

SRI LANKA

ISLAND OF TERROR

AN INDICTMENT



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H.M. THORNTON and R. NITHTHYANANTHAN

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SRI LANKA, ISLAND OF TERROR: AN INDICTMENT

by
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EELAM RESEARCH ORGANISATION

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This book represents the views of the authors and not the collective views of the organisation. The responsibility of the organisation is limited to approving the publication as worthy of consideration by the world community.

Documentation Unit, Eelam Research Organisation.

Dedication

To the suffering Tamils of Sri Lanka and to the rebirth of Eelam

The proceeds of the sale of this book will be devoted to Tamil refugees.

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Roots of Conflict	6
The Rise of State Terrorism	31
The Year of the Holocaust	56
The Aftermath	78
Conclusion	102
Appendices	106
Selected Bibliography	124

Introduction

In the last week of July 1983, Sri Lanka suddenly erupted on the world's television screens and filled the headlines of the world's press. Viewers all over the globe watched appalled as tourists who had fled the island recounted the terrible scenes of horror they had witnessed. The Tamil population of the island was being systematically hunted down, butchered or burnt alive in a reign of terror unparalleled in the history of any civilised country in recent times. Even helpless children were not spared. In these horrendous events, police and army made no attempt to intervene on behalf of the victims; in many cases they actively assisted at the carnage.

Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists and other human rights organisations had for some time been aware of the deteriorating situation on the island, but their reports had received little attention in the western press. Remote from the world's main thoroughfares and centres of power, the affairs of Sri Lanka had tended to be of little interest to the media. Latterly, tight censorship and the denial of access to journalists who sought to discover the true situation for themselves had enabled the Sri Lankan government to shroud their affairs in a cloak of secrecy. A stream of misinformation from the public relations agencies they employed had enabled them to present a facade to the world of a free and peace-loving democracy. Previous pogroms had been reported as "communal riots" or as "inter-racial clashes" by journalists with little understanding of the true situation. The fact that the Tamil population on the island was being systematically slaughtered by sections of Sinhalese had failed to emerge from their reports. Local correspondents of western newspapers were stationed in Colombo, the island's Sinhalese-dominated capital and their reports had reflected the views of their Sinhalese friends. They appear rarely to have visited the Tamil territories to discover the situation for themselves. But in July 1983, Colombo itself was one of the worst

affected regions. There, western correspondents witnessed for themselves the carnage, the burning and the looting. They at last began to comprehend that this was no inter-racial communal clash, but the systematic attempt to hunt down and kill every Tamil in the city and to leave no Tamil-owned building standing.

The perilous situation of the Tamils on the island of Sri Lanka today is a legacy of its colonial past. The rise and subsequent demise of the British Empire left a multitude of insoluble problems in its wake which will be with us till the end of the century and beyond. Hasty settlements reached for purposes of expediency, for geographical or economic reasons, amalgamated into uneasy partnerships peoples of widely differing languages and cultures. When the British, leaving Sri Lanka in 1948, handed over power to the ruling Sinhalese elite, they placed the Tamil population, who had lived on the island for centuries in their own sovereign state, who spoke a different language from the Sinhalese and who had a different culture and different traditions, under the dominion of what was to prove the most tyrannical and repressive regime in history.

From the very beginning, the policy of the Sinhalese overlords was one of systematic annihilation of the ancient Tamil nation and destruction of the Tamil national identity. When the expedients of colonisation of the traditional Tamil territories by Sinhalese and the disenfranchisement or forcible deportation of large numbers of the Tamil population failed, resort was made to the increasing use of terror and repression. Since the accession to power in 1977 of the United National Party under President Jayewardene, this has escalated into a programme of naked and unequivocal genocide. The pogroms of 1977 and 1981 were, as we shall see, connived at and condoned by the Jayewardene government in pursuance of this policy. Horrific as they were, however, neither of these pogroms approached in scale and ferocity the terror of July 1983, which must still be fresh in the minds of every reader. The full extent of the terrible atrocities perpetrated on the Tamil people in that pogrom and the evidence for the complicity of the Jayewardene government in its causation, is set out in full in this book. The appalling story it unfolds must arouse shock and outrage in all who read it.

