP for Vavunia.

⁸⁴ It was after the pressure mounted from the foreign mission, leading citizens and the Nava Lanka Sama Samaja Party that call on the people to defend themselves, Bandaranaike declared a state of Emergency and imposed curfew to all Islands. Five British ships and a French ship were employed to ferry 9426 Tamils from Colombo to North and the East. Though no Sinhalese were bodily harmed, around 2100 Sinhalese also ferried from Jaffna to Colombo stated as precautionary measure. See for details of anti-Tamil riots of 1958, Ponniah, n. 43, pp.34–39 and Navaratnam, n. 17, pp. 138–50.

⁸⁵ 24 June 1958, a joint Parliament session held, while MPs of the FP were under detention. Moving an amendment on the throne speech Suntharalingam stated the 'separation has been made'. Sivanayagam, n. 15, pp. 15–16.

⁸⁶ Annual convention of the FP held between 23–25 May 1958 in Vavunia. Sivanayagam, n. 15, p. 15.

⁸⁷ FP came out with a hard resolution, that rather reflected the emotions prevailed at that time than realistic approach. In essence, it reads, 'No further pacts, keep out of Parliamentary politics, launch freedom struggle'. Convention also 'declared to begin the civil disobedience movement from 20 August 1958'. ⁸⁸ The resolutions of the FP were more populist and hyphenating documents than practicable to the party. Most of the time implementation of the resolutions postponed and at times led to its natural death.

However, Bandaranaike had the direct experience on the political awareness of the Northern Tamils from the period of Jaffna Youth Congress. They did not even hesitate to sacrifice their representation to the SC, against the Donoughmore Constitution. FP mobilised the Tamils far stronger, hence, he could not have taken the declaration and resolution of the FP lightly. Bandaranaike said, in part of the Northern and Eastern Provinces, there appeared to be a 'movement against the State and the government'.⁸⁹ To prevent the civil disobedience movement, all the MPs, including the leader of the FP, Chelvanayagam was placed under house arrest. Nearly 150 party leaders at district levels including some Muslims were detained under emergency regulations.⁹⁰ Subsequently, Bandaranaike introduced the Bill for 'reasonable use of Tamil' in the Parliament with prior approval of Buddhist monks while keeping all the FP MPs under custody.⁹¹ It was presumably

⁸⁷ C. Suntharalingam with his men collected licensed guns and took positions at all the approach roads to Vavunia to defend the town. His unhesitant armed action was the first inspiration for many Tamil youth. Suntharalingam's brave and dedicated response earned him the respect among the Tamils. Navaratnam, n. 17, pp. 139–40. Since then, he gained a populist title, 'Ellai Kaavalan' (protector of the border). His bravery reminded repeatedly in many FP meetings as an example to inspire the youth.

⁸⁸ See 'resolutions of the Sixth Convention of the FP', in *Ilankai Tamil Arasu Katchi Silver Jubilee Volume*, (London: Tamil United Liberation Front, 2000), p. 256.

⁸⁹ S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, emergency session of the Parliament, put the blame for the riots largely on the FP seems prelude to the arrest of the FP leaders. 4 June 1958, Sivanayagam, n. 15, p. 15.

⁹⁰ After four months of custody, 58 FP leaders and activist were released on 5 September 1958. Rests were released earlier. Ibid.

⁹¹ The opposition leader N.M. Perera requested to free the FP MPs, but Bandaranaike offered them to come to the Parliament with police escort. Chelvanayagam rejected this offer, as that would be an affront to the dignity of the House. Bill was passed on 5 August 1958 while only two opposition MPs were present in the House. It was rather a unilaterally passed Act. See for details, Navaratnam, n. 17, pp. 149–50, and Sivanayagam, n. 15, p. 16.

an antidote to subdue the bitter feelings of the Tamils against the government but Tamils were rejected this Act.⁹²

Almost after a year, a Buddhist monk assassinated Bandaranaike⁹³ that created an unsettled government under W.A. Dahanayake. In Tamil political theatre, after one year of lull due to anti-Tamil violence, refugee migration and arrest of leaders, Vanniyasingam passed away. The demise of Vanniyasingam alienated the senior leaders,⁹⁴ that left Chelvanayagam alone. Chelvanayagam's thoughts seem to have undergone change, due to his personal as well as external advices. He began thinking of change of approach that would drag the party into the game of power politics and that would discredit the party. This change of thinking proved futile subsequent to the two quick elections for Parliament.

The Strategy of FP in the Aftermath of Violence

The General Election was held in a mood when Sinhalese people generally got disappointed as MEP rule led by Bandaranaike did not perform satisfactorily in the economic and welfare fronts to uplift them. However, to some extent these anti-government factors were offset by the sympathy on Bandaranaike. UNP did not use anti-Tamil planks, instead it put up a liberal face at the election campaign. Anti-Tamil laws and two large-scale anti-Tamil violences infuriated the Tamils. A parliamentary election of March 1960 was held under such conditions. (see Table 3.1).

⁹² See for details Navaratnam, n. 17, p. 151, and Ponniah, n. 43, pp. 43–44.

⁹³ The chauvinistic forces that were let loose by the Bandaranaike rule, turned against him culminating in his assassination. Ironically, Bandaranaike was shot to kill by a Buddhist monk at close range after a meeting with him at his private residence. He succumbed to his injuries next day, 26 September 1959. See Sivanayagam, n. 15, p. 17.

⁹⁴ Vanniyasingam died in December 1959. Previously, Chelvanayagam, Naganathan, V.A. Kandiah, and V. Navaratnam used to be in Colombo. Vanniyasingam, even though his residence was in Jaffna, mostly he too stays in Colombo. With the 1958 riots, Navaratnam and his family shifted to Jaffna. In a year, Vanniyasingam passed away. Naganathan had his own clinic and had family constraints. Hence, Chelvanayagam was vulnerable to unhealthy influences of Colombo Tamil intelligentsia. See for details Navaratnam, n. 17, pp. 153–54.

Table 3.1: Parliamentary Elections 1960 March

Constituency	FP Candidate	Votes Obtained	Result	Main Contestant	Contestant Parties	Votes Obtained	Position
Jaffna District							
Jaffna	S. Kathiravelupillai	5101	Lost	A.T. Durayappah	Independent	6201	Won
Kankesanthurai	S.J.V. Chelvanayakam	13545	Won	V. Karalasingham	LSSP	5042	Lost
Kayts	V.A. Kandiah	10820	Won	Alfred Thambiyah	Independent	7574	Lost
Kopay	M. Balasundaram	10279	Won	T. Gunaratnam	ACTC	4936	Lost
Pointpedro	K. Thurairatnam	5679	Won	N. Nadarajah	ACTC	2521	Lost
Vaddukoddai	A. Amirthalingam	11524	Won	S. Suntharasivam	LSSP	3614	Lost
Chavakacheri	V.N. Navaratnam	13907	Won	V. Kumarasamy	ACTC	6930	Lost
Uduppidy	K. Jeyakody	3860	Lost	M. Sivasithamparam	ACTC	7365	Won
Kilinochchi	A. Sivasundaram	3741	Won	A.C. Pomambalam	Independent	2582	Lost
Nallur	E.M.V. Naganathan	9651	Won	C. Arulampalam	ACTC	6808	Lost
Uduvil	V. Dharmalingam	9033	Won	P. Nagalingam	LSSP	3811	Lost
Vanni							
Mannar	V. Alegacone Albert	6463	Won	S.H. Mohamed	Independent	4587	Lost
Vavunia	NC	NA	NA	T. Sivasithamparam	Independent	5370	Won
Eastern Province							
Trincomalee	N.R. Rajavarothayam	8872	Won	R.M.G. Thusthakeer	Independent	1311	Lost
Muttur	T. Ehamparam	10685	Won	M.E.H.M. Ali	Independent	10680	Won
Batticaloa	C. Rajadurai	28309	Won	A.H. Macan Markar	Independent	22893	Won
Kalkuda	P. Manickavasagam	7318	Won	A.I. Macan Markar	UNP	5587	Lost
Paddiruppu	S.M. Rasamanickam	10799	Won	S.U. Ethirmanasingham	TSF	6517	Lost
Kalmunai	S.Z.M.M. Moulana	5520	Lost	M.S. Kariapper	LPP	5743	Won
Pottuvil	NC	NA	NA	M.A. Abdul Majeed	Independent	9874	Won

Source: Compiled from, G.P.S.H. de Silva, *A Statistical Survey of Elections to the Legislatures of Sri Lanka 1911-1977* (Colombo, MARGA Institute, 1979),

Note: NC- Not Contested, NA- Not Applicable.

Out of 157 seats,⁹⁵ UNP won 50 and SLFP won 48. FP won 15 seats; in addition, two FP-supported independent candidates also won in the Eastern Province. With the strength of 17 members, FP held third largest status in the Parliament. This election presented a hung Parliament. UNP was called to form the government. However, it needed the support of some other party in the Parliament to prove its majority to be in the power. UNP asked for the support of the FP but refused to consider its demands; instead, it offered some portfolios to FP which the FP rejected. SLFP conveyed its readiness to consider those demands favourably. Based on this understanding UNP was defeated in the Parliament.⁹⁶ However, instead of calling the SLFP to form the government, the Governor dissolved the Parliament and thus the hope for alternative government was shattered. Next election was held in four months (1960 July).

In the election campaign, the UNP justified its rejection of the conditions of the FP to offer its support. The UNP leaders stated, 'They could have continued the government with Federal Party support, but that they would *rather get defeated than concede the Tamil demands.*'⁹⁷ Conversely, the SLFP pursued the 1960 elections with a *sense of gratitude to the Federal Party.*⁹⁸ Paradoxically, liberal UNP showed its chauvinist face and chauvinist SLFP showed its liberal face in this election.

The UNP met a colossal defeat in this election, perhaps due to its overt communal and exclusive plank.⁹⁹ The SLFP got absolute majority for its liberal and inclusive plank. The paradox reflected in the election result too. Sinhalese people gave non-communal mandate to an extremely communalist party, the SLFP. FP again won 15 seats (see Table 3.2).

⁹⁵ Consequent to the delimitation of 1959, the seats in Parliament was increased from 101–157. G.P.S.H. de Silva, *A Statistical Survey of Elections to the Legislatures of Sri Lanka 1911–77* (Colombo: MARGA Institute, 1979), p. 36.

⁹⁶ See Ponnaiyah, n. 43, p. 50.

⁹⁷ Ibid. (Emphasis mine).

⁹⁸ One of the senior leaders of the SLFP and nephew of Bandaranaike, Felix Dias Bandaranaike gallantly defended the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, Federal Party alliance. See for details, Ibid, pp. 49–51. (Emphasis mine).

⁹⁹ Support base of the UNP was largely in urban areas and good proportion of educated section. They generally did not entertain communal politics.

Table 3.2: Parliamentary Elections 1960 July

Constituency	FP Candidate	Votes Obtained	Result	Main Contestant	Contestant Party	Votes Obtained	Position
Jaffna District							
Jaffna	S. Kathiravelupillai	5644	Lost	Alfred Durayappah	Independent	6313	Won
Kankesanthurai	S.J.V. Chelvanayakam	15668	Won	R.N. Sivapirakasam	ACTC	2009	Lost
Kayts	V.A. Kandiah	12110	Won	S. Senathirajah	ACTC	2671	Lost
Kopay	M. Balasundaram	12088	Won	T. Gunaratnam	ACTC	5783	Lost
Pointpedro	K. Thurairamam	8226	Won	N. Nadarajah	ACTC	3968	Lost
Vaddukoddai	A. Amirthalingam	13454	Won	A. Vaidialingam	CP	5206	Lost
Chavakacheri	V.N. Navaratnam	14799	Won	S.K. Thiravianayagam	ACTC	2410	Lost
Uduppidy	K. Jeyakody	7741	Lost	M. Sivasithamparam	ACTC	9080	Won
Kilinochchi	A. Sivasundaram	5338	Won	V. Anandasangari	LSSP	2011	Lost
Nallur	E.M.V. Naganathan	11728	Won	C. Arulampalam	ACTC	6195	Lost
Uduvil	V. Dharmalingam	11475	Won	P. Nagalingam	LSSP	6704	Lost
Vanni							
Mannar	V. Alegacone	7307	Won	S.H. Mohamed	UNP	5790	Lost
Vavunia	G.B. Vincent	5418	Lost	T. Sivasithamparam	Independent	7393	Won
Eastern Province							
Trincomalee	N.R. Rajavarotheyam	8649	Won	E.R.S.R. Cumaraswamy	SLFP	4614	Lost
Muttur	T. Ehamparam	13304	Won	A.L. Abdul Majeed	SLFP	13247	Won
Batticaloa	C. Rajadurai	29853	Won	A.H. Macan Markar	UNP	22031	Won
Kalkuda	P. Manickavasagam	7605	Won	S. Subraminam	Independent	5295	Lost
Paddiruppu	S.M. Rasamanickam	10948	Won	S.U. Ethirmanasingam	ACTC	5283	Lost
Kalmunai	M.C. Ahmed	7616	Won	M.S. Kariappar	ACIUF	5651	Lost
Pottuvil	NC	NA	NA	M.A. Abdul Majeed	Independent	11591	Won

Source: Compiled from, G.P.S.H. de Silva, *A Statistical Survey of Elections to the Legislatures of Sri Lanka 1911-77* (Colombo: MARGA Institute, 1979).

Note: NC- Not Contested, NA- Not Applicable.

The FP delegation led by Chelvanayagam met the Prime Minister, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, urged her to honour the B-C Pact, but the discussion ended with disappointment to the FP.¹⁰⁰ SLFP took the administrative measures to implement the Official Language Act (Sinhala only) vigorously in its full strength in such a way that S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike had to withdraw. In addition, the government enacted another law, the 'Courts Act', intended to eliminate the Tamil in court proceedings and judicial administration of the country. It was a big humiliation to the Tamils, as even the high-ranking professionals had to run to Sinhalese workers in the bakeries to read the official letters.¹⁰¹

The FP realised that the UNP and SLFP wanted to use the FP only as a ladder to gain power. Further, FP could earn only the grudge of the UNP for no gains. Considering the small size of the representation of the FP in the Parliament, its chances for 'king maker' role seemed rare and uncertain. Ultimately, the FP was forced to be fight out on its own for its language demand.

THE SATYAGRAHA MOVEMENT

Practically, FP had only one option and that was to carry out Satyagraha campaign as effective as possible to heed the government. In mid-January 1961 in a public meeting at Jaffna town, Chelvanayagam declared that the Federal Party has decided to launch 'direct action'.¹⁰² Robbert Benewick observes, 'Direct action may manifest in any shape, from boycott to bomb'.¹⁰³ However, Chelvanayagam emphasised that it should be non-violent in character.¹⁰⁴

The FP began the movement with an open call to all public servants, not to learn Sinhala and to boycott classes, do not do any work in your office in Sinhala,

¹⁰⁰ Meeting held in mid-November 1960, see for details Ponnaiah, n. 43, and Navaratnam, n. 17.

