

SRI LANKA: THE HOLOCAUST AND AFTER



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L. Piyadasa



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Glossary

<i>Bhikkhu</i>	a Buddhist monk.
<i>Gansaabhawa</i>	village council.
<i>Goigama</i>	highest of the major castes amongst the Sinhalese (literally 'agriculturalist').
<i>Karava</i>	caste group concentrated in the south-western coastal area, considered by the Goigama to be of lower ritual status but increasingly influential from the 19th century onwards and challenging the Goigama hegemony.
<i>Lake House</i>	popular name for Sri Lanka's major newspaper group, the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd., once privately owned and with right wing associations, nationalised in 1970 by the United Front government.
<i>Mudalali</i>	entrepreneur.
<i>Salagama</i>	caste not unlike the Karava, concentrated in the south-western coastal region, considered of lower ritual status by the Goigama.
<i>Sangha</i>	the Buddhist monastic order.
<i>Vellala</i>	Tamil equivalent of the Goigama.

INTRODUCTION

Shops, banks, offices and restaurants in the capital's crowded city centre and main streets being burnt while the police look on. Thousands of houses ransacked and burnt, sometimes with women and children inside. Goon squads battering passengers to death in trains and on station platforms and, without hindrance, publicly burning men and women to death on the streets! Remand prisoners and political detainees in the country's top prison being massacred. The armed forces joining in and sometimes organising this pogrom against members of two Sri Lankan minority communities. The nation's President and top-ranking cabinet members publicly justifying the pogrom!

Millions of Sri Lankans who live happily in peace with their neighbours and love their country would at one time have dismissed all this as a sick fantasy or a horrible nightmare. They would have regarded reports of this kind as a gross slander against their country. But in July 1983 they were forced to realise that someone in the country had assumed or been given the authority and the freedom to make these unbelievable and monstrous things very real. For within three or four days they themselves, or their colleagues, friends and relatives had been driven from their homes and work places, and become part of a 200,000 refugee population, 130,000 of them in refugee camps vulnerable to further attack.

Abroad, hardly anyone who keeps in touch with the news would have failed to notice Sri Lanka in late July and early August 1983. They would have gathered, correctly, that it had become a horribly and ugly place for millions of Sri Lankans as well as for some foreign visitors; that some 2,500 enterprises, including factories, there were deliberately burnt, and defenceless ✓

people brutally attacked and massacred while the army and police looked on or joined in. Reports of burning office blocks and even people were given on foreign televisions. Tourists who had witnessed the pogrom or had their hotel burned down realised that Sri Lanka did not in reality resemble the beautiful and peaceful 'paradise' of the posters and travel brochures trying to tempt foreigners to holiday there.

Sensational events do not remain sensations for very long. In a few weeks many people would have forgotten the news reports they saw and heard and read at that time. Even before other sensational events — such as the Lebanon fighting and the shooting down of the South Korean air liner — displaced the Sri Lanka pogrom in the news bulletins the Sri Lankan Minister in charge of Information and Tourism was reassuring the world that his country was back to normal, and 'better than normal'. However, those non-Sri Lankans who had seen it all or might for other reasons have had doubts about the respect and high praise accorded by the Reagan and Thatcher governments to the Jayawardene regime, may not have been reassured by such pronouncements. It seemed sinister and racist when 2.5 million of his compatriots were shocked, grief-stricken and highly insecure (and also homeless and economically ruined) following the catastrophe, for the suave Mr de Alwis to want the new situation to be accepted as 'better than normal'. Why was it 'better' for the interests represented by those who ruled Sri Lanka that such a holocaust should occur? Why was the government in such haste to expropriate the refugees' unoccupied or burnt-out properties? What were the geopolitical implications of the government's approach at that point to the United States and Britain? It became clear to thoughtful Sri Lankans and others that much more was going on than met the eye. Those who had already been thinking of what they could do to bring about a restoration of the democratic process which had earlier been suppressed under the Jayawardene regime (as chapters 6 and 7 show) realised that the pogrom and the events connected with it were an important political revelation.

Even so, why should anyone abroad bother with a post-mortem on the holocaust of July 1983? If it was a case of a race riot which had got out of control there are many other countries, too, where clashes over religion and language get out of control. Why does this case call for special attention? The personal suffering and loss of many Sri Lankans was great, but elsewhere, too, racism takes its toll of human lives and happiness. Why

then rake over the ashes of burnt enterprises, houses and bodies in Sri Lanka?

This short book sets out to explain why. It arises from the agony and shame of a number of Sri Lankans who find that the government's cover-up propaganda is as untruthful as its role in the pogroms of the last few years has been cruel and outrageous. It arises also from our determination not to allow the government to carry out further racist attacks and the rest of its agenda of persecution, arson and murder without organised opposition, and without instant exposure. The book will serve its purpose if by the time the answer to the question at the end of the last paragraph is summarised in chapters 15 and 16, readers will be convinced of the urgent need to do something concrete to support those who want to eradicate racism in Sri Lanka.

Many Sri Lankans want their own compatriots as well as freedom-loving people all over the world to consider what is happening in and to a once-beautiful and a once-civilised Sri Lanka, and to analyse events there with a view to transforming the situation and profiting by the lessons. There are at least two other good reasons for asking readers not to be satisfied just because the Jayawardene regime's foreign backers approve of and support its policies. While US, British, South Korean, Japanese and other foreign business and political interests and those who serve these interests in Sri Lanka were not hurt by the pogroms (but on the contrary may, as we show later, have benefited from them), they represent only some tens of thousands of people. There are, however, 15 million people in Sri Lanka whose legitimate interests and well-being are vitally affected, and whose existence as a civilised nation is now at stake. Secondly, people all over the world have not had a proper chance to appreciate the important fact about the racist groups who seek to establish exclusive territorial, political and economic claims in and over Sri Lanka by planning and directing murderous violence against Sri Lankans whose rights stand in their way — namely, that they cannot and do not represent the Sinhalese community as a whole, or a majority of it. It is simply not true, even if Jayawardene says it, that it was *the* Sinhalese who were and are responsible for the cruelty and barbarism of the attacks on their fellow Sri Lankans. We discuss this in chapter 11.

As we show, the responsibility for allowing the organisers of the pogroms to get hold of the power and the freedom to act, and the shame of it, all Sri Lankans who are labelled Sinhalese

must, of course, accept. But it is because millions of Sri Lankans of *all* communities are suffering under the domination of racists, and have been slandered and maligned by government propaganda, that there arose the need for a book to put on record the revulsion of Sri Lankan patriots at what the guilty ones have done and, as we shall show, are planning to do further; and the need also to stir Sri Lankans to action to redeem Sri Lanka's reputation and unity by securing justice for those who have suffered. If there is not, as there always must be in similar crises, a 'what is to be done?' in such an analysis, it is little better than political gossip or academic discussion. That is the subject of our concluding chapter. As the excerpts from newspaper articles and editorials are intended to show, even in early August some Sri Lankans dared to express views on these questions contradicting the government.

When the government has frequent recourse to repression and censorship to prevent the truth from being published and known, investigation becomes more necessary than ever. In present conditions, when deprivation of civic rights, proscription (including seizure of all property and denial of the right to practice a profession), thuggery, imprisonment and execution without trial, and torture are resorted to more readily than are campaigns to eradicate disease-bearing mosquitoes and flies, it is a fact that a book expressing the views of a large proportion of Sri Lankans, a majority, cannot be published inside Sri Lanka.

The events of late July and early August have to be gone over in a methodical way, and that is done in chapter 9. The events immediately preceding, and leading up to, the holocaust, and those which immediately followed it, are also summarised, in chapter 10. These accounts have been written after consultation with several people, and have drawn on bulletins and reports of others, who had personal experience of various episodes and incidents; they also take into account the analyses and prognoses of other groups of Sri Lankans.

Before these events are recounted, some factual background material is given, in chapters 1 to 8. The Sri Lankan holocaust demonstrates, among other things, the dangers of taking myths for history and racist fantasies for actuality. Everywhere in the country people have indeed come to be swayed by myths and fantasies; imagined grievances sometimes influence them more powerfully than real oppression does. The Sri Lankan events, and the confusion of many Sri Lankans as well as foreign observers of these events, show that unless myths

and fantasies are correctly identified, recognised to be what they are, and distinguished clearly from actual discrimination, injustice and oppression, there will be no end to present policies.

In trying to be clear in our minds about what happened in Sri Lanka we cannot avoid seeking the answer to the question of who could have done it. The reader cannot help knowing by now in a general way what conclusions we have reached. We note down the evidence which we gathered and analysed before reaching our conclusions. The reader who wants to can try, on the basis of the notes on actors and presumed actors, to work the answer out for himself or herself. We need hardly argue it out at this point whether or not a spontaneous race riot is all that there was to the events of July. There is no point in seeking to inquire into and to publish the truth if all the time it is visible on the surface, or in official accounts. In the circumstances, which are described in chapter 10, we and others we quote had already started to make our own investigations before the official 'explanations' began to be broadcast and published. The official explanations, which were plainly false, became part of the pogrom-events, and were a reason for deeper investigation.

Reality can sometimes strain belief. As several people remarked when describing what they actually saw and heard on 25-29 July, 'I couldn't believe it.' 'It was like a fantasy, like something happening in a film'. Many people, Tamils, Burghers, Moors, Malays and Sinhalese were in a state of shock after what they discovered to be reality of power and morals in Sri Lanka in 1983. Even people who had, despite the conduct of the referendum and much else that happened between 1977 and 1983 remained blindly loyal to Jayawerdene and accepted without question everything he said, were sickened and revolted this time. In the face of the assertion that 'The Tamils deserved what they got', the question, 'Did they?' had to be asked and answered without sentimentality before the incredible reality of the United National Party's (UNP's) political principles could be grasped.

There is a heavy price to be paid for the extreme racism of the sort that the Jayawardene regime propagates and practices, as chapter 11 argues. What is seen by all decent people as a holocaust gives, we need to be reminded, much satisfaction to some — is even regarded by them as an achievement to be proud of. There is no doubt that those military units, UNP cadres and goon squads who carried out the planned operation and virtually emptied the workplaces, homes and streets of Colombo, Kandy,

etc., of Tamils were told by their bosses, 'Well done'. So it was in the case of the Nazis' 'final solution'. It was the final solution to someone's problem. Whose problem? Even if all the Einsteins in Europe had been despatched to the gas chambers it still would have been the 'solution' of the Nazis' 'problem'. Whose, we must insist, was the problem to which the holocaust of July 1983 in Sri Lanka was part of the final solution? And what is the full price to be paid, and by whom? It is known that it ranged all the way from the abandonment of non-alignment to the ruin of the economy. So the answers indicated in chapter 11 concern not only the people of Sri Lanka but also the rest of the world, as chapter 15 indicates. It must be considered also if a psychiatrist's couch, or a lunatic asylum, or a prison is the place where 'problems' of such a nature can be solved.

Is there a future for a non-racist, multi-communal Sri Lanka? In July and August the thoughts of a number of people, Tamils, Moors, Malays, Burghers and Sinhalese, as well as those who could not think of themselves as anything but just Sri Lankans, turned to the desirability of leaving Sri Lanka. The Tamils had many reasons which are obvious. We allowed many of them prematurely to 'leave' Jayawardene's Sri Lanka without even a funeral. But why were so many of others of the most sensitive and most patriotic Sri Lankans convinced that life was no longer worth living under the rule of Jayawardene, Mathew, etc.? Did we not owe it to the Tamils to determine that they can live and work in Sri Lanka with dignity, justice and freedom? Was abandoning the country to the goon squads and their mentors and pay masters the only action to take? Would that not mean also abandoning to misery, suffering, humiliation and poverty the mass of the people: children denied a civilised life, workers under a repression unknown even under colonialism, women in an increasingly clerical-dominated, sexist regime, all minorities? Do we lack the spiritual and material resources, and the patriotism, to fight for and to create a new Sri Lanka? All over the world people going into exile have had to grapple with questions like these. Chapter 16 considers these questions and goes on to make some proposals. It is clear that we cannot enjoy the incredible beauties of the Sri Lankan 'paradise' and what is so lovely in our people and our traditions without paying for it — without making life worth living for all, and without struggling to create a new Sri Lanka free of racist and other forms of oppression. Readers will, we hope, seriously consider the proposals and make their own contribution in ideas and action.

1. PRESENT REALITIES

Sri Lanka, like any other country, is almost on the eve of the 21st century. Thoughtful Sri Lankans have been reminding ourselves of this. When the country entered the second half of the 20th century as an 'independent' country its possibilities were immense, and the prospects were attractive. Those of us who were youths then, or boys and girls looking forward to life in a 'new' Ceylon, were optimistic, in spite of the inadequacies of the politicians who were holding office and of their failure to achieve full decolonisation.

We were conscious of being an independent nation, a nation composed equally (though not in equal numbers) of several communities. We were no longer a British colony. Sri Lanka was *our* country, we thought, the country of the Sri Lankan people and nation. The more political among us looked forward to working together to build a modern civilisation as great as that built by our ancestors in the ancient past. It was a patriotism felt equally by Low Country Sinhalese, Kandyans, Ceylon Tamils, Moors, Burghers, Malays and Ceylonese of recent Indian origin.

Sri Lanka was not at that time as poor as some other Asian countries. Its per capita income was considerably higher than that of neighbouring countries. The general educational level and health standards were by Asian standards at that time fairly good. Nevertheless, it was a poor country, and there were many Sri Lankans who were very poor. There was a popular demand for quickly making up the loss in progress because of colonial subjection, and for closing the wide gap which existed between rich and poor in regard to property ownership, income, standard of living, education and political power. The 1947 general elections gave an indication of this. The two parties supported by

the working class and anti-imperialist Sri Lankans won 18 seats to the United National Party's 42, obtained partly on the basis of feudal loyalties and landlord pressures in the countryside, and the anti-communism of religious authorities. (About 25 per cent of the votes polled were cast for working class or social democratic parties. They would have had many more votes if they had contested all the seats.)

The rising expectations of higher cultural levels, better material conditions and good job opportunities served to highlight the limitations of the kind of independence which D.S. Senanayake and his colleagues in the UNP had negotiated with the British in the 1940s. The economy continued to be just as colonial as that which existed before Independence Day on 4 February, 1948. It was the creation of the British and their local collaborators; and the freedom to change it radically in the people's interests was evidently not permitted under the UNP's regime. So there were growing divisions among Sri Lankans. These were mainly between those who were thriving on their privileged positions as ministers of state, landowners, professionals and businessmen already earning high incomes, and top officials, on the one hand, and those who wanted a different set-up in which there would be higher wages and better living and working conditions for the workers, peasants and the lower-middle class on the other. These divisions became the source of a political conflict which became increasingly bitter. It was a mark of continuing colonial bondage that the country was automatically aligned with its old masters in the Cold War, and the government was more solicitous of Western interests than those of the masses, the main victims of colonialism.

In the years immediately preceding independence there had been one politician who had been exceptional in being less interested in promoting the wealth and influence of his own family and his circle than in using his office to respond to popular demand. He had been Minister of Education. Though the British had disapproved, C.W.W. Kannangara, during his tenure of office expanded considerably the opportunities for education in the Sinhalese and Tamil medium and in the areas where there had been few secondary schools. In 1945 it became no longer necessary to pay fees to study in schools in the state system or to enter university, if one reached the necessary standard for entry. The children in the plantations were excluded from this, unfortunately. In the rest of the country educational standards rose rapidly, as universal education came near to being a reality. The

literacy rate, the numbers completing secondary education, and the number of local university graduates increased much faster than the rate of population increase.

Among the problems that arose as a result of this educational explosion were two important ones. One, as competition for university places became more intense, candidates from long-established schools and from families whose members had earlier sought and obtained an education in English had an advantage over the children of their contemporaries who could not or did not want in their day to go in for the same kind of education. Consequently, the most literate districts — Colombo, Galle, Matara and Jaffna — produced the students who competed most successfully, both for further education opportunities and for jobs. Second, the leadership to whom the British transferred power proved to be incapable of economic policies which would meet the growing and radically new needs of the Sri Lankan people. Its own interests were in preserving both the colonial economy of tea, rubber and coconut plantations and Sri Lanka's subordination to British, and increasingly US, world hegemony. One of the many evil consequences of this was that an increasing number of educated young Sri Lankans of merit not belonging to elite families had nothing they could do with their education. The World Bank's 'advice', and the incompetence of the ruling class, did not allow industrialisation to take place. The stagnant, neocolonial and archaic society that 'independent' Sri Lanka was turning out to be was the source of increasing discontent among those who had had high hopes for the future.

Like most other Third World countries, Sri Lanka was a land of peasants. In the far north, in the Jaffna peninsula, conditions were hard, and peasants had learnt to be hardworking, self-reliant and thrifty. In the more lush, wet zone of central and southern Sri Lanka rural families had continued to live on or partly depend on the produce from small plots long after continued division and sub-division of ownership had made their livelihood very precarious. Rice cultivation did not lend itself to capital investment for quick profit, as did the production of coconut, coffee, tea and rubber. So under British rule it had not benefited from investment and modernisation of technology. The feudal ruling families in the villages had, in varying measure, been able to enjoy such novel benefits and status as became possible through contact with the dynamic and exotic capitalist world, and also through participation and privilege in

the colonial order. But the cultivators in overpopulated rural areas had suffered under an oppressive land-tenure system and had been hedged in by the plantation economy, especially in the central districts. More than any other section of the Sri Lankan nation the labouring people in the countryside, especially those in the Kandyan region, had reason to hope that independence would give them an opportunity to create a modern Sri Lanka. For, whether they could put it into political jargon or not, such a Sri Lanka would *have* to be one in which the enslaving colonial-feudal heritage was transformed into its opposite by the people, and feudal lords, whether clerical or lay, colonial rulers and greedy money-lenders had become things of the past.

But such a liberation was not to be. Generally, it was the Sri Lankan families who had traditionally dominated over the labouring people in the colonial and pre-colonial periods to whom the future seemed to belong. They were ensuring for themselves, their families and their hangers-on the monopoly of state power and of patronage in independent Sri Lanka. Tenants, servants and other dependents had no choice but to cast their votes for the candidates chosen by the ruling families. The Senanayakes, Bandaranaiques, Wijewardenes, Kotelawalas, Jayawardenes and their like were not going to start a revolution in the countryside. And it was because of the inadequacy of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party's leaders' ideology, and their patrician backgrounds, that the main opposition party at independence did not see the need to organise or give leadership to the peasantry in their struggle against their exploiters.

Bad governments, if they cannot expect to maintain their power by sheer violence, must do so by fooling most of the people most of the time. They can not allow people to see that they are the cause of mismanagement, oppression and the failure to solve the country's problems. In Sri Lanka scapegoats had to be found. The tactic of divide-and-rule had to be resorted to. The anger of the discontented had to be deflected away from the ruling families, and from their imperialist allies, to sections of the nation on whose loyalty they could not count: 'communists', Tamils, plantation workers. To do this they had to distort the facts both about colonial Ceylon and about the nature of development. They also resorted to falsifying the rich and complex history and traditions of pre-colonial Ceylon, to shifting the focus of political controversy away from class issues to communal and religious strife, and to subverting the democratic process itself. We will find it useful to look briefly at the conditions

in which violence and racism came to dominate the lives of the Sri Lankan people.

2. LOSING THE WAY FROM COLONIAL SUBJECTION TO INDEPENDENCE

A nation is not the arbitrary creation of its rulers or of colonial administrators. It comes into being over a long period of time, as a result of a million decisions, actions and the forming of relationships by generation after generation of ordinary men and women — its creators. To understand the Sri Lankan people we have to get a picture of them in deep focus, as it were. Because of the limitations we are working under we cannot attempt such a picture here, but only provide some notes which may help.

After nearly 2,000 years of existence as a distinctive civilisation, Sri Lanka was coveted by one of the rising world powers in the early modern period, namely, Portugal. In 1505 the Portuguese arrived, and the maritime areas became a Portuguese colony. The defeat of the low-country kingdoms showed how far they had fallen behind the new powers on the Asian scene. Thus Sri Lankan history became interwoven as just one strand, a subordinate strand, with others in the history of European overseas expansion. The Dutch ousted the Portuguese one-and-a-half centuries later. At the end of the 18th century the British replaced the Dutch, and in 1815 took control of the Kandyan kingdom, and thus of the whole island.

To be geographically isolated and socially and intellectually in a backwater is not good for any country. Sri Lanka, by its position on major routes of trade and travel, had, for nearly two millenia before the Portuguese arrived, been enriched by products, ideas, techniques, travellers and settlers from distant places which its peoples had assimilated. And its own contributions and achievements had undoubtedly enriched the world. Even people who had come as invaders, to conquer parts of the island or all of it, had often contributed to the country's

development; and they had been a challenge and a stimulus to political renewal and cultural revival. The island, or any of the principalities within it, had not remained for long part of any foreign empire. But this time the challenge was different qualitatively. The capitalist class represented at that time a new force in world history, a revolutionary force. Capitalist Britain had rapidly overtaken in important respects such great feudal regimes as Moghul India and the Chinese Empire. The Industrial Revolution and the revolutionary developments in science and technology were making a vast difference to human powers and human possibilities. At the same time, the capitalist form in which the new forces made their impact on people with ancient civilisations and societies formed on a different mode of life made these forces profoundly disruptive and destructive.

The revolutionary forces had to be used for the benefit and genuine progress of the people of Sri Lanka. But how could this be done? The age of kings and nobles was out-of-date in the worldwide society which was then in its beginnings. It was over in Sri Lanka, too. It continued, in spite of its archaic character, as a more or less recent memory for several decades because Sri Lankans had not as yet transformed the past by their own actions. It was a symbol of a Sri Lanka not conquered and not ruled by distant foreigners who generally cared little for the traditions and problems of the people and did not share their lives. It was still the only symbol of an independent Sri Lanka. The Buddhist sangha which, in the material and social conditions of ancient and feudal Sri Lanka, had often played a valuable civilising and educational role ceased to do so, much to the dismay of many people.

Until new forces arose to give leadership to the Sri Lankan people in creating the conditions for an independent and progressive modern Sri Lanka, able on its own terms to command the respect of the world powers, it would be the British or some other foreign power which would determine the country's future. Unlike the Dutch, the British were far from being a declining world power for most of the 19th century. Therefore a resistance based on a revival of the feudal past could not succeed. The 'rebellion' of 1848 (see below) was doomed to fail. As in India, there had been indigenous growing points, technological and social, among the people, and a post-feudal society might have emerged if the British had not blunted these. In the early 19th century, the stable village communities, based on mutual service and self-reliance, still had life in them — the

potential for development. But once the British reorganised the country, those possibilities soon became a 'what might have been!' In the circumstances, before progress could be made socially and technologically on Sri Lankan lines, and before the country could become truly independent, new leaders of great stature would have to emerge from among the common people.

Ceylon was administered as a single political unit. For many centuries earlier the population had declined in the areas afflicted by malaria. The colonial government counted the population of the 'Maritime Provinces' in 1814 as a little under half-a-million; and they counted the population of the Kandyan Provinces in 1821 as just over a quarter-of-a-million. In 1927 the total population was estimated to be 889,584. That may not have been an accurate figure, but it is safe to take it that the population was under a million. At first the country was divided into five provinces, but at various times additional provinces were created, making nine in all by 1890. Each province consisted of two or more revenue districts.

Broadly speaking, there was some difference between the coastal districts, which had been engaged in the encounter with colonial powers for three centuries before the British arrived, and the Kandyan, central, districts. British rule was consequently much more disruptive of the traditions of the (up-country) Kandyans. The people in the former areas, who included some of European descent, had already begun to understand, assimilate and take the measure of some features of the Europe of the 18th and early 19th centuries. It was in the south-west, around Colombo, that such 'modernisation' as there was took place most rapidly in the 19th century. Galle and Matara districts in the far south were fairly densely populated; these predominantly Sinhalese-speaking areas had traditions of their own going back over two thousand years, and had enough cohesion and dynamism to begin to assert themselves in the new conditions of British colonial rule. In the far north, in the fairly densely populated and predominantly Tamil-speaking district of Jaffna, too, the people adapted quickly to the new conditions of 19th century Sri Lanka. There was internal migration — the movement of people towards the cosmopolitan and fast developing southwestern districts, with the national capital, Colombo. By the middle of the 19th century a new Sri Lankan ('Ceylonese') identity had come into existence.

As the British built roads and railways in order to carry out the economic exploitation of the country and facilitate ad-

ministration of the colony, communications became easy. With population pressures and 'modern' aspirations making the traditional occupations (often caste-bound) inadequate or unprofitable or obsolete, people who found it difficult to subsist naturally moved where employment opportunities were expanding. Locally, it led to the growth of population in ancient towns like Galle and Jaffna, which had by 1891 populations of 33,560 and 35,856 respectively. The population density in the 'Jaffna Division' grew to 2,134 per sq. mile in 1898, and 2,469 in 1902. It was in Colombo that there was the biggest demand for new workers and therefore the opportunities for employment and other 'modern' occupations such as those in the legal profession, teaching and business. Industrial development was not, of course, part of colonial policy. Ordinary people sought a livelihood in lowly occupations in the colonial economy or administration. Those who developed the manual skills or were willing to do manual labour in construction, on the railways, roads and the port of Colombo, became the working class. Traditionally, manual occupations were regarded as too lowly. So there were an increasing number of wage-earners who acquired a knowledge of English and qualified for white-collar jobs in the lower ranks of government departments and foreign business firms.

For many decades Europeans enjoyed a privileged and superior status, regardless of their abilities or competence. There were a few civil servants and European residents, and some great educationists, who were representatives of the progressive liberalism and civilisation of the European bourgeoisie of that period, but most expatriates were unappreciative of and insensitive to the Sri Lankan people and their ways of life and their needs. As for the planting community, they were frequently, and would have regarded in England, too, as 'riff raff'. White racism was not as blatant and crude in Sri Lanka as it was in many other colonial areas, but it was very real, and it was a factor in the development of the kind of racism which was to develop among sections of the Sri Lankans. The notion that there had to be a 'superior' race which would monopolise top privilege and power was a colonial inheritance.

The policy of confining leading positions in government and administration and membership of legislative bodies exclusively to expatriate civil servants, planters and businessmen came under attack. By mid-century, some Sri Lankans, among them some of the great patriots of modern times, had breached

the exclusive educational and other preserves of the British ruling class, and shown that Sri Lankans could, if they wanted to, be as learned as their rulers, become barristers, doctors and so on, while remaining Sri Lankans. Within a few decades the British notions that they had a 'civilising mission' and that only they could carry out modern administration impartially and well were debunked, as they were forced to give in to demands that Sri Lankans should be allowed to compete with them for posts in the prestigious Ceylon Civil Service. Their gunboat diplomacy and autocratic rule were proving ineffective against educated and able Sri Lankan patriots who found in the great struggles going on in Europe for political emancipation and democracy and in the thinking of utopian socialists the inspiration for their own demands.

Ponnambalam Arunachalam was one of the most eminent of that generation of patriots. A number of people have written about his remarkable achievements. Of his political objectives Mr W. Thalgodapitiya wrote in *Portraits of Ten Patriots of Sri Lanka*:

'His passion was to see the revival of the ancient system of local government, where the state governed least, and where the people managed their own local affairs with the least outside interference in a spirit of cooperation for the common welfare. His conception of self-government was not a process starting at the top, but one starting from the Gansabhawas in the village and rising upwards. Government would then, he considered, be broad based on the people's will and work inevitably for their welfare.