Many months have elapsed since July 1983. The events of that terrible time have long faded from the television screens and from the front pages of the newspapers. The tourist advertisements for "paradise isle" have reappeared. But if the Sri Lanka rulers are under the delusion that the July terror will fade into oblivion with the passage of time, they are greatly mistaken. Tamils all the world over, are pledged to revive the memory of that horror time and time again so

that it stays forever in the conscience of the civilised world and will for all time be seen as a scar on the face of civilisation.

The events of July 1983, planned and executed to extinguish forever the aspirations to sovereignty of the Tamil people and to keep them in cowed and terrorised subjection have failed in their objective. They have proved to be a baptism of fire which has united the people, steeled their hearts and strengthened their resolve. Since July 1983, formerly divergent factions and the opinions now speak as one voice. Freedom and sovereignty is its message. Eelam must rise again, to take its place once more among the free nations of the world.

July 1983 marked the point of no return. It was only then that the painful realisation finally dawned that the facile promises of many years would never be implemented, that the talks and negotiations with the government in the past had been but hollow shams, cosmetic exercise, facades to be presented to a concerned world opinion, temporisations to gain time until the whole Tamil problem could be dealt with by the final and ultimate solution, this solution to be nothing less than the systematic eliminations of entire sections of the Tamil population by genocide.

The July terror signalled that the time for talks and negotiations was past. Through the long years of attrition, every peaceful and democratic avenue had been explored, all to no avail. Now such avenues were no longer open. The only remaining Tamil political party had been outlawed. Any discussion in parliament of Tamil separatism had been proscribed by the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution. Leaders, supporters and sympathisers of the Tamil cause were thrown into prison and tortured, despite condemnation by the International Commission of Jurists and Amnesty International. There is no voice now left to the Tamils of Sri Lanka to expose their plight to the world, no democratic channel through which to plead their cause. The government of Sri Lanka has, for Tamils, abrogated the first duty of every government to protect the lives and property of its citizens. Every Tamil now walks in daily fear of his life. In effect, the Sri Lankan government is waging an undeclared war on the Tamil people. This is the reality the Tamil people are now facing. It is a reality the world must come to recognise.

The Tamils have already been through all the suffering and anguish possible to man. If the only way to freedom is through armed conflict, they will not shrink from the challenge. On one thing they are determined—the liberation of their nation and the rebirth of their ancient state of Eelam. Whether Eelam comes peacefully or by force of arms lies in the provenance of the western governments that supply arms and money to prop up the tottering state of Sri Lanka. When the

history of these times comes to be written, what will be the judgement of future generations on those western nations who gave aid and comfort to a government committed to the genocide of a people? We have only to look to recent history for the answer. The present regime in Sri Lanka has many parallels with the Nazi regime in Germany. The ruling Sinhala-Buddhist elite preaches an almost identical gospel. Myths and legends have been distorted to create a false scenario of the Sinhalese as a superior race, a people with a great and glorious past. Like the Nazis, the Sinhala-Buddhist propagandists claim descent from pure Aryan stock. As in Germany, the gospel of a master race has been propagated by skilled but fanatical propagandists and is believed by the majority of the people. In both countries the people blindly allowed themselves to be carried along by their psychopathic leaders to the brink of genocide.

The Nazi extermination of the Jews has gone down in history as a scar on the face of civilisation. The country that produced Bach and Goethe has now to live with this terrible reproach to its humanity. Other European countries which allowed the extermination to happen, have to live with their share of the guilt. Do those western governments now aiding Sri Lanka with arms and money wish the same load of guilt on their rising generation? And what of the Sinhalese people themselves? Do they wish to be like the Germans who are now trying to explain to their grandchildren how it was that they should have allowed such an abomination to happen? It is time for the Sinhalese people to draw back from the brink before it is too late, to take a long hard look down the road where their fanatical leadership is taking them and to call a decisive halt.