¹⁰¹ See for details Navaratnam, n., 17, pp. 155-60.

¹⁰² Ponnaiah, n. 43, pp. 52-53.

¹⁰³ The concept of Direct Action] connotes is hard to define. Since the boundaries that it cross depend on what happens to be law, and on more quickly fluctuating opinion and convention. It may manifest in any shape from boycott to bomb. See for detail analysis, Robbert Benewick and Trevor Smith (eds.) *Direct Action and Democratic Politics*, (Ruskin House, 1972), p. 25.

¹⁰⁴ Ponnaiah, n. 43, pp. 52-53.

do not attend any Sinhala communication and do not use a franks or signatures in Sinhala. It also called upon the people to communicate only in Tamil and send back any government communication in Sinhala. Batches of volunteers led by the leaders marched to every government office and distributed leaflets asking public servants not to learn or work in Sinhala.¹⁰⁵ The response was immense. The Tamil public servants stood solidly together.¹⁰⁶ One such march was led by Chelvanayagam to Jaffna Kachcheri (District Secretariat). A bonfire of copies of the Sinhala Only Act and the Constitution was then made at the entrance to the Kachcheri.¹⁰⁷ However, all these protest activities had little effect, as the government did not respond; instead, this campaign effectively mobilised the people against the implementation of the Sinhala Only Act.

Kachcheri Blockade Movement

Many of the FP leaders had prior knowledge about Satyagraha movement from their study of Indian experience. They also had certain experience on the Satyagraha movement they launched since 1956. Considering the authoritarian nature of the successive governments, and the chauvinist nature of the Sri Lankan State, effective Satyagraha movement required wider preparation in the party structure, working programme and the mobilisation. The majoritarian nature of the government virtually demonstrated intolerance. Its response was authoritarian against any resistance of the Tamils. It even resorted to unleashing of terror to scare the people and keeping the leaders under custody. This coercive approach halted the campaign and eased the pressure on the government. This emphasises the necessity of effective devices to continue the movement even in the absence of the top leaders.

The FP decided to perform Satyagraha to paralyse the government in the two Tamil provinces to meet its demands by exerting pressure on the government.¹⁰⁸ An

¹⁰⁵ Navaratnam, n. 17, p. 161.

¹⁰⁶ Ponnaiah, n. 43, p. 53.

¹⁰⁷ Navaratnam, n. 17, p. 161.

¹⁰⁸ V. Navaratnam proposed the scheme for Satyagraha movement to Chelvanayagam. But he did not willingly accept. He accepted after persuasion. Navaratnam, n. 17, pp. 161–63.

action committee was set up consisting of senior leaders that made elaborate plans to continue the campaign despite any disruptions or disturbance, possibly by the police. Chelvanayagam inaugurated the campaign with the volunteers from his constituency by morning 7.30. They occupied the entrances of the Jaffna Kachcheri. Despite his age and sickly physical condition, he was sitting amongst the volunteers throughout the day. There were number of other leaders also giving directions to the volunteers. Due to the prior mobilisation, crowd gathered in hundreds.¹⁰⁹

First day, well-equipped police battalion arrived to the scene, pulled out Satyagrahis to make way for the entrance to the Kachcheri staff, rather unsuccessfully. Police inflicted violence to remove the volunteers from the entrance and in the process wounded many, but another set of the Satyagrahis replaced them. This tussle began from the day one and continued unsuccessfully for two months, with frequent use of force.¹¹⁰ Police also attacked many government servants who were waiting along with the Satyagrahis. 'The Jaffna branch of Government Clerical Servants Union (GCSU) telegraphed to the Prime Minister against the police violence on the government servants. They also intimated to the government that they would not work unless an inquiry was held forthwith.'¹¹¹ Police attacked the people to find way to Kachcheri staffs, but the attacks on the staff became counter-productive. Among Tamils, it created sympathy towards the Satyagrahis and anger on the government and the police. The news of the police violence on the unarmed Satyagrahis spread to the entire country.

The opposition leaders like J.R. Jayewardene and Pieter Keuneman in Colombo condemned the police atrocities on Satyagrahis. Plantation Tamil's leader Aziz, Bernard Souza, a leading Parliamentarian and Somasundaram of the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) visited Jaffna to show their solidarity to the campaign. They were impressed by the disciplined campaign and condemned the

¹⁰⁹ See for details Navaratnam, n. 17, p. 165 and Ponniah, n. 43, pp. 54–57.

¹¹⁰ Satyagraha movement continued without break from 20 February 1961 to 17 April 1961.

¹¹¹ Ponnaiah, n. 43, p. 60.

dastardly act of police. S. Thondaman, leader of CWC, visited many centres of Satyagraha and encouraged them. Press carried all the news and articles mostly sympathetic and supportive towards the Satyagrahis.¹¹²

The issue on which the Satyagraha movement launched was common to all the Tamils that transformed the movement of the FP, as an all-party movement. Except CPC, all other parties participated. They came out with a resolution, demanding statutory recognition to Tamil, and also appointing a commission to enquire about the police atrocities. All party meeting resolved to take steps to strengthen the Satyagraha movement.¹¹³

The movement continued with rapidly increasing participation of the people of all occupations day-by-day. Lawyers, doctors, nurses, traders, taxi drivers, farmers, and clergymen openly participated in the campaign. The movement quickly expanded to other Tamil districts too. Women participation was one of the most remarkable developments. Supportive activities such as fund collection, food and water supply, providing sanitary facilities, and solidarity activities like rallies, boycott of schools and bar councils, passing resolutions by many organisations and institutions and hartal in many parts of the Northern and Eastern Provinces added to the momentum. Tamils from many parts of the Island including plantation Tamils visited Jaffna in groups to show their solidarity.

Participation of the Muslims in all the districts was highest in the history of the movement. Their comprehensive participation proved that their linguistic identity could not be concealed by giving emphasis to their religious identity. In a 15,000/- strong gathering (mostly Muslims) at the end of the procession in support of the Satyagraha at the entrance of the Batticaloa Kachcheri, Muslim MP for Batticaloa addressed:

In the Tamil freedom struggle, the Muslims of Ceylon have a big part to play. What is wanted now is real unity between the Muslims and Tamils and I am glad that unity is forthcoming and is spontaneous. Once we have

¹¹² Amirthalingam, n. 23, p. 65.

¹¹³ M. Sivasithamparam, MP and M.M. Sultan from ACTC R.R. Dharmaratnam, S. Visuvanathan, N. Devapalasundaram and A. Duraisingam from LSSP; S. Kathiravelupillai and S. Nadarajah from FP, Haji V.M.S. Aboosali from Muslims took part in the meeting held on 21 February 1961. See Ponnaiah, n. 43, pp. 67–68.

become strongly united, the Government cannot but bow down to our demands.¹¹⁴

In the same meeting, another prominent personality observed:

What is the use of listening to those Muslims who pretend to be our leaders and talk softly of the goodwill and alliance with the communal government when our own correspondence in Tamil with the Government is replied in Sinhalese.¹¹⁵

According to Ponnaiah and V. Navaratnam, participation of the Sinhalese living in the Tamil provinces too was remarkable. Sinhalese, including women, participated in Jaffna, Vavunia and in the Eastern Province. In Jaffna, they issued thousands of lunch parcels to the Satyagrahis and financial contributions towards the movement. They had the opinion that the government attitude was communal, dividing the people on ethnic line. This support, even after two big anti-Tamil violences, shows that attitude of the general Sinhalese public was not for the communal agenda of the government.

Almost all the Tamil-speaking people were gradually drawn into the movement in two months and all the works in the Tamil provinces came substantially to a standstill during this period. This was the most significant Satyagraha campaign that had manifold effect in the future politics in Sri Lanka in general, and Tamil politics in particular.

The attitude of the government grew more and more authoritarian as the tenacity of the Satyagraha grew. It was engaged in finding new tactics and repressive methods to foil the movement rather than respect the deep feelings of the Tamils. Prime Minister broadcast a speech to the nation, before leaving for London and warned the campaigners in a tyrant's tone.¹¹⁶ In her speech, she declared, 'any discussion is possible after giving up the campaign.'¹¹⁷ After she

¹¹⁴ See for details Navaratnam, n. 17, pp. 155–160, and Ponnaiah, n. 43, pp. 52–53.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Prime Minister visited London for three weeks to attend the Commonwealth Conference on 4 March 1961.

¹¹⁷ Prime Minister after returning from London, in another broadcast on 25 March 1961; Ponnaiah, n. 43, p. 131.

came back, she threatened the Tamil leadership and the participants in an open speech:

Government is ready and willing to listen to their grievances and make adjustments... Should the Government be compelled to *restore law and order by other means* at its disposal, the supporters of the Satyagraha movement must take full responsibility for the consequences that must necessarily follow.¹¹⁸

Government even stopped the regular supply of dry rations to the Tamil people to fail the movement. Opinions developed against the arrogance of the Prime Minister within and outside the country. Foreign press such as *The Hindu* (India), *Manchester Guardian*, and *London Times* criticised the authoritarian attitude of the government against just and democratic struggle. This compelled the government to have dialogue with the FP leaders. Accordingly, Chelvanayagam had talks with the Justice Minister in Colombo for a few days while the campaign was on. Tamil-speaking people laid the hope for a satisfactory solution. They wished and hoped that their painful efforts would reap some fruit. The talks failed and the Tamils once again got disappointed, rather felt humiliated. They felt that they have to take the intensity of the protest movement to another height, so that the government would bow to their demand.

Civil Disobedience Movement

Navaratnam proposed civil disobedience movement to support the Satyagraha campaign by running a parallel postal system in Jaffna peninsula.¹¹⁹ Secret arrangements were made to print and supply stamps, stamped-envelops and post cards. Appointment of Post-Master General, postmaster and postmen, organising

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Navaratnam proposed the idea of disobedience movement and the scheme of parallel postal system. He was made in charge to coordinate and execute the civil disobedience movement.

parallel post offices with the name of 'Tamil Arasu Postal Service', installation of 'Tamil Arasu Post Boxes', were also arranged.¹²⁰

Chelvanayagam inaugurated the postal service, by starting the sale across the counter as postmaster.¹²¹ About 10000 people witnessed this disobedience movement with wild enthusiasm. In little more than an hour, there were 2500 stamps, 2500 stamped envelopes, and 3000 postcards sold and the post boxes filled.¹²² Navaratnam states, 'Letters were collected, sorted, stamps cancelled with the *Tamil Arasu post-mark*, and then entrusted to several postmen for delivery at the addresses.'¹²³ Sivasithamparam, MP, delivered the letter addressed to the Jaffna Police Superintendent; V.N. Navaratnam, MP, delivered the letter to Army Major Udugama; V. Dharmalingam, MP; delivered the letter to the Government Agent for Jaffna; A. Amirthalingam, MP, delivered the letter to the Superintendent of Post and Telecommunications, Jaffna. Content of most of the letters were informing the officers that they were breaking the law.¹²⁴

The Satyagraha movement brought the momentum of protest to the peak; people were in a hype of Tamil nationalistic feelings. Thus, the mass participation and the response to the civil disobedience movement were much more than the expectations of the FP leaders. All the government staff extended their tacit support. The movement that went on for four days considerably affected the revenue to the Jaffna post offices. This scared the Sinhalese hardliners and leaders that allowing this would take dangerous dimensions. The *Ceylon Daily News* and its sister newspaper in Sinhala and Tamil languages, wrote an unauthentic news, to turn the Sinhalese against the Tamils that the Federal Party is contemplating the recruitment of the 'Tamil Arasu Police Force'.

¹²⁰ See for details of organising and implementation and the state response of Tamil Arasu Postal Service. Navaratnam, n. 17, pp. 175–182.

¹²¹ While the Satyagraha was on at the entrance of Jaffna Kachcheri, Tamil Arasu Post Office functioned in front of the Kachcheri on 14 April 1961.

¹²² See for details of implementation and the impact over the people, Ponnaiah, n. 43, pp. 145–156.

¹²³ Navaratnam, n. 17, p. 178. (Emphasis mine).

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

On the fourth day of the movement, the government declared Emergency in the Northern and the Eastern Provinces and sent Special Army contingent from Colombo to suppress the movement. Sweeping preemptive measures were taken completely to disconnect the communications and mobility to the peninsula from rest of the world. However, the government did not fully succeed in its endeavours.¹²⁵ Party paper *Suthanthiran* was banned. 'Army swooped down on all the five Satyagraha centres in the Northern and Eastern Provinces simultaneously and broke up the gatherings... They bundled them [men and women] into the Army truck... they were taken to distant places and left on out of the way roads to find their way.'¹²⁶ This vengeful use of force by the Army ended up with more than hundred men and women injured and hospitalised.¹²⁷ All the leaders (MPs) and many volunteers of the FP, who were arrested were flown to Colombo and detained in an Army Cantonment in the Sinhalese area to prevent their access to their people.¹²⁸ Army did not arrest those belonging to ACTC, Muslims and the Sinhalese, who also were actively participating in the movement in order to disrupt the unity among Tamil speaking community and support from the Sinhalese. The Army took the charges of the administration of five Kachcheries in the Tamil provinces that continued for months.

¹²⁵ During 18–22 April 1961, peninsula was under curfew with only three hours of relaxation each day. Electricity, telecom, telegram facilities were cut, postal services stopped and all the transport (air, rail and all road transport) services were stopped. Stringent censorship was implemented. Within Jaffna also telephones of the leaders/MPs too were disconnected. Government let the people under severe hardships for the first time in the Sri Lanka's history. See for details, Ponniah, n. 43, pp. 148–179, and Navaratnam, n. 17, pp. 179–80. Despite communication blockades to prevent spread of the Army atrocities to outside world, Tamil Nadu responded with an emotional rally in solidarity with the Sri Lankan Tamils. Mauritius and Malaysian Tamils too conveyed their support. Ibid, p. 181.

¹²⁶ See for the details of army atrocities on Satyagrahis, Ibid, pp. 179–180.

¹²⁷ See for details, Ponniah, n. 43, pp. 148–155.

¹²⁸ Leaders were released after six months, on 4 October 1961.