It was a magnificent dream suggested to his mind by his deep studies of our ancient institutions — the Gansabhawas and the co-operative system. In it there would be no room for the aggrandizement of private individuals, while it would give full scope for the free flowering of human personality. Power would not be concentrated in the hands of a few, but diffused throughout the whole community consistently with the security of the state...' (p.57)

Arunachalam had been engaged in the struggle for racial equality. He had competed for and won a place in the prestigious Ceylon Civil Service. Though kept languishing for years in its lowest grade, in judicial appointments, he was suddenly, probably because of the need to get a job done, made Registrar General. People have remarked that both in his Administration Reports, and in the Report of the 1901 Census he

directed, he showed an amazing grasp both of detail and of sociological and economic theory. So he engaged in political work with a concrete and intimate knowledge of Sri Lanka. His concern over the exploitation of the urban working class and the plantation workers, and open support for trade unions and for strikes, arose from the deep sense of justice and fearlessness in offending the British government which were characteristics he shared with a number of other Sri Lankans like C.C. Corea who were free of the 'colonised mentality' of a number of Western-educated Sri Lankans. His founding in 1919 of 'The Ceylon Workers' Welfare League' and other activities in support of the working class are explained by an outlook expressed in the course of a dissenting report on the labour unrest of 1912:

'The general spirit of unrest which has broken out in strikes and other violent upheavals in widely sundered places of the earth should not be overlooked. With the close continual contacts of trade, investment, travel and intellectual life, every country is more sensitive to the events and thoughts of other countries than ever before. Ceylon cannot expect to be untouched by the wave of discontent among the proletariat of the world'. (Quoted in Kumari Jayawardena, *The Rise of the Labour Movement in Ceylon* 1972)

It was not surprising that in the course of a speech, 'On Our Political Needs', in 1917, he said,

The assumption underlying the whole system of our administration is that we are children unable to judge for ourselves. It is for us to show that we are grown up and determined to have a say in the management of our affairs... Successive generations of our youth deprived of the opportunities of education during the formative years of their life, pass into the adult population with irremediably stunted powers and narrow outlooks affecting the whole quality of our national life. The real makers of the country's wealth — the peasant and the labourer are steeped in poverty... Tied as we are to the apron strings of a bureaucracy, and deprived of all power and responsibility, our powers and capacities are dwarfed and we never rise to the full height to which our manhood is capable of rising. We have hypnotised ourselves into thinking that we are weak and inferior. No greater disaster can overtake a people. We must regain our self confidence. We must feel that nothing can daunt us, nothing is beyond us.' (Quoted in *Portraits of Ten Patriots of Sri Lanka.*)

It is with these ideas in mind that Arunachalam, together with his associates, took the initiative in 1919 to bring together various political groups in the Ceylon National Congress.

That was a long time ago. There were elections to a government-dominated Legislative Council, on a restricted franchise, from 1924, and from 1931 there was a State Council elected, except for its Official Members, on universal adult franchise. Something went seriously wrong with the movement to take towards the goal of national liberation and genuine independence the limited democracy won from the colonial rulers in those distant years. The British played their cards well, and used the communalists and self-seeking politicians to split the independence movement, drive the great patriots into the wilderness, and start Sri Lanka on the road to communal conflict, dictatorship and neocolonialism. Seventy years ago the government could not have got away with half the things that it is now doing with impunity. We wonder what Arunachalam, Corea, E.W. Perera, and others of the generation of our grandparents and great grandparents would have done about the present situation of people of Sri Lanka: strikes crushed with massive force, strike pickets so brutally assaulted as to need intensive care, and strikers dismissed by the tens of thousands; Sri Lankans being killed by army and police on the streets and in their homes, and their bodies summarily burnt; political dissenters deliberately massacred while in detention; the abolition of elections; and so on. We discuss these in subsequent chapters. In the meantime, we need to say a little more about the failure to decolonise.

The most destructive and negative consequences of British colonialism were suffered by the Sri Lankans in the central districts — the Kandyans themselves and the Tamil-speaking immigrants of the 19th century who were put to work on the plantations. Both were victims of a regime which represented the interests of the planters and the companies they worked for. The impact made on the Kandyan rural communities by the sudden influx of large numbers of immigrants and of racketeers from the Low Country areas and by their exclusion from the lands annexed by the Crown and carved out into plantations was a bad one. Rights which were ancient, and necessary for survival, were suddenly done away with. Ananda Coomaraswamy, who worked for a time in government service, deplored the insensitivity of the government. In an address to the Ceylon Social Reform Society in 1908 he said:

Take, for example, the village rights to the produce of neighbouring jungles. These have never been well defined, but certainly the villagers have always been accustomed to be able to obtain wood for building and agricultural purposes, firewood, jungle ropes, medicines, dyeing plants, honey and wax and such things from the forests. The endeavour of Government seems to have been, however, not to contribute to the villagers' prosperity and security in such matters, but to restrict their rights as much as possible, generally on the plea of forest conservation, and with much condemnation of the harm done by chena cutting. Personally I find it most difficult to distinguish between the harm so done, and the harm done by the sale of lands for tea or rubber estates to such an extent that, as in some parts of the Matale district, whole villages have been destroyed as the result of the continual encroachment upon the free area about them. Again, instead of forest regulation being communal, or even in the hands of the local Agent of Government, it is in the hands of a centralised Forest Department whose main object is to run the forests as a business concern, and whose hope is to get credit for a larger revenue; and the result is that we get the great Department suing a poor woman for stealing five cents worth of firewood (*Times of Ceylon*, 1/9/03). These are small matters perhaps, but show which way the wind blows.

The Kandyans reacted to British colonial rule differently from the Sri Lankans in the maritime areas. Their problems were in important respects different from those of other ancient Sri Lankan communities, and it took a whole century before they themselves, and the others, could work out a common approach to achieving independence, democracy and justice for the people of Sri Lanka. By then things had started going badly wrong with the form that struggle was taking.

The opening up of the tea (earlier coffee) and rubber plantations did not lead, as has frequently been assumed, to the transformation of the feudal economy into a capitalist economy. Sri Lanka was incorporated into the world capitalist economy, and the surplus labour of the plantation workers became one of the sources of expansion of British capital. Also, as we mentioned just now, within the larger economic and political unit which was the British Empire, of which colonial Ceylon was a part, impoverished peasants from South India were brought to Ceylon to work on the plantations. They were part of the traffic in

'coolies' through which Britain and some other imperialist powers secured, mainly from India and China, cheap and virtually captive labour for hard, menial work which the local peasantry and craftsmen disdained. The condition of plantation workers was comparable in some respects to those of the worst-off of contemporary British miners and textile workers, but they did not amount to the development of capitalist production in the full sense of the term; nor did they bring about the decisive social and economic transformation of rural Ceylon.

There were the 'leading families' among the native Sri Lankans, who played a role as a link between the British administration and the mass of the people. Most of them did not attain leading positions as a result of a patriotic movement. Some of them were already privileged feudal families in feudal or Dutch times. With some exceptions, they became a colonial elite who contributed little or nothing to creating the economic, social and cultural base of a modern, independent Sri Lanka able to hold its own in and to contribute usefully to an industrialising, scientific world. 'The interests of the Ceylonese planters are identical with those of the European planters', James Peiris wrote. (Quoted in Kumari Jayawardena, *The Rise of the Labour Movement in Ceylon*.) It would be fair to call them a parasitic class, mostly of landowners, estate owners and title-holders from the Low-Country areas. They were village and caste 'chiefs' of a sort. And it was as their family or clan inheritance or preserve that they regarded the succession to Colonial Office rule; later on they contended among themselves, and against more patriotic Sri Lankan leaders, for state power, adopting the rules of parliamentary politics to get office.

So it was that (i) ownership of paddy lands, ownership of coconut, and, increasingly of rubber and tea estates and mines; (ii) ministerial positions, with the prestige, power and patronage they allowed; (iii) the holding of posts in the prestigious Ceylon Civil Service and Judicial Service; and (iv) ownership of such business undertakings as they had acquired in a British-dominated economy, for example the manufacture and sale of coconut arrack: all these were the prizes for which the members of the elite contended. In addition, talented and able members of the professions sought by their skill and hard work to achieve the 'top', and the most lucrative, positions as lawyers, surgeons, doctors and academics. In their 'country' mansions and in the posh sections of Colombo and Kandy the top people lived in luxury in spacious bungalows with large retinues of hangers-on and

servants.

When first-class standards were to be enjoyed on visits to or stays in England or imported from there, there was little incentive to produce or achieve excellence in Sri Lanka. There was little concern with the hard task of building with some sacrifice of ease and privilege the economic and cultural base necessary to provide the wants and needs of the people who did not belong to the dynastic networks and *nouveaux riche* families.

By the 1940s there were many people who did not take for granted the domination of these privileged families, most of them Low-Country Sinhalese, some of them Ceylon Tamils and Burghers. The standards of living were too obviously unequal. Some of the communities among the Low Country Sinhalese had the highest literacy rate and the highest standard of living. The Kandyans in general had fallen behind, and the 'Indian Tamils', the Tamil-speaking community of recent Indian origin, were far behind both in education and living conditions. The percentage of literates for each of the major communities nationally, and then for the districts of Colombo, Galle (94.0 per cent Low Country Sinhalese), Matara (94.0 per cent Low Country Sinhalese), Jaffna (96.3 per cent Ceylon Tamil), Kandy (47.7 Kandyan Sinhalese, and 29.2 Indian Tamil) and Nuwara Eliya (30.6 per cent Kandyan, and 57.3 per cent Indian Tamil) will show the gaps.

Colombo	72.8
Galle	70.1
Matara	66.8
Jaffna	70.6
Kandy	47.5
Nuwara Eliya	40.4

There was discontent. Not only were there the political radicals and the trade union militants on the one hand, and the Kandyans and the subordinate caste communities on the other; there were the other realities reflected in the consciousness of Sri Lankans who had to be kept satisfied with the status quo and submissive: the decline of Britain as a world power and the Western European powers generally, the experience of the anti-fascist struggle, the Indian Independence Movement, and the national liberation struggles.

Through the negotiated 'independence' from British rule of 1948, the Senanayakes, Bandaranaiques, Jayawardenes and others like them avoided the ferment of an independence strug-

gle. The same families continued to dominate after, under the national flag, as before. But the 1947 elections had shown that even the parliamentary device did not prevent a good showing by left-wing social democratic forces and pro-communist forces. Moreover, the inevitable social mobility and breakdown of traditional pieties meant that the monopoly of domination by the *goigama* and *vellala* (see Glossary) families was being challenged by other caste groups which had had no place among the traditional social elites. So communal and religious politics was used to introduce divisions and antagonisms and resentments which would deflect the attacks of the rising families away from their traditional exploiters.

So the predominantly colonial economy — based on the predominantly British-owned tea and rubber estates — continued into the 1950s and 1960s. The world was then already in the age of space satellites and computerised technology, and was realising that independent self-reliant development was the answer to neocolonial backwardness. Sri Lanka was going backwards, towards autocratic rule.

It was then no surprise that in December 1982, the campaign to deprive the Sri Lankan people of the power to stand for election and to vote in the general election due in 1983 was exhorting them (illegally, since the law governing referendums prohibited public campaign posters) to 'Go Forward into the Jayawardene era'. Jayawardene, from one of the most privileged families in Sri Lanka, had been out-of-date even in the 1940s!

3. THE PEOPLE OF SRI LANKA

In taking a clearly focussed look at the people of Sri Lanka its geographical position has to be kept in mind. Attention has been drawn to the fact that the surrounding ocean made fairly distant countries Sri Lanka's closest neighbours. To the west, there are Tanzania, Kenya, Zimbabwe and other countries on the east coast and the Horn of Africa, and to the northwest the Arab lands; to the north, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh; northeast and east Burma, Malaysia, Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries, and beyond them China. In the pre-colonial past some of these countries were, like Sri Lanka, great civilisations; they made an impact on Sri Lanka, and Sri Lanka made an impact on many of them, including China.

Living on an island, near a huge neighbour, has tended to make modern Sri Lankans insular. On the other hand, they have migrated to, and made some useful contributions in Malaysia, Britain, Australia and elsewhere. They have in some cases become Malaysians, British, Australians, and so on. They have been going in large numbers to countries in Africa and the Middle East for lucrative jobs. They know enough about the real world to know that in all civilised countries even first-generation natives, and legally-settled immigrants, expect as citizens to have the same rights as tenth-generation natives. They become a part of the people of their new homeland.

If we start, as we should, with the present, we note that in the last thirty or forty years individuals and families have continued to come from other lands and become Sri Lankans. The country is no less — and of course no more — theirs than it belongs to individuals whose ancestors have lived in the country for twenty generations. But, leaving aside such individual cases,

it would be good to consider the fact that all the *communities* which make up the Sri Lankan nation have been part of it, and have contributed to it by their labours of hand and brain, at least for over a hundred years before the reign of J.R. Jayawardene and Cyril Mathew. Before July 1983 (and more so at the time of independence, before there were any anti-social attempts to alter by violence the make-up and structure of Sri Lankan society) the reality in the country as a whole, and in particular in the towns and cities, was this: in Sri Lanka, as its people had made it, those of different 'ethnic' and other communities and of religious groups were closely interrelated and integrated economically, socially and politically. They lived and worked side by side, and in the most friendly way. It still is the case, after the holocaust, where the people had time to put up a resistance.


The social reality has been a problem for the racists: the continuing life of the nation is such that even massive and brutal terror and violence has not succeeded as yet in disintegrating the country, or Colombo, or Kandy, etc. But those who rejoice in multi-ethnic character and want to preserve it, too, have been aware of problems which have arisen because harmony and goodwill among people of different communities and religions inevitably comes under strain in a country in which economic development is chronically retarded, traditional occupations have become obsolete and new opportunities for earning an honest livelihood are insufficient; a country, too, in which Buddhism has ceased to play the great role it once played as a civilising influence; also one in which contending factions of the ruling class impose inequalities and injustices on and organise violence against those who are of a different religious or cultural tradition. Moreover, there are likely to be problems as long as genuine independence and democracy are not achieved, for the people in different localities then lack the means to work together rationally to determine their own future (see chapters 4, 5 and 6).

Attention has already been drawn to the fact that a society takes its existence and shape from the innumerable decisions, acts and interactions of its members. A nation is not the creation of its rulers. However all-powerful and all-controlling the authorities on top may want to be, the people will turn the wheel of history forward wherever and whenever they can in their quest for survival, for a better life, and to be in the company of those they like to live with and work with. So it has been in Sri Lanka. Once social realities take deep root, they are not easily

changed. The fictions and myths of political propaganda have kept on changing, but it has not been easy to get the people to change what *they* want, and to want what some fanatic prescribes for them.

Individuals and families and bands of people have always taken the initiative to go and live somewhere, join a community, adopt its ways and language, take to some trade or occupation which others need or find useful, and intermarry. That is how Sri Lanka developed. People have not been concerned about the ancestry of whoever sells them rice or cloth or bus tickets or employs them, as long as they are treated fairly and with respect and consideration. Over a period of time, and imperceptibly, old and new members of a village or town or principality or country have intermingled, and become one. The period of time we are talking about in Sri Lanka as a whole is a very long one, 25 centuries.

Once we start using communal labels, there is a real danger of falsifying the reality which we have indicated. We discuss the communal make-up of the Sri Lankan people simply to show how contrary to reality racist fantasies are. After all, if any person traces his or her ancestry back 20 generations (at 25 to 30 years to a generation it would be 500 to 600 years) he or she could literally have had as many as a million ancestors. Of course, this *possibility* is modified in practice by social regulation of marriage and by the smallness of village communities and towns. Even then, there is no question that the practice of tracing ancestry by one or two lines of descent is self-deception. By the early 19th century the people of Sri Lanka were thoroughly mixed in ancestry, and could, if they wished, trace their remote ancestry to very diverse parts of the globe. Like most of the world's peoples, nearly everyone in Sri Lanka is descended from immigrants and settlers who arrived at different times and kept on joining in building new villages and settlements. And most live in neighbourhoods, towns or villages which the people by their actions have created right up to the present. Sri Lankans can take pride in their diverse inheritance, which accounts for the fascination of living in Sri Lanka. The freedom to make one's home anywhere in Sri Lanka is an old and valued tradition, and essentially Sri Lankan, as against ideologies of the master 'race', exclusive territorial rights, skin-colour discrimination, and *apartheid* which are alien to our traditions.

According to what may be called the South African 

apartheid) view, where people are allowed to live and what work they may do and whom they will relate to are things enforced by people on high, who will label them for the purpose. Those who over centuries have intermingled and integrated will be segregated: some categories of Sri Lankans will be forcibly removed or driven out from their homes, home neighbourhoods and livelihood and towns into Bantustans or special areas reserved for a particular 'race', or from the country. Sri Lanka's good traditions are under this alien threat.

In colonial Ceylon there was segregation in a limited sense when the coffee and tea plantations were opened up. Impoverished peasants from one part of the British Empire, India, were shipped to another part, Ceylon, and those who survived the hard journey and could be put to work opening up the plantation areas and cultivating coffee or tea were segregated in 'coolie lines'. Three aspects of this colonial practice were a shock to the long established Sri Lankan tradition. First, the immigrants were introduced by the government into the Kandyan areas in large batches (40,000 to 70,000) year after year, and shipped out, year after year, in large batches, too, ever since the 1840s. Compared with the local Kandyan population these were in any case unassimilable numbers; and the economic impact of supplying them with food, etc., was not slight. Second it was in the planters' interest to keep them segregated from the proud and rebellious Kandyans, and to prevent them from living, normally, in villages, and from mixing and intermarrying. Third, though they came from a country with civilised traditions as ancient and as great as Sri Lanka's, they were nearly all, for many decades, people who had become extremely impoverished, and not educated in the traditional sense in which the Kandyan peasant was; they had also been and still were, in the circumstances, victims of the iniquitous Indian caste system, and consequently the difference in cultural level between them and the Kandyan peasants or Sinhalese and Sri Lanka Tamil workers was unfortunately very wide. It was government policy not to provide for the educational needs of the children on the plantations. Though the contribution made to the economy by generations of plantation workers was considerable, it was only from the late 19th century that they were able to integrate with the rest of the population. Along with some others who came individually as traders or professional people from India and made Sri Lanka their home in British times, they made up the 'Sri Lankans of recent Indian origin', labelled 'Indian Tamil', as distinct from

'Ceylon Tamil'.

They came to Sri Lanka legally. They are now fourth or third generation Sri Lankans. They were the first victims of the racist practice, initiated by D.S. Senanayake, (and agreed to by G.G. Ponnambalam), of disfranchisement, deprivation of citizenship, racial persecution and expulsion. The plantation workers had voted for opposition candidates in the 1947 general elections, and were thus a 'threat' to the UNP. Because the Indian government interfered in the matter and condoned this treatment, opposition to it has been difficult. Under all governments since independence they have been subject increasingly to humiliation, harassment, expulsion from their jobs and homes, organised violence, and killings, all carried out without any danger of punishment by the courts or even moral condemnation by the rulers. Thus the *apartheid* ideology and Sinhalese racism has been nurtured. 11 per cent of the national population at independence, they had been reduced to less than 6 per cent at the time of the 1981 Census. Generally, they are the urban and estate workers who do the worst-paid and most unpleasant jobs.

The rest of the people include several 'communities', depending on how one counts. There are those, some of whose ancestors first came to the island 200 to about 700 years ago — the Burghers, Malays, some of the Sinhala-speaking and Tamil-speaking coastal communities, and the Moors — and intermarried with earlier immigrants; and others deriving from settlements going back over 2,500 years or from the original inhabitants living here in prehistoric times. A knowledge of the details will be possible only when serious archaeological and historical research (difficult in the last 25 years) is resumed and freedom of publication becomes possible again. But from what is already known, there is no doubt that, from early times, the southward migrations which were taking place on the South Asian mainland in the 1st Millenium B.C. spilled over into the island, and that the early versions of both Sinhala and Tamil were used before the 5th Century B.C. In the period before racism infected even scholarly publications of the University of Ceylon, Dr Senerat Paranavitana wrote of some archaeological discoveries in Sri Lanka:

'These megalithic sites and urnfields are found throughout the regions inhabited by the Dravidian-speaking people. The burial customs to which they bear witness are referred to in early Tamil literature. It is therefore legitimate to infer that

the people who buried their dead in dolmens and cists, as well as in large earthenware jars, were Dravidians... The few megalithic monuments and urn-burials discovered in Ceylon are obviously an overflow from South India. The archaeological evidence is supported by literary sources. The Dravidian peoples influenced the course of the island's history about the same time they gained mastery over the South Indian Kingdoms' (*Sinhalayo*, 1967)

The historian, Dr G.C. Mendis, in his *The Early History of Ceylon*, wrote in the 1930s:

'Another stock of people who helped to form the Sinhalese race was the Dravidian. There is no evidence to show when they first came to the island, but they undoubtedly came from the earliest times onwards, whether as invaders or as peaceful immigrants. Most of them gradually adopted the Sinhalese language as some of them still do in the coastal districts, and were merged in the Sinhalese population...

There is sufficient evidence to prove that in the early centuries of the Christian era the Dravidians helped to form the Sinhalese race... It is difficult to gauge the extent of Tamil blood (sic) among the Sinhalese, but there is no doubt that it is considerable.'

The central Sri Lankan tradition — that which made all Sri Lankans beneficiaries till recently of a major civilisation lasting over 2,000 years — is that which was developed by the people out of the Buddhist civilisation of Anuradhapura beginning in the 3rd Century B.C. It is difficult for us to imagine the Sri Lankan people continuing to live as civilised individuals and communities if the deep moral and doctrinal crisis in which Buddhism in the island now finds itself is not resolved, and if the horrible barbarism which falsely claims to be Buddhist (see chapter 12 and 13) prevails. In religion anyone may be Buddhist, or Hindu, or Muslim, or Christian, or anything else, but in a real sense the example of the Buddha, the noble moral aspirations and world outlook of the Dharma, and the original ideals of the Sangha (the non-hierarchical community of *bhikkus* depending on and serving the people) have to some extent permeated all of Sri Lankan society and culture. Whether or not the tree has begun to wither, the deep roots have been there in what we may term the ideal Sri Lankan morality and psychology of a compassionate respect for all life, of tolerance of diversity, in-

dependence and dissent, of a rational approach to problems of truth and of relationships, of open hospitality, of exposing the falseness of racism and casteism, and of good humour, goodwill and serenity rather than fanaticism, greed and hate. All this may seem like a 'commercial'. But it expresses the attractions that their country used to have for Sri Lankans before some bhikkus were not too ashamed to start organising pogroms (see chapters 11 and 12).

What anyone's birth is, or caste, or race, or language, is a matter of indifference to those who take the Buddha's teaching seriously. Such considerations are regarded as bonds from which freedom is to be sought; they are obstacles to achieving the only righteousness and wisdom worth achieving. In one of the Buddha's dialogues, he has an encounter with a Brahmin, Ambattha. In the course of it Ambattha asks a question, and Gotama answers:

'In the supreme perfection of wisdom and righteousness, Ambattha, there is no reference to the question either of birth or of lineage, or of the pride which says: 'You are held as worthy as I', or 'You are not held as worthy as I'. It is where the talk is of marrying, or of giving in marriage, that reference is made to such things as that. For whosoever, Ambattha, are in bondage to the notions of birth or lineage, or to the pride of social position, or of connection by marriage, they are far from the best wisdom and righteousness, It is only by having got rid of such bondage that one can realise for himself that supreme perfection in wisdom and in conduct.' (Ambattha Sutta)

People who have visited the ruins of Anuradhapura will be aware that Sri Lankan civilisation originated as early as the time of Alexander the Great. The original civilisation was the creation of immigrants from prehistoric times who intermarried with the indigenous and earlier immigrant peoples and with persons in the nearby Indian principalities. Whether the Sinhalese or Tamils came first is irrelevant. Only the racist campaigns and distortions of the recent past have made *that* into a life-and-death issue. (As though it affects Greek civilisation where the early Greeks migrated from and from where their alphabet was derived!) The Sinhala language was developed in the island, and so were classical Sinhalese culture and Sri Lankan Buddhist civilisation. Among the early Buddhists were 'Tamils', and their contribution to these merged with that of the 'Sinhalese'.

It will save needless confusion if it is remembered that Buddhism, like these waves of Sinhalese and Tamil immigrations, originated in the Indian subcontinent — where there were many principalities and migrations of peoples. When its missionaries came to the island in the time of the emperor Asoka, many of the peoples of the subcontinent, including those in the south, had been 'converted' to it. It is also useful to remember that part of the migrations of the ancestors of the Tamils branched off and stopped in various parts of southern India, to create ancient cultures and societies there which differed from that which carried on into Sri Lanka, where the Tamils joined with the Sinhalese (in so far as they were different in make-up) in creating a different culture and society. Only a fraction of 'Tamil' settlers must at that stage have remained Tamil-speaking. But even those Tamils who migrated later, in the 3rd Century B.C. onwards, along with others from what had become for a time Buddhist India, must have included Buddhists. There is evidence of Tamil members of the Sangha, in southern India, and in any case, the bhikkus' names usually obliterated their pre-Buddhist identities. Tamils would have contributed not only to the make-up of the 'Sinhalese' population, language and music, etc., as no less an authority than Dr E.R. Sarathchandra has pointed out, but also to Buddhist scholarship.

It was only later, after the Hindu revival in India, that the South Indian kingdoms became, sometimes militantly, Hindu. Bhuddhist teaching and practice declined and almost disappeared in its homeland, including the south. Later immigrants into Sri Lanka, as well as invaders, were Hindus, speaking an already developed Tamil language. Hence the existence of Tamil villages and principalities in the island which remained Tamil, and Hindu, from the early centuries of the Christian era. Sri Lanka, or large parts of it, was for long periods unified and ruled as one or two kingdoms; at other times there was either anarchy, or the existence of a number of principalities. Naturally, when there were invasions in later centuries from South India, the descendants of earlier 'Tamil' Sri Lankans played their part in resisting these and liberating the country. There were no racial wars. History is very much the same everywhere. Only, people in most countries do not base the writing and teaching of their early history almost entirely, as Sri Lankans have recently done when they have relied exclusively on the *Mahawamsa*, on the chronicle of a mediaeval monk who was anti-Tamil, and not capable of grasping the complex nature of international alliances

and conflicts.

It may be worth mentioning also that the 'Tamil' Elara, who ruled in Anuradhapura from 145 to 101 B.C., was one of the great kings of Sri Lankan history — a man of high principle, concerned for his subjects, and humane. Dutugemunu, the Sinhalese hero who defeated him in battle and reigned after him, paid him the honour and tribute of virtually making his tomb a shrine. It was really in Sri Lanka, as the newspaper, *The Island*, reminded the self-styled 'Buddhists' who organised the pogrom, 'that a Sinhala King after slaying his rival in single combat erected in his memory a monument commanding his people that no one should pass that tomb but on foot and all drums should be silenced and that all singing should cease in processions passing by... (21 August, 1983).

At one time the Nazi doctrine of a superior 'Aryan race' was propagated by some Sinhalese racists. In fact, Sinhalese and Tamils are racially the same. For centuries, Sinhalese who moved to Tamil-speaking villages or communities adopted Tamil; and Tamil-speaking Sri Lankans who moved to Sinhala-speaking villages became Sinhala-speaking, and modified their name-endings. Sinhalese and Tamils who moved into or were incorporated into Moor villages sometimes became Muslims and spoke Tamil, which is the first language of this community. Those who were attracted to Christianity, for one reason or another, chose to become Christian, and, along with immigrants who came as and remained Christian, lived amongst Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and others. Some of us believe that it is a Buddhist civilisation and polity which best provides for and accounts for the tradition of the peaceful coexistence of Sri Lankans who are free to speak different languages and be Hindu or Muslim or Marxist or whatever. (Radical rightist or fascist movements cannot succeed in seizing power without first subverting the Buddha's doctrine and the Sangha from within.)