There were encouraging incidents during the July massacres of individual Sinhalese, at great risk to themselves, going to the aid of Tamils in danger and giving them shelter. Sri Lanka has vigilant and independent civil rights movements. Many liberal-minded people in the academic, legal, and other professions are known to have privately condemned the massacres. In the threatening atmosphere prevailing at the time, they were afraid to make their opposition known. These people must come forward and raise their voice against the descent into barbarity of their people. They must speak out, loudly and decisively, before it is too late.

Civil war can and must be avoided. The aspirations of the Tamil people to freedom and sovereignty must be recognised. These aspirations will not just go away. They are too firmly embedded in the consciousness of every Tamil. They must be recognised, by the Sinhalese themselves, and by the Western governments now committed to propping up the tottering Sinhala-Buddhist state of Sri Lanka in which

the Tamils have no place. If civil war does come, the responsibility will be theirs.

1. Roots of Conflict

Marco Polo wrote of it, "Ceylon is undoubtedly the finest island of its size in the world". The beauties of Sri Lanka have inspired such appellations as "pearl of the orient", "this other Eden, this demi-paradise", "land without sorrow". Today these appellations have a hollow ring. To many of its people it would be better described as "Island of Terror", a land steeped in blood, scene of the worst atrocities in modern times. A recent newspaper headline described it as the "Island of the Damned". This would be a truer description of the island as it is today.

Lying at the southern extremity of the Indian sub-continent just north of the equator, its coral fringed shores washed by the Indian ocean, its tropical heat tempered by sea-borne breezes, scenically and climatically Sri Lanka fully lives up to its fabled reputation. A little less than the size of Ireland, the mountainous terrain of the hinterland slopes gently down through the central highlands to the wide coastal plain. With its fabulous palm-fringed beaches, its luscious tropical vegetation and profusion of frangipani, bougainvillea, hibiscus and poinsettias, its ancient temples and monuments, its blue skies and glorious sunsets, Sri Lanka is indeed a beautiful island. Separated from India by the Palk Strait, at one point by a distance of only 22 miles, Sri Lanka, or Ceylon as it was called before 1972, with its strategic situation on the east-west sea route, was from time immemorial, especially favoured as a port of call for the intrepid traders and travellers who crossed the Indian Ocean and who left indelible marks on the island and its people.

Two distinct peoples constitute the main ethnic grouping of the island, the Sinhalese, forming about 72 per cent of the population and the Tamils about 21 per cent. There are, in addition, 6.5 per cent Tamil speaking Muslims. As spoken languages, Sinhala and Tamil are totally unlike and their written scripts are fundamentally dissimilar.

The Sinhalese and Tamils have different traditions and customs and wear different national costumes. The two people differ also in their religious beliefs, the Sinhalese being mainly Buddhists while the Tamils are mostly Hindus. As a result of European missionary activity in colonial times, however, there are Christians in both communities. The indigenous Tamils of Sri Lanka live mainly in the north and east of the island while the Sinhalese inhabit the south and west.

Throughout the centuries the two communities existed as separate kingdoms divided by impenetrable malaria-infested jungle and arid zones, their distinct identities undisturbed by successive waves of European occupation, of the Portuguese from 1505 to 1656, and of the Dutch, who ousted them and ruled the island from 1656 to 1796. Initially the British, who vanguarded the Dutch and acquired the different territories separately, administered the Tamil areas from Madras in south India. In 1833, however, for the sake of administrative convenience, the British welded the two nations into a single entity, administering them jointly from Colombo, thus sowing the seeds of the present unhappy plight of the Tamil people. Jungle clearance and the eradication of malaria blurred the border zones between the two communities. As time went on, improved land communication eroded these boundaries still further. But despite these factors, the two peoples continued to maintain their separate identity and little or no integration took place.

The cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of the two peoples lies rooted in the historic past. The existence of two separate Sinhalese and Tamil nations, governed by their own kings, can be traced in the historical records as far back as the second century BC. Earlier than this, the history of the two peoples is shrouded in the mists of time, from which only fable and legend survive. There is no definite historical evidence of a Sinhalese presence on the island before 247 BC, the date of the introduction of Buddhism. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states: "The earliest surviving specimens of the [Sinhalese] language are brief inscriptions on rock, in Brahmi letters, of which the earliest date from c 200 BC." The Sinhalese language is derived from the Pali tongue, which died out in India by about the 12th century AD. The ancient Buddhist texts were written in Pali, and Pali is still used as the standard language of Theravada Buddhism in Burma, Thailand, and Kampuchea, as well as Sri Lanka. All the available evidence indicates that the Sinhalese came from India with the propagation of Buddhism some time in the third century BC.