Causes for the Failure of Satyagraha Movement

Despite being organised disciplined and dedicated Satyagraha movement continued for two months. However, like earlier occasions, this protest too came to an end with the arrest of the main leaders. Knowing the attitude of the State, FP failed to have comprehensive plan with adequate techniques in the face of necessary supportive measures to continue the movement despite worst response of the State. Joan V. Bondurant argues, 'Certain of the steps required in an ideal Satyagraha campaign would be impossible under circumstances obtaining in monolithic authoritarian states. Such for instance, is the step of wide-spread publicity and propaganda conducted without secrecy.'¹²⁹

Jaffna people were politically awakened from colonial period in general due to active political debates and activities, especially, aware of Gandhian movement due to close interaction and observation of the independence movement of India. Therefore, already it was a fertile ground for such movements. Contrarily, other districts especially, the Eastern Province was much behind in this regard. FP failed to concentrate on bringing them along with Jaffna. Moreover, number of MPs were more in the Jaffna peninsula. They were not distributed to other districts for mobilisation and leading the movement. Therefore, the movement in Jaffna was qualitatively and quantitatively asymmetrical in strength which was evident from the demonstration and vigour of the people. That further emphasized by their quick adoption of civil disobedience to give added strength to the movement. Considering this disparity, FP, instead of opting for civil disobedience, should have widened and strengthened the Satyagraha movement in other districts too.

Parallel postal service is a direct challenge to the State. Thus, it is more powerful weapon than Satyagraha. It should have been employed widely as another stage of the struggle to get maximum impact and benefit. As Joan V. Bondurant observes, 'Large-scale disobedience is disruptive and, if it is

¹²⁹ Joan V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 226–28.

sufficiently widespread, it makes the position of those in control untenable. This is the basis of the theory of general strike, just as it is of civil disobedience.’¹³⁰

Considering the impressive participation of the Muslims and Sinhalese, such systematic approach would have cultivated strong bond with the Muslims and gained wider support among Sinhalese too. Use of disobedience movement was an effective weapon, so was Satyagraha. But the combined use of both together was an utter waste of the effective weapons. ‘Gandhi believed that Satyagraha, if properly applied, would always meet with a high degree of success’.¹³¹ Later developments proved the lack of plan, perspective, and structural limitations of the FP that was unable to utilise the wider support and to reap fruits of the movement or even take the movement forward. FP, instead of going for retrospection of its conduct of the movement for adequate preparations and application of wider programmes, got frustrated on Satyagraha method and attributed the cause of failure fully on the attitude of the State. Confessing this, Eelaventhan states, ‘The response by the government and its security forces at the Gandhian struggle in 1956, 1958 and 1961 were made to loose the faith on non-violent Gandhian way of struggle.’¹³² This shows lack of their understanding in the application of Satyagraha and the failure of the FP leaders to forecast and to be prepared to meet any consequences. There were no clues to suggest that FP had alternative plans to face such eventuality and sustain the movement, instead, almost all the leaders seem to have been carried away with the crowd and enthusiasm like the public.

While the Army was in action against Satyagraha, thousands of people including youth and students insisted on breaking the army cordon with the slogan of, ‘Violence must be met with violence’.¹³³ Leaders announced, ‘Civil government has failed, and military rule established. To this extent, our Satyagraha is a success.’¹³⁴ They implored the leaders to come out with the role for them to play. Leaders stated, ‘The cause is not lost and we must wait for the opportunity’.¹³⁵ However, people did not wait for opportunity; they continued the movement in a limited way to maintain the spirit till the leaders believed that they

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Author’s interview with Eelaventhan, Jaffna, 29 April 2003.

¹³³ Ponnaiah, n. 43, p. 152.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

would continue to lead the movement at their release. Based on this belief, they organised eighteen day to every month (the day of the arrest) as day of hartal to show their protest of the arrest. They also published a propaganda newspaper secretly. On the contrary, it was the leaders who lost the spirit.

Decline of FP's Agitational Campaign

Since language is the key component of the culture of any community, the Official Language policy had a wide impact on the politics. It affected the entire Tamil-speaking community. While FP succeeded in mobilisation and demonstration, partly the blatant suppressive attitude of the state and partly the inability of the FP to utilise the mass power put an end to the five-years-old movement without any tangible dividend. It changed the way issues were being debated in the country. Political alienation of minorities towards Sinhala State set in after this.

While people were in the mood of agitation and expecting the party to give leadership, FP could not openly reveal that they lost faith on mass movement and would not go back to it anymore. If FP says so, they should accept the parliamentary process as their only path to achieve the goal. Since people were well aware of politics and largely lost hope on Parliament, FP was unable to convince them, thus it lost support. Therefore, probably to appease the emotion of the people, FP ordered the Working Committee to *expand and prepare the party* to begin the *direct action again* before 17 April 1963.¹³⁶ However, instead of preparing for the direct action, after four months, party gave an ultimatum to the government (10 August 1963), to launch a civil disobedience movement, 'unless the government withdrew the imposition of Sinhala Only and grant the just demands of the Tamils-speaking people before 1 October this year [1963].'¹³⁷ Ultimately, twice-announced direct action was led to its natural death.

¹³⁶ See, "Resolution Mannar Convention, 1 September 1962", in a *Ilankai Tamil Arasu Katchi Silver Jubilee Volume* (London: Tamil United Liberation Front, 2000), p. 261 (emphasis mine).

¹³⁷ Sivanayagam n. 15, p. 33. Tens of hundreds of Tamil government servants were issued ultimatum to prove their proficiency in Sinhala. Government also decided to send 2000 Sinhalese teachers to the Tamil provinces and compel the plantation Tamils to study in Sinhala medium. *Eelandu*, 23 June 1964.d

However, FP contemplated a new protest method that was to, 'quit the Parliament, get fresh mandate, resign again, and repeat the same'.¹³⁸ This innovative and most attention-seeking method was welcomed by the people. On the contrary a group in the FP led by Thiruchelvam opposed this decision¹³⁹ and the party backtracked of from this idea too.

The post-disobedience movement politics of the FP shows vast gap between its words and deeds. While it projected itself as vigorous fighters through the build up of stimulating resolutions and fairy speeches among Tamils and statements threatening the government, in practice, party did nothing or seeking ways to cooperative approach. While leaders mobilised support for the federal goal, called the people to be ready to fill the prisons, contrarily, when people were ready for action, leaders backtracked. FP's faith on the path of '*Direct Action by non-violent means*'¹⁴⁰ to achieve their goal was over with the civil disobedient movement of 1961.

Number of factors seemed contributed to the change of the trend of the FP against its said principles subtly. Chelvanayakam's understanding of direct action appeared to be in support of parliamentary process, mild activities such as placating, hungers strikes, and hartal would bow the government and could achieve the federal solution. Chelvanayakam never proposed or planned any of his activities from 'Goal Face' protest to disobedience. Instead, when V. Navaratnam submitted the proposal for foot march or for Satyagraha, initially, Chelvanayakam rejected such proposal and had the opinion that such proposals were impracticable and waste of time. He accepted these with hesitation after persuasion. His responses show that either he did not have the understanding of the power of Gandhian way of protest or not committed to that method. His comrade in arms V. Navaratnam observes:

Chelvanayakam had no concept of the value of mass action in the politics of a freedom movement. He had no knowledge or understanding of the

¹³⁸ *Eelanadu*, 23 June 1964 and Chelvanayakam interview, *The Ceylon Observer* (Colombo), 28 June 1964.

¹³⁹ Chelvanayakam interview, *The Ceylon Observer*, 28 June 1964.

¹⁴⁰ FP, n. 32, p. 244. (Emphasis mine).

personalities of the Indian national movement. He liked crowds and their adulations, but not beyond their value in parliamentary politics. He was essentially a mid-Victorian English liberal of the Gladstone type. He believed in parliamentary battles, just as he did in forensic battles in the courtroom. He had a childish belief in parliamentary institutions.¹⁴¹

But in the eyes of the people, it was Chelvanayakam who led all these movements thus, gained high respect and trust of the people. He had immense belief in the parliamentary process. Due to his old age and sufferings due to Parkinson's disease, he was also comfortable with mass protest movements, as it entailed even physical humiliation and imprisonments that he was unable to cope with. Finally, he got tired because he could not achieve federal system in even ten years.¹⁴² Hence, he wanted to achieve powers as much as possible through the approach of cooperation as any movement against the State would be perceived by the government negatively. Moreover, his foster son Thiruchelvam also began influencing his decisions since the early sixties. Thiruchelvam influenced some of other senior other party leaders also in support of his approach of cooperation with the government. Many of the leaders lost trust on Satyagraha method as they felt that it would not succeed under authoritarian government, thus, they willingly accepted, Thiruchelvam's approach. Along with Thiruchelvam, some leaders were obsessed with the post of Minister. These developments suited some other leaders who opted not to suffer by coercive approach of protest. Few leaders, like V. Navaratnam had the trust on mass action. Since then, the FP was reduced to a mere parliamentary party, interested only in elections and MP posts. Contrarily, they continued their firebrand rhetoric and sensational statements to maintain the trust on them, without any concrete action till the 1965 election.

DUDLEY SENANAYAKE–CHELVANAYAKAM PACT

FP foresaw precisely that the election verdict of the Sinhalese constituencies would present a hung Parliament and had the conviction that it could play the

¹⁴¹ Navaratnam, n. 17, p. 114.

¹⁴² Chelvanayakam believed that can be achieved in ten years: See Wilson, n. 2, p. 37.

decisive role in the formation of government. Based on this calculation, party manifesto requested:

The left and right wing allies are engaged in an unprecedented contest for power in the South... As a result, we can expect that an opportunity would arise after this election to change the fate of the Tamil-speaking people, at least to an extent. To make use of such opportunity to regain our lost rights, it is necessary that representatives of the Tamil-speaking people should be elected from a single organised party.¹⁴³

During this period, the leadership came through series of protest activities and imprisonments; FP leaders were enjoying full trust and high respect among people, hence, it was not difficult for them to convince the people about their new approach. It was portrayed that as a king maker, FP would negotiate from the position of strength. People mandated as the party expected. (See Table 3.3).

The FP became the third force with fourteen seats to determine the government. Both UNP and the SLFP sought the support of FP, to form the government. Thiruchelvam once underrated by Chelvanayagam,¹⁴⁴ assigned to identify the party that would offer the rights of Tamils better. However, contrary to the party principle, primary motive of Thiruchelvam was to get a ministerial berth to him.¹⁴⁵ While SLFP offered the implementation of the B-C Pact and refused ministerial berth, the UNP offered three Minister posts, District Council (DC) and implementation of Tamil Special Provisions Act.

¹⁴³ FP, '*Ilankai Tamil Arasu Katchi, Therthal Vingnapanam 1965*, (Election manifesto)', (Colombo: Suthanthiran Press, 1965), p. 1.

¹⁴⁴ While FP took the decision to withdraw from Parliament on protest against the language implementation of the previous government, Thiruchelvam led an opinion in the Party against such decision. Commenting on this issue, Chelvanayagam said, in my view, Mr. Thiruchelvam's judgment is a Colombo resident's judgment. He has no contact with the Tamil masses, the ordinary farmer, and worker. Chelvanayagam, interview, *The Ceylon Observer*, 28 June 1964.

¹⁴⁵ One of the basic principles of the Party was not to assume power until the Party achieves its goal.

Table 3.3: Parliamentary Elections 1965

Constituency	FP Candidate	Votes Obtained	Result	Main Contestant	Contestant Party	Votes Obtained	Position
Jaffna District							
Jaffna	C.X. Martin	6800	Lost	GG Ponnampalam	ACTC	9350	Won
Kankesanthurai	S.J.V. Chelvanayakam	14735	Won	S.Sri Baskaran	ACTC	6611	Lost
Kayts	V. Navaratnam	13558	Won	N.T. Sivagnanam	ACTC	5816	Lost
Kopay	S. Kathiravelupillai	12339	Won	T. Gunaratnam	ACTC	8230	Lost
Pointpedro	K. Thurairatnam	7564	Won	N. Nadarajah	ACTC	6614	Lost
Vaddukoddai	A. Amirthalingam	15498	Won	K. Subramaniam	ACTC	4359	Lost
Chavakacheri	V.N. Navaratnam	16316	Won	M. Sivanathan	ACTC	7191	Lost
Uduppidy	K. Jayakody	8452	Lost	M. Sivasithamparam	ACTC	12009	Won
Kilinochchi	K.P. Ratnam	5922	Won	V. Kumarasamy	ACTC	4076	Lost
Nallur	E.M.V. Naganathan	10301	Won	C. Arulampalam	ACTC	9860	Lost
Uduvil	V. Dharmalingam	11638	Won	P. Nagalingam	LSSP	6726	Lost
Vanni							
Mannar	V. Alegacone	6896	Won	M.S. Abdul Raheem	Independent	6040	Lost
Vavunia	G.B. Vincent	4512	Lost	T. Sivasithamparam	ACTC	7265	Won
Eastern Province							
Trincomalee	S.M. Manickrajah	9651	Won	S.H. Somapala	SLFP	4555	Lost
Muttur	M.E.H.M. Ali	20237	Won	A.L. Abdul Majeed	SLFP	16726	Won
Batticaloa	C. Rajaduari	29023	Won	A.L. Sinnalebbe	UNP	12010	Won
Kalkuda	P. Manicavasagam	6096	Lost	K.W. Devanayagam	UNP	6566	Won
Paddiruppu	S.N. Rasamanikam	11270	Won	U.S. Ethirmanasingam	Independent	9140	Lost
Kalmunai	S.Z.M.M. Moulana	6235	Lost	M.S. Kariappar	Independent	6726	Won
Pottuvil	M.S. Cader	871	Lost	M.A. Abdulmajeed	Independent	6768	Won

Source: Compiled from, G.P.S.H. de. Silva, *A Statistical survey of elections to the Legislatures of Sri Lanka 1911-1977* (Colombo, MARGA Institute, 1979)

While the B–C Pact offered Regional Councils, with power in many subjects including land and language, the D–C Pact presented a much weaker District council system. As both parties disowned their promises to the FP on more than one occasion, there was no rational ground to trust and support only the UNP. SLFP and Left alliance appeared to be a better choice to support, as the B–C Pact was the product of Chelvanayakam and husband of Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the prospective Prime Minister. She might have had sentimental and emotional ground to honour it. Further, the left leadership was sympathetic to the rationality of Tamil demands until such time, so, it would have been an added reason to implement it.

Against the interests of the people and the principle of the party, FP joined the UNP-led National Government (NG).¹⁴⁶ The agreement was a vaguely drafted document without discussing the specific distribution of powers.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, the details of the agreement were kept secret from the people.¹⁴⁸ The entire handling of negotiations and the way the decision was made by the FP to join the NG indicates the degeneration of the party. Firstly, it has proved that a party formed for a sacred cause with great principles was reduced to such condition that one or few could take it as ransom to their interests. Secondly, FP proved its inability to have effective negotiation and the hold on the government to ensure the implementation of the Pact.¹⁴⁹ Federal Party joined the National Government with the hope that they could exert pressure to the rights on land, language, and autonomy for development of Tamil Districts through the D–C Pact.