Until the British colonial administration began its census classifications, people had not been counted according to virtually unchangeable religious and communal labels. It is simply not the case that in reality the 'Sri Lankan Tamils' or 'Low Country Sinhalese' each form a monolithic community. Much less do they constitute 'races'. Among the Sri Lanka Tamils, for example, there are different communities, in the real sense: the 200-year-old Sri Lanka Colombo Tamils are historically distinct from the Jaffna Tamils; and there are contradictions between the latter and the Batticaloa Tamils. Castes among the Sinhala-

speaking Sri Lankans must not be taken to mean castes in the Indian Hindu sense. The *Goigamas* have been the privileged, mainly landowning caste. But whatever some of them may like to think, there is no stratification into superior and subordinate castes in relations between them and the *Karava* and *Salagama* communities. It does not reflect the social reality to count all the currently Sinhala-speaking individuals together, as though their economic interests, cultural traditions and aspirations were the same. They are part of a variety of local communities, some integrated more closely than others with Tamils, Moors and Burghers. For centuries people have come to belong to, and helped to create, local communities, and have developed loyalties to a particular region or town or city neighbourhood.

Even nationally, when left to themselves, people imperceptibly change the picture. Nearly 100 years ago, at the 1891 Census, the total population was 3,007,800. Of this,

2,044,762 (67.3 per cent)	were Sinhalese
488,644 (16.0 per cent)	were Sri Lanka or 'homeborn' Tamils
197,381 (6.5 per cent)	were Moors
21,289 (0.7 per cent)	were Burghers
10,120 (0.3 per cent)	were Malays
235,109 (9.0 per cent)	were 'Indian Tamil' immigrants
6,356 (0.2 per cent)	were Europeans

Colombo's population then was 127,836. Colombo was already then a truly multi-communal, multi-religious city. By 1946 its population had grown to 362,074, of which 38.5 per cent were Buddhists, 18.1 Hindus, 20.5 Muslims and 22.7 Christians. The main communal classifications for the two years may be of interest:

	1891	1946
Low Country Sinhalese		44.3
Kandyan Sinhalese	46.9	2.4
Ceylon Tamils		9.8
Indian Tamils	19.0	12.5
Ceylon Moors		12.4
Indian Moors	19.0	4.4
Burghers	8.3	4.4
Malays	2.6	3.0
Europeans	1.7	0.7
Others	2.1	5.7

In so far as Colombo gave an indication of trends towards communal harmony for the future the following facts about it just about the time of Independence are interesting. Of those in it who were 3 years and over, 38 per cent could speak both Sinhala and Tamil, 28 per cent could speak English, and 14.4 per cent could speak all three languages. 47 per cent could speak Tamil, but that was partly because 40 per cent of its population had Tamil as their first language.

Colombo was not the only urban centre in which these trends were manifested. But it was the main working-class centre, in which birth and privilege and power were opposed by the demands for change, for justice. Colombo had been the seat of colonial rule over Sri Lanka. But with less than 2,500 Europeans living in it at independence (whatever that was to mean in practice), it was a Sri Lankan city. Many of the people who had migrated to it for over two centuries and helped to create it had been people who had been forced to leave their home villages because they did not have any land or other means of production to get their subsistence.

By 1981, in the same area, the population of the city had almost doubled. But the changes that had taken place were not those which any patriotic person in 1948 would have hoped for. The capital had almost lost the character it had been given by those who had lived in it, designed its buildings and streets, and enjoyed it. The skyline and the high rise buildings told the story of take-overs by property developers and the approaching death of the city centre. Hotels were coming up for tourists and stop-over stays. The House of Representatives was soon to be vacated. Rule by armies of thugs, and by the commanders of those armies, was soon to manifest itself.

4. THE FAILURE TO ACHIEVE ECONOMIC PROGRESS

Although Sri Lanka had suffered badly as a result of colonial subjection, its situation at the time of independence was by no means as bad as that of most countries in East, Southeast and South Asia in the late 1940s. The task then before the Chinese people was colossal, seemingly impossible. India had a few more modern industries, a unified administration, and so on, but its rural and urban poverty was unbelievably bad. Several other countries had been through the Japanese occupation and had suffered from the Second World War; Indonesia, moreover, had very few people educated in modern science and technology.

Sri Lanka was spared the fighting and civil war, as well as the costs of a war of national liberation. Though it was dependent heavily on production for export markets, it was a major producer of rubber and coconuts as well as of tea. It was not as badly off as single-crop colonial economies. This was not much of a consolation, as decolonisation would in any case be enormously difficult. But if the Sri Lankan people had relied on their own powers and initiatives and hard work, they would have had, by Third World standards of the time, the advantages of being relatively healthy and educated. Because food rationing had been introduced during the War, in 1942, extreme malnutrition was at a minimum. There was a well-organised and competently staffed public health service as well as a state hospital system. Life expectancy was 46 years. Free and compulsory education was in operation. The schools were not adequately distributed throughout the country, as between town and village, and among the districts; but there were enough high school and university graduates already on whose knowledge and enthusiasm the people could rely to make rapid advances in education. The literacy

rate in 1946 was 58 per cent.

Unfortunately, there was no scope under the 'independence' deal for the people to rely on themselves, or to give expression to their patriotic desire to create a new Sri Lanka. We have already dwelt on this point. Health conditions continued to improve for a number of years, and the literacy rate and general education level rose. Academic and professional standards were generally high, and students worked hard. But those who in one sense or another had been most oppressed or confined by colonialism and feudalism did not take into their own hands the power and responsibility to make their future. They were unable to break free of the paternalistic rule of politicians whose petty personal ambitions and intrigues, chauvinism, conservatism, reliance on the imperialist powers and fear of revolutionary change prevented the solution of the country's problems. The hard currency (sterling) balances accumulated during the war were not used to invest in the country's future. Britain was allowed to use some of them to solve her problems. The rest of it, as well as the funds accumulated during the Korean War boom, were run down on imports of food and of luxury goods. After the boom import prices rose as export prices fell. The government resorted to deficit financing to balance the budget.

In the meantime, the sudden death, after an accident, of Prime Minister D.S. Senanayake in 1952 threw the ruling class into some confusion. It was not overflowing with talent, and the need, from their point of view, was to keep the existing state of affairs stable. Dudley Senanayake succeeded his father. He called an election in 1952, and though Bandaranaike had left the UNP in 1951 and contested the election as SLFP leader (see below) Senanayake had his position confirmed. With continued reliance on the plantation economy and on foreign investment and loans, the government ran into difficulties. The stringent economic measures to which the UNP resorted in August 1953, revealed the vast gap between the rulers, for whom the Lake House newspapers (see Glossary) created 'public opinion', and the mass of the people. The subsidy on rice was abolished suddenly, and the price of rice nearly trebled. Rail fares were increased; the free mid-day meal for school children was abolished. The price of sugar went up. The government had hit the poor, not the rich or foreign interests.

The people responded with the now famous *Hartal* (general work stoppage) of 12 August. It was led by the workers. And it was effective. Sri Lanka had never before, and has never since,

been so close to a revolutionary overthrow of the government by the working class. (The LSSP was not a revolutionary socialist party, and refrained from seizing the opportunity.) The rulers, and Lake House, panicked. The Prime Minister was reported to have sought safety on a ship. There was repression, the army was used, and people were shot. Dudley Senanayake could not stomach all that violence, and resigned. His cousin Sir John Kotelawala took his place.

Kotelawala became Prime Minister because he was the UNP leader and not because he could solve Sri Lanka's problems. The people's aspirations, needs and demands grew much faster than the means of satisfying them within the existing system in a just and civilised manner. Their discontent with the UNP also grew. In the mid-1950s the overseas market for rubber contracted, and both the estate owners and the government were anxious about the future. The People's Republic of China came to Sri Lanka's rescue and a deal was made to barter the rubber, at favourable rates, for Chinese rice. The government was forced to begin changing its hitherto Western-oriented trading pattern.

S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike (now opposition leader) did not know much better than Kotelawala how to bring about the economic leap forward that would provide the people with increasing job opportunities and better living conditions, as well as scope for ambitious members of the petty bourgeoisie who gave him support. He was clever enough to mobilise patriotic and radical mass opinion against his opponents. But the SLFP was careful to avoid fundamental decolonisation or de-feudalisation. To break the mould which was continuing to produce an essentially colonial society would, he knew, mean the destruction of the foundations on which rested the rule of the patrician families of all political factions. But he was shrewd enough to redefine the problem and to propose a radical solution. The Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) was more a Sinhalese party than a Sri Lankan one. He tried to satisfy his party cadres and followers, and win over voters from the UNP (especially those from the frustrated non-*goigama* communities), by proposing *communally* discriminatory policies which were unjust as well as contrary to the Constitution. They were a device which would enable the rulers to cater primarily for the 70 per cent or so of Sri Lankans who were Sinhalese and increase the jobs and businesses available to them by taking those of the Tamils and other minorities. Sri Lanka was deluged with 'statistics' and 'analyses' for this ignoble purpose. Sri

Lankans could not, as a small nation, go and attack some other country and loot its resources. But the numerically larger community could loot the smaller ones. This form of redistribution was a way of avoiding both class conflict and a confrontation with imperialism, whose interests were not affected by attempts to revive the cultural and religious 'glories' of a fictitious past in which Sri Lanka was supposedly exclusively Sinhalese and Buddhist and to make Sinhalese the only official language. (Sinhala-speaking compradors need not be any less 'loyal' than English-speaking ones. As long as they were victimising Tamil-speaking compradores and the Tamil masses, Sri Lankans would not join the Third World struggle against imperialism!) Bandaranaike formed a united front with a chauvinist fraction of the LSSP, and called it the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP). They got the power they wanted when the anti-UNP vote in the 1956 general election swept them to office.

But economic realities are different from racist fantasies. Once in office, they could not find the way to economic independence and development by making false accusations against and killing one section of Sri Lankans. For the ownership and exploitation of the common means of production was mostly by foreign companies and ruling class Low Country Sinhalese owners of paddy lands, estates, mines, firms and businesses. The plantations were sacred, but not the rights and lives of Sri Lankans! To have challenged the sanctity of British capital and US 'Free World' doctrine would have been courageous; the organised victimisation, humiliation and killing of one's own people, innocent people, was the beginning of a leap forward in national degeneration — not only morally and politically but also economically. National unity among the people, a firm grip on economic realities, social justice, and the determination by the people to eradicate colonial and feudal privilege: without these there could not be real economic progress in the conditions that existed. Sri Lankans, mostly Sinhalese, had a right to jobs. But only development could produce them. The SLFP turned out to be a party that did not foster and support independent Sri Lankan industry but rather welcomed new foreign capital with guarantees of security.

Bandaranaike could not however avoid taking account of the demands of tenant cultivators. In 1958 the Paddy Lands Act was passed; its aim was to regulate, not of course to abolish, share tenancy. If it had been made to work it would have given a measure of security of tenure to poor peasants; kept rents, in-

terest rate on loans, and the cost of hiring implements, farm animals, etc., within reasonable limits, and brought about a measure of self-determination through cultivation committees. Rural inequalities were very great, and the affluence and political power of the landed families and prosperous farmers would have been eroded. But the Act was only half-heartedly implemented. What happened was that though the Act made evictions of share croppers illegal, tens of thousands of evictions by landlords took place, and the cultivation committees did not function properly. Reforms were not allowed to undermine the basis of landlord power. Rural poverty continued to hold back the country's economic progress.

In the 1950s and the early 1960s, when Mrs Bandaranaike was the Prime Minister, development planning, such as there was, assumed the continuance of the plantation economy. (E.g. the 1959 *Ten Year Plan*.) This conservative outlook was the cause of economic stagnation. The UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East showed that from 1950 to 1959 'Private Consumption per head' rose at the rate of 1.2 per cent, and 'Total Consumption per head' at the rate of 1.8 per cent, annually. The corresponding figures for Japan were 6.8 and 6.7; for the Philippines 5.7 and 3.1. During those years in Sri Lanka only 11 per cent of public investment went into industry; whereas for India the corresponding figure was 21 per cent and for China 51 per cent.

In 19th century Ceylon the plantation economy failed to bring about the transition of capitalism in Ceylon. In a recent paper, Dr S.B.D. de Silva provided an illuminating analysis of why this was so (*Plantations and Underdevelopment*). He drew attention to the 'inherent technological backwardness which went hand in hand with a low wage structure', and to the fact that the 'low organic composition of capital on plantations also retards capital concentration, involving the capitalisation of surplus value and increased productivity of labour...' We do not have space to discuss the question here in detail. What we would like to point out is that the nationalisation of plantations does not solve the economic problems Sri Lanka faces as it approaches the 21st century.

During her first term (1960-65), Mrs Bandaranaike created further distortions in the country's development by resorting to emergency rule, and sending the military to occupy Jaffna. The sound and the fury of racist demagoguery and reaction sabotaged even the cultural renaissance. The UNP returned to office

under Dudley Senanayake from 1965 to 1970. There was increase in paddy production. But the rich had grown richer, and the poor poorer. Inflation had become a serious problem; there was massive unemployment; and the number of people living below the poverty line increased rapidly. According to the 1969/70 Socio-economic Survey of the Department of Census and Statistics, it was the young people of both sexes, and especially those who had 'O' level and higher certificates, who had the highest rates of unemployment; for example, for low-income and middle-income groups aged 20-24 it was over 40 per cent and in some cases over 50 per cent. The UNP-SLFP power struggle was proving to be incapable of solving the desperate problems of the people. In 1970 the radical 'socialist' manifesto of the United Front seemed to offer new hope.

The 1970-77 government had difficulties which arose from external factors as well as internal, and tried to improve the extremely bad balance of payments situation while coping with world recession, oil price rises and foreign (Western) hostility: But the incompetence of many Ministers, especially the Minister of Agriculture, made things worse. Living conditions for millions were really bad, and made worse by the grossly unjust and cruel treatment of large sections of the labouring people. The viciousness of the government's attack on minorities created serious problems of security. What ordinary people wanted — opportunities to better their lot, jobs, dignity, peace, enjoyable living — were further away than ever before.

An issue of the Bulletin of the National Science Council of Sri Lanka, *Vidurava*, (March, 1977) dealing with Food and Nutrition had an article by Priyani Soysa, Professor of Paediatrics of the University of Sri Lanka, based on the results of an authoritative international survey of the nutritional status of pre-school children, done from September 1975 to March 1976. 6.6 per cent were acutely undernourished and 34 per cent chronically undernourished on the average. In 1974, three districts had an infant mortality rate of over 70, and three others of 60 or over.

Increasingly in Sri Lanka it was Ministers, MPs, their families and their proteges who had it 'good'. At the expense of the whole people they enriched themselves, travelled abroad at public expense, grabbed lucrative posts, promoted their business interests and persecuted those whom they disliked. Jobs were at the disposal of this privileged elite, regardless of qualifications or merit, and it was not unusual for persons of the favoured

'race' and religion, who were well-qualified to fill job vacancies, to have to pay a bribe.

There is no doubt that corruption, nepotism and discrimination got much worse after 1977. But as the UNP regime, with its 'liberalization' talk, was very acceptable to the United States and Britain, and to the World Bank, and as they were not bothered by such matters as corruption, we will consider very briefly how the World Bank assessed the performance of the government from 1977 to 1982. The *Lanka Guardian* published its economic report on 15 August, 1983, and we will quote some of the World Bank's comments on the three main objectives of (i) Higher growth of production and related employment; (ii) Higher savings and investment; and (iii) Export promotion.

Overall GDP growth, for example, has been relatively high, averaging 6.2% over the past five years. The sources of growth have been paddy production, services and construction — areas which benefited from the change in relative prices, the removal of import quotas and rapidly expanded investment. Growth in the key tree crop and manufacturing sectors, however, which should have benefited from the 'liberalization' strategy, has been low... Relative incentives and institutional support have been weak to the manufacturing sector, where growth...has been sluggish.

In 1977 and 1978, foreign savings were financed by aid inflows, which were sufficient to enable Sri Lanka to accumulate foreign reserves. In recent years, however, an increasing share of foreign savings has been financed by non-concessionary external borrowing and a drawdown in reserves — an undesirable development...

Turning to the third major objective of the 1977/78 reforms — export promotion...exports are lower today, in relation to GDP, than they were in 1977. Problems associated with the traditional exports of tea, rubber and coconuts have resulted in a decline of export earnings from these products from about 20% of GDP in 1977/78 to 10% of GDP in 1982... Also disappointing has been the relative 'slow growth in other non-petroleum exports — with the notable exception of garments...

External factors have been both favourable and unfavourable to Sri Lanka... Private remittances from Sri Lankans working abroad and net aid inflows have increased dramatically since 1977. In current dollar terms, these foreign

inflows have increased from \$110 million in 1977 to \$620 million in 1982; as a percentage of GDP, they have risen from 3% to 13%...

There was a strong need for government policies to encourage production in the short to medium term through better price incentives and supportive institutions, while maintaining domestic price stability to the extent feasible. In view of this need, the major failure in the government's strategy during the past five years has been its budgetary policy. As a share of GDP, budgetary spending increased sharply from 23% in 1977 to a record 43% in 1980 and about 34% during 1981-82. The increase in capital spending was especially dramatic, with heavy emphasis on capital-intensive and long-gestating projects, such as the Mahaweli Program and the housing and urban development program. The preoccupation with this expanded public sector program diverted attention from the need for support for profitable, quick-gestating in the goods-producing and especially export-producing sectors. Budgetary provisions, including tax incentives for other sectors, have, in fact, reduced incentives for private investment in the goods-producing sectors...

The large budget deficits have led to both higher imports and higher inflation — the latter particularly in 1980 as a result of pressures of much higher expenditures on real and financial resources. Inflation in Sri Lanka averaged a relatively high 15% a year over the 1977-82 period... In sum, one is forced to conclude that, whereas the government's initial reforms improved the economic environment, the primary condition for a successful liberalization strategy — namely a marked improvement in the price incentives and hence profitability for the production of traded goods — has not been sustained...

A significant feature of the post-1977 budgetary situation is the high dependence on foreign financing...

We do not share the World Bank's view of what is good for Sri Lanka. But the UNP presumably does. While the regime has failed to perform satisfactorily by the World Bank's standards, it has done much worse in terms of improving the material conditions of the Sri Lankan people. The boom in construction was related mostly to the building of hotels, guest houses, etc., for tourists and of houses for the more affluent. The promotion of grandiose schemes was certainly profitable for some Sri

Lankans. We might add that the padding of the payroll of government departments and corporations with UNP thugs and agents has been economically damaging. By the end of 1982 it was clear that very difficult times were ahead.

When those who belong to the various Sinhala-speaking communities and who profess Buddhism are encouraged to think of themselves as the master race, whose most capricious demands all fellow-Sri Lankans must give in to, and who do not need to earn honestly what they get, things naturally go wrong in the economy. The leaders become those who utter the most blood-curdling war-cries and make the most bombastic speeches, like nearly the whole present cabinet of ministers, and not those who know how to do a competent job of work.

By the end of 1981 Sri Lanka was economically far behind most of the countries she had been ahead of 35 years previously. Sri Lanka's Total Public Debt in millions of rupees had gone from 15,620.6 to 58,659.2; and the Foreign Loans Total in the same period from 5,306.9 to 29,172.1.

5. DOWN THE SLIPPERY SLOPE TO DICTATORSHIP

In the early 1950s, as a consequence of the struggle for state power and economic privilege within the dominant Sinhalese elites, a section of the ruling United National Party (UNP) broke away to form a new party, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike was the leader. His position as the second-ranking member of the UNP leadership had become precarious, as the Senanayake family had more than one candidate for the succession to the Prime Minister. The UNP had always used a great deal of violence against those who stood as candidates against its nominees, and it had not bothered to conduct elections fairly and honestly. The split now among those who knew the 'tricks of the trade' about the UNP's conduct of elections and manipulation of the results provided the conditions, after the general election of 1952, for the creation of a strong and impartial Department of Elections. It made a big difference that government ministers no longer gave orders to election staff, and were not in possession of ballot boxes before the count!

The commissioner who headed the department was an old-style civil servant: a person of exceptional integrity and sense of public responsibility, a good administrator, and what may be termed a liberal conservative. Sri Lankans were tending to take elections seriously. Between the general elections of 1947 and 1952 (the first after independence) the percentage of voters who polled went up from 55.8 to 70.7. Senanayake had disfranchised, and deprived of their citizenship, the vast majority of the Tamils of recent Indian origin, and in that way prevented the plantation workers from voting against the UNP. Nevertheless, apart from the votes for the northern Tamils' communal parties

and the non-party 'independents', about one-third of the vote was anti-UNP, even though it secured only 23 per cent of the seats.

For the politicians the stakes were high. As we noticed earlier, for affluent and leisured landowners the prospect of being Prime Minister, of being a VIP in the country and internationally in the changing world of the 1950s, was worth realising at almost any cost. Sir John Kotelawala, for example, was one of five who called together the now famous Bandung Conference; the British and US governments treated him with respect. As rivalries intensified, politics became more violent and acrimonious than ever, and increasingly characterised by demagoguery in which appeals to race and caste played a big part. As ambitious and well-to-do politicians were not much interested in or knowledgeable about the issues of independence, social progress and economic development, voters had to make the best of things by shopping around for the best that was on offer.

The administration of the general elections of 1956, 1960 (March), 1960 (July), 1965, 1970 and 1977 kept to high standards. Governments were unable to 'fix' these elections, whatever they did to influence MPs once they were in office. In each of these elections the parties holding office failed to satisfy the electors and were defeated at the polls. (The UNP, which had 54 seats out of 95 in 1952, was allowed only 8 in 1956). Though Kotelawala had said that he would never allow the SLFP to come into office, he was forced to accept the verdict of the people. There were cases of local post-election violence directed against either victorious or defeated candidates, but never a refusal to quit the seats of power and, evidently, profit. In 1972 the ruling coalition, carrying out its election promise to regard the 1970 Parliament as a Constituent Assembly, passed a new state constitution. But it used the occasion, with some casuistry, to renew its term of office, thereby remaining in office for 7 years. For this presumption and for other reasons we have given elsewhere the Ministers and others paid dearly, in a general election in 1977 in which 86.7 per cent of the total number of voters turned out to reduce their parties' representation in the National Assembly from 116 to 7. The Sri Lankan voter was to be feared! The United Front coalition, liberal with its pseudo-Marxist and populist clap-trap, had vastly increased the powers and status of MPs, been responsible for the killing of many hundreds of young people connected with rebellion by the youthful

Janatha Vimukthi Peremuna (JVP), taken harsh and cruel measures against innocent plantation workers of Indian origin, organised serious police harassment of the people of Jaffna, victimised political opponents and personal enemies by expropriating their property and even personal possessions. The coalition could not save itself from justice at the hands of the people by its appeal to Sinhalese chauvinism.

For all its distinction as a parliamentary democracy Sri Lanka did not complete its process of transformation from colonial and neocolonial to fully democratic conditions. There were not enough centres of business, production or publication economically independent of the ruling class and of the government. There were only a few people's groups and organisations which were independent of and not afraid of the government. The necessary infrastructure of autonomous economic, cultural and political associations formed and run by the people had not been developed sufficiently to articulate the life of the people in ways and forms they wanted. Nevertheless the Sri Lankan people had got used to creating, joining and supporting political parties, arguing about and debating political issues with varying degrees of political sophistication and not being afraid of criticising their rulers and their institutions. Moreover, as we have noticed, for decades even the lack of a sufficient variety of political journals and centres of learning and publication had not prevented people from 'listening in' to and critically evaluating debates on fiercely contested issues in parliament. Until 1972 the judiciary was independent of the executive and the MPs. Judges of course had their own subjective bias based on class, etc., but they, particularly the Supreme Court, did not, in carrying out their work, have to yield to executive threats and pressures in order to remain judges. Even in colonial times, English judges maintained a great tradition in protecting civil liberties and the rights of ordinary citizens against the Governor and his officials. Undoubtedly, the people favoured further development of the conditions of democracy rather than the growth of arbitrary rule and dictatorship.

To 'punish' the United Front of the SLFP, LSSP and Communist Party the people had to vote massively for the opponents. This they did to such effect that the UNP's representation in the National Assembly went up from 17 in 1970 to 142 in 1977. It must be recognised that the stringent measures taken by the UF government to weather the world crisis of 1973-4 and to manage the economy in the face of the hostility of Western

governments and of local sabotage was used with skill by their rivals. Their financial discipline had helped them to reduce the debt burden. Nevertheless, they failed to convince those who had been taken in by their grand promises in 1970 and their populist appeals that the hardships that had been inflicted on the masses and the economic failures during their term in office had not been due to bad faith, incompetence and corruption.

The UNP's election campaign of 1977 had been carefully planned. The people's hatred of the long queues for essential foodstuffs, of injustices, and so on, had been exploited with skill. At the same time every reactionary tendency, too, had been made use of. Caste loyalties and ambitions also were exploited with scant regard for future consequences. The UF government's vicious treatment of the plantation workers had thoroughly alienated the Ceylon Workers Congress under Thondaman, and the estate workers' votes were mobilised in support of the UNP. The lavish promises of J.R. Jayawardene, who led the UNP, matched the moods and desires of different sections of the masses as well as the hard-line UNP membership which had been in the wilderness for seven years. 'JR' consequently took office with an overwhelming majority in the National Assembly.

The popular vote had enabled this veteran politician to realise his long-held ambition to be Prime Minister. He took office with very laudable promises and undertakings: he was going to eliminate corruption; his Party was determined to avoid the 1970-77 government's resort to repressive legislation and its assumption of inordinate executive powers; he committed himself to respect and foster democracy, to end the hardships of the minorities, and to achieve rapid economic development of the country.

The 50th anniversary of the introduction of universal adult franchise in 1931 occurred during his term of office, and his government made much of the occasion at home and abroad — holding an exhibition at the Commonwealth Institute in London and also inviting the Queen of England to visit Sri Lanka (which she did in 1981). Although D.S. Senanayake's government had already put an end to universal adult franchise, the celebration of the anniversary could have been taken to mean a continuing commitment to parliamentary democracy.

In 1978 the UNP used its huge majority in parliament to change the state constitution. Some of the undesirable features of the 1972 constitution were done away with. The independence of the judiciary was restored. The new constitution laid down

that 'No citizen shall be discriminated against on account of race or religion', and 'All persons are equal before the law and are entitled to the equal protection of the law'. The language rights of Tamil-speaking Sri Lankans in all parts of the country were guaranteed. The term of office of the existing Assembly was definitely to end in July 1983, and elections thereafter were to be on the basis of proportional representation.

Under the terms of the new constitution, the head of state and head of government would henceforth be the President. Jayawardene changed from being Prime Minister to being President of the Republic. Ranasinghe Premadasa became Prime Minister, but without the right to nominate ministers for appointment or to dismiss them. The President would have those powers and would preside over the cabinet of Ministers, but the Prime Minister would be the government leader in Parliament.

On 12 September, 1978, the government newspaper, the *Ceylon Daily News*, published an interview given by the new President to Vijitha Yapa, who was later to become Editor of a new independent newspaper, *The Island*. In the course of the interview there were the following question and answer:

Q. When I interviewed you last year, before the elections, my first question was to ask you to comment on fears expressed in certain quarters that you may become a dictator if elected.

Now, returning to the island after a year abroad one finds the same accusation of paving the road to dictatorship being levelled against you by those in the Opposition.

A: In which dictatorship do you find tight laws like we have to prevent the extension of terms of the President or Parliament? Even two third majorities can no longer be used to deny the basic rights of people to choose their own representatives. Perhaps it is forgotten that Mrs Bandaranaike extended her term by two years and was wondering about extending it further. No, not even with a 100 per cent majority will elections be postponed.

The President could not have been more explicit than that. If in practice he had respected the basic rights of people to choose their own representatives and followed the path of democracy rather than dictatorship, he could not have done more for his country than that.

In 1977, in introducing legislation to repeal special legislation passed by the previous government, he had spoken of the special powers, 'hidden away somewhere, in some wardrobe or

closet, (which) one feels like using...’.