In contrast there is historical evidence for a Tamil presence on the island as far back as the sixth century BC. There is well authenticated documentation for two Naga (Tamil) kingdoms from the years

1000 to 100 BC. They are mentioned in the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, the two great Indian epics written in Sanskrit before the sixth century BC. The two kingdoms are mentioned by the Greek astronomer Ptolemy, writing in the 2nd century AD. Recent archaeological excavations of burial mounds in the regions of these ancient kingdoms revealed artefacts demonstrating a settled and civilised population existing, according to the palaeographical evidence as early as before the fourth century BC. The Anaikodai excavation of 1982 found evidence that Hinduism was the religion practiced by these early people confirming them as the ancestors of the present Tamil population. Thus the Tamil presence on the island predated that of the Sinhalese by at least three centuries.

The Tamils belong to the Dravidian group of peoples, one of the oldest races in the world. The Ceylon Tamils are thought to have emigrated from south India in very ancient times, when Sri Lanka was almost certainly joined to mainland India through the shallow ridge of sandbanks called Adam's bridge in the Gulf of Mannar, and established themselves on the north and east of the island.

The Dravidian civilisation is one of the three oldest in the world. The Indus Valley excavations in the 1950s established that the remains of the ancient civilisation discovered there in the 1930s was Dravidian. Two great ruined cities near Lahore and Karachi had been uncovered, with more than 100 towns and villages, built over 4000 years ago. Their geometric planning, their sophisticated drainage systems and artistic artefacts indicated a high degree of civilisation. Traces of cotton cultivation were found and evidence of extensive trading with the other great ancient civilisation, Mesopotamia. Relics of the Hindu religion and worship of the god Shiva were found. The splendour of the Indus Valley Civilisation was such that it ranked on a par with Mesopotamia and Egypt, and these three came to be regarded as the three earliest civilisations of man. The Indus Valley excavations established that the Dravidians had preceded the Aryans in India, and that their language antedated Sanskrit and the Sanskrit based languages.

Tamil is the oldest and the principal Dravidian language. As such it is the only ancient classical tongue surviving today as a living and spoken language. Its basic structure has remained unchanged from very ancient times and its vocabulary has evolved only slightly. The language of the classical poet Tiruvalluvar who wrote over 2,000 years ago is clearly understood and widely quoted today. As befitting such an ancient tongue, it differs from modern languages, in many important respects. It has 247 characters in its alphabet, for instance and only 18 consonants, probably the least number of consonant sounds in any language, and uses no relative pronouns. It is thus an exceedingly

difficult language to learn though Dr Sathianathan of the West London Tamil School has brought his scientific talents to the problem; devising a system of phonetics which has reduced many of the difficulties of the problem. Following the Indus Valley discoveries, there has been a tremendous upsurge of interest among linguistic scholars and historians all over the world who are studying the Tamil language as the gateway to the historic literature of one of the three oldest civilisations of man. Every few years the International Tamil Congress, a body of academics and scholars from all parts of the world meets to present papers and participate in learned discussions on the Tamil language and its literature.

Across the water in South India is the state of Tamil Nadu, about 50,000 square miles in area and with a population of about 45 million. From Tamil Nadu in the 19th century the British recruited vast numbers of migrant workers to Ceylon to tend the newly developed plantations of coffee, tea and rubber and settled them in the up-country districts as indentured labour in the estates. Isolated in their up-country plantations, they remained for a long time cut off from the mainstream of the social and political life of the island. They were sometimes referred to by those in power as the "Indian Tamils" though most of them arrived in the 19th century, and as such distinguished from the indigenous Tamil population who were spoken of as the "Ceylon Tamils". The Plantation Tamils now form about 9.4 per cent of the total population.