Thiruchelvam was appointed as Cabinet Minister for Home Affairs on behalf of the FP to monitor and ensure the implementation of the Pact. Probably to win

¹⁴⁶ The decision to join the NG and accept the ministerial berth was not done in a transparent and democratic manner in the Party. The decision was resulted of the game of Thiruchelvam and almost the veto of Chelvanayakam. Author's interview with Srikantha, 20 May 2003. Also see for details, Navaratnam, n. 17, pp. 221–30.

¹⁴⁷ See Dudley Senanayake–Chelvanayakam Pact signed on 24 March 1965.

¹⁴⁸ Editorial, *Viduthalai* (Jaffna), 15 June 1968.

¹⁴⁹ See Navaratnam, n. 17, p. 221–230, Sivagnanasundaram in *Viduthalai*, 15 June 1968, *Daily News*, (Colombo), 8 June 1968, and the 'Editorial', *Viduthalai*, 15 June 1968; Dudley Senanayake Chelvanayakam Pact signed on 24 March 1965.

the trust of the FP, within one year, despite the protest of the Buddhist monks,¹⁵⁰ the government enacted Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Regulations Act¹⁵¹ that benefited the Tamils living and working in the Tamil provinces only. Dudley Senanayake knew that the influence of the FP among Tamils would considerably depend on the implementation of the Pact since FP had created big hopes to the Tamils that this Pact would resolve important issues to some extent.¹⁵²

Using the Pact as a hold over the FP, the government enacted a number of new laws, such as to implement the Sirimavo–Shastri Agreement, enabling the government to send 5,25,000 plantation Tamils to India.¹⁵³ And Registration of Persons Act meant to identify the ‘Tamils as Tamils and as Sri Lankan to the Sinhala security forces and the bureaucracy to enhance the implementation of the Government’s discriminative policies and practices.’¹⁵⁴ Government also sent 2000 Sinhala teachers to the Tamil schools in the North and Eastern Provinces.¹⁵⁵ Tamil government employees working in the non-Tamil provinces were given

¹⁵⁰ See for details Navaratnam, n. 17, p. 238

¹⁵¹ This regulation meant to make Bandaranaike’s Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act of 1958, operational. Accordingly, transactions of all the government and public affairs and maintenance of records should be in Tamil in the Northern and Eastern Provinces; Ambalavanar Sivarajah, “The Role of the Federal Party in the Parliament of 1965–1970”, *Journal of South Asian Studies* (Jaffna: Jaffna University, 1981) pp. 42–43.

¹⁵² It was the principal attraction with which they [the FP] sold the Pact to the Party supporters in the country and justified their joining the government and accepting the office. From public platforms they [the FP] raised the hope of the people to believe that it was something big and the future of the Tamils was dependent on it. They set so much store on it. Navaratnam, n. 17, p. 261.

¹⁵³ FP continued its demand for grant of citizenship for all those who are living in Sri Lanka for more than five years. Chelvanayakam strongly criticised GG earlier as betrayer of the Tamil interests, later criticised the Sirimavo–Shastri Agreement on the plantation Tamil issue. Contrarily, FP compromised on one of the pillars of its policies for the Pact and supported the Bill for the implementation of the Srimao–Shastri Pact passed on 19 June 1967.

¹⁵⁴ To understand the intentions of the government and the implications of the Registration of Persons Act over the Tamils, see Navaratnam, n. 17, pp. 261–73.

¹⁵⁵ This issue was taken in the Mannar Convention in 1964 in which the votes were equally divided for and against. Chelvanayakam, as the leader, voted against and decided to oppose Sinhala teachers to Tamil areas. Later, Chelvanayakam himself agreed to the government to send Sinhala teachers to the Tamil areas while in the government. See *Viduthalai*, 5 August 1969.

deadlines to prove their Sinhala proficiency to continue their jobs.¹⁵⁶ These laws and practices would virtually demolish the very foundation of the FP on which the party was built upon. The intention of Dudley Senanayake could be well understood by his interview to the *Washington Post*, 'here [in Sri Lanka] we are developing two powerful democratic parties. *I am belching the communalist [the FP and the ACTC]* and Mrs. Bandaranaike is belching the left'.¹⁵⁷

FP was in a fix. If it supported these laws, it would compromise its own principles and policies. If not, it may lead to collapse of government and hamper the implementation of the DC. Either of the options would be loss to the FP and the Tamils. Paradoxically, FP supported these laws and practices despite the dissension and split of some potential leaders and activists. While the fact remains that the FP had the magic number in the Parliament to topple the government at any time, it behaved too submissive to the UNP leadership even when government took anti-Tamil measures. In its entire tenure as partner of the government, FP never tried to use pressure tactics by using its support as trump card to implement the Pact or prevent the anti-Tamil laws and practices. Ironically, it justified its support and went to the extent of overindulgence by inviting Dudley Senanayake as chief guest to the annual convention of the FP in Batticaloa and organised massive reception meeting in Jaffna. This exposed its conviction on the UNP leadership. Both of these events gained significance, as he was the only Sinhalese leader who enjoyed such massive reception of the Tamils in the modern political history of Sri Lanka. This drastic change of the attitude of the FP vindicated the qualitative change, largely due to the personal considerations of the important leaders as analysed elsewhere.

FP had full trust on Dudley Senanayake that he would implement the Pact. But after three years of the signing of the Pact, Dudley Senanayake presented a

¹⁵⁶ In this issue, FP managed to get concession of extended two more years as deadline to pass the Sinhala proficiency exam. See *Viduthalai*, 20 August 1963.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Dudley Senanayake published in *Washington Post*, 4 March 1968. (Emphasis mine).

white paper on the 'establishment of District Councils under the direction and control of the central government'.¹⁵⁸ It was disappointing to the FP as it was an absolutely powerless body. SLFP and the Left combination spread the false propaganda and staged protest rallies announcing that the D-C Pact would lead to separation. Considering the increasing tempo of the protest and the possible negative impact on the electoral prospects of the UNP, Dudley Senanayake declared that *District Council proposals were abandoned* on the ground that *majority people did not want it*.¹⁵⁹ This openly unethical acts of the UNP proved that not even single post-independence leaders showed the statesmanship to rise above Sinhalese extremist nationalist pledge for complete and total domination.

FP faced consistent criticism and warnings from the *Viduthalai* and the ETVI, but FP leaders continued to reject these with the strong conviction that D-C system would be implemented. The abandonment of the D-C Bill undoubtedly damaged the image of the FP among the people. FP sought a face-saving device to justify its support and to show some achievements to face the next election. Thiruchelvam took efforts to declare the Thirukkoneswaram Temple area as sacred area.¹⁶⁰ Since it was a popular issue, FP thought it would help to downplay its failures. However, Dudley Senanayake prevented this move.

Having next election in mind, that is to be held in one year, FP announced withdrawal of its support to the government on five charges, stated, 'If support the National Government anymore party cannot do any help to the Tamil speaking

¹⁵⁸ In essence, the white paper gave a council consist of elected representatives of Parliament and Mayors and Chairmen of the local bodies of the respective districts. It was described very much as the Counties in England. Despite offering a weak system, the white Paper proposals required the District councils, Town Councils and village councils in the Tamil provinces to conduct their affairs in Tamil and Sinhala. See for details, K.T. Rajasingam, *Sri Lanka: the Untold Story*, <http://www.atimes.com/ind-pak/C108Df02.htm>.

¹⁵⁹ Navaratnam, n. 17, pp. 280–81. (Emphasis mine).

¹⁶⁰ The temple is a pre-historic monument of the Hindus and popular among Saivites across the globe as many 'deity songs were sang by Thirunavukrasu Nayanar on the God Siva of this temple'.

people'.¹⁶¹ This posture of anger shows the duplicity of the FP. In fact, FP did not withdraw the support to the government; it only came out from the government, but, rendered support from outside until the full tenure. The charges FP leveled against the government also seems merely to the consumption of the people. Contrarily, FP was convinced on the sincerity of the Prime Minister. Despite the debacle of the D-C Pact and temple issue, Thiruchelvam hailed Dudley Senanayake, 'The Honorable Prime Minister tried his best to honour his promises... I want to pay tribute to him; he tried his best to introduce the District Council Bill'.¹⁶²

The achievements of the FP by taking part in the National Government had the anti-Tamil contents in it. The Tamil Language (Special) Provisions Act was only in the newspaper and not implemented until the dissolution of the government. Yet, the law, while freeing the administrative staff of the Northern and Eastern Provinces from the compulsion of proficiency in Sinhala language, it was implemented to the Tamil staffs in all other areas. This naturally weakened their voice due to the partial solution. Likewise, FP obtained exemption of Sinhala education to the Tamil schools in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. But its support to the implementation to the Muslim schools in these provinces, plantation Tamil schools and Tamil and Muslim schools in all other areas again narrowed down the party only to address the interest of the Sri Lankan Tamils. It means that the representation so far given to other communities was only a strategy to strengthen the voice of Sri Lankan Tamils. This mistrust would virtually affect the

¹⁶¹ FP announced the withdrawal of its support to the government on 8 April 1969, on five charges: (a) Disown the promise of establishing District Councils. (b) Disown the promise of establishing a University in Trincomalee. (c) Discrimination in industrial development, fishing, and communication to the Tamil areas. (d) Total negligence of educational and cultural development of Tamils. (e) Delaying the implementation of Tamil language provisions and treasury circulations. See for the details of charges, FP, 'Resolution, 11th Convention held at Uduvil on 8 April 1969', in *Ilankai Tamil Arasu Katchi Silver Jubilee Volume* (London: Tamil United Liberation Front, 2000), pp. 270–74.

¹⁶² M. Thiruchelvam, *Ceylon*, Senate Official Report, Vol. 26, 1968, column 786.

unity among Tamils and achieve their ultimate goal. The same way, by supporting Sirimavo–Shastri Pact FP endorsed to send more than half of the population to India. Ultimately, the achievements of the FP also enhanced the division of the Tamils and affects their overall interests. This virtually faded the uniqueness of the FP from ACTC in terms of policy and commitment.

Split of the FP

In its decision to support every law, it has faced serious dissents and split of few potential leaders and activists who charged the FP of betraying the Tamil cause by compromising its principles. For the first time, the FP faced a series of departures from the party which heaped strong criticism on the FP and its leaders. Some of the most committed bureaucrats among the hundreds of government staff who resigned their jobs protesting the Sinhala Only Act in 1956, protested Chelvanaykam's compromise on the implementation of Sinhala in non-Tamil area, left the party and launched a fortnightly named *Viduthalai* (Freedom) in 1966. Assessing the aim of the journal, Srikantha¹⁶³ observed:

It was started with the view to correct the FP leadership and to put back the party on its original ideological line, using fiery language. *Viduthalai* writings highly critical of the Federal Party, and keep stimulate the youth to maintain the sprit of fight for their rights.¹⁶⁴

Later, three parliamentarians of the FP, V. Navaratanam, Senator Manickam and Manickarajah¹⁶⁵ opposed the party decision to support implementation of Sirimavo Pact. Among them, Manickam stuck to his position and voted against the Bill

¹⁶³ Srikantha was one of the founder members of the Thamizhar Suyatchi Kazhakam (TSK) Self-Rule Party of Tamils). He joined the Party while he was a young lawyer. He was one of the members of the working committee of the Party, member of the editorial board of the Party propaganda paper *Viduthalai* and an active campaigner. In the late 1980s, he joined the TELO and became its official spokesperson. He was Member of Parliament from Jaffna for a short period in place of assassinated MP Yogasangari of the EPRLF.

¹⁶⁴ Author's interview with Srikantha, Colombo, 20 May 2003.

¹⁶⁵ Manickarajah was the then FP MP for Trincomalee constituency

before he resigned from the party.¹⁶⁶ He charged the party that it has betrayed the Tamil's interest as Ponnambalam did in 1948. *Viduthalai* came strongly against those who supported the Bill and declared all the FP Member of the Parliament except Manickam as traitors'.¹⁶⁷ Subsequently, some personalities and the leaders whom were expelled from the FP, and C. Suntharalingam of ETOM, together, formed a new party, named, 'Eela Thamizina Viduthalai Iyakam' (Eelam Tamil Liberation Movement) in 1967. The ETVI went strongly against the compromises of the FP, and differentiated itself as the genuine party, advocating federalism without compromise.¹⁶⁸ In a year, despite the knowledge of the anti-Tamil intention of the Bill, Chelvanayakam decided to support it.¹⁶⁹ V. Navaratnam refused to abide by the party decision and was thus expelled.

Responding to the disownment of the D–C Pact, V. Navaratnam delivered a thought- provoking speech in the Parliament. He declared, 'Never again would the Tamils want to have any more pacts. Let the D–C agreement be the last pact, and the last betrayal'. Giving emphasis to this declaration by propounding the only option for the Tamils, he stated, 'Tamil people would wake up and re-establish the ancient Tamil State in their hereditary homeland in Ceylon's north and east which they lost to the European colonial powers'.¹⁷⁰ The significance of the declaration in the Parliament was the time, when the Tamil minds especially, the youth

¹⁶⁶ After many internal discussions, Manickarajah was won over by the Party. Navaratnam was given option to deliver his statement and not to vote. However, Manickam stuck to his position. Author's interview with Srikantha, Colombo, 20 May 2003.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ The campaign of the ETVI was to expose the FP as it was not genuine for its said course therefore to reject the FP and call the people for its genuine struggle. Some of the prominent leaders who formed the ETVI were Sivagnanasundaram of the *Viduthalai*, former Senator Manickam and C. Suntharalingam and Kodeeswaran. Earlier it was not registered as Party, it took another carnation as Thamizhar Suyadchi Kazhakam (Self-Rule Party of Tamils). Srikantha, n. 164.

¹⁶⁹ FP leaders realised the anti-Tamil content of the Bill only after Navaratnam explained it in the Parliamentary Group meeting of the FP held on 22 April 1968. Chelvanayakam while conceded the fact that the law might prove to be a dangerous weapon in the hands of the hostile Sinhalese police, said, we would have studied these dangers and get changes done from the Prime Minister. Now, it is too late to do so. If we oppose this Bill, District Council Bill would not be passed. Thiruchelvam confessed, I did not realise that the Bill is such poisonous. See *Viduthalai*, 15 May 1968.

¹⁷⁰ Navaratnam, n. 17, pp. 280–81.

reached the stage to consider such eventuality that was kept by the FP in its backburner.