I do not want that temptation in our Government. When these are repealed, all the laws that will be operative in Sri Lanka will be normal laws. No man can be locked up by the police for more than 24 hours. He must be brought to court.... This is the only piece of legislation.

In 1978, on the pretext of proscribing the so-called ‘Liberation Tigers of Eelam’, alleged to be the terrorist movement of a few hundred youths in Jaffna fighting what they claimed was state repression, the President assumed powers to ban any organisation which *in his opinion* advocated violence or was directly or indirectly concerned in unlawful activity. There was no protection in it for persons who could be banned under it for up to a year and there were no rules governing the detention. There was a ban on ‘engaging in any activity of or connected with or related to’ a banned organisation; and so on. Objections to this bill from a democratic standpoint were raised, but to no avail.

The reality was turning out to be very different indeed from the promise and from the declared principles. And people concerned with democracy were worried, especially as the keen debates on national issues between government and opposition were no longer a feature of the National Assembly. The clear sign that drastic change was in the offing was given when Mrs Bandaranaike, who had been Prime Minister (1960-65 and 1970-77) and was the leader of the main opposition political party in the country (for which 2 million voters, 30 per cent, had voted in 1977) was deprived of her civic rights, virtually disfranchised, for ‘misuse of power’ by the use of the government’s majority. Such a move was unprecedented, and illegal, and was received with anger in the country, even among UNP members. It was a sign, which only a few then read accurately, of the UNP’s leadership’s wanting never again to submit their achievements and the careers of its parliamentarians and their proteges to the democratic process. And that was as early as October 1980.

In the Yapa interview, Jayawardene dismissed with an evasive answer questions about corruption in ministries and departments. In fact, under him and his associates, the explosive growth of corruption and nepotism was such as to dwarf everything that occurred prior to 1977. Foreign support to the regime provided, in addition to other things, massive foreign

loans — a source of rapid enrichment for the ministers and their friends and hangers-on, and of patronage to maintain a political base in the underworld and among the unemployed. There was massive waste; one cause of it was the growth of the numbers appointed to posts carrying salaries — these were the UNP's political cadres and thugs (the JSS) who were added to the payroll of government offices, banks and corporations. Many of them did no work at all, except to intimidate non-UNP staff. The public debt grew (see chapter 4). But unemployment was 'reduced' this way, as well as by encouraging skilled craftsmen, workers, experienced technicians and professional people to go and work abroad, especially in the Middle East, and, incidentally, remit hard currency for the government! The dismissal in 1980 of 40,000 workers, many of them veteran workers, and the ruin of the handloom industry, created new unemployment, however.

During those years the political discussion in Parliament (as it was now called) was, as we remarked earlier, of a lower standard than ever before in Sri Lanka. The SLFP leadership was under attack. The official opposition was led by the TULF; for the racist policies of the SLFP and its partners in the United Front had led to the victory in the general election of Tamil communalist candidates in the North. This was ideal for the UNP.

Political developments have to be understood in relation to the unprecedented levels of violence of all kinds resorted to by the Jayawardene regime from 1977 (see next chapter).

In June 1981 there were elections for the District Development Council of Jaffna, the main district of the Northern Province. The arrangements for the poll made by the Commissioner of Elections were countermanded by higher authority. This was illegal and unconstitutional. But the fact was that since the Commissioner who had responsibility since the 1950s had retired, the President could appoint his successor. The subversion of the Department's independence and functions became possible for two reasons: the UNP's open disregard for law and order and constitutional proprieties; and the new system of political patronage in public service appointments, for which the SLFP must share the blame. So the illegal cancellation of the arrangements already made and the replacement of election staff who had come on duty for the DDC election by UNP thugs and party cadres — all made by people who had no authority in the matter (Cyril Mathew and Gamini Dissanayake) — were obviously so that thuggery and malpractice could determine the

result of the election. For the functions of a DDC were considerable, and if the people of the district elected a Council which was not UNP, they would have some measure of autonomy and democracy. Such a development would be contrary to the direction in which the central government was taking the country. Moreover, the people who were contesting the UNP's candidates were from the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF).

It was assumed that the President was in collusion with the cabinet ministers from Colombo who went with their thugs, impersonators and handpicked officials to 'supervise' the election. There was a lot of violence. But the desired result did not materialise. By no subterfuge, even the 'disappearance' of ballot boxes, could it be made out that the UNP had won. But it was clear that, after about 25 years, the independence of the Elections Department and impartiality of the staff could no longer be assumed in any elections. So, by the time it came to the Presidential Elections of October 1982 it was not surprising that it was made clear that the rules of the democratic process as they had been practised for over 50 years were not going to be observed. The holding of the election before the end of the fixed term was challenged, but to no avail. Then, not only was the main rival of Jayawardene disfranchised for 'abuse of power' as the result of the 'findings' of a Commissioner he appointed, and the vote of the UNP members of the National Assembly, but she was also prevented from canvassing for or speaking in support of or even associating with any rival candidate. So much was her popularity feared! The government, and possibly foreign agencies, also exploited splits within the SLFP. It was then very much a one-man election, in which there was evidence of election malpractice, and in which, in many polling booths, opposition candidates' agents and officials had been prevented from being present.

Nevertheless, the results must have been a shock to Jayawardene. Mrs Bandaranaike's stand-in, Hector Kobekaduwa, a person of no great distinction and a poor performer as a minister in 1970-77, got 2,548,438 votes, compared with the much more prestigious incumbent President's 3,450,811. The TULF did not put up a candidate; but Kumar Ponnambalam, the Sri Lanka Tamil candidate from the Tamil Congress stood. There were three other leftwing candidates. The President needed one vote more than 50 per cent of the valid votes cast to avoid a second ballot, and he got 52.9 per cent.

Kobbekaduwa got 39.1 per cent. What Mrs Bandaranaike would have got is an interesting thought. It is very likely that there would have been a second ballot which she would have won. The awareness of this obviously had a lot to do with two things: the decision of Jayawardene and the Cabinet in October 1982 not to allow the August 1983 general election to take place; and the stepping up of the campaign to smash the SLFP beyond recovery by police action and thuggery. The violence that Bandaranaike had instigated or condoned against helpless and unsuspecting Sri Lankans in 1956 and onwards was now turned against his Party, and against the more than 3 million voters who would very likely have looked to it to do something for them.

The determination, one year after the English Queen had been invited to grace the celebration of parliamentary democracy, to do away with the general election ('postpone' it!) was cynical. It showed how quickly and systematically the basis of self-determination by the people, of democracy as Sri Lanka had known it, had been eroded. As many Sri Lankans remarked at the time, under the UNP regime Sri Lanka had plummeted from being politically one of the outstanding Third World countries to the ranks of one of the Latin American dictatorships, or Marcos's Philippines or Zia's Pakistan. 86.7 per cent of the total electorate cast their votes in the 1977 election; outside the Northern and Eastern Provinces, 79.37 per cent voted in the 1982 Presidential election (an impressive figure, even taking into account impersonations). The rulers must have concentrated enormous power in their hands — including the power to use inordinate state power to coerce and terrorise patriotic and politically articulate Sri Lankans — to be confident that they could deprive the people of their power of the vote.

Some device had to be found to make the establishment of autocratic rule acceptable to foreign governments which wanted the UNP to continue in office in what had almost become a one-party state. So a referendum was organised. The fact that it was unconstitutional to use it for this purpose was cogently argued by the Civil Rights Movement, opposition parties and even in the UNP, but it was becoming plain that the time had passed in Sri Lanka when the executive's decisions could be challenged. As soon as he had been reelected President, Jayawardene had demanded, and got on the spot, undated letters of resignation from the members of the Cabinet, and then from all UNP members of Parliament. These he kept in reserve. This was un-

constitutional, and almost incredible, but there was little the people could do other than express their anger, disgust and apprehension at small meetings and in private discussion.

In any case, the UNP leadership, its cadres and its hangers-on had never before had it so good. They could do what they wanted, even commit crimes, with impunity. It was believed in the Party that even the most favourable electoral verdict on their performance would leave them with only a bare majority in Parliament; a number of ministers and MPs would certainly lose their seats, and the inordinate privileges of others and their immunity from criticism would be curtailed; and the trend towards making Sri Lanka a one-party state would be reversed. Even if Mrs Bandaranaike was prevented from taking part, the elections would result in a Parliament with a sizable SLFP representation. That is if the results were very favourable to the UNP. But, in fact, the likely outcome would have been different. In many constituencies the people had come to despise and hate their MP, elected in the swing away from the UF regime. As we note later UNP MPs, Ministers, *mudalalis*, proteges who were given lucrative posts as pay-offs for services rendered, and underworld thugs, etc., had become extremely well off in five years, some becoming billionaires without doing a stroke of honest work; in the meantime, *many* who had voted UNP in 1977 were living below the poverty line or were forced to accept the hardest and most humiliating conditions in order to make a living. In the circumstances, and given the PR system of voting, the UNP might have become a minority in the 1983 Parliament.

There was another risk in holding elections. The UNP, though a right-wing party, was composed of factions. There was a faction which was liberal, multi-communal and to some extent democratic in its methods, and less ready to do away with the Rule of Law than the likes of Jayawardene, Premadasa, Gamini Dissanayake, Mathew and the Party's chairman, Panditharatne. They did not go along with one-party rule, the attacks on the independence of the judiciary, and the trend towards dictatorship. If there was a general election, this tradition, which had been excluded in 1977, would definitely play a part in determining who the UNP candidates should be.

We go into some detail because Jayawardene, Premadasa and their advisers (local and foreign) were shrewd tacticians, and realised that if their *coup* in abolishing parliamentary democracy did not have enough of a semblance of legitimacy or of constitutional ambiguity, they would have a rebellion on their hands.

Yet, if asked to vote Yes or No to the proposal not to hold the 1983 elections at all, certainly more than 75 per cent would have voted No. The democratic faction of the UNP itself drew up a leaflet giving such cogent arguments for a No vote that it would have carried most of the Party — who were not thugs and embezzlers but middle class conservatives.

When the Referendum of December 22nd was held, and the result was officially declared, the voters of Sri Lanka learnt that they had by a decisive majority given up their right and power to express collectively their verdict on the 1977-83 government and their MPs, to offer themselves or propose others as candidates, and to elect the National State Assembly for 1983-89.

What happened between the Presidential Election is appropriately described and analysed briefly in the next chapter. It is our view the most significant attack on the people of Sri Lanka — on all the people — until what happened in July and August 1983.

Sri Lanka used to be, before J.R. Jayawardene made himself President, the most democratic country in Asia. Under him it has come to be led by people who admire, and emulate, the South Korean regime of Chun Doo Huan, the CIA agent who seized power in 1980 in very interesting circumstances. In various respects it is no worse than Malawi under Dr Banda, or the Philippines under Marcos, in some respects still better, politically. Speaking to the UNP's annual convention on 26 February, 1983, Jayawardene was reported in *The Island* as saying, 'I have the power to do anything for 6 years'.

6. PERVASIVE VIOLENCE

We have had reports in Colombo of what the U.K. Foreign Office Minister, Mr Howe's deputy, said in the House of Commons on the day after the holocaust began:

There is no dictatorship there. There is a thriving democracy, which has a serious problem with its minority... (We) collaborate with the police force of Sri Lanka, as we do with the police forces of many other Commonwealth countries. We are proud of that...

If the reports were accurate, and if Mr Ray Whitney in fact referred to 'the democratically constitutionally elected government of Sri Lanka' on that date then we must say that these words mean something totally different to us from what they mean to the British government. Whatever our criticisms of British colonialism, liberal democracy of the kind that the peoples of so many countries in Europe and the Americas were fighting for in the 19th century was a progressive achievement in the Ceylon of the late 19th and the early 20th century. Only crazy Sri Lankans would have applied the term 'thriving democracy' to their country on 25 July 1983!

Parliamentary democracy was a step forward in the direction of the people collectively determining their lives in a civilised and orderly manner. There was a long way yet to go. But the practice and tradition of freely discussing and analysing political and economic issues, forming political parties, putting up oneself or others as candidates for election to the legislature and to political office, voting by secret ballot at regular intervals, were clearly superior to what obtained in South Korea or the Philippines or Pakistan. In recent years the Sri Lankan people

had cause to be anxious about the tendency of UNP leaders in the government and outside to express admiration for the extreme right-wing South Korean 'model'. Through the captive press and in other ways it was being argued that democratic forms were not suited to Asians. Where that doctrine emanated from the reader will have no difficulty in guessing.

In 1981 another pogrom was organised. In some cases MPs and Deputy Ministers were identified as the organisers and leaders in attacks on dwellings, temples, workers, women and children, priests, and others which resulted in many rapes and murders, and the deliberate desecration of Hindu holy places. A tourist from India was among those killed. The government denied that there had been many murders and rapes by its gangs. But the annual administration report of the Police Department for 1981, released only in mid-1983, confirmed that these had taken place on a large scale. In 1982 the government used its majority to pass an Indemnity Act giving immunity to ministers and public servants for their actions in maintaining law and order! This even affected pending court proceedings.

There were many truly violent attacks on strikers. It must be remembered that striking and peaceful picketing has been a right enjoyed in Sri Lanka for many decades. In January 1978 several thousand teachers assembling peacefully outside the Education Department office to make representations were baton-charged by mounted police; many were badly hurt. In March that year a picket outside the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation was assaulted, as also some members of the All-Ceylon Oil Workers' Union. The assaults continued for several days, some of them inside the Corporation's offices. The Accountant, who had to be sent to hospital on 9 March, received head injuries on 14 March, when he was hit with a pistol. (Cyril Mathew was the Minister of Industries and also President of the UNP 'union', the Jathika Sevaka Sangamaya.)

In July 1978, workers from twelve banks came out on a one-day token strike to protest against the dismissal of 971 bank employees. Other trade unions held one-hour demonstrations in support, in their places of work. There was plenty of evidence that the government transported large numbers of thugs in its own vehicles, and that, with police help, the strikers were badly assaulted. What happened to the Ceylon Bank Employees pickets in January 1980 was even worse. The thugs transported there in government and JSS-controlled vehicles used bicycle chains, clubs and knuckle dusters. Police refused aid to the in-

jured. All this took place in the centre of the Fort area. A little distance away bombs were thrown at pickets.

In June that year teachers at the Maharagama Teachers' Training College were attacked by JSS thugs, who used rubber belts, stones, bicycle chains, etc., poured wasted oil over the clothes and into the eyes and ears of the women, and even attempted to run over one of them with a bus. Four women had serious injuries. As in the other cases, the people who led the gangs, the numbers of the government vehicles in which they were transported, the depot from which they came, etc., were noted down and checked. On the same day, the day of protest of the Joint Trade Union Action Committee, there was a picket in front of the Department of Government Supplies. The President of the branch there of the Government Service General Workers' Union, D. Somapala, was killed by a bomb after a government MP arrived there in a jeep. A police report sent to the Inspector General identified the man and gave the number of the jeep and other details. Apart from Somapala, six strikers were hospitalised.

The members of the JSS are put on the payroll by the government, and have slowly been taking control and smashing the unions. In the universities this tactic had proved to be difficult. UNP agents and cadres are 'admitted' as students, regardless of qualifications, and some staff members are JSS members. But students are not easily cowed. The UNP students have found it impossible in many campuses to take control of the Student Union, however much thuggery has been used in the elections. There has been considerable police and thug violence used on and around the campuses in attempts to suppress student protests. The pattern has been the same as in the case of strikers. Violence was used at Kelaniya University in March 1978, Katubedde University in April 1978, Kelaniya University in March 1979, in Colombo University in March 1980, in Kelaniya University in January 1980 and in Nugegoda (Vidyodaya) University repeatedly in 1983. The police and the UNP thugs showed no hesitation about attacking *bhikkus* and women.

During this period thuggery and police violence were used to break up both public and private meetings and peaceful demonstrations. To economise on space we shall refer to only four instances. In July 1981, there was a meeting of the Public Services Nurses Union at Narahenpita, Colombo, which was broken up. In 1982 the Sinhala Bala Mandalaya held a meeting,

which was going to be addressed by Dr E.R. Sarathchandra, one of the most eminent Sinhalese intellectuals. He was a former professor, had been Sri Lanka's Ambassador in Paris, and had made invaluable contributions to contemporary Sinhala culture through his creative and scholarly work. He was going to speak on the impact of external influences on present-day Sinhala culture. It was no secret that he would expose the utter falsity of the UNP leadership's pretensions to be promoting Sinhala-Buddhist culture, and Cyril Mathew was understandably concerned, as was J.R. Jayawardene. The JSS, led by its boss, prevented Dr Sarathchandra from speaking, and beat him up badly, making it necessary for him to be in hospital for a few days. Of course, there was no inquiry, much less any punishment of those responsible. Later that year, in December, a patriotic organisation of Buddhist and Christian clergy, *Pavidhi Handa*, was about to hold a private meeting in Gampaha, but was prevented by violence, with the police also using threats. Some literature they had printed was seized illegally by the police. The Supreme Court imposed a fine on the senior police officer who had been responsible, and the cabinet promptly promoted him and paid the fine out of government funds. Fourthly, during the International Women's Day demonstration in March 1983, a group of well-known women were taken to a police station, where one of them was assaulted by a police officer. The Supreme Court found fault with him, and the government immediately promoted him.

The government found it irksome that in two instances its victims had taken their case against officials who carried out its orders to the Supreme Court, which in turn had given judgements against the police officers concerned for violation of human rights. So on 11 June 1983 UNP leaders organised a demonstration to intimidate the three judges who had heard the second case. (They already had publicly attacked and slandered some judges who refused to kow-tow to the politicians, and had declared their intention of removing them.) The thugs arrived at the houses of the judges (they made a mistake about one of them) in buses of the Ceylon Transport Board (as in most other cases), the numbers of which the wife of one of the judges noted down. They shouted abuse, and behaved in a threatening manner, referring to the judgement. When the police were contacted they avoided taking the complaint, and did not arrive on the scene until after the demonstrations were over. The government took no action, even though the incident was more than the

public could stand, and there was an outcry of protest.

Just before and during the Referendum of December 22nd 1982 which Jayawardene insisted on holding, lawlessness and government violence had reached such a pitch that people were getting used to it. Earlier such criminal violence as was planned and carried out against individuals and organisations would have been considered unimaginable in Sri Lanka.

This is not the occasion for going into the Referendum in detail. Jayawardene wanted a show of popular assent to his proposal to cancel the 1983 general election. In brief, the government, using its well-rehearsed control of the police and its armies of thugs to terrorise and intimidate, and its powers acquired on the excuse of the terrorist attacks in Jaffna, set about smashing the main national political network that could have been used to campaign legally for a 'No' vote (for which the symbol was the Pot) to Jayawardene's proposal to do away with the 1983 general election. As we have already mentioned, voter participation in Sri Lankan national elections has been high. In 1977 it was 86.7 per cent of those who could vote. It is indisputable that the overwhelming majority would have voted for the Pot in the Referendum, once the campaign against the Referendum proved abortive. Even within the UNP there were members who worked openly for a 'No' vote. In a leaflet they quoted Dudley Senanayake:

A supposed mandate from the people is being used as the justification of all things. But there are some things in every true democracy that no mandate can ever destroy. Even if a majority agrees, the freedom of speech, the freedom to organise political parties, the freedom of the press, the right to vote to elect your representatives at periodic and regular elections, these are features which cannot ever be abolished. Even if a majority agrees a country which deprives any men of these fundamental rights and liberties is not a true democracy, is not even a really human society. A free people must not be condemned to state slavery, even by its own elected representatives, under the cover of an alleged mandate.

However, while those who feared a general election worked freely and vigorously and violently, using all the government-run press, radio and television, and breaking the law with impunity, the other side, even to campaign, had to contend with the full force of the lawless violence of the state and the thugs.

Mrs Bandaranaike could not be prevented from campaigning. But in her own electorate in which she had won a massive majority in 1977, the violence and intimidation was so great that before the polling she, as leader of the SLFP, took the decision to withdraw all pro-'Pot' poll observers and party agents from her electorate, Attanagala! We cannot appreciate this remarkable surrender simply by talking about that lady's cowardice. She had to think of the lives of her party members. Her party agents were brutally and repeatedly beaten up and threatened with death. The magic name in this episode was Paul Perera, then Chairman of the Greater Colombo Economic Commission, and next-door neighbour to Junius Richard Jayawardene in Ward Place, Cinnamon Gardens. Vance Packard wrote a book about the hidden persuaders. Perera was the prince of not-so-hidden persuaders. In the Presidential election of October he persuaded 22,531 Attanagala votes to be cast for his friend and neighbour. But that record figure was a nothing to the 'Yes' (pro-'Lamp' symbol) votes that were there to be counted after the Referendum polling: 35,747. In the same district, for comparison, we can take two other electorates and their vote first for Jayawardene in October and then for the Lamp in December, impersonations and all: Wattala 29,387 — 22,908; Kelaniya 24,723 — 19,337. Mr Perera's claim to be the greatest vote-getter of all time was challenged in another electorate, Laggala, in the up-country Matale District. There had been floods and earthslips just before polling day and the *Sun* newspaper reported on 23 December that voters there were cut off from their polling stations and unable to cast their votes. Nevertheless, so determined were these civic-minded citizens not to have the 1983 general election that their voting figures for the two occasions were: 17,354 — 26,115 (out of a total electorate of 35,129).

People who observed events after the Presidential elections with great care and made extensive investigations have drawn attention to the following:

1. The imposition of emergency rule without reason during the referendum campaign.
2. Much-publicised CID questioning of Hector Kobekaduwa, who had, despite all the obstacles placed in his way, received 2,548,243 votes in the Presidential election.
3. The sensational announcement of an SLFP 'ration book fraud' and a so-called 'Naxalite plot' in connection with the

Presidential election.

4. Harassment of and assault by police and thugs on the leading opposition party (SLFP) organisers all over the country, and arbitrary police arrests of some of them, as well as the raid on the SLFP Party headquarters and seizure of documents, including lists of members and cadres and contributors to Party funds.

5. The sealing of newspapers campaigning for continued elections. The sealing of presses and arrests or detention of printers.

6. A massive 'Yes' (Lamp) campaign, much of it known by the public to be illegal but supported by the government, police, the security forces and the government's foreign backers. This was a clear indication that Jayawardene, the Cabinet, the rest of the government and the UNP were above the law, and free to act with impunity.

7. Equally massive obstruction of the campaign for democracy, for holding the general election (Pot). Police seizure of legally permitted literature, and obstacles to meetings, including threats and use of violence.

8. The unwillingness of the police to enforce the law whenever it had been infringed in the interests of the government's aim of securing a Yes vote.

Moreover, opposition polling observers were in a large number of carefully checked cases prevented by threats of murder or of having their homes burnt, by false arrest, assault and robbery of documents (e.g. identification), from functioning as polling observers. Officially appointed presiding officers were intimidated and manhandled when they challenged impersonators or tried to stop thuggery within polling booths by legally unauthorised persons. Many voters were prevented from voting freely or voting at all. This was done openly, with police connivance or collaboration, by UNP thugs in many ways, including compelling voters to show how they had marked their paper and preventing people known to be members of 'Vote No' groups and parties from leaving their homes. Very prominent in the organising and carrying out of the violence and intimidation were Paul Perera (who was not long afterwards nominated to be an MP) and a gun-wielding MP, Anura Bastian, whom the President appointed Deputy Minister in charge of the Home Guard, soon afterwards! There was impersonation on a scale never before attempted in Sri Lanka. In one polling booth the

Presiding Officer had counted one person voting 72 times, and had officially reported this to his superior.

In most of the country it required real courage to vote for the Pot in these conditions. But so much is the vote valued in Sri Lanka that instead of the 10,000 or so that one Jayawardene aide predicted, no less than 2,605,983 had the courage and ingenuity to vote against the cancellation of the 1983 General Election. Using every means possible to them the government could record only 3,141,223 (less than 38 per cent of the registered voters) as their justification for continuing with a Parliament which was five-sixths UNP and a regime which was the most corrupt ever.

If there had been free and fair elections in August 1983, we have reason to think that there would have been a political climate in the country — as well as a Parliament — which would have seriously examined the conditions which led to the government's repressive violence in, and virtual military occupation of, the north, and the counter-violence of the terrorist groups in Jaffna. Specifically, this respect for the traditional democratic practices could have resulted in the repeal of the iniquitous Prevention of Terrorism Act, to which we refer below when we give excerpts from the Report of Amnesty International. This Act, to which all groups and parties concerned with civil rights and the rule of law took serious objection when it was introduced in 1979 as a temporary measure, was made part of the normal law of the land in March 1982. Not even in South Africa is there a law like this.

Part of the violence that has pervaded and almost ruined Sri Lanka is that which has been organised and carried out by terrorist or guerilla groups in the north, mainly Jaffna, in the form of retaliation against police and army repression and the killing of Tamils believed to be collaborating with the government. There have also been bank robberies and raids on military posts. There are believed to be some 300 or 400 such terrorists. Whatever the original reasons for the formation of terrorist or guerilla groups, it is normally the function of the state to defeat and to capture the people responsible and to bring them to trial. There can be no legitimate complaint if terrorists are tracked down, engaged in combat and punished by the courts. What we, like many other Sri Lankans, say is that the law as it obtained in the 1950s and 1960s was quite adequate for this purpose. More important is the *fact* that the problems that gave rise to terrorism have a just and practical solution through *political* processes.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) was not necessary. It was introduced in order to remove *all* civilised, moral and legal restraints on the maximum use of terror and violence by the rulers against the people. We have no doubt about that. It has been used by those who have the power and influence (officially and unofficially) to make use of police officers and the armed forces to imprison, torture and kill Sri Lankans as they wish, and regardless of the Constitution and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both of which absolutely prohibit torture, and more so the keeping in the custody of their torturers people who are currently complainants, defendants or witnesses in cases being heard in the courts.

That last reality is a microcosm of the political order, the world, that Jayawardene and his associates, on whom we provide some notes in chapter 11, have built. To be a Sri Lankan who does not belong to one or another of the gangs of those factions of the ruling class, and refuses to countenance what they are doing, is to qualify to be a victim in that world. Sri Lankans are often asked for their birth certificates by all sorts of inquisitive bureaucrats. They are asked for identity cards. But they can be 'taken' without any reasons being given, imprisoned without their spouses, children, parents and friends knowing where they are, killed, and their bodies disposed of without an inquest or a death certificate or even a record of whether they are dead and where their remains are.

7. THE OPPRESSION OF THE TAMILS AND THE SEPARATIST RESPONSE

Opposition to the partition of Sri Lanka into two separate states does not in the least preclude either recognition of oppression of the Tamil communities or the commitment to unite with them to bring about their complete liberation from racist oppression. The denial of fundamental rights and the escalation of violence in the country has victimised the Sri Lanka Tamils and the 'Indian' Tamils more than they have other communities. It would be good to recall what has happened.

In 1944 the State Council discussed the matter and decided that Sinhala and Tamil should be made the official languages. The country was still a British colony. The following year the State Council appointed a Select Committee to investigate the practical problems and make recommendations on how the transition from English to Sinhala and Tamil as the official languages should be implemented. The Chairman of the Committee was a politician who was relatively a newcomer, J.R. Jayawardene.

The use of the languages of the people, rather than English, would have been sensible, and democratic, if the transition was made efficiently. The English language was used by a small minority. But it was already the language of administration, the courts, and higher education, and the only international language for Sri Lanka. Sinhala and Tamil had been neglected, the former more than the latter, since there was some modern development of Tamil elsewhere, particularly in South India, and Sri Lanka Tamils could draw on those resources. Both languages had been spoken in Sri Lanka for nearly two thousand years before the Portuguese conquest, but it was one of the drawbacks of colonial subjection that in the period of the

development of modern science and technology, and of the world economy of capitalism, these two languages had an inadequate vocabulary and literature, and were unsuited for modern purposes. To remedy this State aid was necessary.