Down the centuries smaller influxes of migrants attracted by reports of the fabulous wealth of Ceylon, its pearls, gems and spices had settled on the island. Adventurers, traders, seamen and mercenary soldiers brought in by disputing factions stayed to settle on the land. Their descendants now form the small communities of Malays and Moors and the larger community, the Tamil speaking Muslims who form 6.5 per cent of the total population. Thus the total of the Tamil speaking peoples is 27.0 per cent of the island's population. They still live mainly in the northern and eastern provinces, their traditional homelands, more than half in the Jaffna peninsula where the old capital city of Jaffna is situated.

Modern Sri Lanka and its problems is largely a legacy of the British Empire. After the colonisation of the island by the British in the eighteenth century, the Sinhalese and Tamil nations were administered as separate entities. But the union of the two territories under the recommendation of the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission, brought them together under a centralised government. Under British colonial rule the Sinhalese and the Tamils continued in their separate loyalties as distinct nations. National integration failed to take root.

The two peoples were administered impartially by the British, each having the same status, rights and responsibilities. The language of administration was English, so there was no conflict between the Sinhalese and Tamil tongues. Additionally, for purposes of administration the country was divided into regions. Christian mission schools spread the knowledge of English, particularly in Jaffna, and since the administration was conducted in English many Tamils entered the Civil Service in the colonial period. Western culture, the English language and Christianity made considerable inroads into the traditional life of the islanders and were often the only points of contact between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. Thus, under British rule the two peoples lived alongside each other in apparent amity.

But already by the 20th century, under this apparent calm, the first stirrings could be detected of what was to emerge as the early beginnings of the extremist Sinhala nationalist fervour that developed after independence. In the nineteenth century, Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist consciousness had not been high. Buddhism then lived up to its saintly ideals of peace, compassion and benevolence to all men. The Buddhist priesthood received the Christian missionaries courteously, affirming their conviction that all religions were equally good. They lent the missionaries their priceless manuscripts and translated the Bible into Sinhalese for them. But later the insensitive methods of the more zealous of the missionaries, who denounced Buddhism as paganism, alienated the gentle Buddhist priesthood, and the steady inroads they were making into their ancient faith alarmed them. The Buddhist clergy became more militant, learning from the westerners by establishing printing presses and publishing houses for the dissemination of religious tracts. This new militancy was reinforced by the Theosophists who, arriving from the west at the end of the 1880s, saw Christianity as the common enemy of both Theosophism and Buddhism and infected the priesthood with their own brand of militancy. The catalyst for the reaction against Christianity and westernisation came with the temperance movement initiated by the Buddhists, who campaigned against the British policy of granting licences to taverns on a wide scale for the sale of liquor. They denounced alcohol consumption as a foreign Christian vice that ran counter to the tenets of Buddhism. Propagandists emerged preaching a gospel of reaction to western influence and Christianity.

Chief among the propagandists was Anagarika Dharmapala, fanatical Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinist, who created a mythology of a glorious Sinhala past and of the Sinhalese themselves as a superior race descended from pure Aryan stock. "No nation in the world has had a more brilliant history than ourselves" he wrote. "There exists

no race on earth today that has had a more triumphant record of victory than the Sinhalese". These claims had no justification in fact but were based on myth and legend and on the distortion of the true facts of history, but they were widely believed. Dharmapala saw Ceylon as a Sinhala-Buddhist state in which the Tamil people had no place. He viewed them as recent arrivals, usurpers and interlopers. "The country of the Sinhalese should be governed by the Sinhalese" he said. His exhortations took root in the Sinhala national consciousness. Gradually gaining ground through the succeeding decades, they paved the way for the fanatical Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism that was to lead to such tragic consequences for the Tamil people. Many young revivalists took Dharmapala as their model, adopting "Aryan" names, renouncing western dress and devoting their lives to Buddhist propaganda and agitation, activities that were to bear fruit once the island achieved independence.

By the 1930s the colony had begun to advance towards self-government. The Legislative Council had been expanded to include an increasing number of Ceylonese representatives elected on a wide franchise and in 1931 the franchise was extended to all adults; Ceylon became the first Asian country to exercise adult franchise.