Subsequently, the ETVI group and V. Navaratnam together formed the Thamizar Suyadchi Kazhakam (TSK) (Tamils Autonomous Party) under the leadership of V. Navaratnam.¹⁷¹ Navaratnam explained in the inaugural speech, 'Suyadchi (autonomy) means not just federal but it also means Federal'.¹⁷² His emphasis on this interpretation seems that by autonomy, he also means something more than federal status—like confederation or even separation. *Viduthalai* became the propaganda newspaper of the TSK.

Since 1966, *Viduthalai* exposed the FP as it had surrendered its principles and depicted that the entire party was rusted, and would be no more useful as its leaders had become corrupt and power hungry. It called the Tamils, especially the youth, not to believe the 'verbal braves' of the FP leaders and to rally for genuine fight for autonomy. Leaders of the TSK came out with the detailed account of their experiences with the leaders of the FP, especially, the non-committal, pessimistic and self-centred thoughts of important FP leaders. Their articles explained their direct encounter with Chelvanayakam regarding his compromise of principles and his inability to convince them. One article accused Thiruchelvam for the dysfunction of the FP movement. It says, 'The movement brought up with tears and blood has died down for the power hunger of single person'.¹⁷³ The same article indicted Chelvanayakam, for sacrificing his principles for the selfish interests of his foster son.¹⁷⁴ Blaming Chelvanayakam's changed attitude in addressing the issues, another article published after a month said, 'Chelvanayagam is living but his policies and principles are dead'. In the same article, author concludes, 'Chelvanayagam, whom I saw while I began my service

¹⁷¹ ETVI and Navaratnam together with their followers formed the TSK on 31 July 1969.

¹⁷² K. Sivagnanasundaram, *Viduthalai*, 15 June 1968. (Translated from Tamil).

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

under the FP, could not see at my exit'.¹⁷⁵ Such firebrand campaign of the *Viduthalai* compelled the FP leaders to prove their faith on their principles and policies. The TSK and *Viduthalai* strongly believed that sustainable mass movement would be the only effective weapon to achieve any solution, either autonomy or separate State.

The role of the TSK and *Viduthalai* should be seen in the light of the hostage status of the FP in the National Government. In this period, the TSK and *Viduthalai* assumed the role played by the FP in upholding Tamil nationalism, but rather aggressively. Even though the TSK was a small group in size and peninsula-based, it has succeeded in making a section of the FP supporters to have critical view on the party and its leaders. Until then, FP enjoyed unquestionable trust of the people. Some of the FP branches in the Kayts electorate turned as TSK branches. While FP kept the people in the false hope and allowed the spirit of the movement to get subdued, it was *Viduthalai* and TSK which kept the people at least in the Northern Province motivated. Contrary to the FP, they tried to keep the Tamils away from the illusions about Sinhalese leadership and inculcate the need of mass movement based on the philosophy that 'rights are not somebody gives and we take, but establish through struggle'. This logically sound campaign pushed the FP to answer the people. However, important FP leaders including Chelvanayakam and Amirthalingam continued to ridicule Navaratnam's political stand on various issues. His thoughts and views were swayed by the popular support and media power of the FP. However, many of his stances and views were later swollen by the TUF.

Emergence of Youth in Tamil Politics

During 1965–1970, when the FP took part in the National Government, the culture of direct action and mass movement in the party faded away. Heroic deeds of the individual leaders in the past became history. Tamil nationalist campaign of the

¹⁷⁵ K. Sivagnanasundaram, *Viduthalai*, 15 May 1968. (Translated from Tamil).

TSK and *Viduthalai* began to influence the politically active youth. They realised that any compromise formula would not help to obtain the rights from essentially majoritarian State. They felt that the FP too was tired like GG in 1948 and accusing each other would bear no meaning, instead youth wanted Tamil parties to join together, change the course of action and lead the movement.

The FPYF mounted pressure on the party to quit Parliament and asked them to lead the movement for right to self-determination. Manifesting the disappointment of the youth on the Tamil leadership, some of the active youth formed 'Eela Thamizar Ilaingar Iyakkam' (Eelam Tamil Youth Movement [ETYM]).¹⁷⁶ Even though it was short-lived; it was the pioneering organisation which attributed to the present Tamil youth movement. It was active in the second half of 1969. One of their remarkable initiations among other activities was, organising a hunger strike and a rally in Jaffna, demanding unity among Tamil political parties, and preventing the government's move to convert the untouchables in Jaffna to Buddhism.¹⁷⁷ Their aim was to unite the Tamil leadership to lead the Tamil liberation movement. This demand gained widespread support and unity became reality in the forthcoming years.

The 1970 Election

The suspicion on the commitment of the FP on its said cause and the impact of the anti-FP campaign of the TSK and the *Viduthalai* created a need for the FP to convince the people. A public debate between Navaratnam and Amirthalingam was held, while 1970 election was around the corner.¹⁷⁸ The highlight of the debate, was federalism versus separate State, in which Amirthalingam outrightly

¹⁷⁶ ETYM was formed in 1969, in which, Ilangai Mannan was president, Mavai Senathirajah was the General Secretary, and Michael Thambirajah was the treasurer of the ETYM. Sivakumaran and Muttukumarasamy were notable among its important members. S. Pusparajah, *Eela Poradaththil enathu Sadchiyam* (My Witness in Eelam Struggle), (Puthanatham, Tamil Nadu: Adayalam Publishers, 2003), pp. 33–34.

¹⁷⁷ See for details of ETYM activities, *ibid*.

¹⁷⁸ The vigour of the campaign of the TSK compelled the FP to prove its credentials on the fronts of its policy and practice, especially during electioneering FP had no option but to respond to it decisively. An open debate was organised at Puliyangkoodal Jaffna, The debate was on federal policy versus separate Tamil state. Srikantha, n. 164, and Eelaventhan, n. 26.

rejected the idea of separate State. Assessing the outcome of the debate, Eelaventhan said, 'Navaratnam was factual, logical, and legal. Nevertheless, Amirthalingam, even without much knowledge, he can bluff the opponent. But eventually Navaratnam was right and Amirthalingam was wrong.'¹⁷⁹ In the 1970 parliamentary election campaign, the TSK advocated the policy of separate State. Strongly rejecting this policy, FP went to the extent saying that the demand for separate State was wrong, impossible and ridiculous.

Hoping for a hung Parliament like one in the 1965 election, a month before the election FP declared that it would offer conditional support to either of the parties to form the government.¹⁸⁰ Despite the disastrous failure with National Government, this declaration vindicated the FP's approach of cooperation with any government that came to power. It also proved that FP had completely lost the trust on mass struggle, or for that matter, any anti- government protests. It had immense belief on parliamentary-based activities. Hence, any extra-parliamentary activity was only just to ritualistic, satisfy the people, and not intended to exert pressure on government to meet its demand. However, the victory with two-third majority of the SLFP-led United Front (UF) shattered the hope of the FP of being the kingmaker. During the election campaign in the Southern theatre, besides some populist promises, UF incessantly portrayed the UNP-FP partnership as sign of UNP's intention of betraying the Sinhalese interests and won with two-third majority. This verdict led to the drastic change on the existing trend of the Tamil

¹⁷⁹ Author's interview with Eelaventhan, Jaffna, 20 April 2003.

¹⁸⁰ President of the FP, S.M. Rasamanikam, declared in an election meeting at Jaffna on 22 February 1970 that the FP would support any political Party in the south, to form government, after the next general Elections, provided that the Party was prepared to grant the main demands of the Tamils, for equal status for Tamil language along with Sinhala and regional autonomy for the Tamil areas. S. Sivanayakam, *Sri Lanka Background Briefing*, (Chennai: TIRU publication, 1987), p. 24.

politics and the Island's politics as a whole. In the 157-member Parliament, UF obtained 115 seats. UNP 19, FP 13, ACTC 3, and independents won two seats.

In the North, it was close contest between the FP and the ACTC for the first time in their history.¹⁸¹ Notably, the verdict of Tamils by this election shows that they had to begin direct and correct the Tamil leadership. Important leaders of the FP and the ACTC were defeated by narrow margins. Prominent leaders of the FP, Amirthalingam, E.M.V. Naganathan and Aalalasundaram lost their seats to ACTC candidates.¹⁸² G.G. Ponnambalam and his possible successor M. Sivasithamparam lost their seats to the FP candidates.¹⁸³ It seems the propaganda of *Viduthalai* had its certain impact in this result. Both Amirthalingam and Naganathan were projected as close associates of Thiruchelvam, hence responsible for mishandling the Pact. Later was known for its anti-FP politics in the Parliament thus contributing to the failure of D–C Pact (See Table 3.4).

¹⁸¹ Even though, FP won 13 seats, rapid increase of votes to the ACTC and the vote split for two years old TSK proved the losing credibility to the FP. TSK could not win any one of the seats, but its campaign, largely contributed to damage the image of the FP in general and defeat of five leaders from FP and the ACTC. Defeat of the FP in three constituencies in the Jaffna District was caused due to the contest of the TSK.

¹⁸² Amirthalingam and Naganathan along with Thiruchelvam emerged doubtful personalities in the FP for the surrender of its policies and principles. *Viduthalai* and TSK contributed a lot in expose these leaders and their defeat.

¹⁸³ ACTC too was instrumental to the failure of the D–C Pact. G.G. Ponnambalam and Sivasithamparam were seen as responsible for the ACTC's narrow politics at the cost of the interests of the Tamils.

Table 3.4: Parliamentary Elections 1970

Constituency	FP Candidate	Votes Obtained	Result	Main Contestant	Contestant Party	Votes Obtained	Position
Jaffna District							
Jaffna	C.X. Martin	8848	Won	A. T. Durayappah	Independent	8792	Lost
Kankesanthurai	S.J.V. Chelvanayakam	13520	Won	T. Thirunavukarasu	ACTC	3051	Lost
Kayts	K.P. Ratnam	13079	Won	P. Kathiravelu	Independent	5013	Lost
Kopay	S. Kathiravelupillai	16428	Won	T. Gunaratna	ACTC	11288	Lost
Pointpedro	K. Thurairatnam	9217	Won	N. Nadarajah	ACTC	8902	Lost
Vaddukoddai	A. Amirthalingam	13634	Lost	A. Thiyagarajah	ACTC	14359	Won
Chavakacheri	V.N. Navaratnam	15473	Won	V. Kumarasamy	ACTC	12921	Lost
Uduppidy	K. Jeyakody	12918	Won	M. Sivasithamparam	ACTC	11662	Lost
Kilinochchi	M. Alalasundaram	8392	Lost	V. Anandasankari	ACTC	9049	Won
Nallur	E.M.V. Naganathan	12508	Lost	C. Arulampalam	ACTC	13116	Won
Uduvil	V. Dharmalingam	14120	Won	N. Sivanesan	ACTC	11656	Lost
Vanni							
Mannar	V. Alegacone	10697	Won	S.A. Raheem	UNP	10628	Lost
Vavunia	X.M. Sellathambu	10947	Won	T. Sivasithambaram	ACTC	10674	Lost
Eastern Province							
Trincomalee	B. Neminathan	12395	Won	S.M.A.C. Jamaldeen	SLFP	8346	Lost
Muttur	NC	NA	NA	A.L. Abdul Majeed	SLFP	22727	Won
Batticaloa	C. Rajadurai	27661	Won	M.A.C.A. Rahuman	SLFP	14805	Won
Kalkuda	T. Manicavasagam	8420	Lost	K.W. Devanayagam	UNP	11205	Won
Paddiruppu	S.M. Rasamanikkam	12723	Lost	S. Thamibirajah	UNP	13370	Won
Kalmunai	A. Udumalebbe	4960	Lost	M.C. Ahamed	SLFP	8779	Won
Pottuvil	NC	NA	NA	M.A. Abdul Majeed	UNP	10610	Won

Source: Compiled from, G.P.S.H. de Silva, *A Statistical Survey of Elections to the Legislatures of Sri Lanka 1911-1977* (Colombo, MARGA Institute, 1979)

Note: NC-Not Contested, NA- Not Applicable

INTRODUCTION OF REPUBLICAN CONSTITUTION AND THE FORMATION OF THE TAMIL UNITED FRONT

Newly elected UF government announced far-reaching policy changes including change of Constitution in its throne speech, in which no demands of Tamils appeared. Two amendments of the FP, 'the republic to be a federal union of linguistic states' and secondly, 'Sinhala and Tamil would be the official languages to the entire State', were defeated.¹⁸⁴ Tamils were well aware of the character of the SLFP-led UF from their hatred campaign against Tamils and mobilisation based on false information against their demands.¹⁸⁵ Yet, Amirthalingam who led the opinion to participate in the Constituent Assembly, said, to 'expose the racist nature of the UF government'.¹⁸⁶ To the Tamils, this reason was an irrational excuse to avert pressure for extra parliamentary activities.

Role of the FP in the Constituent Assembly

Contrary to the FP, TSK took the stand to expose the government effectively and maintain the legitimacy of the federal demand. V. Navaratnam observed that the FP's participation in the Constitution Assembly would only be a futile exercise, as any demand or amendment of the FP would have been voted out. Moreover, it was suggested that the FP's participation itself would give legal validity to the Constitution. He further stated that if the Constitution came into being while Tamil leaders boycotted the Assembly, it would be an illegitimate Constitution on the moral grounds. Therefore, Tamils can continue to uphold their demand as a nation and it would earn more legitimacy in the eyes of the world.¹⁸⁷ It is also to be noted

¹⁸⁴ Ironically, as part of the government, the LSSP and the CCP too turned down both the resolutions of the FP. Two decades long demand of the FP for a federal system, and the parity of status for Tamil language reached a point of taking its last breath.

¹⁸⁵ The SLFP was known as an anti-Tamil organisation. From 1956 onwards it was under the SLFP government in 1956, 1958 anti-Tamil violences held. The non-violent movement for the language issue was violently suppressed under Emergency during 1960–61. Between 1965 and 1970 SLFP with the LSSP and CCP mobilised the Sinhalese hardliners and staged strong protest inside and out of the Parliament against the limited use of Tamil language and the D–C Pact. These were deeply in the Tamils mind. Therefore, exposing SLFP and the Left parties was almost a non-issue.

¹⁸⁶ V. Navaratnam, *Viduthalai*, 1 September 1970.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

that the FPYF too demanded the FP to boycott and lead the movement based on the right to self-determination, since the fiasco of D-C Pact. The demand of FPYF gave the second interpretation to the concept that is 'external self-determination or right to secession'.¹⁸⁸ FP could not find convincing reasons to reject these warnings and requests. Genuine intention to prevent or to uphold the position of the Tamil needed the implementation of effective plan of action that could make an impact on the government, with two-third majority. Contrarily, the party took efforts to manage the vigour of the Tamil youth. Employing its 'cold storage' tactics,¹⁸⁹ party announced that the, 'GC mandated to Chelvanayakam to unite all the Tamil leaders cut across parties to stage protest action against the government'.¹⁹⁰ However, there were no attempts made to implement this decision. Instead, the party passed time to settle the dust and took another sloppy decision with the care of preventing any voice of protests, that, 'FP would attend the Parliament, but the decision to support the resolution, to convert the Parliament as Constitution Assembly would be decided later'.¹⁹¹ Finally, the FP deceived the people 'extended its full support to pass the resolution unanimously'.¹⁹² This attitude, shows the duplicity of the FP., it also reemphasised the naïve leadership.