When Bandaranaike first formed the Sri Lanka Freedom Party in 1951, it had been part of its original policy that both languages should be official languages. Everybody understood that Sinhala would have priority. It was the major language, as well as the first language of over two-thirds of Sri Lankans. It, rather than English, was the *lingua franca*. And unless the government, writers, scholars and publishers in Sri Lanka made a special effort, Sinhala would continue to lag behind not only most European languages but also many Asian languages which were developing rapidly after the years of colonial subordination. There was naturally strong feeling among some people at what they felt was the UNP leadership's indifference to this question.

Then suddenly, capitalising on this mood in the country, Bandaranaike and his colleagues promised that if they were elected, they would make Sinhala alone the official language. He was not, of course, a statesman or a man of principle — if there are such people who make politics their career. But neither were his erstwhile fellow-members of the UNP. In fairness to him it may be said that Jayawardene or some other opportunist politician in the UNP would have used the same gimmick if he had not beaten them to it. The exclusion of Tamil, the first language of three Sri Lankan communities, in no way at all promoted the use of Sinhala. The Colombo Tamils and Moors, for example, spoke Sinhala, and some of them knew it as well as did the Sinhalese, and would eventually have made it their first language. Some of them would undoubtedly have made useful contributions to the development of Sinhala as a modern Sri Lankan language, and to the development of Sinhala music and so on. There would have been national unity, and communal harmony. For the Burghers could have been persuaded to learn Sinhalese.

A great deal was being sacrificed, perhaps for ever, just for the perverse satisfaction of making the Sinhalese (not Sinhala-speakers, since many upper class Sinhalese, Bandaranaike included, hardly knew Sinhala and had English as their main language) the dominant and the other communities the subordinate Sri Lankans. Predictably, Tamil-speaking communities were outraged, and unwilling suddenly to be turned into second-

class citizens in their own country. The Sinhala Only Bill was correctly opposed by the left parties, and therefore by many Sinhalese, including large sections of the working class. Dr N.M. Perera, leader of the LSSP, in opposing the Bill in Parliament pointed out that the switch from English to Sinhala and Tamil had been the policy of the LSSP since its foundation in 1935; it flowed from a very real concern for the interests of the people who spoke those languages. The Communist Party opposed it on the ground that the Bill was oppressive. But the SLFP were not moved by considerations of justice or of the cost to the country of their petty arrogance. When the Tamil MPs made a strictly non-violent protest by sitting down on the green in front of Parliament, SLFP goons, much to Bandaranaike's personal enjoyment, roughed them up and humiliated them. Thus began the violent efforts to make Sri Lankans labelled the 'Tamils', particularly the Sri Lanka Tamils, submit to being less than equal to those who assumed the 'Sinhalese' label, and to a diminution of their status as nationals. It was a violation of fundamental provisions in the state Constitution. What might have been a turning point in Sri Lanka's history in one direction became, with the passing of the 'Sinhala Only' Bill, a turning point in another direction, as the previous chapter will have shown.

In 1957 and 1958, as the Federal Party, which had won most of the seats in the north, continued to lead the popular Tamil agitation against the Sinhala Only policy, the SLFP stepped up its violence against all Tamils. The first pogroms were in 1957, in the Eastern Province. In 1958 SLFP activists, with Bandaranaike's connivance, and without provocation (in any case what provocation could justify it?) began the practice of attacking Tamil-owned shops, Tamil houses, and individuals in trains and on the streets, and raping, mutilating and burning people living peacefully among them. At that time, however, there was a head of state, the Governor-General, different from the head of the ruling party, the Prime Minister. The former, with the backing of the senior administration, the police and the army, decided to act to stop the carnage, in spite of SLFP protests. Bandaranaike gave his consent to an Emergency being declared, and some semblance of civilised order was restored. Even at that time there were people who thought that to have been born a Sinhalese and a Buddhist was enough licence to loot, assault, mutilate and burn alive lesser breeds, and were not ashamed to protest indignantly when their followers were shot in order to

prevent them carrying on with such unlawful acts. The big difference between then and now is that such people were not above the law.

But they clearly had their way not long after that. We recognise that for over 25 years Tamils have lived in insecurity if their home areas have been outside the Northern Province and the Batticaloa and Trincomalee Districts of the Eastern province. Surprisingly at first, even in the highly cosmopolitan city of Colombo, which Sri Lanka Tamils together with Low-Country Sinhalese, Moors, Burghers, Malays and Indian Tamils, have played an important role in developing as a metropolis, they have increasingly been subject to racist oppression — to humiliation, assault and killing. This is an indisputable fact of the last 25 years, though it was only in 1977, 1981 and 1983, that the foulness of racism which was there all the time fully erupted.

All this is so shameful that it is difficult to admit it to foreign readers. Twenty-five years is a long time, time enough, it may seem, for Sri Lankans, and particularly the Sinhalese, to have built up an effective resistance to racism. Instead of reversing the trend, even the LSSP jumped on the racist bandwagon to get ministerial office. The experience they had over the Sinhala Only policy and the terrifying sense of physical insecurity in their own country (which few Sinhalese seem even to be aware of, much less understand) have been taken by some Sri Lankan Tamils as 'an argument for a Tamil-ruled territory within the island in which the lives, persons and property of Tamils will be secure against racist attacks.

At first the demand was for a federal constitution for Sri Lanka. S.J.V. Chelvanayakam, one of Colombo's leading lawyers, and some other leading members of the Tamil Congress formed the Federal Party not long after the disfranchisement of the 'Indian' Tamils, when the unconstitutional deprivation of citizenship showed which way the wind was blowing. In the early 1950s most progressives, including Tamils, regarded the Federal Party as unduly communalist and politically reactionary. But its candidates won most of the seats in Jaffna and some other northern and eastern areas in 1952 and 1956. With both the major 'national' parties, the UNP and the SLFP, abandoning a Sri Lankan for a Sinhalese communalist position, Tamil communal reactions have grown more extreme. What has been termed 'Separatism', the demand for the Tamil State of 'Eelam', has become stronger until, in the early 1970s, when the United Front

government's high-handed and brutal treatment of the Tamils in Jaffna outraged the people, it became a demand (especially among the youth) for 'liberation', and Chelvanayakam and others took the lead in forming the Tamil United Liberation Front. S. Thondaman, President of the mainly up-country Ceylon Workers' Congress, and some of the leaders of the Moors in the Eastern Province also helped to form the TULF.

J.R. Jayawardene realised the dangers of ignoring such a deeply felt discontent and mood of revolt which had united the three Tamil communities. After winning the 1977 election he took steps to restore some of the language rights which previous governments had denied the Tamil-speaking Sri Lankans. He promised to set up District Development Councils which would allow considerable local autonomy; and also undertook to end the hardships of stateless Indian Tamils. Then, having got Thondaman to join his cabinet as a minister, he failed to carry out his promises to set up effective District Development Councils. After the 1977 elections there had been an anti-Tamil pogrom. 50,000 had become refugees. In these conditions, some young people in Jaffna abandoned what they saw as a futile constitutional agitation and responded to police repression with terrorist tactics. The government, instead of stepping up the political solutions to the problems of the Tamils, made the mistake (if mistake it was) of concentrating on wiping out this rebel movement of a few people by stepping up its own repression in the north — thus making the 'separatists' more intransigent and influential and creating more recruits for the terrorists.

Feeling in Jaffna, and among Tamils generally, cannot be understood without our taking account of some discontents other than those over the language policies and the pogroms. We can only mention and consider briefly three issues: first, what is interpreted as a conspiracy by governments (which have been virtually monopolised by the Sinhalese since the 1930s) to 'colonise' the traditionally 'Tamil areas' of Sri Lanka with Sinhalese, and thus make the Sri Lanka Tamils a subordinate minority in every province and district; secondly, pro-Sinhalese discrimination in the admission to higher educational institutions and recruitment to jobs, as a consequence of which a considerable proportion of Tamils are unemployed or unable to continue with their education, however able or qualified they are; thirdly, the systematic denial of economic investment in the areas where the population is predominantly Tamil, so that there have been hardly *any* new enterprises or industries set up there for over 20

years.

Are Sri Lanka Tamils right to see these as specifically anti-Tamil, and as oppression of them? It is true that from the time of D.S. Senanayake there has been an ulterior communalist motive in some of the colonisation schemes. These schemes have been very expensive, as well as wasteful, in terms of economic resources used. But those who talk of maintaining the racial composition of the 'Tamil areas' have not considered whether they themselves have been trapped in the chauvinist perspectives of those who prepared the way for Cyril Mathew. In the real Sri Lanka there are no Sinhalese areas and Tamil areas. In Galle and Matara Districts the population is over 90 per cent Low Country Sinhalese; in Jaffna District it is over 90 per cent Sri Lanka Tamil. But whatever the communal label applied to those who are statistically in the majority in a particular area at any time, their *right* to live there in security as individuals and families, to own property which has been legally purchased, inherited or received as a gift, and to practise an honest trade or profession is theirs *as Sri Lankans*; in these districts as in others, it is an inalienable right which all other Sri Lankans have *equally*, whether they are labelled Kandyan Sinhalese, Moors, Burghers, Malays or 'Indian' Tamils. In reality, there are no 'Tamil areas' just as there are no 'Sinhalese areas'. In particular regions one of the several Sri Lankan cultural traditions may be deeply rooted and highly developed and valued, and must be respected as such, but even there other traditions which were Sri Lankan at the time of independence cannot be excluded.

The aims of those who have set up 'colonies' of thugs and racial and religious fanatics in particular districts were and are sinister and racist. But it is surely not on the grounds that Sinhalese were intruding into 'Tamil areas' that such policies should be condemned. Now, more than ever before, when there can be no further doubt that the government is in the hands of groups who have, in order to turn Colombo into a Sinhala-Buddhist area, begun liquidating more than half its population (see chapter 3), talk about Tamil areas and Sinhala areas is not only offensive to other communities which are fully and equally Sri Lankan but also the licence for (we must use the word) genocide.

As we have shown in chapter 3, for nearly 200 years the people of Sri Lanka have created a social reality. If the British had not unified the administration in the whole island, there might have been several states, as there had been. But even if

that had been the case, what would have been created by the mid-20th century would have been a matter of history. 'What might have been' is an interesting speculation. What is a matter of historical record is that Low-Country Sinhalese, Sri Lanka Tamils, Burghers, Moors, 'Indian' Tamils and Kandyan Sinhalese united and worked for a Sri Lankan-ruled Sri Lanka, free of foreign rule and exploitation. History is not the story of individual 'great men' and 'great women'. However, the names which crop up in the history of the creation of a post-colonial Sri Lankan nation are names like Lorenz, Arunachalam, Ramanathan, F.R. Senanayake and E.W. Perera.

Before the British established their rule, the ancestors of the various Sri Lankan communities (some of which have been wrongly described as castes) had been concentrated in certain localities for centuries, and in some instances had their own regimes. In post-independence Sri Lanka the more conservative members of the different communities continued living in the same region and preserving the old culture and customs. But it is not possible either to freeze a society in an unchanging pattern or to wind the spool of history backward to return to any chosen century of the past. The argument for a separate Tamil nationality and for a separate state of 'Eelam' in the present day has been buttressed by the claim that 600 or 700 years ago there was a Tamil kingdom in the north and east of the country. But we do not see that this proves anything about the 20th and 21st centuries, any more than the arbitrary selection of another century in the past, when the greater part of the island was for a time unified under a Sinhala-speaking dynasty, proves that Sri Lanka should be a Sinhalese state.

Contrary to what the Sri Lanka Tamil communalist leaders and ideologues have been arguing, the Tamil masses and the Tamil middle classes have been opting for a multi-communal Sri Lanka, at least until the holocaust. They have been optimistic members or supporters of political parties led in recent years by racist Sinhalese politicians. In the 1982 Presidential election, the Tamil Congress candidate, Kumar Ponnambalam, stood for Tamil separatism. In Colombo District, which had 972,196 voters, he received only 3,022 votes. In Kandy District, with 564,767 voters, he received 662 votes. In Nuwara Eliya, with 201,878 voters, he got 558 votes. The percentages of Sri Lanka Tamils in the total 1981 population of these districts were, respectively, 9.8, 4.9 and 13.5. More significantly, we can look at the percentage of valid votes cast in that election for Ponnam-

balam, on the one hand, and all the other candidates, *all Sinhalese*, on the other, in Batticaloa (70.8 per cent Sri Lanka Tamil) and Jaffna (95 per cent Sri Lanka Tamil) Districts respectively: Ponnambalam 39.22 and 40.02; Jayawardene, Kobbekaduwa, de Silva, Nanayakkara and Wijeweera combined 60.78 and 59.98. In Jaffna District Kobbekaduwa (SLFP) received 35.45 of the valid votes cast, and in Wannu District, also in the Northern Province, 32.82. In our opinion, in free and fair elections, a non-racist national party capable of winning office would sweep the so-called Tamil areas, and given the right kind of campaign, the rest of the country, too.

In a country where the unemployment rate among the educated youth has been very high, it was not surprising that Sri Lanka Tamils should have a high unemployment rate among the educated. We refer to the economic conditions in chapter 4. Tamils in the Northern and Eastern provinces have for many years been carried away by communalist appeals to vote for right-wing parties and send right-wing candidates to Parliament. As long as they have opposed parties which might have worked to eradicate the oppressive neocolonial conditions in Sri Lanka, they have contributed to retarding economic development. The expansion of employment opportunities has not taken place. It is in this context that there has been discrimination against Tamils, and growing support, among the Sinhala unemployed, for racist leaders. The failure to unite with other communities and forge the solidarity of workers and unemployed and struggle for progressive change has had its consequences.

It is not the best time, when there is so much suffering among all Tamils in Sri Lanka, to draw attention to the insensitiveness of many Jaffna Tamils, after the 1930s, to the situation of Sri Lankans as a whole. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the Low Country Sinhalese and the Jaffna Tamils (as well as the Burghers) valued a school education highly, and took the opportunities offered to acquire literacy. At independence the literacy rate in Colombo, Galle, Matara and Jaffna Districts was much higher than it was in the areas where Kandyans and Indian Tamils predominated. (The Moors had the opportunity, but unfortunately did not make adequate use of it.) If the Sri Lankans in the central districts of the country had not caught up with those on the coast, there would have been a most undesirable polarisation between the regions. The insensitiveness and selfishness of the better-off communities produced a reaction against them. But whereas the Karava Sinhalese,

who were as narrowly communal-minded as and better off than the Jaffna Tamils, could cleverly ride on the bandwagon of Sinhala communalism and get more privileges, the Tamils were discriminated against.

For more than forty years the Sri Lanka Tamils have allowed leaders to speak for them who have unnecessarily created hostility and misunderstanding among other communities, and prevented movements which would have won Sinhalese support in opposing Sinhalese racism. We think that it was a simplistic view that the survival of the Sri Lanka Tamils and other Tamils depended on the establishment of a separate state. But the fact is that there was strong support for Eelam among a number of young people and others in the Northern Province and in some other areas. The support for the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) must be understood as a consequence of the failure of the Sinhalese to fight Sinhala racism effectively enough.

These considerations do not deny the *fact* that Sri Lanka Tamils and Tamils of more recent Indian origin were oppressed communities even before the holocaust. They indicate why the Tamils' liberation from oppression could not be achieved under the leadership of A. Amirthalingam and the TULF and of Thondaman and the Ceylon Workers' Congress. What these leaders and parties achieved by political manouvring was of temporary benefit to the Tamils; but it had adverse long-term consequences in that it strengthened the pretensions of the 'Sinhala-Buddhist' racists in power. Even more adverse to the liberation of the Sri Lankan people have been the tactics of the young Jaffna militants who have sought by assassinations of political opponents and by guerilla warfare against the repressive police and military occupation forces in the north to force the government in Colombo to surrender the so-called Tamil areas to them. They have proved more than a match militarily for the anti-Tamil police and military Jayawardene has sent against them. But their claim to be liberation fighters and socialist revolutionaries is just propaganda. It is spurious. The struggle of the Sri Lankan people of all communities to create a society in which the people in their neighbourhoods and their workplaces are free to determine their own lives (and thus their development as persons) has hardly begun. As people who have never seriously joined in that struggle at any level, the 'fighters' for Eelam have failed by mere violence and propaganda abroad to help to defeat or even weaken the oppressive domination of the racists over the people. Instead of Tamil Eelam there has been the increasing isolation of

the Tamils from the rest of the Sri Lankan people, and the strengthening of fascist tendencies in Sri Lanka.

8. SINHALESE FEARS

Large numbers of present-day Sinhalese have confused notions about their status as the Sri Lankan Sinhala-speaking community, and fears about their own future and about the dangers that Sri Lanka faces. These notions and fears are a very tangible factor in Sri Lankan politics. It is necessary to consider what substance there is in these fears and notions. In order to do that we think the utterly irrational should be separated from more serious fears, such as the fear that Sinhalese culture and traditions are being destroyed by alien influences. Unfortunately, many Sinhalese have been victimised by the falsehoods in the communalist hate propaganda concocted by the people who have been trying to use the 'Sinhalese majority' to attain illegitimate power and privileges for themselves. The mass media, school textbooks and curricula, and political propaganda have been designed for over 25 years to carry out intensive and subtle brainwashing, in order to manipulate 'the majority'. Careful studies of school textbooks and the press conducted by Reggie Siriwardena and his colleagues have shown how Sri Lankan history, and the traditions and situation of other communities have been falsified for many years by those who control the Sinhala press and prescribe textbooks.

One of the criticisms of the content of education in colonial Ceylon was that children were taught much more about the history and geography of Britain and other European countries than about their own country and their own continent. But it has turned out that those who went to school and read books in English up to the early 1950s had a much deeper and more accurate knowledge of Sri Lanka and its people than their children now have. Children have been denied true knowledge of the

geography and history of their country and of their complex and interesting nation; their capacity to conceive of time, distance, cause and effect, the distinction between what is true and what is false, and their capacity to use statistics and make their own investigations into what is going on has diminished, not increased. As the saying goes, they asked for bread, and have been given a stone. Sri Lankans have in the past done excellently in various fields of knowledge, and distinguished themselves internationally. The people one meets today, who locate highly fictionalised accounts of what was supposed to have happened two millenia ago in the battle between Elara and Dutugemunu in present-day Sri Lanka are the victims of the propoganda of the politicians.

If masses of people are possessed by irrational fears, these fears cannot simply be allayed or dispelled by the facts. Before they come to be ready to look at and to relate to reality, the 'atmosphere' must change. As long as nearly all the members of the Cabinet and some newspapers are, without opposition, whipping up support for further attacks on Tamils, Moors, leftists and others, there cannot be the atmosphere for the calm, dispassionate and, necessarily, self-critical facing of the facts. Nevertheless, the facts are there to be distinguished from the fantasies, real men, women and children have to be distinguished from evil monsters.

We will take one example. It has often been said that the colonial rulers favoured the Tamils. We have looked for evidence, and found none. What we have found suggests the opposite, though we do not mean to imply either that the Tamils were oppressed by the British or they fared badly in getting education and jobs. They do, however, have a point when they complain, in their present desperate plight in their own country, of 'betrayal' by the British. If the Tamil-speaking parts of the country had continued to be kept a separate administrative unit after the British established their rule, our common history would have been different. It is likely that the Tamils would have developed a predominantly Tamil-speaking area in the north and in the coastal parts of the east and northwest of the island, instead of making the valuable contribution (not without rewards, though) they have made to a multi-communal Sri Lanka. That is just speculation. The point is that the British policy of divide-and-rule, at the time in the early 20th century when the nationalist movement was becoming difficult to handle, was accomplished by encouraging those communalists who split the unity of the middle-class Ceylonese who were proving more

than a match for the colonial administration.

It is true that a greater proportion of Sri Lanka Tamils than of any other community (except perhaps the Burghers) found their livelihood in clerical and administrative jobs and the professions from the late 19th century. There were economic reasons for this. Moreover, their working as clerks, cashiers, lawyers and doctors did not give them more economic or political power than their fellow Sri Lankans had. It certainly did not give them economic and political power over other communities. Low Country Sinhalese (and some Tamils and Moors) owned and exploited (but did not sufficiently develop and modernise) most of the paddy lands in the country, the Sri Lankan-owned estates and mines. Most of Sri Lanka's agricultural and mineral resources were privately owned by Sinhalese. They were enterprising, and enormously wealthy, and they bought real estate in Colombo, and their children had a good education and took to business and the professions, and to politics. The historical record does not show any differences in the level of achievement of the middle class Sinhalese, Tamils, Moors and Burghers. There has been a tendency to specialise in different fields of activity and in the case of the Jaffna Tamils the climatic and ecological factors have been singular. After hearing the propaganda, we found the facts rather surprising. Politically and economically, it was certainly not the Tamils who had the power at independence. Even in the prestigious Ceylon Civil Service, in 1948 (the year of independence) the myth that the British favoured the Tamils was not borne out. The entrance to this service was by examination in English. The communal breakdown of the CCS in that year, in order of seniority, was (we use the initial letter to denote European, Sinhalese, Tamil, Moor and Burgher):

E, B, E (Class I, Grade 1); E, B, E, E, E, E, S (Class I, Grade 2); T, S, S, E, S, S, S, S, S, E, E, S, S, E, T, S, B, B, S, S, S, T, M, S, S, S, S, T, S, B, E, S, B, S, S, E, S, S, S, T, T, S, S, S ... (Class II).

It would be tedious to continue. There were no Tamils in that year in Class I. But of 99 Civil Servants in Classes I and II, there were 19 Tamils, and 58 Sinhalese. The interesting thing is that of the Tamils (21 per cent of the population) all, except possibly one, were Sri Lanka Tamils, and of the Sinhalese very few were Kandyans.

There were 5 Tamils out of the 27 in Class I of the Judicial Service in that year. Our research is incomplete. If the figures for government employees in lower grades, especially those in the clerical service, are looked at, it is very likely that the proportion of Tamils would be considerably higher. At those levels there must have been some nepotism in making appointments. It would be surprising if anyone imagined that the Sri Lanka Tamils were less prone to nepotism than members of other communities. The proportion of Tamils in government employment has been falling since the late 1950s. When state corporations were formed, and the economy became partly state capitalist, virtual ownership powers in the public sector — the powers of investment, planning, initiatives and policy-making, disposal of profits, and the making of appointments — were all in the hands of a Sinhala-dominated government. (In fact, from 1956 to 1977 there was not a single elected Tamil MP who was a minister.) And in Colombo, which was the home town of a considerable number of Tamils, not a single national party put up Tamils as parliamentary candidates. In the numerous buses of the Sri Lanka Transport Board plying in Colombo, the virtual absence of Tamil drivers and conductors is striking.

We can go on like this. Tamils were, until the holocaust, economically active in places like Colombo, running small businesses, eating houses (cafes), running wholesale businesses in some commodities like foodstuffs, and, in a few cases, as capitalists. They were to be found in considerable numbers among the doctors and lawyers and teachers and engineers in the country. But by no serious economic analysis or political analysis could they be seen as economically dominant, or as people to be feared. They were, rather, highly insecure and fearful themselves. In 1958 some of the businesses they had built up had been seized, and kept, by Sinhalese gangsters. It is the patrons of those gangsters who have concocted the 'Tamil threat'.

There is, however, one very real fear which, in a confused way, has become a 'Tamil threat'. It concerns Sinhalese no more than it does other Sri Lankans. It is the fear that a small country has for a huge neighbour. India is not a Tamil country. The Tamils in India are a smaller minority, in percentage terms, than the Sri Lanka Tamils are in their country. Culturally, Sri Lanka has many things in common with India; the Buddha himself was an 'Indian'. The people of Sri Lanka know, however, that small countries are very vulnerable to big and powerful neighbours. Moreover, the part of India which is closest, geographically and

historically, to Sri Lanka is Tamilnad. So, the more fanatically and aggressively some Sinhalese behave towards the Tamil communities in Sri Lanka, the more strongly do feelings of guilt and fear of reprisals combine to produce the 'Tamil threat'. Sinhalese racism is thus making more and more real the very danger it is cynically invoking to persecute Tamil-speaking Sri Lankans — the danger of Indian intervention and the loss of the country's independence.

The economic stagnation, lack of opportunities for higher education and employment, inflation, poverty, ill-health, crime, political violence and corruption which afflict those who label themselves Sinhalese also afflict Sri Lankans who are labelled Tamils, Burghers, Moors and Malays just as much or more. Moreover, these things afflict people of many Third World countries. The evil features of neocolonialism are the most crucial problem in the world today.

9. HOLOCAUST, JULY 1983

There are two stories, or sequences of events. We have to find out whether or not they are connected. Which reveals the cause, and which is in the nature of a consequence? What is apparent may not be true.

The first story begins with the actions in July 1983 of one of the army units stationed by the government in Jaffna. As we have noticed in the course of Chapter 6, they had been given enormous powers of life and death over the people of that district, and allowed enormous freedom of action. Harrassing and assaulting Sri Lankans there, going into houses and shops in search of anti-government guerillas and their leaders who have been organising attacks on government officials, UNP cadres and the police and military personnel guilty of atrocities, they were carrying out a task which the government had set them. Around the 20th they killed two guerrillas, and gang-raped a Jaffna Tamil girl. The raping of Tamils by Sinhalese anti-Tamil action groups had never been punished, and this incident was ignored by the government.

On the 23rd, while the same unit were going either on patrol or on some errand, they ran into an ambush in the same area prepared by a guerrilla group, as an act of retaliation. 13 soldiers were killed. These were the highest casualties the 'security forces' had suffered since the military occupied Jaffna, and the most bloody action of the pro-Eelam guerrillas. The army, since they could not find the enemy, then 'retaliated' by going around Jaffna and shooting a number of the local citizens. 41 were killed, many other injured.

The soldiers stationed in the north are virtually all Sinhalese, and the casualties were therefore all Sinhalese. The

dead men were not buried in Jaffna or sent to their families for burial in their home towns. The government started carrying out a plan to hold a mass funeral 200 miles away at the General Cemetery at Kanatte in Colombo on July 24th. Since press censorship had been imposed some days earlier, there had not been any reports published of the military casualties or anything else about the deaths in Jaffna. But on the 24th a communique was issued, for publication on the 25th morning, giving the names of all the soldiers who had died, and reporting the funeral. All the people we spoke to were unanimous that the report was so worded as to present the event not as the killing of government soldiers by rebels or terrorists with whom they were at war but as the racial killing of Sinhalese by Tamils. While one set of government leaders, including the President, were proceeding with the funeral ceremonies, another set evidently had organised a different demonstration, for which a number of civilians had been mobilised. The latter effectively put a stop to the funerals. The bodies appear to have been taken away by the families.

The second story begins to surface at some time in the week beginning the 17th of July. There were cryptic declarations that 'Sinhala heroes' were being got ready for some great exploit. Those who took these seriously were anxious about violence organised by extreme racist groups, but unable to do anything specific to avert the unknown danger. On the night of July 24th bands of people gathered for the unruly demonstration at Kanatte, and then proceeded to set upon any Tamils they could identify on the streets; they proceeded to Tamil shops and dwellings in the vicinity, mainly Borella, attacking and burning, and then spread the action towards Timbirigasyaya. The pogrom had begun. It began literally at the end of the road, Ward Place, where J.R. Jayawardene has his residence, and where he was that night, with his house guarded by a special military unit and armoured cars and tanks. There is evidence that those officers who had kept the President informed of what was happening had been certain that a curfew would be imposed at once. It was not.