¹⁸⁸ Right to self-determination to the nations was used to interpret and exercise in two ways in multi-ethnic societies: one is, internal self-determination that accepts and appreciates the different nations within a State and find solutions applying consociational democratic methods by giving different kind of autonomy or accommodate in the government enabling to protect their identity and rights. Failure of the first method leads to exercise the second interpretation, which is external self-determination or secession.

¹⁸⁹ Using (or abusing) its advantageous position as only powerful and articulative Tamil Party, the FP after 1961, developed a pattern that aroused the people by hyphenating utterances to pose that the Party was addressing the issue effectively. When the people demand the Party to act accordingly, the leadership throws their own words into the cold story by mere registering a protest through statements or resolutions, and weakening the issues by compromising with the government. Therefore, their fairy and emotion filled utterances became valueless as they failed to give practical validity.

¹⁹⁰ *Suthanthiran*, 18 July 1970.

¹⁹¹ Quoted in *Viduthalai*, 15 August 1970.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

Such lethargic representation of the FP paved way for the government to abolish the Upper House (Senate),¹⁹³ and the right to appeal to the Privy Council.¹⁹⁴ Both Acts were unconstitutional and revoked the rights of the minorities. FP, with numerous legal experts, failed to challenge the legal validity of these Acts.¹⁹⁵ Its passive opposition disappointed the Tamils.¹⁹⁶ By its inactiveness, the FP missed an opportunity at crucial juncture to get hold of stake in the making of new Constitution. Likewise, FP supported the resolution to make 'Sri Lanka, a free, sovereign, and independent Republic'; thus, accepting, 'Sri Lanka as one polity', which amounts to refute its own two-nation theory on which the party was thriving.¹⁹⁷ Ultimately, FP's mission of exposing government by participating in the Constitutional Assembly turned counter-productive. The disappointment and anger of the Tamils on the government, turned towards the FP too for abdication of its responsibilities.

Some concerned Tamil nationalists realised that every leaders had different calibre and that should work together for the good of the people. They brought leaders of various Tamil parties to the table to work together for effective handling of the proposed Constitution to ensure the Tamil's rights. As a result, the FP, ACTC, CWC, TSK, and the *Eela Thamilar Ottrumai Munnani* (ETOM) (Eelam Tamils United Front) together drafted six-point rider¹⁹⁸ as the minimum prerequisite for 'keeping the two nations together, while preserving the territorial,

¹⁹³ Senate had the power to hold the legislations, if it was against any section of the people or against the Constitution. In addition, dissolution of Senate has wiped the opportunity to the representation of the plantation Tamils.

¹⁹⁴ Since the Privy Council had the final power to uphold the Constitution, it had the power to interfere to protect the rights of the people.

¹⁹⁵ Both of these Acts directly affected the minority rights and that was against the Article 29 which presents some safeguard to the rights of the minority. Therefore, these Acts were unconstitutional. See Soulbury Constitution of Sri Lanka Clause 29.

¹⁹⁶ FP leaders were predominantly lawyers, and legal approach is one of the effective forms of protest, against any impingement of their rights. But, they failed to challenge these Acts.

¹⁹⁷ The demand of the FP for a federal system emerged based on the theory that Tamils were separate nation and they had the right to self-determination.

¹⁹⁸ A. Amirthalingam, 'Ilatchiyapathai' (The path of ideals), n. 23, p. 82.

linguistic, religious, and cultural integrity of the Tamils'.¹⁹⁹ The FP has evidently argued that these demands were accepted by every single political party with the Sinhalese leadership in some form or the other, both before and after independence. Nevertheless, the UF Government ignored these proposals. The only benefit of this effort was that the support of the deprived caste people shifted to the FP.²⁰⁰

Meanwhile, government also introduced standardisation system to curb the admission for higher education to the Tamil students.²⁰¹ This system drastically cut down the opportunities of the Tamil students to get higher education; thus, deprive them from the employment opportunity. Furious Tamil students in Jaffna witnessed spontaneous uprising against this standardisation and burnt the effigy of the Education Minister, Badhiyudeen Mahmood. Probably realising the cold storage approach of the FP, they were not ready to trust the party to fight for the solution of the issue that directly affected them. They formed Tamil Student League (TSL) to address their issue. They staged a huge protest rally in Jaffna against the introduction of standardisation system.²⁰² It is known as the biggest ever student rally in the history of the Tamil politics. They demanded that the FP MP's resign their seats and fight out to the last or quit.

¹⁹⁹ Wilson, n. 2, p. 124.

²⁰⁰ The six-point rider included the demand to incorporate, 'untouchability as unconstitutional'. Rejection of this demand by the left dominated Constitutional Assembly shattered their long laid trust on the left parties. Contrarily, it made them believe the sincerity of the FP.

²⁰¹ According to the system, Tamil students had to get more marks than the Sinhalese to get the university admission. For instance, The minimum marks set-out to the various disciplines for the university admission in 1970 were:

Course	Tamils	Sinhalese
Peradeniya Engineering	250	227
Kaddupeta Engineering	232	212
Medical and Dental	250	229
Agriculture, Veterinary and Bio science	184	175
Physical Science	204	183
Architecture	194	180

²⁰² The grand rally of the TSL was held in Jaffna on 24 November 1970, See for details Pusparajah, n. 176, p. 35–36.

FPYF also demanded that the FP call for a parallel Constitution Assembly outside the Parliament. Unlike the past, now the tone of the youth was rather challenging the leadership. Hesitating to quit the Parliament, Chelvanayagam opined, 'Quitting the Parliament will amount to betraying the people who send us to the Parliament'.²⁰³ Entire Tamils, especially the youth, had the image that Chelvanayagam as an unparalleled leader, who would not bother to any posts, in the interests of the Tamils. However, he even belittled the faith of even those who demanded for resignation, by creating doubts in the minds of the voters of the FP. A heavily worded long letter of the students, emphasising the honesty in politics was submitted to the FP which stated:

*Give life to your speeches that you made, by resigning your parliamentary seats. Accelerate the struggle, and Join the ranks of liberation regime as sincere volunteers. This is the unanimous request of the [Tamil] youth world. We hope you would not under estimate their strength.*²⁰⁴

Following the students, the Clerical Servants Union of the Postal Department also requested for resignation.²⁰⁵ These submissions reflected the fast changing popular view. Reflecting the magnitude of the pressure, *Suthanthiran*, stated, 'The question that is troubling the minds of every Tamil today is, whether the Tamil representatives should completely reject the Parliament and resign their memberships or to go to the Parliament'.²⁰⁶ Contrary to their hyphenating speeches, no MPs, were willing to resign their Parliament seat.²⁰⁷

All the Tamil MP's were aware that if they resigned, not only would it yield a great deal of political propaganda to the issue and the just demands of the FP, even to international level, but it would also raise the credibility of entire leadership. Moreover, there was not an iota of doubt that anyone of the sitting MPs would lose their seat at the re-election, because, Tamils had the tradition of voting, for those

²⁰³ *Veerakesari* (Colombo), 19 May 1972. Even though this statement created shock among the youth Chelvanayagam did not come out with the statement to refute it. *Viduthalai*, 15 June 1972.

²⁰⁴ *Viduthalai*, 15 June 1972.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ Editor, *Suthanthiran*, 4 June 1972. (Translated from Tamil).

²⁰⁷ *Viduthalai*, 15 June 1972.

sincerely assert their rights, since independence. For two decades FP enjoyed this credibility and won more than two-third of the Tamil constituencies. Moreover, the only potential vote-splitting contender, the ACTC, was united with the FP. Above all, smaller parties like TSK took the principled position for effective resistance. Hence, the unity among Tamils and sensitive political climate would have brought them back with handsome margins. Yet, their refusal shows that either they had the fear that they may be arrested or they were not ready to sacrifice the happiness of their personal life. In the eventuality of the former, as they had the experience, they would have been treated like heroes. Therefore, their passion with Parliament seats and their priority to personal life seems the cause for their rejection that was contrary to their projected image. Later developments proved that, the FP did not make any impact on the issues either inside or outside the Parliament. Unable to suppress this degenerated feature of the party, *Suthanthiran* observes:

Since his [Vanniyasingam] death, it has been unable to see some one of selfless, personally integral, ideologically devoted, and an indomitable spirit for freedom, who totally sacrifice himself for the organisation. No one can be a match to him in this regard...there was no in-discrepancy between his words and deeds. Unfortunately, these days there is vast gulf between the words and practices of our present leaders. Unless this gulf is bridged, they cannot lead the people towards their aspirations.²⁰⁸

After constant pressure and after many deliberations, the party decided for symbolic resignation. Since Chelvanayakam was the leader, he was made to sacrifice his seat on behalf of the party.

Chelvanayakam resigned his seat, challenged the government to prove the support of the Tamils for its Constitution by defeating him. Knowing the inability of the government to defeat him in the election he had the apprehension that all undemocratic means be used to defeat him. Chelvanayakam warned, 'Let not the Government deprive the people of their decision on the issue raised, by postponing the by-election'.²⁰⁹ Between 1961 and 1976, this was the only remarkable protests

²⁰⁸ Editor, *Suthanthiran*, 17 September 1972 (emphasis mine).

²⁰⁹ Chelvanayakam's speech in Parliament, in Karikalan, *A Referendum: Reflections of K. K. S. by Election* (Chunakam, Jaffna, V. Dharmalingam, MP, 1975), p. 5.

made by the FP. However, the government showed its usual character of neglecting the rights of the Tamils and conducted the election after three years.

The Formation of the Tamil United Front

Increasing State oppression against the Tamils reached such a point that Tamil undoubtedly believed that the design of the dominant Sinhalese polity was to assimilate the minorities by erasing their identities. In addition, they increasingly felt that the FP and the ACTC were rather concerned about their narrow party interests than to find solution to the menacing issues. They wanted these parties to unite and fight out with increasing strength to win the Tamils rights. As noted earlier, the demand of the ETYM in late 1969 for the unity of these two parties and the facilitation of influential Tamils that brought all the Tamil parties to deal with the Constitutional Assembly in early 1971 were reflections of this opinion of the people. Moreover, the defeat of the important leaders in the party was interpreted as punishment to their petty mud-slinging politics.

However, respecting this strong desire of the people was not taken as an official decision of either the parties. They never declared the motive of such unity. Instead, Amirthalingam and Sivasithamparam demonstrated special interests and initiatives for such unity.²¹⁰ Dominant view reveals that it was the defeat of Amirthalingam and Sivasithamparam that the necessity to form the TUF and later the TULF was felt and not due to the realisation of the desire of the people. People wanted the unity to have more capable and effective leadership to match the government to win over their rights. Contrarily, this view argues that both wanted

²¹⁰ Soon after the elections, GG went for world tour. Out of three ACTC MPs, two joined the government and the third one was wavering. Therefore, Sivasithamparam was almost alone with some of his loyalists seeking a comeback desperately. He unofficially began work with the FP. Following Sivasithamparam, many ACTC leaders turned towards FP for their political survival. G.G. never gave his consent for this unity; however, he did not oppose either. Despite being selected as one of the joint presidents, he never shared platform with the FP until his death. Author's interview with M. Sivasithamparam, Chennai 16 July 2001 and K. Premachandran, Colombo, 10 July 2001.

to regain their lost ground and consolidate their stature as successive top leaders to the Tamils.²¹¹ Commenting on this view, Sidharthan said:

I personally believe that if these two leaders had not lost in the 1970 elections, there would not have been the TULF or Eelam cause. I also believe, if both had won their respective seats, mud-slinging politics between the ACTC and the FP would have continued.²¹²

On the part of CWC, abolition of the Senate snatched their representation in the Parliament and it became necessary for them to work along with the FP to address the issues of the plantation Tamils. Ultimately, the ACTC and the CWC formed the united front with the FP, named, 'Tamil United Front' (TUF).²¹³ (Hereafter TUF would be used in place of the FP). Eelaventhan evaluates, 'While TUF was formed quality was suffered and quantity was increased'.²¹⁴ TSK viewed this as conglomeration of opportunist people aimed at electoral benefits.²¹⁵ However, the average Tamils believed that it was the achievement of major step towards the goal. They welcomed with great hopes.

²¹¹ Chelvanayakam was the charismatic leader; virtually he was always in the limelight. Since Chelvanayakam resigned his post of MP, it was Uduvil MP, Dharmalingam who led the parliamentary group of the FP. Therefore, his long speeches in the Parliament and other parliamentary activities kept him in the limelight. Amirthalingam was virtually subsided. He was desperate to regain the ground. In case of Sivasithamparam, since Ponnambalam had gone for world tour and the Party was uncontrolled and slumped. Two ACTC MPs, joined the government. Therefore, he was alone with some of his loyal Partymen seeking a comeback desperately.

²¹² Author's interview with Sidharthan, Colombo, 11 July 2001.

²¹³ The TUF came into being on 14 May 1972, a week before the new Constitution came into effect on 22 May 1972 in which TSK and ETOM were left out. TSK did not believe the sincerity of the FP as its character had not changed and it did not come out with its working programme to take the struggle forward. In its view, the formation of TUF was absolutely aimed at next election and not to lead the movement. C. Suntharalingam was old and ill, he was almost at the retirement stage in politics. Also he was rather egoistic, hence could not cope with the control of a Party.

²¹⁴ Eelaventhan cites the names of many leaders who he said, were no way committed. Author's interview Eelaventhan, Jaffna, 20 April 2003.

²¹⁵ Citing two Tamil UNP leaders including K.W. Devanayakam who later became Minister for Justice in Jayewardene regime made all draconian laws against Tamils were part of the TUF. Also the TSK had strong doubts of the bona fides of many leaders including Chelvanayakam, who did not clarified or apologise for their compromise of principles in the National Government. Srikantha, n. 164.