The next day many people in the rest of Colombo, and suburban commuters, went about their usual Monday morning business, and children were taken to or went to school. They noticed that some shops were closed, but thought that that was as a precaution in view of the morning's newspaper item. At about 10 a.m. they suddenly became aware that a pogrom had begun: organised action against Tamils in the streets and in

buildings, and against Tamil establishments was being taken by squads which had taken up their positions and armed themselves with hit-lists and weapons throughout Colombo and in the suburban cities of Dehiwala-Mount Lavinia, and Kotte, south of Colombo, and Kelaniya to the north. There were a large number of eye-witnesses of what happened. They watched with disbelief and amazement as the police and the government made no attempt to stop or hinder small gangs of men who went about with lists, burning the houses and flats (in Sinhalese-owned dwellings only the contents), grocery stores, pharmacies, textile shops, tailoring establishments, restaurants, bookshops, hardware shops, lawyers' offices, studios, etc., patronised regularly by tens of thousands of Sri Lankans, as well as tourist hotels. They also burnt trucks, vans and cars. They went for only those things which were owned by one or the other of the Tamil communities, in many cases refraining carefully from looting or killing the residents. They did this expertly, as early reports stated, within sight of President's House (formerly 'Queen's House') in the administrative and business centre, a few yards away from the Prime Minister's official residence, near the UNP headquarters, in blocks immediately adjacent to or opposite major police stations — taking care, on a hot, dry morning, not to start fires which would spread to adjoining Sinhalese-owned or state property. Accidents and violations of 'discipline' were few.

The job was done in Colombo and its suburbs within a matter of hours — much of it between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., when the curfew began; but the action continued all afternoon and evening, as the army was involved. By about 1 o'clock it looked as though there had been an air raid. If it had been the action of the government of another country and not that of the Sri Lankan government (as we shall show), there would have been international condemnation. The fruits of years of economic development and hard work were destroyed on a massive scale: buildings, some of them newly constructed; homes put up and furnished with the life savings of men and women who in the international scale of wealth were poor; factories with their machinery and raw materials; wholesale and retail stocks of foodstuffs, medicines and textiles; 2 million kilogrammes of tea waiting to be exported; furniture, office equipment, valuable documents, irreplaceable film archives of the Sinhala cinema. All were deliberately destroyed that day.

And so were the livelihood, health and lives of many Sri Lankans. To understand that, we have to consider what people

noticed about the men who led the action. In Kelaniya, Industries Minister Cyril Mathew's gangs were identified as the ones at work. The General Secretary of the government 'union', the Jathika Sevaka Sangamaya (JSS) was identified as the leader of gangs which wrought destruction and death all over Colombo and especially in Wellawatte, where as many as ten houses a street were destroyed. A particular UNP municipal councillor of the Dehiwela-Mount Lavinia municipality led gangs in Mount Lavinia. In the Pettah (the bazaar area, where 442 shops were destroyed and murders committed) the commander was the son of Aloysius Mudalali, the Prime Minister's right-hand man. And so on. The thugs who worked regularly for the leaders of the UNP, both ministers of state and Party Headquarters, and in some cases uniformed military personnel and police, were seen leading the attack. They used vehicles of the Sri Lanka Transport Board (Minister in charge, M.H. Mohamed) and other government departments and state corporations. Trucks of the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation's Oil Refinery came from many miles away bringing the men who destroyed so much of Wellawatte. There is much other evidence of this sort. In view of the quasi-governmental nature of the 'action', the killings that took place may have been difficult for the eye-witnesses to resist, though thousands of Sinhalese could have led the attacks on the bullies who were having it so easy, and so saved many innocent lives. But in the neighbourhoods, after the initial shock, Sinhalese and Burghers organised themselves and kept off the gangs who had been sent to burn and kill.

// We have talked to people who were eye-witnesses of the killings — the beatings-to-death and burnings-alive in cold blood of individual Tamils seized, with never a case of police opposition, on the streets and in vehicles. Most people have read or heard the account, which we are convinced is authentic, of the Norwegian tourist who saw twenty people burnt alive in a minibus by one of these gangs. One of the most remarkable exploits of the 'heroes' was the massacre, that day, in Welikade Prison (Sri Lanka's most important) of 35 people, including some convicted men, and most either on remand or arbitrarily detained by the military. All were Sri Lanka Tamils. We are convinced that this massacre could not have been carried out without government and National Security Council authorisation and preparation at a level which would have guaranteed immunity from prosecution and public investigation. The men and women responsible for the conspiracy to commit this atrocity

were never named, nor were those who organised and directed it. Fellow-prisoners of the murdered persons who were set up to commit some of the killings, and provided with weapons (and what else?), were collectively but not individually identified, but no one was charged!⁷

The pogrom continued less intensely in Greater Colombo for three more days, in spite of the curfew. On Tuesday, July 26th, some of the action squads were transported to Kandy, some 70 miles away, and that afternoon there was a similar sharp and quick action there before the curfew was declared at 6 p.m. It then moved further up-country, past towns like Matale (devastated) and Nawalapitiya towards Badulla and Nuwara Eliya. Hindu temples had been added to the hit list. Army action had resulted in over 60 per cent of Badulla's city centre being reduced to rubble. On the 27th, incredibly, the second massacre of Tamil political detainees and remand prisoners was successfully carried out. This time 18 were killed. There was more to come. For, as some of the Tamils began to trickle back to work towards the end of the week, their fellow-countrymen, J.R. Jayawardene, spoke publicly for the first time on Thursday evening, justifying what had been done to the Tamils in south and central Sri Lanka, and uttering not a word of sympathy. On Friday, this provocative speech, and other actions, led to further arson and many more killings.

" By the end of the week, the majority of the some 600,000 Sri Lanka Tamil children, men and women in the predominantly Sinhala-speaking areas and in Colombo, and many of the 800,000 'Indian Tamils' had been driven or fled from their homes and places of work into refugee camps and homes of neighbours and friends, or were in hiding, some of them actually in the jungle.⁸ Those who had been spared because they or their homes had not got on the hit list knew that it was very unsafe to continue to live at home. Because the police in some places had allowed or even encouraged the gangs to stop vehicles and demand to see identity cards, even Sinhala-speaking Sri Lankans with Tamil-sounding names who dared to travel on public transport (buses and trains) and by car or scooter-taxis ('three wheelers') knew that they did so at risk to their lives. For after the first day, when it was clear that the refugees were fewer than the total number of Tamils, the action squads had stepped up the killings, cornering helpless individuals in trains and station platforms and setting up road blocks. It was not safe even to be in a government-run refugee camp. On the 29th an 'incident' ap-

pears to have been staged to create hysteria, and in one case two Tamils were murdered in most gruesome fashion in the sanctuary of a Christian church. That day one of the refugee camps in a southern suburb was about to be attacked; but it was in broad daylight, there was no curfew, and already international attention was focussed on Sri Lanka, and the government itself took action to avert a massacre.

In chapter 6, in discussing the voting in the 1982 Presidential election and the Referendum, we pointed out that the Indian Tamil voters were responsible for the record vote that Jayawardene obtained in Nuwara Eliya District and also for the massive 'Yes' vote there in the Referendum. Towards the end of that fatal week what the President of Sri Lanka justified on Thursday night on radio and television as the 'natural reaction' of 'the Sinhalese' was manifested in the town of Nuwara Eliya. Nuwara Eliya is in the satrapy of Dissanayake, who travelled in a helicopter! Here is an eye-witness account:

29.7. Nuwara Eliya. The town was closely guarded by the army. All vehicles were checked. Bus conductors had orders not to transport Tamils. Minister Gamini Dissanayake came from Colombo to Nuwara Eliya to hold a meeting with party members. The day before, MP Herath Ranasinghe had arrested precariously (sic) some well-known rowdies. Soon after the end of Gamini Dissanayake's party meeting they were released. These people went out immediately, well-equipped with petrol, iron rods and other kinds of weapons, and tried to attack two Tamil priests in town. They managed to escape. Without having succeeded they moved on — another mob joined up with the first one. They laid a ring of petrol around a Tamil shop which was then burnt. They were supported in this by the army who supplied them with gallons of petrol. During the day nearly all Tamil-owned shops were burnt. Mrs Herath Ranasinghe ordered the army to disperse the looters — but it was already too late. The Member of Parliament was banished from town under a hail of insults. Tamil people who walked the streets were beaten by soldiers. The fire brigade which stood waiting was hindered by the army and the Sinhalese mob in doing its job... Shops which had not been burnt by the mob were set fire to by the army. Around noon Nuwara Eliya was like a sea of flames.... (Sri Lanka — 'Paradise' in Ruins, Sri Lanka Co-ordination Centre, Kassel, 1983.)

The account goes on, to include an account of how the soldiers and thugs who had gone into action after the Minister gave his orders burnt alive a little girl whom they caught, along with 13 of her relatives, the head of the family being the local UNP organiser.

¹ We do not intend to go on with our account of what the 'heroes' did. The morning of the 25th, when one of us, caught completely unprepared for the holocaust, asked a bystander in the Fort what was happening, he explained what 'our Sinhalese boys are doing...' We are absolutely clear that even though what was done to Sri Lankans who were Tamils was approved and commended by *all* the senior members of the cabinet, it was *not* the action of *the* Sinhalese. It was a planned, well-organised action which took over 90 per cent of the population by surprise. It was carried out largely by the same people who had been trained and paid to smash strikes, terrorise and crush political dissent and kill when necessary. Some of masses, including workers and students, had previously been stirred up by the unashamedly and virulently anti-Tamil propaganda put out by members of the Sangha and by leading politicians; now, believing that anti-Tamil pogroms organised and commended by the country's leaders were a good thing, they joined in the action once the hit squads had begun. At the corner of Galle Road and Dickman's Road a unit of Jayawardene's troops trained their weapons on six Tamils to prevent them from escaping and got the Sinhalese 'heroes' to batter them to death and burn the bodies. Some mobs, like the master-minds, took a sadistic pleasure in causing pain and suffering, whether they had been recruited into the armed forces or not. Only a few people in Sri Lanka take an insane and pathological pleasure in having the power of life-and-death over their neighbours, and in publicly torturing to death some of the gentlest and most unoffending of Sri Lankans. Many Sri Lankans find the atrocities, and even more the objective behind them, so terrible that they cannot take it all in.

By early August it was clear that the holocaust had little connection with the reactions of ordinary people to the army casualties in the fight against the terrorists. As one of the newspapers reported, on the hit list had been the widow of Inspector Bastianpillai, who had been killed by a terrorist while he was on duty in Jaffna some time earlier. Mrs Bastianpillai and her children were Tamils, and for the master-minds that was good enough reason for burning their house and driving them out of an area reserved for the master-race.

10. THE CONTEXT

As we have suggested, there were omens of the imminent holocaust in the weeks before. There was a mounting fear, as though the country were getting into the grip of sinister forces out to destroy everything that was precious in its traditions. But what can be termed 'omens' are very subjective perceptions, depending on comparisons with other countries, such as the happenings in Germany which indicated the rising power of the Nazis, and other such foreign comparisons. There had been nothing in Sri Lanka's past, before the 1950s, to indicate the ultimate meaning of what the so-called Security Forces and government officials were up to in the district of Vavuniya from March 1983 onwards, or of the escalation of government-directed violence against law-abiding Tamils in the east coast port of Trincomalee in June or of the decision of the authorities of the University of Peradeniya (Sri Lanka's premier university) not to investigate seriously or to punish organised assaults by undergraduate thugs on Tamil fellow-students and teachers in May.

In Vavuniya the government was obviously driving out, by burning their huts, refugees from an earlier anti-Tamil attack who were eking out a living on very inhospitable soil. But driving them where? And then the eviction in June of many Indian Tamil refugee families who had been rehabilitated by voluntary organisations took place. Why were the police being used for this? What was going to happen to these people? Who was behind these attacks? The government seemed to consider it no longer necessary to discuss or explain these important questions. People wondered whether it was the President who was giving orders or some other authority.

In Trincomalee the violence against the Tamils became quite serious in June. It seemed senseless to carry out a policy of bringing in outside forces to stir up violence and communalism in a town which had been peaceful. One had assumed that governments normally favour law and order. Now the rulers of Sri Lanka appeared to be instigating lawlessness and disorder. Was that a new policy? The answer began to emerge when we discovered how active Cyril Mathew had been. When the top government officials in the Trincomalee District (of which the port is the district capital) took measures to restore peace in the area after some initial trouble-making by thugs, Mathew, who had absolutely no business there or authority over them, intervened. The armed forces he had indoctrinated (see chapter 12) were moved into Trincomalee, and under their protection there began the action of the UNP's thugs brought in from the opposite side of the island. And a reign of terror began.

Until the violence began, Trincomalee was a town in which there were a fair proportion each of Sri Lanka Tamils, Moors and Sinhalese, with the Sri Lanka Tamils as the largest community. Almost a hundred years ago, at the time of the 1891 census, 9,536 (79 per cent) of the town's population of 11,948 had been Sri Lanka Tamils. It had grown considerably by 1946 (just before independence), and become a multi-communal town, with about 30 per cent Sinhalese and about 50 per cent Tamils (Sri Lanka and 'Indian'), and with just over 25 per cent Buddhist, about 45 per cent Hindu and 20 per cent Christian. Communalist governments had tried to settle Sinhalese in the town. It changed slowly. A town like this changes naturally, as Sri Lankans go to live and work in it, and it is a community with a life of its own. It would require a massive campaign of terror against workers, traders and other residents, and considerable killing, to change the population radically and make Trincomalee a predominantly Sinhala-Buddhist town; and the UNP leaders who started on this cruel and barbaric operation must have known what it would cost. All the same, throughout June and July Jayawardene allowed it.

What was the implication of using the 'security forces' to engage in such racist work? What did Jayawardene want the Trincomalee Tamils, whose ancestors had lived there for hundreds of years, to do with themselves? Did he think that terrorising and killing Sri Lankans for such a purpose was 'the natural desire' of the Sinhalese? Was the use of UNP thugs and troops for arson and anti-Tamil terrorism a rehearsal?

Similarly, there were unanswered questions about university policy. The President was in charge of the Ministry of Higher Education. If the Tamil students, while following their courses, were to be driven out, where were they to go? It had been Peradeniya's proud claim that there had never been racism on the campus. Now at least one professor had been identified as the instigator of the anti-Tamil attackers. Moreover, in a residential university, the Vice-Chancellor and other officials, and the powerful bureaucrat in Colombo to whom the universities are subject, had some responsibility to protect residents against racist attacks, or to explain why undergraduates living in halls of residence could be beaten up with impunity if they just happened to be Tamils.

In view of the government's record it was not a surprise that it was condoning indiscriminate attacks on the Tamils. There was a perceptible shift in its policy, however, and for this reason the incidents in Vavuniya, Trincomalee and Peradeniya were described as ominous. To understand this we have to see how the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) was being used. The government had originally defended its introduction and use on the grounds that it was temporarily necessary to fight terrorism. This argument had been effectively demolished by the Civil Rights Movement and by others. Regardless of the serious objections to its temporary use, the government made it part of the permanent law of the land. But even from the point of view of some who conceded that it might be necessary to combat the terrorists, who numbered less than 500 and were concentrated mainly in one district, Jaffna in the extreme north, the government was going too far in using it against the whole Tamil population of Jaffna (about 800,000 now), who were certainly not terrorists. Some people could hardly believe it, but it was becoming evident that Jayawardene and his colleagues were letting the people of Sri Lanka get used to the idea that the PTA was for use against the TULF and its supporters — that is, against people who were known to be against terrorism but were agitating for Eelam on political and humanitarian grounds (see chapter 7).

The country was heading towards a major disaster if the government kept on going in that direction. The answer to Tamil fears should have been not a stepping up of Sinhala racist violence (using sophisticated, Western supplied arms in the case of the police and armed forces), but the very opposite. It should have been political. The only proper way to use the 'security

forces' was to make all Sri Lankans, of whatever race or religion, not only feel secure, but in fact secure against crimes such as assault, robbery, housebreaking, extortion, arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, rape and murder (including assassination). Especially because of what the Tamils had been through, it should have been *shown* that it was not necessary for Tamils to find protection for their lives and property and their other human rights in a separate state. If that had been done, only a few hardline ideologues would have been left to agitate for Eelam, even in Jaffna, and terrorist activity would have diminished. But what was one to think if the government was moving towards the opposite goal: from outlawing those it defined as terrorists to outlawing all supporters of the TULF and then to outlawing all Tamils? How else could anyone interpret what Jayawardene said in the course of an interview with a British reporter (an interview which he had republished in the government-run Colombo *Sunday Observer* of 17 July):

"...I am not worried about the opinion of the Jaffna people now... Now we can't think of them. Not about their lives or of their opinion about us! //

Jayawardene, had made use of the votes of the Sri Lanka Tamils and the 'Indian' Tamils to be elected President in 1982 and then to do away with elections. The majorities show how decisive the pro-UNP Tamil vote was. He was now treating the Tamils as expendable. Anti-racist Sinhalese and other Sri Lankan opinion was slow to respond to the danger. The discussion that went on around May and June 1983 showed how confused people were about what they should do to stop what they feared was going to happen.

The working up of anti-Indian public opinion was part of the campaign. The Indian government had, quite correctly according to diplomatic procedures, expressed its anxiety about the trends in the country. It was plain that what was brewing in government circles would be a threat to Indian citizens in Sri Lanka. Events were to prove the Indian Foreign Minister right. Jayawardene's anti-Indian remarks, echoed by the servile press, seemed to be part also of some move which had little to do with Jayawardene's wanting a free hand to persecute 'his' Tamils. But, more important, it appeared to be an indication of a shift away from non-alignment.

The Amnesty International Mission's Report on Sri Lanka was published in July. The government reacted to it hysterically

(as they did to some critical reporting in the U.K. *Guardian*). The publication of the Report was an important event, and its accurate and precise report on the use of torture by the Armed Forces and Police showed how far the Jayawardene regime had gone:

Torture

On the basis of the mission's interviews with released detainees and medical and legal affidavits received subsequently, Amnesty International concluded that torture was regularly used (at least until the time of its mission) by the army and police as a means of obtaining information or 'confessions' from people suspected of knowing about the activities of Tamil extremist groups.

(In September 1981 the Sri Lanka Court of Appeal confirmed that torture had been inflicted on two detainees at Elephant Pass Army camp).

The Amnesty International delegation found that between June 1981 and January 1982 the following methods of torture had been used in army camps and police stations:

- hanging detainees upside down and beating them;
- repeatedly beating them with heavy sticks, pipes and fists, especially on the soles of the feet, around the head and shoulders, and on the stomach and back; these beatings were prolonged and some resulted in broken bones;
- stripping detainees naked and beating them on the genitals;
- inserting needles under finger-nails and toe-nails or in the arms;
- inserting chili into sensitive parts of the body and forcing detainees to drink heavily chili-infused water until they vomited;
- burning them with cigarettes; in one case a detainee's pubic hair was burned;
- chaining detainees in such a way that they had to lie on the floor for up to six months in cramped conditions.

Torture of detainees was reported still to be occurring in army camps in the north at the end of May, and a recent allegation referred to torture being inflicted in police stations, including one in Colombo (known as the 'Fourth Floor').

In several instances, released detainees are reported to have been threatened with reprisals if they disclosed details

about torture or ill-treatment. Some of those released are still allegedly being harassed and intimidated by the security forces, who in some cases, arbitrarily restrict their movements.

Jayawardene was unmoved, and accused Amnesty falsely of being 'communist'-influenced.

When attacks on the Tamils in Colombo began on the night of 24 July, most Sri Lankans were lagging so far behind in following what the government was doing that they expected the President and the Cabinet to put a stop to the pogrom. It took some time for the truth to sink in: the burning, beating to death and killing was aimed at Tamils who were indifferent or positively opposed to Eelam and to terrorism. It had been planned for months, more likely years, and a vast deal of research and organisation had gone into the preparation for the holocaust. The first massacre of the detainees in Welikade Prison was carried out on the 25th itself, and to do that the Deputy Superintendent must have got the assurance from the highest authority that he and the jailors who collaborated with the army officers in organising the massacre would not be charged with murder or even be investigated and punished by their superiors in the Prisons Department.

In August the *Island* courageously published what S. Thondaman and his Ceylon Workers' Congress declared after they had met and surveyed the situation:

Violence against the Tamil minority, which has been a permanent feature of Sri Lanka's political scene during the past three decades has erupted once again on a large scale with unprecedented savagery. Organised groups went on a rampage, unchecked for nearly a week, destroying and looting property, setting houses and establishments on fire, and killing and maiming the innocent and defenceless victims while the guardians of the law remained inactive and in some instances even encouraged and assisted the lawlessness.

We are deeply grieved that this wave of violence has been unleashed even before the wounds inflicted by the criminals in August 1981 had healed. The vast majority of the peace loving Tamils, who by hard work and frugality have helped to build the economy of this country, have been rendered destitute overnight.

There is substantial evidence to believe that the events of the last week of July are not a sudden and spontaneous out-

burst of the Sinhala population against the Tamils. It appears that a concerted attempt has been made by means of a carefully laid out plan over a long period of time to destroy the houses and belongings of persons of Indian origin in the professions and the trade. The objective of the exercise appears to be to deny this community all avenues of progress and condemn them to a permanent state of captive labour. Large numbers of estate workers have also been affected.

Even before the riots began in Colombo, the attack on the Tamil settlers in the Mannar, Vavuniya and Trinomalee areas had been set in motion. It is significant that communal violence on a large scale commenced with the burning of the huts of settlers in Trincomalee. They were uprooted from their homes in the early hours of the morning of July 23rd bundled and brought against their will to Nuwara Eliya and Hatton and left as destitutes.

The failure to regularise the land holdings of stateless persons and other people of Indian origin in the North, through a dialogue with the Minister of Rural Industrial Development and President of the Ceylon Workers Congress has been a major contributory factor to this sad state of affairs which we are witnessing today.

Instead of implementing the declared policy of regularising the settlement of persons of Indian origin in these areas, where they were transported and dumped as refugees after the previous holocaust, a concerted effort had been made to drive them out of their holdings under various false pretexts. This had been further intensified around the middle of July when the police and the security personnel set in motion a wave of terror intimidating the settlers and driving them away.

In order to legalise this programme a proposal was presented 'For Prevention of Encroachments and Illicit Settlements in Sri Lanka, the Prevention of Unlawful Activities of any individual, group of individuals, Associations, Organisation or body of persons within Sri Lanka...' which includes some of the obnoxious provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act like detention without trial for up to 18 months, power to G.A. or A.G.A. without giving consent to authorize Police, Army or Navy to demolish building etc. thus branding settlers as terrorists.

In the backdrop of recurring waves of violence, the C.W.C. points out that these acts of savagery, discrimination

and displacement have been practiced in spite of the unstinted cooperation that the C.W.C. had extended to the Government and the whole-hearted support the people of Indian origin gave during the Presidential election and the referendum, that no compensation has been paid to date to the victims of the earlier violence, and none of those responsible have been punished.

11. WHO COULD HAVE DONE IT?

Who did it? As in the case of any ordinary crime, the guilty ones have to be identified, tracked down if they have gone under cover, and brought to justice. In this chapter we list most of the suspects. Who did what? Several things, all of them serious crimes according to the law of the land and according to laws defining crimes against humanity, went on at the same time in June and July and August. But, most important of all, what was set in motion in Colombo, Dehiwela-Mount Lavinia, Kandy District, Negombo, Nuwara Eliya District and in the rest of South, Western and Central Sri Lanka was the first, and most difficult part, of a strategy *to change the ethnic composition of Sri Lanka* — to change it to such an extent that it ceased decisively to be a multi-ethnic, multi-religious nation.

Sri Lankan society, as we have tried to show, has taken over 2,000 years to be formed; and in the last 200 years modern Sri Lanka has taken shape and become integrated as a society in which at local level and at national level Low Country Sinhalese of different historic communities, Kandyan Sinhalese, Sri Lanka Tamils, Moors, Burghers, Malays, 'Indian' Tamils and other groups have become Sri Lankan. In Colombo, which its people have made into a multi-ethnic community in which in many cases the communal distinctions have become obliterated (even though censuses and officious government functionaries have kept on attaching labels to people) massive violence will have to be employed repeatedly to turn the metropolis into a predominantly Sinhala-Buddhist town in which a few poor Tamils, Moors and others are available as depressed communities to do menial work. No Marxists or Communists will be permitted to exist, even though Sri Lanka is a country in which

professing Marxists, as leaders of socialist parties, have hitherto been free from proscription and have been important members of national governments. Hindu temples have been attacked. Attacks on mosques and churches will follow. There can be little doubt that this is the agenda of those who now wield state power.

What happened in July and August was not simply and entirely a holocaust. Individuals and factions in the ruling class and the state machine were taking the opportunity to make their fortunes or jockey for political advantages. In the Pettah (which includes the bazaar area of Colombo) an entire street of rich Tamil merchants and jewellers was given 'protection', and a historic section of the city was systematically destroyed mainly for pecuniary advantage; the interests of property developers and their highly-placed patrons were involved. The dust of 442 Pettah destroyed buildings (mainly shops, but including residences) had no sooner settled than a plan for rebuilding was rushed through the Cabinet. A South Korean multi-national was part of the action!

In such a corrupt and unprincipled regime as that led by Jayawardene, the 'authorities' assisted individuals who were making use of the program to get personal benefits. Ministers, MPs (if that term has meaning any longer), and rank-and-file UNP (and perhaps a few SLFP) members were able to use skulduggery to get sitting tenants (who were not all Tamils) to vacate rented houses which they (the owners) wanted to re-let at high rents, rivals to vacate shop sites into which members of the chosen race could move in, less able or less qualified government and mercantile employees to create vacancies in posts which would become theirs by virtue of their 'race'. We have considerable evidence of this.

We cannot, in the time and space that is available, do more than provide rough notes on the various factions and groups which were involved in one way or another. What appears outwardly and formally as the political structure and process is in fact now an empty shell. As we have shown, the President, with the help of his closest colleagues, destroyed virtually all serious political opposition, at least for a time, and by 1983 had virtually absolute powers, though constitutional forms were sometimes very conspicuously observed. But in a regime based so much as this is on personal loyalties, violence and intrigue, the President's ability to hold on to the power to make legislative, judicial and executive decisions and to coerce assent, which he

had concentrated in his hands depended on (i) the loyalties of his fellow conspirators and lieutenants; (ii) his ability to keep his proteges and instruments divided and mutually suspicious; (iii) the monopoly in his hands of the security and special forces, the army, navy and air force, the police and the administrative heads; and (iv) control over the rump Parliament and the judiciary and even the Buddhist and Christian hierarchies.

No statemanship or concern for the people is required for the successful exercise of that kind of presidency. But almost superhuman cunning and authority is needed for such superhuman pretensions. However, to have brought about the absence of political criticism and opposition outside the UNP, and the cancellation of the 1983 election, were fatal blunders. J.R. Jayawardene's authority and power over his own apparatus began to slip away rapidly, as his tricks (he had been nicknamed 'Tricky Dicky') were no longer required. His petty-minded obsession with the Tigers' challenge to his authority played into the hands of Mathew and his associates. Jayawardene was a Sinhalese racist rather than a Sri Lankan patriot, as he himself virtually admitted, but he was too pragmatic and rational to be swept away by the extreme racist fanaticism and violence of his proteges. He affected to deplore the fanaticism of Mathew and some of the other fascist elements operating under cover of Buddhism. But he was outmanoeuvred. For when he allowed what had become no longer a Sri Lankan but a Sinhalese army and police to be used without restraint against the Tamils, Mathew's racist gospel was preached among members of the armed forces, and the Commander-in-Chief lost control of most of the army as anyone Mathew wanted to wipe out became 'the enemy'.

'JR' had been in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s the friend of the USA. With no other political leader in the UNP had the USA a closer relationship. But he had not noticed until it was too late that the thumbs down signal had been given. In 1983, when other South Asian leaders were visiting the USA, Jayawardene waited for his invitation. He did not get it. Instead, Premadasa, neither head of state nor head of government, was invited, and given the welcome and attention which the President had expected.

R. Premadasa is the Prime Minister, a person of humble origins who became Mayor of Colombo, and rose by his own 'skills' to become the second-ranking leader of the UNP. He is at present the person who according to the constitution will act for a specified period as President if Jayawardene dies or is

seriously incapacitated. He is a master of political tactics in the Sri Lankan context, and as a supposedly 'low caste' person has had to overcome opposition from the *goigama* Sinhalese in his party. His skill (as an organiser and public speaker) in mobilising lower class opposition to the 'feudal' patrician families in the leadership of the SLFP has been invaluable to the UNP. His social base is made up of the street traders and pavement hawkers dealing in smuggled or stolen goods, underworld characters and other members of the lumpen proletariat in central and North Colombo and elsewhere; and also *nouveaux riches* of all communities engaging in shady business practices. Needless to say, starting with nothing, he has become a rich man, and is founding a 'dynasty'. His rise has signalled a widening of the UNP's interests to include those of the lumpen proletariat. Premadasa's much-feared mafia has been for years the means by which he and his faction in the Party (which includes several MPs) as well as the UNP itself has defeated opponents, built up an apparatus of terror, and brought under control any police officers who may be so romantic as to be zealous in law enforcement.

The prominent businessman Aloysius Mudalali is one of his most loyal associates and mass leaders. The links between Premadasa's interests and those of South Korean firms operating in Sri Lanka are close. He holds his position in spite of Jayawardene's dislike of him, but his exclusion from the National Security Council has been a serious problem for his caucus.

Premadasa is a pragmatist, whose faction has risen with the help of Tamils and Muslims. His main base in cosmopolitan Colombo is not a breeding ground of obscurantist theories of racial superiority. This, together with the fact that he has had a long personal struggle against the decadent traditionalist forces which have concocted the murderous 'Sinhala-Buddhist' racist ideology and which aims, among other things, to drive out half of Colombo's population and take it over, makes him a reluctant collaborator in the attacks on UNP members and associates whose capital crime is that their families and those of the terrorist groups in Jaffna speak the same Sri Lankan language.

The caste-conscious and communal-minded *goigama* families in the UNP have been trying to find a candidate who could become a successor instead of Premadasa. Ironically, the tycoon Upali Wijewardena, a family connection of the President, who had the highest political ambitions and was willing to

take on Premadasa, started a newspaper, the *Island*, which was liberal and free of communalism. But about a year ago he disappeared in truly mysterious circumstances, presumably killed in a plane crash between Singapore (where he had extensive business interests) and Colombo. He was enormously wealthy, and was believed to be the President's favourite.

Gamini Dissanayake, one of the satraps, has his own force of thugs and his machine. The Minister of Mahaweli Development, in charge of a project which is receiving and spreading billions of dollars, had no need to be short of funds and cadres.

One of his rivals is Lalith Athulathmudali. The Minister of Commerce and Trade, he is overlord of the suburban area south of Colombo. He was not surprised by what happened.

Anandatissa de Alwis, the Minister of Information, is also ambitious. However, he has no major independent power base.

But the politicians vying with one another to be picked out by Jayawardene as the most reliable, most loyal and hence most suitable as heir apparent are being undercut by a coalition of politicians who do not appear to have waited for the President. One of this group is Esmond Wickremasinghe. He became a press baron in the 1940s and is known as a 'kingmaker'. His son, Ranil Wickremasinghe, is the Minister of Education and Youth Affairs. Paul Perera, who was until recently the Chairman of the Greater Colombo Economic Commission, is a friend and neighbour of Jayawardene. Panditharatne is the Chairman of the UNP; G.V.P Samarasinghe is Secretary to the Cabinet. Perhaps the best-known member of the group is Cyril Mathew, the Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs. They were active in organising against Supreme Court judges who did not toe their line. They control the JSS, the party headquarters and much of the police and armed forces: they are more than a match for Premadasa.

Opposite the Bandaranaike Memorial Hall is a huge statue of the Buddha and a residence of bhikkus. One of these is the young Elle Gunawansa, a leader of the Sinhala Peramuna, members of which were involved in drawing up lists of non-Sinhalese businesses. There are other bhikkus who are prominent in racist groups (reported in *Weekend*, August 7th 1983).

Some members of the security forces have an elaborate training which includes torture techniques. Cyril Herath of Vavuniya was trained by Mossad, the Israeli secret police.

Who else was involved? The CIA? Other foreign agencies? Readers are invited to draw their own conclusions. We do not

think that the Soviet Union, the JVP, the NSSP or the CP were involved, and there has been no evidence produced to that effect. There is however massive evidence of the involvement of the UNP. The main apparatus for organising the events at the end of the July was the JSS. This has infiltrated every government department and the banks, and there is now no guarantee of confidentiality in the mail, telephone calls, bank transactions etc. JSS members helped to draw up dossiers on Tamils including where they lived and the houses and businesses they owned.

12. THE RACIST GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATHEW

A close and comprehensive analysis of the July pogroms in their context points to only one conclusion. And it is this: far from their being the spontaneous actions of the Sinhalese masses inflamed by any Tamil attacks on Sinhalese, they were part of a strategy for driving out from their work places, schools and residential communities hundreds of thousands of Sri Lankans who were Tamils — a strategy carefully planned, organised and carried out by the dominant faction in the UNP. We know they were not the patriotic action of Sri Lankans against those who threatened the country. The reality was that the various Sinhalese communities as such were not oppressed or threatened by any of the Tamils on the hit list. On the contrary, Sri Lankan people of all communities gained by the social and economic integration of diverse ‘communities’, and by having Tamils as neighbours, colleagues, employers, employees, doctors, clients, benefactors and friends, and they have said so.

In fact, in that fateful week of the holocaust, extending over some eight districts, not a single Sinhalese was killed during the orgy of assault, arson and murder, even though the provocation was extreme. Even in Jaffna, the terrorist attacks had been overwhelmingly against Tamils; and, as we have shown, the danger of partition of the country was a danger to *all* Sri Lankans — not one bit more to Sinhalese than to Malays, Burghers, Moors and Tamils. ‘Separatism’ was manifestly opposed by the vast majority of Tamils as well as other Sri Lankans.

We have earlier written about the holocaust being part of the ‘final solution’ of someone’s problem, just as the social, economic and physical elimination of 6 million European Jews

was the final solution of the Nazis, who claimed to speak and act for all true-blooded Germans. In this chapter we take a closer look than we have so far taken of the ruling-class ideologue and strategist for whom the 'problem' is how to turn Sri Lanka exclusively into a 'Sinhala-Buddhist' domain. We look at the President of the Jathika Sevaka Sangamaya (JSS), the man who can make free with the resources of the Ministry of Industries and Scientific Affairs, and the man whom no one in the government dares to attack publicly. It is Mathew's gospel of 'Sinhala-Buddhist' racism which other ministers, Jayasuriya and Wickremasinghe, for example, are vying with one another to proclaim and put into practice. It is the ideology peddled by the *Ceylon Daily News*, which expounded it in a series of anti-Tamil articles in September 1983. Mathew continues to be important also because most Sri Lankans, and particularly Sinhalese, are deeply disturbed and ashamed of what Sri Lanka has become because of him and Jayawardene — of the injustices, cruelties and barbarities to which these two give such noble names like 'Righteous Society'!

Within Sri Lanka at present the opposition to their 'solutions' is as yet neither organised nor united; and, further, is hampered by the noisy activities of the Eelamists at home and abroad. What the government is trying hard to get is the approval of foreign public opinion and of the UN and other international organisations concerned with human rights for its version of what the holocaust was all about — and thus to weaken the domestic Sri Lankan movement to build a new multi-communal Sri Lanka on the ruins of the old.

Sri Lankans are aware that some among them can get more lucrative and prestigious posts in the government sector, business and industry and more political power over others than are now possible: the way to do so is to push the ideology of Sri Lanka as the Holy Land of Sinhala-Buddhism. Such a 'Buddhist' Zionism may sound absurd, but the prospects it opens up of a monopoly of political power of economic opportunities, now having to be shared among all Sri Lankans on the basis of merits and equity, are very substantial. This then is 'the problem': it is that in reality the multi-communal Sri Lanka that its *people* have created by their labours, their decisions and choices, and their interactions, is no such thing as this mythical Holy Land. The 'solution' is to turn that myth into reality — into a Sri Lanka from which Tamils, Moors, and others who cannot be even nominally Sinhala-Buddhist (some 4 million odd) have

been driven either out of the country or into enclaves occupations designated by the master-race; it is to drive out of Colombo the more than 50 per cent who are not Sinhala-Buddhists.

The myth had its origins in the 19th century. Recently it has been turned into practical politics mainly by gross falsifications which are calls to action against Sri Lankans who are not of the 'Sinhala-Buddhist race'. Mathew himself makes virulent attacks on all his targets and is immune to restraint from the President, but he has his own ideologues who write some of his propaganda material which for years has been distributed very widely at Government expense. It has been used to indoctrinate the armed forces and the police so that everything that Mathew says, any programme that he devises and wants implemented is actually carried out by the special security forces, the army, the police, public servants and thugs, and propagated by like-minded newspaper editors. Books published in his name have been distributed to schools and colleges, to university lectures and other educationalists. The literature is highly inflammatory. We give below a sample from *Diabolical Conspiracy*, a book of his speeches with two essays by bhikkus, available both in Sinhala and English.

About 2000 years ago the Sinhala people started facing the dreadful enemy invasions and threats from diverse communities living in the Indian subcontinent. Then they began to suffer the terrible conquests, tortures and harassments by the Portuguese and Dutch. In spite of all these calamities, the Sinhala people somehow managed to safeguard at least an iota of their cherished independence and sovereignty somewhere or other in this blessed land of Sri Lanka. By subjecting the innocent and defenceless Sinhala people to extremely cruel tortures and harassments such as beheading, bloodbaths, killing on the spike and setting whole villages on fire, the foreign invaders mercilessly suppressed the Sinhala people and forced Hindu, Catholic and Christian doctrines well and truly into their minds as well as their bodies. In this manner the Sinhala Buddhist people were purposefully polarised into opposing camps as non-Buddhists and Buddhists and the Sinhala people who became adherents of the doctrine of the foreign tyrants were given lands, possessions, honours, offices, wealth etc. commensurate to the extent that they shed their 'Sinhalaness' and assumed decadent non-Sinhala demeanours and traits. With such techniques, the ter-

rible foreign invaders started their repressive and oppressive rule of the Sinhala people. Nevertheless, by some great good fortune, there remained in this country a majority of the Sinhala people who were undefiled and who treated the honours, citations, wealth, prosperity etc., obtainable from the foreign rulers as undesirable as stinking infective dysentric excrement. Even after the British subjected the entire island, this majority people made an enormous effort to somehow safeguard their undefiled and unservile 'Sinhalaness' and unite against the oppressors, in spite of the numerous threats, tortures and harassments they were subjected to...

The British gave top most priority in providing employment and entrusting official and other responsibilities to the white-skinned descendants of the Portuguese and the Dutch in Sri Lanka. The next priority was given to the Catholic and Christian non-Sinhala descendants of the Dravidian Chola and Pandya invaders. The next priority was given to other non-Sinhala people... The lowest priority was given to the Muslims who were the most difficult to be persuaded to abandon their religion. Those who did not receive any privileges were the Sinhala Buddhists incompetent in the use of the English language. A very special partiality was shown to the minorities and they were given valuable and privileged opportunities. In this crafty way the British rulers were able to obtain all the information regarding the efforts of the majority people in their struggle for a united stand, from the beholden and grateful minority communities. Thus, the British rulers were able to prevent the organisation of the Sinhala Buddhists to rise against the British Raj and to prevent the success of any such organised activities. That is how the British built their empire-estates and subtly but certainly, exploited this land ruthlessly. By giving prominent and important positions in the administrative machinery of this country, to the Sri Lankans who did not regard this blessed island as their motherland and who did not consider the pristine religion of this country as their own religion, the British rulers achieved all their objectives most competently...

This is a mere factual fragment of the true history of our country; it is not a divisive fabricated figment of racial or religious dissensionisms.

...the officials belonging to the minority communities who in fact received special privileges and concessions from the British, diligently pressed on with their aim of improving

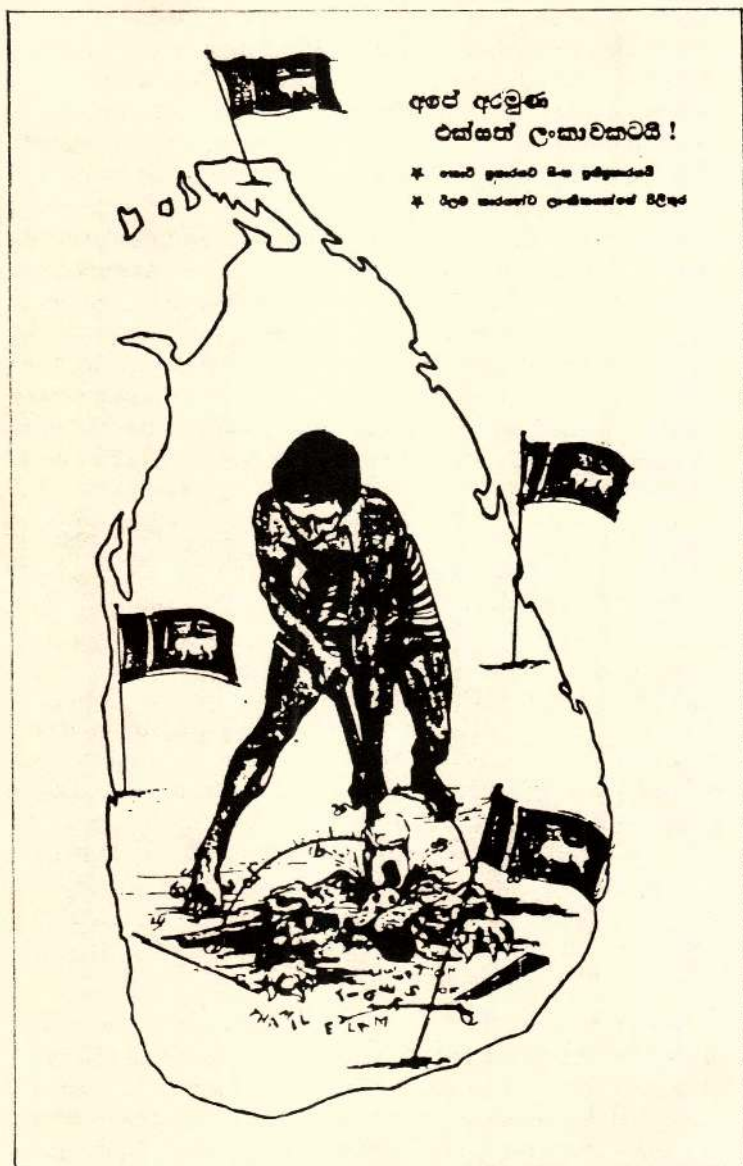
the conditions of their own minority communities to the utter detriment of the majority community in Sri Lanka. The Tamil officers who were favoured with prominent positions in the administrative machinery by the British, enhanced, more and more, their numbers and expanded their domain of influence in the administrative set-up in the country. These Tamil officers recruited more and more of their own kind to both high and low levels of employment and made available the facilities for higher education to the Tamil community in ever-increasing proportions, and thus began to enjoy a disparate proportion of the benefits and resources available to the entire country, in a most unjust manner. As an increasing number of Tamil students who reaped the benefits of higher educational facilities started entering the administrative machinery in the country and the medical, engineering, university teaching and school teaching professions and other services the advantages and privileges unfairly secured by the Tamil community began naturally to pile up more and more ...

(Diabolical Conspiracy. Privately published 1979 together with and in connection with the speech by Mr. C. Cyril Mathew, Hon. Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs, in Parliament on 7 November 1978.)

There are several ingredients in that concoction. But more, (from the book *The Malay Dilemma* by Mohamed Mahathir) are added before it becomes the strong brew which will transform the (according to Mathew) gullible, easily put-upon, lethargic and generally inferior breed of Sinhalese into his 'heroes', who will, as a powerfully suggestive cartoon in one of Mathew's other books (*Kavuda Kotiya*—who is the Tiger?), suggests, plant the Sinhala flag in the four corners of Sri Lanka by finishing off the last of the (Tiger-like?) Tamils in the far south. On August 4th in Parliament, Mathew quoted Mahathir:

The fact remains that should a Malay and an Indian be forced to leave Malaya, the Indian can settle down in India and be an Indian whilst the Malay cannot. Similarly, the Chinese, whatever he himself may think, is still acceptable to China should he find the need to go back... To be truly indigenous one must belong to no other race but that truly identified with a given country.

We do not have space to go into why Sri Lankan fascist ideology has to invoke the authority of Mohamed Mahathir. We



Who is the Tiger?—a racially inflammatory cartoon from one of Cyril Mathew's books.

are sure that the present Prime Minister of Malaysia will want to dissociate himself from Cyril Mathew, especially since there are over 1 million Sri Lanka Moors who, according to the 'Bumiputra' theory now being propagated by such Ministers as Mathew and Jayasuriya can find their welcome in some foreign 'homeland' rather than in their own country.

It indicates what the standards of competence of the Jayawardene regime are that Mathew has sixteen industrial corporations under his Ministry, several state-run companies and other scientific institutions and departments. Mathew's ignorance of economic and social realities is quite remarkable. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the predominant position of the Malaysian Chinese in post-independence Malaysia's industry and commerce, the comparison of the Malays with the Sinhalese and the Chinese with the Tamils reveals Mathew's disregard for history, economics and 'psychology'. In Sri Lanka it is the Sinhalese (and, particularly, certain Sinhalese communities) who have been economically and socially (and, of course, politically) disproportionately privileged. As we have shown, their 'leading families' exploited their colonial privileges, their considerable wealth and business skills, their numbers in association with communal appeals, and their political dominance to dominate more than 74 per cent of the Sri Lankan economy, and particularly the means of production. We ourselves, as a multi-communal group, find little cause for any communal complaint in that disproportion. (Our objection is to the iniquitous concentration of economic power in a small, multi-communal ruling class.) But if people want to think in communal rather than in Sri Lankan terms, it is the Sinhalese who should lose some of their privileges to the 26 per cent of non-Sinhalese Sri Lankans.

The official *Report on Consumer Finances and Socio-Economic Survey 1978/79*, published in 1983 by the Central Bank, comments: 'The Burghers and Malays recorded the highest proportions of persons proceeding beyond primary education. This may be attributed to the fact that these communities have traditionally been employed in the formal sector, where the educational system is used as a screening device to allocate jobs. It is, however, noteworthy that these communities did not perform quite so well in the Passed 'A' Level and Above categories. The Low Country Sinhalese registered the highest participation in tertiary education ...' (p 33)

The recently-formed multi-communal and multi-party 'Committee for Rational Development' has issued a carefully-

researched report in the course of which it says: 'with 74% of the population, the Sinhalese have 85% of all the jobs in the public sector, 82% in the professional and technical categories, and 83% in the administrative and managerial categories. On the other hand, the Tamils, with 18% of the population, have only 11% of all public sector jobs, 13% of professional posts, and 14% of administrative and managerial positions. Confirmation of this point is to be found in the UNP election manifesto of 1977 ...'

The Jaffna District has 5.6 per cent of the country's population. This report points out:

In the District Budget for the year 1982, the amount allocated to the Jaffna District for new works is only Rs 27 million. This shows up the smallness of the District Budget and its very limited capacity to spearhead decentralised development. In the case of the Central Budget, an analysis of the figures in the Ministry of Plan Implementation Performance, 1981, shows that capita expenditure in the Jaffna District was only Rs 260 million — that is, only 2.6% of the national capita expenditure of nine billion rupees (sic). The per capital expenditure in the Jaffna District is Rs 313, while the national per capital expenditure is Rs 656. In addition, foreign aid utilisation in the Jaffna District for the period 1977-82 was 0. (Reproduced in *Lanka Guardian*, November 1st 1983.)

Mathew has been assiduous in his campaign to stir up the Sinhalese against the Tamils, to such an extreme that Sinhalese hatred breaks out in murderous attacks on Tamils. Since there is no rational cause for such persecution and oppression, the invoking of Mohamed Mahathir's book and his supposed hatred for the Malaysian Chinese, and of the *Bumiputra* principle, has a mystical significance for Mathew.

So does the murderous rage to which he and his associates tirelessly rouse their hit squads by invoking the Buddha. In case there are people who think that Buddhism is capable of being interpreted, as it is in Mathew's gospel of racial hatred, as a sanction, by holy duty, to rob others of their livelihood and their homes, torture and kill them, and drive them from their country, we quote excerpts from a newspaper interview given by Professor Mahinda Paliawadana of the University of Sri Jayawardenapura on 'Violence in a Buddhist Society' (*Weekend*, September 11th):

... Human beings were tortured and killed. 18,000 houses were destroyed. 80,000 people became 'refugees'. I don't see how we can call ourselves Buddhists if we are pleased about these things. The Buddha asked us to have maternal mercy for all living beings, not only for our kith and kin ...

What I want to say is that a certain kind of mind is the first prerequisite. Let us put it this way: If you are Buddhist, you will not kill. If you can kill a human being, you must count yourself out as a Buddhist. There you have a basic thing. Next, you cannot touch what is necessary for another. This is the second precept Buddhists profess to follow. With that, looting and all that is out. So, being Buddhist puts you right away from the path of violence. Let us call this the Buddhist mind. On this the Buddha has been the most uncomplaining person on earth ...

The Buddha asked us first and foremost to be awake to what we are. He asked us not to kill. But, first and foremost, he asked us to be aware that we have in us the propensity to kill — the mentality of hate and retaliation. That is what enables us to be provoked. In the known history of religion, it was the Buddha who first insisted that man must be profoundly awake to all that is within him. He said so because he was convinced that such awareness is a catalyst. Awareness is the cornerstone of the Buddhist teaching. The *Dhammapada* Commentary says that the Buddha's entire teaching can be summed up in one word, the word awareness.

Awareness develops the critical faculty. It liberates man from the influence of myths, including the myths of racialism. It makes us question the concepts and prejudices of society. Mercy is not possible in a heart cluttered with racial and other prejudices ...

If 'Sinhala Buddhism' can deter us from being merciful, then it is not a form of Buddhism. This is surely something we must critically examine. The phrase does not occur in the Buddha's discourses. No rational person can believe that the Buddha entrusted his teachings to one particular people.

Who after all is a Buddhist? He is one who tries to understand the Buddha's teaching, to live it and to show it to others. He may live in any country; he may speak Sinhala or Tamil, be black, white or yellow.

Let us honestly face the facts. The horrors of July will be an eternal reminder of our failure to listen to the Buddha ...

Events have revealed, for all to see, how thin is the veneer of our piousness. Not only the murders, but the sheer nature and extent of the attendant cruelties, permit no 'white-washing'. Instead of trying to project a false image, let us see ourselves in our true image. Let us be aware of the seeds of hate and retaliation in our own society. Then at least we would have taken the first steps in our pilgrimage towards the Buddha...

We can only say that if Sinhala-Buddhist leadership is what those words represent in Sri Lanka, it will be a blessing. But if all that is best, and potentially good, in Sri Lanka is sacrificed for the bogus 'Sinhala-Buddhist' fascism of Jayawardene, Mathew, and the *bhikkus* like Elle Gunawansa who joined in compiling the 'hit'-lists, the enemies of Buddhism are easy to identify.

We must return to the fictions about the 'Sinhala race' that Mathew propagates. We mean no disrespect to the Malays in Malaysia when we say that the identification Mathew's gang make between his mythical Sinhalese with the mythical Malay (in Mahathir's anthropology) is a slander on the Sinhalese. As a thoroughgoing reactionary Mathew wants people to think in racist terms even about themselves. Sri Lankans, including the Sinhalese, do not see the Sinhalese communities as inferior to the Tamil communities. Most certainly not. The Sinhalese are not morons, and they do not need Mathew or any other saviour. Making money, getting on top, robbing and dominating their fellow-Sri Lankans; recruiting an army which tortures people, crushing strikes (and occasionally massacring them on the 1969 Kuala Lumpur and 1983 Colombo models) — these are not only *not* the be-all and end-all of their aspirations but also utterly hateful ambitions for the Sinhalese *people*. They are the aspirations of Mathew and his cabinet colleagues, and his goons in the JSS. If the Sinhalese workers, peasants and educated youth lack the power to determine their own future and their country's future it is certainly not the Tamil or Moor or Burgher or Malay working people and small traders who are responsible but Jayawardene, Mathew, Dissanayake, Athulathmudali, Panditharatne, Paul Perera, de Alwis and their gangs. It is these people who have deprived us all — all the people of Sri Lanka — of the little democracy and civil rights we enjoyed, the freedom of association, of publication, of dissent, etc, practised torture on the people in violation of the Constitution, used the police and army and their thugs against the labouring people as they did in Trincomalee, burnt factories and homes built out of the

hard earned savings and labours of the working people, thrown out of work people working in factories and shops, and at the behest of the multinationals and the big powers, tried hard to weaken and divide the working class and the unemployed poor. It is they who have just recently almost destroyed the Sri Lankan people's capacity to work for self-reliant development in the face of the threat of their being enslaved by forces which do not care one bit for Sri Lanka and its future.

13. SOME REACTIONS AND RESPONSES

The *Island* reacted strongly to the events of the end of July. In its editorial on August 5th it stated:

The available statistics alone are enough of a condemnation which the whole country has to bear and for which there might never be any sufficient act of national penance. Statistics do not normally bleed, but these figures put out by the authorities reek from end to end of that intolerance and hate which transformed men into beasts during the last week.

But now that the country is at last facing squarely up to its shame and tragedy it is the duty of all citizens to turn inward and ask themselves what each of them can do to alleviate the misery of the uprooted and the orphaned. The people in the refugee camps have often been left with nothing on their backs but what they had been wearing when the mobs struck. There is an urgent need for clothing and medicine for the inmates of the refugee camps. Every person however humble or poor can contribute his mite towards the relief operation, for by such deeds alone can we compensate (if compensation is indeed possible) for the savagery of our own fellow men whose heartlessness has reduced an entire community to stark misery and indignity unworthy of the human personality.

This kind of fellow-feeling and sympathy for the afflicted is all the more necessary because there is the very real danger of the gulf between the Sinhala and Tamil peoples widening beyond redemption because of the recent events. This is a trend every right-thinking person must do everything in his power to arrest. This is no time for jingoism and sabre-

rattling. The tragic outcome of such petty heroics is all around us to see. The need of the hour is to put this chapter of shame in the nation's history behind us and begin anew the task of nation-building in which struggle the Tamil people of Sri Lanka have to play their own role.

Repairing the bridges between the two communities ravaged by the insensate acts of vile men is a task which falls on every citizen. The nation owes a debt to all those selfless men and women who in the face of the mob's fury came forward to give refuge in their own homes to the displaced. By their acts of self-sacrifice and courage they have testified to the vestigial humanism of man and redeemed the nation's good name from being totally sullied and dragged in the mud.

The country has to learn a lesson from the example set by these Sinhalese in our midst and begin the task of reaching out to the Tamil people who have been affected by the recent holocaust. Each person must do this within his or her own circle, trying to regain the confidence of Tamil friends and associates and offering proof that in spite of all the ugly happenings of the past few days all is not lost...

The task of reassuring the Tamil people, of building the damaged bridges between the two communities and drawing the Tamil people back into the mainstream of national life is the greatest challenge which awaits the country today.

On 19 August in the *Island*, Professor Carlo Fonseka commented on the phrase 'intolerance and hate that transformed men into beasts'.

The implication is that intolerance and hate are more characteristic of wild beasts than of civilized men. Unfortunately this is not so. The truth is the reverse.