Amirthalingam, wanted to maintain this momentum of support of the people and to regain the trust of the youth. At the same time, he also wanted to ensure that their parliamentary politics was not affected. Balancing these two interests, the party passed the resolution which states, 'This Convention declares self-rule for the Tamil nation as its objective'.²¹⁶ It was nothing but adoption of the policy of the TSK that could be interpreted as separate State or federal. Giving such a vague solution seems intentional: the first interpretation for the Tamils, and the second for the government. Amirthalingam's speech was aimed at Tamil people, especially the youth; it gave the impression that it was subtle pronouncement to prepare for Eelam. Contrarily, the real agenda of the TUF was to try to incorporate at least some of the issues in the six-point demand. Responding to the query on the motive of the formation of the TUF, Sivasithamparam said, 'amendments to the Constitution',²¹⁷ on issues which were mentioned in the six-point demand. He stressed, 'The question of federation or separation did not figure at that time'.²¹⁸ This clearly shows the gap between the expectation of the people and the real nature of the party. As analysed elsewhere, the TUF did not believe in the mass movement. Hence, even to achieve its real agenda of six-point demand it did not have programme other than highly impossible parliamentary process.

In sharp contrast to the actual nature of the party, Amirthalingam's speech in the convention shows his unhesitating attitude to employ populist rhetoric for the narrow interests of the party and himself.²¹⁹ It was to keep the people, especially the youth in tipsy stature, by giving false impression that TUF was very much on the track. He explained that the mode of struggle for their goal of self-rule would be, 'non-corporation', as adopted by Gandhi and Mujibur Rehman. Quoting a Brazilian professor, he emphasised, 'The revolution of the deprived people is only

²¹⁶ FP 'Resolution of the Twelfth Convention, 7-9 September 1973', in *Ilanka Tamil Arasu Katchi Silver Jubilee Volume* (London: Tamil United Liberation Front, 2000), p. 282 (emphasis mine).

²¹⁷ Author's interview with Sivasithamparam, Chennai, 16 July 2001.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ An essential feature of the populism is its rhetoric aimed at mobilisation of support... The populist ideology is moralistic, emotional, anti-intellectual, and non-specific in its programme. See, Tom Bottomore, Laurence Harris, V.G. Kiernan and Ralph Miliband (eds.) *A Dictionary of Marxist thought*, (Second Edition), (New Delhi: Maya Publishers, 2000), p. 432.

Ahimsa revolution'.²²⁰ The FP/ TUF lost trust in Ahimsa and could not adhere to it even for a decade. Preparing people to such movement, the conditions he laid:

We have to develop our thoughts to demonstrate united opposition against the State and the Government. *We have to boycott and sideline the traitors among us.* Disobey the selected laws in a disciplined way and without violating the Ahimsa way, we have to go to the prison in thousands. *Today we need revolutionary mind...* if we unite as Mujibur Rehman united, *we will surely get our rights as if Bangladesh got the independence.*²²¹

Two important messages he gave by the speech targetting the so-called 'traitors'. To the FP and Amirthalingam, the Tamils represent the UF government. In Tamil areas, the government used its appointed leaders such as SLFP and left party organisers like de-facto MPs with full power, to sideline the elected Tamil MPs, in order to gain support of Tamils and instigate them to politically challenge the TUF and strengthen leaders like Jaffna Mayor Thuraiappah. They gave employment, transfers, promotions and appointments in many local institutions such as cooperative societies. They were shaking the very foundation of the support base of the FP—committees of cooperative bodies etc.—by appointing their supporters. Amirthalingam wanted to ensure that they were not in his path to gain ground. Next, Chelvanayakam was projected like Mujibur of Eelam and indicating India as potential protector of the Tamils as it did it in Bangladesh.

Amirthalingam categorically rejected the armed struggle, he said, 'All over the world armed revolution has been utilised as a movement of few—to place few in the power'.²²² Portraying himself as Garibaldi of Eelam, he gave a emotional call to the youth to rally behind him, as if, he would lead a relentless fight against the State. This speech fuelled the already charged youth. He called the youth:

Should the Tamil race survive or it should sink and ruin? It is in your hand. If you do not arouse, we will not have dawn. *I call you, as if Garibaldi called the Italian youth.* Initially we could give you only attacks and torture of the Police and Army, prison life, suffering and may be even

²²⁰ Amirthalingam's speech, n. 216, p. 223. (Translated from Tamil).

²²¹ Ibid. (Emphasis mine).

²²² Ibid.

*brave death. Only if we cross these miseries, we can achieve casteless and socialist Tamil Eelam.*²²³

In his speech, he subtly project himself to lead the struggle. It shows that he was desperate to strengthen his position in the party to be the unchallenged successor of Chelvanayagam by winning over the support of the youth, who already demonstrated their resentment and unfaith on the FP leadership. Since the launch of the TUF, its platforms were used to reflect emotional, logical, and analytical speeches on separate State. Leaders explained the legal and moral authority to have a Tamil State. The speeches and seminars also reflected the economical viability and sustainability. Following *Viduthalai*, *Suthanthiran* also carried articles and write-ups educating on different issues pertaining to the eligibility, feasibility and sustainability of Tamil nation, if it achieved the status of sovereign State. In essence, the campaign of the TUF was aimed at building up conviction among Tamils. It was almost an appropriation of whatever the TSK said and did until then, thus leaving the TSK almost issueless.

Contrary to their heavily loaded speech to call for effective struggle, the TUF announced protest, to mourn the Republic day as black day.²²⁴ The culture of protest and separateness was instilled in both the young and the old through hunger strikes, sit-ins, school boycotts, demonstrations and pamphleteering. The response in both the Tamil provinces was overwhelmed. The TUF organised a rally on that day and hoisted the party flag, as flag of the Tamil nation. Since then, people annually marked May 22 as a day of protest, while the rest of the country celebrates the occasion. Some emotionally charged youth expressed their resentment to the government by marking the day with a few violent activities such as burning of buses and rail wagons in Jaffna. These activities also signalled to the TUF leadership that they were disappointed with their protest that was only formal and not intended to make any impact over the government. A total of fifty-two youth activists were arrested in connection to the republic day protest

²²³ Ibid, p. 224. (Translated from Tamil). (Emphasis mine).

²²⁴ FP called for complete boycott of all the institutions, government offices, and business establishments. It requested to hoist black flag at every house to show the protest to the Constitution and keep away from any Republic Day celebrations.

including violent activities.²²⁵ The Republic day of Sri Lanka, thus, could be well marked for the beginning of movement for violent resistance and the beginning of struggle towards separation.

THE EMERGENCE OF MILITANCY AND THE FORMATION OF TAMIL UNITED LIBERATION FRONT

Tamil militancy found expression through Tamil Students League (TSL). The TSL soon fizzled out with the arrest of its leader, Satyaseelan, and then Sivakumaran became the most popular figure.²²⁶ Few years later, Amirthalingam described him in his speech at the pyre of Sivakumaran as 'Bhagat Singh of Eelam'.²²⁷

The origin of the present militancy emerged with the formation of the TYL in 1973 following the formation of the TUF with imminent shift of policy for separate Eelam State. TYL was founded by around 40 youth, not affiliated to the TULF, and brought numerous young Tamils from entire Tamil region under one banner. Some of them later emerged as leaders of different militant organisations. K. Pathmanaba, who was one of the leading figures of the TYL, became one of the founder members of the Eelam Revolutionary Organisers (EROS). Later he became the Secretary General of the Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF). Another participant V. Prabakaran later emerged as the leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

²²⁵ Author's interview with N. Jeyakody, one the members of TELO (O) and later Central Committee member of the EPRLF, Chennai, 9 October 2004.

²²⁶ Sivakumaran is a native of Urumpirai, Jaffna. He entered active politics in 1968–69 while he was a student. He planted bomb in the Deputy Minister Somaweera Chandrasiri's car while he visited Kokuvil Hindu College, Jaffna on 13 July 1970. He was arrested but after release continues to involve in violent campaign against the Sri Lankan State until his suicide by swallowed cyanide, while arrested in 1974. See Pusparajah, n. 176, p. 39.

²²⁷ It was an ample evidence for the ambivalent State of TUF that while, one side openly rejected the violent means, glorifies the death of Sivakumaran. His speech aroused youth towards militancy. Author witnessed the funeral and the speech of Amirthalingam and Mangayatkarsi Amirthalingam.

Emergence of Militancy and their Relations with the TUF

The dictates of TUF produced differences of opinion within the TYL, whose members were broadly divided into two streams: those wholeheartedly supporting the moderate Tamil leadership with the believe that the TUF would lead the Eelam movement; and others who had leftist leanings, and raised doubts as to how far the traditional leaders could lead the Tamils. In addition, they were beginning to see the mainstream Tamil leadership as half-hearted tea cup revolutionaries.²²⁸ Pathmanaba was in the latter's group. The final split came in June 1975 when a section of the TYL threw its weight behind the TUF leadership. Others branched away, formed themselves the *Thamil Eela Viduthalai Iyakkam* (Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation) (TELO).

It was the first 'politico-military organisation', which advocated armed struggle aimed at social, political, and economic liberation of the Tamils but remained essentially a reformist organisation.²²⁹ It was the first such organisation to publish a bulletin *Erimalai* (Volcano) to mobilise the people. However the bulletin was stopped after 3–4 issues, as the organisation became standstill, due to a bank robbery and subsequent swoop down of police on its members.²³⁰ There was a brief lull subsequent to their release on bail. The title of the TELO was virtually unused at that time. Kuttimani group leader, Thangathurai, with the permission of Muttukumarasamy one of the leaders of original TELO, acquired this title and the present TELO was born in 1977 under the leadership of Thangathurai and Kuttimani as number-two.²³¹ [Hereafter the old TELO would be

²²⁸ For the details of TYL and non-committal, ineffective and ritual kind of protests of the TUF, Pusparajah, n. 176, pp. 54–60. Arumugam Kandiah Manoharan, *Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka*, unpublished thesis, London, Saurth Bank University 2004, p. 180.

²²⁹ Pusparajah, n. 176, p. 155, and personal interview with N. Jeyakody, Chennai, 9 October 2004.

²³⁰ TELO robbed the Puloly Bank on 10 May 1976, to meet their organisational needs. However, soon almost all the members were arrested. It was the first bank robbery of a Tamil liberation organisation in Sri Lanka. One of those arrested Balakumaran later became leader of the EROS and at presently he is one of the leaders of the LTTE. Author's interview with Jeyakody, Chennai, 9 October 2004.

²³¹ Ibid.

mentioned as TELO (O) and new TELO as TELO (N)]. Except a few, all the TELO (O), members joined the left oriented militant group EROS.

By 1975, two underground groups that were active in violent activities were TELO (N) and the Tamil New Tigers (TNT), which also was known as the Chetti group,²³² later known as the Prabakaran group. TNT was formed in 1974 under the leadership of Chetti. Prabakaran and Inpam were notable founder members of this group. Chetti enjoyed the tacit blessings of one of the TUF/TULF leader, Alalasadaram; and Prabakaran had close relations with Amirthalingam.²³³ Soon Prabakaran killed Chetty, and renamed it as Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in which Umamaheswaran became chairperson.²³⁴ Both Prabakaran and Umamaheswaran had constant meetings with Amirthalingam and occasionally with V. Darmalingam.²³⁵ The TNT, later the LTTE, and the TELO (N) at least until 1980, were in the TUF/TULF or accepted the TULF as their political leadership, especially the LTTE functioned almost like an unofficial militant arm of the TUF/TULF or rather arm of Amirthalingam in this period. Therefore, they felt that they have the right to pursue the TULF in policy decisions and thought that it was the duty of the TULF to protect them. The relationship between the early militants and the TULF could be understood from this background.

Since early 1970s, the TUF and then the TULF used to preach in the public platforms that, 'One of the preconditions to Eelam struggle is to weed out the

²³² Chetti was the nickname of Tanabalasingam. His native is Kalviyangkadu in Nallur electorate, Jaffna. He was a known robber, who robbed petrol station, rural bank etc. He had money and small firearms. He perhaps wanted to gain political image. He found some boys, who were at that time yearning to engage in militant activities but did not have weapon or money. Prabakaran was one among them who joined with him. See for more details, Pusparrajah, n. 176, pp. 561–62.

²³³ Authors's interview with Sidharthan, Colombo, 11 July 2001.

²³⁴ Prabakaran wanted to build an organisation that would be committed to political goal. He might have thought that Chetti was basically a thief, hence, would not be useful for his purpose. Prabakaran killed him and took large amount of gold jewellery from his house. Prabakaran formed LTTE on 5 May 1976. See for details of genesis and character of the TNT, Pusparrajah, n. 176, p. 210, and Author's interview with Sidharthan, Colombo, 11 July 2001.

²³⁵ Prabakaran and Umamaheswaran used to visit Amirthalingam's house. They used to have long chats over meals, until they realised that Amirthalingam was using them. Author's interview with Sidharthan, Colombo, 11 July 2001.

traitors among Tamils',²³⁶ and even openly reveals the name of some political opponents as betrayers of the Tamils interests. This was perceived as subtle instruction to the violent youth to take on their life.²³⁷ In 1972, Kasi Anandan one of the most popular platform speaker among youth, told the audience while Chelvanayakam was present on the platform, 'Duraiappa, Subramaniam, Arulampalam and Anandasangari are enemies of the Tamil nation. They do not deserve a natural death. Nor do they deserve to die in accident. The Tamil people, especially the youth, must decide how they should die...'.²³⁸ This speech was editorially quoted in the *Suthanhiran*. Such a speech apparently had the blessings of the TUF was a foretaste of things to come.

Meanwhile, the Eelam Revolutionary Organisation (EROS) was formed in London in 1975.²³⁹ It viewed the Tamil's issue in the Marxists perspective. EROS represented the left wing camp of the Tamil militants. They believed that even the Sinhalese working class are under suppression but the Tamils had additional problems of discrimination. Therefore, only socialist Sri Lanka could present an equal society. However, since the ethnic issue reached the irrevocable stage, achieving a Socialist Eelam would be the precondition to achieve socialist Sri Lanka.²⁴⁰ They built up relations with various liberation organisations and revolutionary movements, notably, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO). Some of its members got military training from the PLO and came to Sri Lanka to establish an organisation and prepare for an armed struggle.²⁴¹ It has organised

²³⁶ Author witnessed many such public meetings in Jaffna in 1970s.

²³⁷ Author's interview with Sidharthan Colombo, 11 July 2001 and Thillai Nadesan, London, 20 September 2000.

²³⁸ See Rajan Hoole, *Sri Lanka: The Arrogance of Power: Myths, Decadence and Murder* (Nugegoda- Colombo: University Teachers for Human Rights, Jaffna, 2001), p. 18.

²³⁹ A group of educated expatriate professionals and students from various fields together formed EROS under the leadership of Ratnasabapathy, a Marxist theoretician. Discussion with A.K. Manoharan, one of the founder members and Executive Committee member of the EROS. New Delhi 14 April 2003.

²⁴⁰ Author's interview with K. Premachandran, Colombo, 10 July 2001.