If we could find a wild beast that behaved in the malignant way that some of our fellows did during those terrible days, it would be more accurate to describe it as behaving like men. In fact, however, we cannot find such a beast. No beast takes positive pleasure in the exercise of cruelty upon another of his own species. Certainly no beast burns alive members of its own kind.

Two thousand five hundred years of the civilizing influence of Buddhism on the Sinhalese could not restrain a disturbingly large number of members of our race from burning to death many unarmed, harmless, helpless, isolated Tamils who lived among them.

Nor could it elicit from any responsible Sinhalese leader during the darkest hours at least some expression of regret about the unmitigated racist cruelty that was unleashed on Tamils, *although several leaders expressed their profound sorrow about the destruction of property that occurred.*

The *Island* deserves a prize for the courageous, anti-racist stand it took during these days, in spite of government pressures. Mrs Bandaranaike unfortunately temporised, when so many looked to her for a lead. But, as an *Island* report in September showed the ordinary working people, if organised, could have played a more decisive role. The Ceylon Mercantile Union, a major trade union, took an unequivocal stand.

Government trying to shift responsibility — Banning of JVP, NSSP unjustified — CMU

The banning of the JVP, the CP and the NSSP are without any justification, according to the conclusion reached at a meeting of the General Council of the Ceylon Mercantile Union on 27 August and the overwhelming majority of the General Council members were of, the view that Government was merely trying to shift responsibility for what had taken place, states a letter sent by the CMU to President J.R. Jayawardena.

The letter states that the following conclusions were reached at a meeting held on 15 August to consider various matters concerning or arising out of the incidents of the disturbances in the last week of July.

- a) The organised destruction of places of residence and/or business of Tamil people and people of Indian origin appeared to have been preplanned and to have been carried out, not by anti-government forces but forces behind the government.
- b) The loot of houses and business premises of Tamil people and people of Indian origin, and even of some Sinhala and Muslim people, took place in the situation arising from the organised campaign of arson that was permitted to take place, in broad daylight, on Monday, 25 July. No effective action had been taken either by the Police or by the Military forces to prevent the attacks. There were many instances, on the other hand, where such attacks had taken place with the co-operation, and even at the instigation of the 'security forces'.

c) With regard to the physical attacks on Tamil people or persons believed to be Tamils in the South, and the murders of many of them, the view was that they did not appear to have been carried out on an organised basis.

In the case of the murders of the Tamil prisoners held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act at the Welikade Prison, on the 25 July and 27 July, there was no doubt that they were planned.

Unjustified

The banning by the Government of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, the Communist Party of Sri Lanka and the Nava Sama Samaja Party, and the arrest and detention of some of their leaders, accompanied by a witch-hunt for others, was considered to be without any justification. The overwhelming majority of the members of the General Council, with the exception of three members, were of the view that the Government was merely trying to shift the responsibility for what had taken place on to the Left parties that had been banned. This was considered to be intended to confuse national and especially international public opinion as to what had taken place.

It was unanimously decided that the ban on the three proscribed parties should be lifted immediately and that all political prisoners detained under the Emergency Regulations should be released forthwith.

It was the view of members of the General Council, with one exception, that the situation created by the violence that had taken place, was harmful, and not beneficial to the Sinhala people, though most of those who suffered death or destruction of property were Tamil people. The one exception said he was unsure of this.

In view of the statement of various Government spokesmen, including yourself, concerning the reactions of the Sinhala people, it is to be noted that 166 out of the 195 members of our General Council who attended the meeting were Sinhala members. The others were Tamils, Muslims and Burghers.

The letter states that on information received so far, it was known that three CMU members, all Tamils, were killed.

1,730 members were out of work, as a result of damage to or destruction of industrial establishments in which they were employed.

The Government should take responsibility for the payment of wages to all workers, of whatever race, who have been unable to go to work or been deprived of work by reason of the incidents of violence that had taken place since 24 July 1983, states the letter.

It adds 'We are completely opposed to the employment, even on a temporary basis, of women employees displaced from employment in garment or textile manufacturing establishments, in other establishments *on night shifts*. We must point out that the law prohibiting night work for women in industry still stands unamended.'

Not all reactions took the same tone. During the violence, passing motorists had been stopped by the thugs and asked for petrol. Those who were reluctant to give any were challenged: 'Have you no Sinhala blood in you?' Dr Ariyaratne is the leader of the rural Sarvodaya movement and winner of international prizes. In his article *Sinhala Buddhists! the nation needs your noble service!* (The Island, 8 August 1983) he assured readers, 'I am of Sinhala Buddhist descent and as I am aware of it, I have no blood relationship to any non-Sinhala, non-Buddhist.'

In view both of the historical record and of the fact that over a million of his fellow-Sri Lankans were at that moment suffering grievously because of Sinhalese racism, it was, to say the least, insensitive of Ariyaratne to write, in the course of his article,

We are all aware of the attempts made during the past 28 years by certain Tamil factions to break up this country into two. We who know our recent history, should remind ourselves as to how these privileged sections who owed their positions to the foreign imperialists and despised Buddhist, Hindu values, voiced their opposition to the granting of Universal Franchise to us in 1931. We should also recollect the deliberate attempts made by them ever since to drive a wedge between the Sinhala and Tamil people, who up to then, worshipped together in the same temples and kovils in harmony. These were same elites, who under the guise of further increasing the minority rights, did so over those of the majority, undermining the rights of the common man and shrewdly scheming and manoeuvring both at national and international levels, entrenching themselves more securely in their privileged positions.

We know how the local and foreign anti-nationals voiced

their demands, in the cries, for 50-50 in the 1940s and for federation thereafter, to be followed by, a separate state next. This reached the critical climax, making use of parliamentary privileges within the legislature and the democratic social environment prevalent outside. The final act of this tragic drama was the Tamil terrorism that reared its ugly head in the North during the last few years.

We too have spared no effort to avert this tragedy, exposing this trap to the Sinhala as well as the intelligent Tamil people. But unfortunately, all these were in vain and the anti-national forces swelled in power. Thus, the folly of everyone paved an easy way to looters, criminals and petty party politicians to participate in the country's destruction, which has been now accomplished.

Now, leaving it to His Excellency, the President to safeguard the Unitary status of our state and to the Defence Force to tame the Tigers, the Sinhala Buddhists should take over the tremendous responsibility of providing leadership for the re-building of our spiritual and moral value system from the very foundation itself, enlisting the unstinted co-operation of the Hindu Tamil population and the rest Christian and Muslim sectors in the country in this noble task.

There were others too, who, less pretentiously and more crudely, followed the lead given by the government in condoning and justifying the pogroms, and in taking advantage of the plight of the victims to further their own interests. Some middle-class professional people and businessmen abroad were heard to say, 'The Tamils deserved what they got'; they could not grasp why patriotic Sri Lankans were revolted, grief-stricken, angry and ashamed at the injustices and cruelties inflicted on friends, neighbours and fellow-countrymen generally. When the government tried to justify the pogroms most of the newspapers helped; UNP members abroad played their part. For example, an advertisement packed with falsehoods was inserted by them in the British newspaper, *The Guardian* — in order to mislead the British public.

The Sinhalese racists were encouraged and even organised by the government to express their views. Others had no easy way of showing what they felt and thought about the latest achievement of the Jayawardene regime — the July holocaust.

We cannot end this chapter without recording the disgraceful behaviour in France, Britain and elsewhere of a

handful of Jaffna Tamil racist hooligans, who reacted by murder of and thuggery against other Sri Lankans.

14. THE COST OF THE AMBITIONS OF THE GANG

Before we discuss the economic cost, we should take note of the human cost. If the destruction that was wrought in July and August were the result of a natural disaster or a foreign bombing raid, horrific though these would have been, the effect on the people would have been profoundly different. In this case one of the results was the destruction of trust. Many were left numbed and disorientated. Others became accustomed to guilt and cruelty.

In considering the effects on the economy, let us start with a general point. Economic relationships, networks and enterprises are the result at the grassroots of decisions and co-operation by thousands of people over a long period of time. Their destruction by violence cannot be made up overnight.

Now we come to some of the statistics of the economic losses incurred in the holocaust. According to the Government's own very moderate statistics, 116 industrial units were damaged or destroyed. These were mainly in the Colombo region, the chief industrialised area in the country. The estimated cost of reconstructing these was set at US\$160 million. The polyvinyl chloride pipe industry was the worst affected, about 80% of the country's manufacturing capacity being destroyed. Almost 70% of the plastics and paint industry was destroyed; 50% of the steel-based industries were seriously affected; and the manufacturing capacity of the tannery industry, which supplies the footwear industry, was reduced by 40%. The destruction of nine coconut oil mills seemed likely to lead to the loss of Sri Lanka's position as the world's second largest exporter.

2,500 businesses throughout the country were destroyed. 18,000 houses were burned in the holocaust to make it impossi-

ble for Tamils to live, work or trade in Colombo, Kandy, Dehiwela-Mount Lavinia and other localities. Losses on this amount to over Rs. 4 billion, not including the value of the furniture and other belongings destroyed.

Tourism was Sri Lanka's fifth largest foreign exchange earner, giving direct or indirect employment to nearly 100,000 people. The immediate economic loss was estimated at US\$60-70 million. There was nearly 90% cancellation by charter groups, primarily because charter operators were afraid of being sued if any tourists in their charge were killed or injured. At least 50,000 people employed in the tourist sector have lost their livelihood.

Embezzling of humanitarian aid has slowed down the rehabilitation of holocaust victims. Careful observation of one refugee camp south of Colombo in August showed that every night someone in the government was sending vans to remove humanitarian aid supplies from foreign agencies. Subsequently this was discovered by an honest public official and stopped.

Ronnie de Mel attempted to justify the pogrom to a foreign correspondent (*The Economist*, August 20th) by claiming that 'the Tamils have dominated the commanding heights of everything good in Sri Lanka'. To him, the 'only solution' is to 'restore the rights of the Sinhalese majority'. What kind of Finance Minister would justify such destruction? In communal terms, de Mel's own *Karava* community is far over-represented in leading positions in the economy, society, politics, the church etc! Such recklessness as he showed in his actions and attitudes was also shown in his 1984 budget, doubling the Defence Ministry allocation of 1982, and estimating for a 1984 gap between expenditure and income of Rs. 23 billion (\$1 billion). The government's anti-Tamil obsession continues to be ruinous.

In this quick, past-holocaust summary we do not attempt to go in detail into the damage done to such economic development as there has been up to 1983. The economic interests represented by Esmond Wickremasinghe, Cyril Mathew and Gamini Dissanayake can be furthered only at considerable cost to the people of Sri Lanka.

15. WHY RACISM IN SRI LANKA CONCERNS THE WORLD

The public in many countries has been bombarded with propaganda by the pro-Eelam expatriate groups, and in some countries has responded by accepting their analysis and supporting their cause. Those who have read the book up to this point will have noticed that we give a different account in many important respects of the history behind the holocaust and the basic issues. There is a real danger that people will be so confused by the differences that they will decide not to involve themselves in the affairs of Sri Lankans. We hope that this will not happen.

In our analysis the turning of a large proportion of Sri Lankans into refugees has been one of the main objectives of those who now dominate the Sri Lankan state and receive support from influential foreign governments. In the propaganda put out by the Sinhala-Buddhist ideologues it is made out that Tamils of both communities, the Moors, the Burghers and Sinhalese Christians can find homes in other lands. However nonsensical such thinking is, Mathew and his associates have convinced some Sinhalese Buddhists that this is true. Secondly, as we have already shown, Sri Lanka is made out to be the 'holy land' of Sinhalese Buddhists. According to our account, these doctrines will lead to the creation of anything up to 4½ million refugees. This should be taken very seriously by the United Nations. In Sri Lanka we will have to fight very hard, and win, before we can stop this from happening. While we carry on this struggle, we would like members of the UN and of UN agencies to do everything in their power to stop the refugee problem from becoming worse.

Britain and the USA have been backing the present regime. But nobody believes that either the British government or the US

government are going to open their doors to hundreds of thousands of Sri Lankans driven from their homes, jobs and country. There should be much more discussion of this problem internationally, and it should lead to action. It is not the private concern of the Jayawardene regime.

When people are driven from their home country in large numbers and become a displaced community with little left to lose, a likely consequence is an increase in world terrorism.

US and other foreign government agencies have been training Sinhalese military, para-military and police 'special' squads at a time when people are pressing for a just, democratic and peaceful settlement which can make violent struggles in the north and east unnecessary. Escalating government-backed Sinhala-Buddhist aggression against Tamils in the eastern province is creating a new, truly terrorist resistance. Whereas the main groups in Jaffna have *never* harmed ordinary Sinhalese civilians living among or visiting them, desperation in the eastern province is leading to attacks on Sinhalese.

For decades Sri Lanka has played an international role as a peacemaker, trying to mediate between India and China during the border conflict of 1962-3. In the 1970s, during meetings of the non-aligned movement, the then Prime Minister Mrs Bandaranaike worked to make the Indian Ocean a zone of peace. At the end of July, however, the Sri Lankan government implied Soviet involvement, whipped up anti-Indian feeling, tried to commit Britain and the USA militarily in this situation and requested soldiers from Bangladesh and Pakistan. A government which behaves so irresponsibly does not deserve the international support it is currently receiving.

The steps which have led to Sri Lanka's practically abandoning non-alignment are worth detailing. The first problem was the 'security' of an increasingly racist and repressive state. By its prolonged and intensively anti-Tamil campaign, and its identifying itself as a Sinhala-Buddhist rather than a Sri-Lankan government, the regime had some success in winning over the politicians of the SLFP and other Sinhalese parties. Yet, large numbers of Sinhalese had taken a patriotic, Sri Lankan, rather than a racist stand; and some of them were angered and outraged at the holocaust and the government had reason in it: So there was a large, dissident, even rebellious Sinhalese population. Secondly, the government had reason to doubt if foreign public opinion had really been deceived by its use of irrelevant arguments about 'terrorist' attacks and separatist movements to

justify the 'Sinhala-Buddhist' campaign to drive the Tamils out of multi-communal Sri Lankan neighbourhoods, and from their homes, jobs, businesses and schools. Something had to be done to secure Western support. Thirdly, it was also, as we have shown, alarmed by Indian reactions to both the anti-Tamils pogroms and the anti-Indian provocations.

Fourthly, it quickly became clear that it had to consider the adverse consequences of hostile anti-racist and anti-fascist, as well as liberal and humanitarian opinion in Western Europe and North America, in the Soviet-bloc countries and in the Third World about the savage and cruel burnings and killings. The businessmen and politicians behind the reckless attempt to destroy economically and politically integrated Sri Lankan nation and illegally to appropriate Tamil property were leaving it to the government to bear the enormously heavy economic and political cost of their racism. The foreign aid agencies and the World Bank would not be inclined to foot the bill. There were different Sri Lankan politicians and others working for different US and other foreign agencies. Significantly, the UNP faction which had been extremely pro-US and anti-Non Aligned — that to which Esmond Wickremasinghe belonged — had been in large measure responsible for the destruction of the rule of law, of democracy, of communal harmony and of independence. They quickly seized the opportunity they had created to press for the abandonment of Sri Lanka's non-alignment and its good-neighbourly relations with India.

The approach, made in early August through a Sri Lankan intermediary (a US Agent) to the US embassy, and to Britain, did not succeed. It was hardly worth the while of the Reagan administration to foot the bill for Sinhalese-Buddhist madness, *and* also antagonize the major country in the region (currently the Non-Aligned Chairman) — just to use Trincomalee and have Sri Lankan as a fully client state. (It was because the approach then made led to nothing that the Sri Lanka bureaucracy panicked when Stuart Slavin, an American correspondent, reported what the censor wouldn't let him, and expelled him.)

Washington naturally wanted a bargain on its own terms. Many observers were mistaken in expecting that Trincomalee, one of the world's best natural harbours, would be worth a great deal as a US naval base when Subic Bay was becoming 'difficult'. In fact, the diplomatic and economic cost of accepting Colombo's offer of Trincomalee would have been excessive. It was clear that Jayawardene was unreliable. If his regime was

not so hell-bent on repressing the Tamils there would not have been a 'terrorist' problem in Jaffna or a near-rebellion among Tamils in the north and east. But as things were, the US would have to underwrite the costs of Sinhala racist obsessions. Even if all Tamils were either cleared out of the traditionally and predominantly Northern and Eastern Provinces or reduced by the massive importation of Sinhalese thugs and 'colonists' to a small, frightened and submissive minority, the civilian-bashing Sinhala army and navy could be no guarantee against guerilla attacks on Trincomalee. Premadasa as President would probably have made a non-military settlement which would have satisfied legitimate Tamil demands and allayed both Tamil and Sinhalese fears and grievances. But the Wickremasinghe-Panditharatne-Mathews gang was out to block the 'low caste' Premadasa. Such political water as the US would get into were too polluted by racism and casteism and too deep for the US navy to be safe in Trincomalee.

The US, moreover, was interested in something else. For a long time it had been wanting to 'extend' Voice of America transmitting facilities in Sri Lanka, and to get agents into the rural areas as Peace Corps volunteers. A 'deal' of this kind could be kept secret or passed off, if discovered, as a 'civilian' deal. Premadasa's rivals, eager, to show that they could be relied upon to serve US interests, pushed it through in spite of some internal opposition.

On 30 September Caspar Weinberger, US Defence Secretary, made a 105-minute 'refuelling stop' on his way from Peking to Rawalpindi! His high-powered team of 30 included some of the Pentagons top experts in military technology. They talked with local Defence Ministry and other officials while Weinberger met the President. On 8 November, General Walters, Reagan's special envoy, arrived in Colombo, as the BBC reported. He met Jayawardene. An agreement was initiated which gives the US government enormously powerful transmitting facilities — to reach China and the Soviet Union — and electronic facilities to direct nuclear missiles to their targets in the event of war. No doubt, the US can now 'eavesdrop' on the countries of the Indian subcontinent, Southwest Asia, East Africa and Southeast Asia.

The base, in southwest or south Sri Lanka, is safe from Tamil guerrillas. The USA will guarantee the 'security' of the host government even against domestic anti-racist and democratic forces. But what must concern the world is the

casual way in which the theatre of superpower warfare has been extended; and in which the Indian Ocean has ceased to be a zone of peace. The fact that India has a hostile country to its south can hardly help the progressive forces in India.

The idea that some races are superior to others and have the right to use any means, however brutal, to maintain their purity and supremacy is not confined to Sri Lanka. Where racist ideas are accepted at the highest levels of government and openly propagated, it is a boost for racists everywhere including the South African regime, the National Front in Britain, the Ku Klux Klan in the USA, and neo-Nazis in Germany where the notion of an Aryan master race, so ardently promoted by Mathew, was taken to its logical conclusion.

Hitherto international concern has tended to be pro-Eelamist. While Tamils of both communities deserve sympathy and solidarity, this does not automatically imply support for the demand for a separate state. As we have urged throughout the book, we do not feel this is the solution. We have said enough to indicate that a large number of Sinhalese, we think a majority, are not only willing but also want to live and work with Tamils and get rid of persecution and discrimination on communal grounds. Tamil nationalism is not an anti-racist stance, rather the opposite. It is defeatist to put forward the idea that the way to deal with Sinhalese racism is not to fight it but to split the nation on ethnic grounds, harkening back to the days before the nation state and a largely mythical feudal past. To demand Tamil Eelam, a state where a particular ethnic group have special rights and privileges, is in itself racist, and implies that Sri Lanka can be conceded to Sinhalese domination so that members of all other ethnic groups and Tamils who choose to stay or who cannot find a livelihood elsewhere may legitimately be treated as second-class citizens. The widespread support for Tamil separatism throughout the world is a boost for racism.

In this case, a regime which has adopted genocidal policies is receiving firm foreign backing. We live in a world where not only the obliteration of villages and towns, but also the destruction by death and dispersion of whole ethnic groups, are increasingly accepted, especially if such acts fit in with the ambition of one or other of the major powers. In an era when weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, are available, the success of genocidal policies anywhere has repercussions for everyone.

In terms of economic and social development, racism is a

dead end. Not only has aid been diverted to destructive ends, as when CTB buses for which the World Bank had lent money and vehicles for the Mahaweli scheme were used to transport the thugs from place to place at the end of July. But also, in general, in Sri Lanka racism has been used to deflect many Sinhalese from their aspirations for job opportunities, a just distribution of land, improved educational facilities, a sense of national identity. Indeed much of what industry and commerce there was has gone up in smoke, literally, and tens (possibly hundreds) of thousands of skilled personnel have been forced over the years to leave the country. The nation is now heavily and increasingly in debt. Only when freed from the domination of the racists will Sri Lanka be able to make its full economic and cultural contribution to the world.

16. WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

In times of disaster and social crisis cool-headed analysis is called for. It is good not to become too subjective. Both Sri Lankans and interested people abroad will recognise, however, the fact that recent events and current developments have left many Sri Lankans grief-stricken and angry because of what the gang which rules the country has done not only to fellow-Sri Lankans but also to the country. That so many Sri Lankans from all communities have felt and acted in ways totally different from, and opposite to, the fascists who are at the moment dominant is a highly significant fact. The cabinet, the UNP, various so-called religious organisations, the government-run media (especially Lake House newspapers) are putting out propaganda which suggests that nearly all Sinhalese and even other Sri Lankans have been won over to Cyril Mathew's racist gospel; but the fact is that they represent a minority. The majority of the Sinhalese and nearly all others are either confused about what is happening to their country or decidedly opposed to the lies, injustices and barbarities of those who for the moment rule the nation and the streets.

One of the first things to be done is to face up to the fact that the days of easy-going living are over. The people of Sri Lanka have, we are sure, to be prepared for a Dark Age of suffering, repression and poverty which will last for many years. If enough Sri Lankans had understood in time where the country was going, they could have averted this Dark Age. To face up to its reality now is not to accept it but to get a measure of the task that lies ahead. To oppose the gangs who now rule the country is to risk persecution, torture and death.

Those Sri Lankans who want to can fight for the restoration

of civilisation and law and order (however imperfect the forms that these will take) have to start by refusing to play any part in the oppression of the Tamils and the Moors, the Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Marxists, to benefit themselves or their families. They should not take jobs, business premises, houses, goods, businesses or land robbed from fellow-Sri Lankans or even foreigners who had them and had a right to them; and they should discourage friends and acquaintances from doing so. It is not enough to do it privately and individually. A movement must grow to isolate the people who have committed the crimes and are planning to commit the crimes we have described and analysed.

One of the tasks ahead is to increase our understanding of the nature of Sri Lankan fascism — its social basis, international links and how it can be fought.

The attempt to blame 'the Marxists' for what the UNP did in July is intended to drum up anti-communist feeling among those who abhorred the barbarities which were committed. It is very important to unite with all those who are willing to struggle against fascism, and not to be deceived by anti-communist campaigns. It must be remembered that, whatever legitimate criticisms may be made of the NSSP and Communist Party, they did take a firm anti-racist stand.

The present regime depends on foreign aid, both to bale it out of the difficulties it has got itself into and to carry out the repression as ruthlessly and effectively as possible. It is trying to get as much foreign aid as possible, and has sometimes used humanitarian concern for refugees to get aid which goes into the pockets of the government. It is in the interests of Sri Lanka to campaign for an end to foreign aid until there is a change of government and rehabilitation of all victims of the pogroms. This includes compensation and the creation of a climate of trust in which normal life can be resumed.

The same applies to tourism. The government is trying to attract tourists to make up the loss in income caused by the destruction of factories and other enterprises. That is why Ananda Tissa de Alwis, Minister of Information, advertised that the situation was 'better than normal' when it was more horrific than it had ever been in modern times. It should be made clear that no tourists are welcome in Sri Lanka until there is a return to normality in which people return to run their businesses and live in the home they occupied before the holocaust. Friends of Sri Lanka abroad can help to bring about this normality and

restitution by trying to persuade tour operators to exclude Sri Lanka from their programmes until the thugs of Mathew and his associates are no longer in charge. It must be borne in mind that the use of violence to turn Colombo and Sri Lanka as a whole into a Sinhala-Buddhist dominated society is going to continue. There will be more attacks on Tamils who have returned to their homes and businesses, including tourist guest-houses and hotels, and on Muslims and Christians. As long as the present regime continues, it will remain a violent society.

This raises the question of the need to stop the gang's programme before it starts on the next stage. We must not allow what happened in July to be repeated. It is necessary not only to speak out against the cruelties and injustices that people like Mathew contemplate but actively to stop those who carry those out.

There has to be justice done to those who have already been victimised. It is necessary to organise to make it possible for them to return to their homes and neighbourhood. Doing this will involve bringing to justice, that is punishing, those who have been guilty of arson, murder and, most important, the conspiracy to commit these, and to deprive Sri Lankan citizens of their fundamental rights. Just as there have been war crimes tribunals after the Second World War and during the America-Vietnam war, and a tribunal to investigate the crimes of Marcos and others, there must be one to arraign those who have been guilty of genocide in Sri Lanka.

In the meantime, no member of the present cabinet should be allowed to visit any part of the world or any international gathering without world public opinion about their actions being made very clear.

For many years Sri Lanka was one of the main advocates of non-alignment, and was thus able to exert significant influence in maintaining the Indian Ocean as a zone which was nuclear free and in which the superpowers could not operate without embarrassing publicity and criticism. This non-aligned stance should be resumed, and it is the task of people of all countries who are concerned for peace to work for a return to non-alignment.

In Sri Lanka genuine Buddhists — those who take seriously the great teachings of Buddha — should stop simply deploring what has happened and begin a struggle to assert true Buddhist practice and teaching. Tolerance is a virtue only if it means tolerance of differences of race and belief. Buddhist tolerance

and compassion still have a contribution to make to the restoration of civilised life in Sri Lanka. At the present time Buddhists alone cannot carry out the task. They will have to work together with people who have other contributions to make.

This restoration of civilised life will also require the restoration of democracy and its development beyond the stage which Sri Lanka had reached in the 1970s. It is no use simply to ask the Jayawardene regime or any openly fascist regime that replaces it to restore democracy. It has to be won by the people. It is only if there is democracy that the political solutions to the country's problems can be discovered and worked out rationally.

One of the things noticeably lacking in recent months has been serious and informed public discussion with a view to solving problems in relations between communities and in economic development. This requires freedom of the press, restoration of civil liberties etc. What happened in July is a lesson to all people, not only Sri Lankans, on what follows when the people are forcibly prevented from participating in the rational solution of their common problems.

Socialists may look forward to and work for an era when there is no more oppression and exploitation and when racism is only a memory. But they must bear in mind that people must survive and have the basic necessities of life in order to have any hope of taking control of their lives and future.

It is not just the left who can take a stand. In the face of press censorship, increasing repression and the slide of the nation towards barbarism, the *Island*, a 'liberal conservative' newspaper, has continued to monitor, report and comment on the situation from a perspective opposite to that of the government. It demonstrates what can be achieved by all who have the determination and courage to resist racism.

Women have been profoundly affected by the recent events. And women have a vital part to play in all aspects of the anti-racist struggle.

Sri Lanka is a beautiful country, rich in culture and history. One of its greatest strengths, on which its past achievements have been built, is that it is multi-cultural. But recent events have made it clear that this cannot be taken for granted. The situation is too urgent simply to grieve. Communalism has not always existed. It is the result of history made by reactionaries who have worked patiently for years. They have gradually taken possession of the curriculum of schools, and of most of the press. They have monopolised what is published and read, and established

their hegemony over the government and even the courts. All this is the result of political work — for evil. In every case where fascism triumphs, it is the culmination of a strategy. Those who want a different kind of Sri Lanka have to work patiently and persistently, mobilising all the anti-fascist and anti-racist forces in the country. A lot of organisational work is involved. But the defeat of racism in Sri Lanka is possible, and when it comes it will be a great victory for all throughout the world who are concerned for justice and peace.

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