²⁴¹ Notable leaders among those who came to build the organisation were, K. Pathmanaba and K. Premachandran.

training for some LTTE members too. Notable among them was its chairperson Umamaheswaran.²⁴² Almost all the members of the defunct TELO (O) joined the EROS in 1977.

EROS spread its work to entire Northern and Eastern Provinces and among plantation Tamils. They concentrated more among the deprived caste in people in Jaffna. They concentrated in politicisation and mobilisation of cross-section of people with a political and working programme. In this process, it mobilised a good section of middle class educated youth with Marxist mind. By 1975, though small, at least three militant organisations emerged with different perspectives and ideologies. Tamils began silently endorsing the militant activities and supported the militant organisations. These endorsements resulted from the revenge feeling against the autocratic attitude of the State rather than from comprehensive understanding of their path and the ability of the youth to achieve the goal. However, people saluted the dedication and sacrifice of the lives to the cause of Tamil Eelam and worshipped the militants as heroes and martyrs.

Political Importance of the Victory of Chelvanayakam

The period between 1970 and 1977 witnessed an upsurge of Tamil agitation. While government suppressed the Tamil resistance under the rule of Emergency, it took efforts to win the support of Tamils by rather undemocratic ways. It sidelined the elected MPs of the TUF and empowered its party organisers and office bearers in Tamil areas. They were able to influence appointments, transfers, and recommendations for all sorts of works to be done with the government. Government made the people to depend on them for their day-to-day needs, even to buy baby food.

After three years of such desperate efforts to win the support of Tamils, UF fielded V. Ponnambalam, a communist party leader, to contest against

²⁴² In 1977, EROS included some of the LTTE members for training in the PLO camp in Lebanon. One of those LTTE members later became the leader of PLOTE. Ratna's motive for arranging the LTTE cadres to train in Lebanon was subsequently to absorb them into EROS, but this plan could not take off. Author's discussion with A.K. Manoharan, New Delhi, 14 April 2003. Manoharan was one of the founder members and central committee member of the EROS.

Chelvanayagam, to fill the vacancy of Kankesanthurai electorate. Government has thrown its full weight to defeat Chelvanayakam, who resigned his post to challenge the government to prove the acceptability of new Constitution by the Tamils. Government sent many ministers to camp in the constituency, to facilitate the candidate, by expediting all matters initiated in the electorate. For Chelvanayagam, a large number of youth from other constituencies actively involved in the election campaign.

Significantly, the TELO (O) and other radical youth used this opportunity to pursue the TUF to declare separation as its policy. Their speeches claimed this victory as the first step to the cause of Eelam. In the campaign, contradictions emerged between TELO and the TUF, especially Amirthalingam against the domination of the youth.²⁴³ Despite the efforts of the government that employed all the undemocratic methods to woo the voters, Chelvanayagam won in the election with handsome margins. Contribution of the youth for his victory was enormous. Chelvanayagam sensed the mood of the youth, stated in his victory speech, 'I consider the verdict of this election as a mandate that the Tamil Eelam nation should exercise the sovereignty already vested in the Tamil people and become free.'²⁴⁴

The demand to declare the Eelam policy had already gained momentum among the active Tamil youth. From the beginning, the FP and then the TUF asserted the Tamils right to self-determination. They seem to have used this slogan at times to threaten the government and mobilise the people's support. However, abrogation of D-C Pact, and subsequently the introduction of the republic Constitution and the standardisation convinced the Tamils to part ways with Sinhalese. In this backdrop, Chelvanayakam's speech was taken by the youth with immense faith. Many other leaders of the TULF believed that their top leaders really had the programmes and the conviction to lead the movement for Eelam. Based on this belief, almost all the leaders contributed to develop the hope among

²⁴³ Author's interview with N. Jeyakody, Chennai, 9 October, 2004.

²⁴⁴ Chelvanayakam's speech after the declaration of the election results, "Tamil Eelam Right of Self-Determination", <http://www.tamilnation.org/selfdetermination/1100chelvanayakam.html> (Emphasis mine).

Tamils as the Eelam would be a reality, by their emotional and at times thought-provoking speeches.

The Politics of Separation

Youths wanted the party to officially declare the Eelam policy and lead the movement consistently towards this end. Contrarily, party wanted to achieve something through parliamentary process to prepare the ground, as two years ahead for the next parliamentary election. As noted elsewhere, Amirthalingam and Sivasithamparam did not want to give any chance to shrink their position and prospects.

It was in this background, that the first Convention of the TULF was held in 1976.²⁴⁵ When the party faced a situation to moot Eelam as the policy, many leaders appeared skeptical about the practicability. Most of the leaders, including Chelvanayakam, felt that their mobilisation strategy could backfire. The TUF had hard options in front of it, either to declare Eelam, or to quit politics. In real sense, strong difference of opinions prevailed in the Eelam resolution.²⁴⁶ Some leaders, though not fully convinced, did not have the will to oppose the youth, and thus opted to toe the party line.²⁴⁷ Another section put forward their reservations but their opinion was not taken for debate.²⁴⁸ Chelvanayakam identified with the majority and not with the conviction and courage to come out frankly with his opinion. In the first comment after the decision of the resolution, Chelvanayakam

²⁴⁵ This convention is known as famous 'Vaddukoddai Convention' and the resolution to adopt the policy of Separate State 'Tamil Eelam' was passed in this convention, popularly known as Vaddukoddai Resolution. The convention was held under the chair of Chelvanayakam on 14 May 1976. *Resolution, Tamil United Liberation Front*, (Jaffna: Kathiravelupillai MP, 1976).

²⁴⁶ Anandasangari said that there were difference of opinions before the final decision was taken. But whatever majority accepts would be the final decision, all have to comply with. Author's interview with Anandasangari, Colmobo, 3 July 2000.

²⁴⁷ K.P. Ratnam, X.M. Sellathambu, T. Thirunavukarasu, and S. Rajathurai were in this category. Author's interview with Eelaventhan, Jaffna, 20 April 2003.

²⁴⁸ V. Dharmalingam and Thangathurai represented this section. Author's interview with Sidharthan, Colombo, 11 July 2001.

expressed his despair and disillusion, said, *Ithu valum villangamana visayam ini kadavulthan Thamiz makkazhai kappata venum* (This is very difficult task; only the God should save the Tamil community).²⁴⁹

Dharmalingam questioned the feasibility of forming Tamil Eelam National Assembly. He had the opinion that it would be impossible while they were in Parliament. However, Amirthalingam suppressed his voice.²⁵⁰ Thangathurai felt that such a radical demand was unattainable and would only cause immeasurable hardship to the Tamil people living in the ethnically heterogeneous Eastern Province. Amirthalingam literally shouted and made him quite, while he raised the issue with Amirthalingam a few times.²⁵¹ Anadasangari said that 'declared Eelam policy does not mean that was the absolute decision. The party had the understanding that if the government put forward an alternative proposal, they would place it to the people for mandate.' He emphasised that 'in every meeting in my electorate, I used to tell this'.²⁵² Nadarajah said that 'Eelam is impossible. Where to draw the line? How to demarcate the boundary? How to protect the boundary? Can Tamils put fence for such a long boundary? If Tamils were Sinhalese and vice versa, would Tamils allow them to do so? I told Amirthalingam to soft-pedal the Eelam slogan but he did not. That's why the youngsters now feel betrayed'.²⁵³ This shows that the majority of the leaders did not have the faith or conviction on the Eelam policy.

²⁴⁹ Author's interview with Thillai Nadesan, London, 20 September 2000.

²⁵⁰ Instead of answering to the question or to take it for debate, Amirthalingam treated him as student, said *Tharumar kulapamal irum* (Tharumar do not disturb and sit). Author's interview with Sidharthan.

²⁵¹ See D.B.S. Jeyaraj, 'Golden Lord A. Thangathurai: An Eastern Man for all Seasons', *Tamil Times*, (London), 15 July 1997, p. 17. Also Author's interview with Sidharthan.

²⁵² Author's interview with Anandasangari.

²⁵³ Authors interview with Nadarajah, one of the first generation leaders of the FP and the Chairman of the DDC Jaffna, Jaffna, 1982 date not known.

Even though the position of Amirthalingam was strong, he saw Rajathurai, and Kathiravelupillai and later V.N. Navaratnam as challenging leaders to him.²⁵⁴ Because of this, relationship of Amirthalingam with these leaders was deteriorating. Despite these oppositions from different angles, Amirthalingam had to tackle the hard realities, as the dominant leader in the party had to rally the support, especially, the youth behind him to sustain his leadership. Hence, it was Amirthalingam and Sivasithamparam who planned and executed the convention and resolutions. The young delegates fully supported him.²⁵⁵

Finally, the convention announced the merger of FP and the ACTC and the formation of a new organisation, The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), amongst big fanfare and applause. Giving radical posture to the party, they added the term 'Liberation' to the name TUF. Declaring its policy, the TULF resolved, 'Restoration and reconstitution of the Free, Sovereign, Secular, Socialist State of Tamil Eelam based on the right of self determination to every nation has become inevitable in order to safeguard the very existence of the Tamil Nation in this Country.'²⁵⁶ To achieve the goal, the Convention directs the Action Committee of the TULF, 'to formulate a plan of action and launch without undue delay the struggle'. Preparing the people to play their role, the convention called upon the Tamils in general and the youth in particular, 'come forward to throw themselves fully in the sacred fight for freedom and to flinch not till the goal of a sovereign

²⁵⁴ Kathiravetpillai earned a good name for his intellectual articulation and composed character. Rajathurai had already challenged Amirthalingam for the post of president of the FP in 1972. Subsequent to the demise of Chelvanayakam, Amirthalingam loyalist spread canard against Rajathurai who was one of the seniormost leaders, almost equal or rather most popular in the Eastern Province as compared to Amirthalingam. He was humiliated by Amirthalingam and made to leave the Party. See for details, the *Report from the Select Committee to inquire into the Alleged Expulsion of C. Rajathurai*, MP from the TULF, (Colombo: Government Publication Bureau, 25 February 1982).

²⁵⁵ Although he [Amirthalingam] lost in 1970, and Sivasithamparam of the Tamil Congress, was also defeated in Udupiddy, they were largely responsible for the formation of Tamil United Front. The front re-named itself as Tamil United Liberation Front and propounded the Eelam demand as the panacea for Tamil grievances. See D.B.S. Jeyaraj, 'LTTE-Amirthalingam Alliance?', *Tamil Times* (London, July 1988), p. 9.

²⁵⁶ *Resolution, Tamil United Liberation Front*, (Jaffna: Kathiravelupillai MP, 1976).

socialist Tamil Eelam is reached'.²⁵⁷ The declaration and speech brought resurgence of political activity among Tamil youth. However, CWC, a constituent partner of the TUF, opted out of the TULF as it was a trade union and its members are living out of the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

CONCLUSION

The post-independence Sri Lanka essentially witnessed a majoritarian Sinhalese rule forever and ethnically antagonistic party system as the result of the refusal of the British government to formulate a consociational democratic system of government at their departure. The Sinhalese leadership succeeded in acquiring and consolidating its rule of independent Sri Lanka both by false promises to protect the interests of the Tamils and political manoeuvring.

Tamil people decisively rejected the Sinhalese rule over them from independence onwards. They mandated to the ACTC in the first parliamentary election to prove their rejection of the Soulbury Constitution with the expectation that the British government would incorporate their demand in the Constitution for reasonable representation in the Parliament and the Cabinet in such a way as to ensure the non-domination of the Sinhalese majority over them.

Rejection of the mandate by the British government, on the one hand allowed the Sinhalese to have a freehand to establish their rule over the Tamils and on the other hand let the Tamils under the mercy of the majoritarian Sinhalese regime. Contrary to the promise, the first post-independence government made half of the Tamil population stateless and accelerated government sponsored colonisation in the traditional Tamil homeland. While preventing the economic resources for the Tamils in their own lands, it also reduced their representation in their own territory. All the governments, while implementing all the anti-Tamil measures of the previous governments, enacted new laws and adopted practices aimed at wiping out the identity and muting their voices. The series of anti-Tamil measures such as Sinhala as the official language, introduction of standardisation, racial

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

discrimination in employment opportunities and economic developments, and above all, denial of constitutional and legal rights to get remedy were increasingly frustrated the entire Tamil community.

The ACTC, instead of addressing their issues, joined the government. Tamils found the FP as principled and dedicated party to assert their rights and mandated them consistently for two decades. FP demanded for a federal system of government to protect the interests of the Tamils, using parliamentary and extra-parliamentary democratic means at least until 1961. The majoritarianism of the successive governments suppressed the democratic movements by force and rejected the demands. Disappointed of using the cohesive approach, FP has adopted cooperative approach between 1965 and 1970, by taking part in the government to achieve District Councils that was trivial compared to the federal system. The coalition leader of UNP betrayed the cooperative approach. Due to the suppressive nature of the State, most of the leaders, either lost belief on mass struggle or scared of the counter-actions of the State. They never showed interests to work out effective programme and plan of action for effective movement after 1961. When both the approaches they tried failed, FP was almost clueless with the debacle of the D-C Pact. Since then, the youth mounted pressure on the FP to quit the Parliament and lead the movement for separate State.

In these two decades, one verbal agreement and two written agreements were abrogated both by the SLFP and the UNP governments. Peaceful resistance movements were brutally suppressed. Two nationwide anti-Tamil violences were staged. Many hundreds of Tamils were killed, many hundred lost their homes, and hundreds of million worth properties lost. Nevertheless, the mobilisation strategy of the FP against these communally hatred practices, politicised and sensitised the Sri Lankan Tamils to re-establish their lost status and pride as rulers and equal citizens in the Island. In sum, it has strongly propped up the Tamil nationalism.

Introduction of Republican Constitution and standardisation made the entire Tamils particularly youth, conclude that the politics with the Sinhalese is meaningless, and there is a necessity to re-establish their lost Tamil State and pressurise the FP to take the lead. While FP did not have any plan, TSK

announced the boycott of Parliament. FP was wary of TSK claiming it as the victory for his idea, behaved oppositely, went to the Parliament probably with empty mind, but performed disastrously and lost its face among Tamils. It tried to change its posture as still a proactive party by forming the TUF and gave an impression that leaders respected the expectations of the people. However, since then the decisions of the FP, the TUF and the formation of the TUF were largely determined by the youth and the radical elements. The FP was cornered because of its inner contradictory characters of being representatives without ability; in a situation, the party had to demonstrate extraordinary ability. In other words, the FP and then TUF had politically broken down, but they were pushed by the people/youth to activity that resulted in the formation of the TULF. Youth who did not believe in the Ahimsa path and those suspected the faith of the TUF formed both supportive and alternative leadership (militants).