By the 1936 general election, negotiations were well under way to complete independence and were confidently expected to lead to a successful outcome. But in 1939 the second world war broke out and further moves towards independence had to be postponed for the duration of hostilities. During the war, Ceylon became an important military and naval base and many Englishmen still cherish happy memories of their period of service on the island. With the entry of Japan into the conflict, Lord Mountbatten's headquarters for the South East Asian command was established in Ceylon and all the resources of the island were diverted to the war effort.

The war ended in 1945 and in Britain the Labour Party, committed to the dismemberment of empire, came into power. India and Burma achieved independence in 1947. In London, the Sinhala leader, D.S. Senanayake, architect of Ceylon independence, entered into negotiations with the Colonial Office for the immediate granting of dominion status to the island. Finally, in July 1947 the British Secretary of State announced in the House of Commons that, upon signing of agreements on defence and foreign affairs, Ceylon would be granted full independence within the Commonwealth. A general election on the island was called and on February 4, 1948, by an Order in Council and an Act of Parliament, power was transferred to the government of D.S. Senanayake, leader of the United National Party which had won the majority of seats in the election. On the same day, amid widespread

celebrations and ceremonies, the Duke of Gloucester, brother of King George VI, ceremoniously handed the instruments of power to Senanayke. Ceylon had become independent.

The British believed they had left behind in Ceylon a model parliamentary democracy. The constitution bequeathed to the new nation had been drawn up by the Soulbury Constitutional Commission, mandated to draw up the constitution to be handed over at independence. The Commission had not greatly concerned itself with the fate of the Tamils on the island. There had, at the time, seemed no compelling reason to do so. There had been no serious differences between the Sinhalese and the Tamils under British rule. The Sinhalese had not yet developed the extremist national fervour that was to emerge later. They had not, at the time, seemed even a united cohesive force, but rather gave the impression of a divided people, split by caste, division between up-country and low-country loyalties, and by religious distinctions. They were regarded by the British as an unorganised and educationally backward people, with little political consciousness. The Commission commented that there had been no proven acts of discrimination against the Tamils in the past and there was not likely to be any in the future. The rise of left-wing movements, they said, already constituted a potent solvent of racial or religious solidarity. So the constitution contained no specific safeguards for the Tamil population beyond a general prohibition against the enactment of any law which would make persons of any community or religion liable to disabilities or restrictions to which persons of other communities or religions were not liable or to confer advantages and privileges on any community or religion not conferred on others. In including these provisions, Lord Soulbury said he felt he had "entrenched all the protective provisions for minorities that the wit of man could devise". Time was to prove him tragically wrong.

The Soulbury constitution had been set out in a white paper and debated prior to independence in the State Council in October 1945 when all the Tamil members had unanimously voted for its acceptance. They had been reassured by the words of Senanayake, who asked, "Do you want to be governed from London or do you want, as Ceylonese, to help govern Ceylon? ... On behalf of the Congress and on my own behalf, I give the minority communities the sincere assurance that no harm need you fear at our hands in a free Lanka."

There were, in fact, built in defects in the Soulbury Constitution that were to open the gateway to a series of measures that were to reduce the Tamil people to the status of second class citizens. There was no definition of citizenship, of the right to franchise, or of the fundamental human rights of individuals. Moreover, the basis of

representation in the legislature had been altered from its previous ethnic division. It was now allotted solely on the basis of numerical and territorial representation—one seat for every 75,000 persons and one seat for every 1,000 square miles of territory. Though it was not fully realised by the Soulbury commission, this system was weighted heavily in favour of the Sinhalese. In the 1947 election it had yielded a 67 per cent Sinhalese representation in the legislature. By 1970, as a result of various illegal political manipulations, the Sinhalese majority had risen to 80 per cent.

When the British left, the extreme form of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism that was to infect the country later had not yet developed, but already the Buddhist priesthood had begun to influence the political scene. In the twenties and thirties they had begun to attack their leaders' westernisation and renunciation of the Sinhala language for English, demanding that their politicians speak to their people in Sinhalese. Many politicians had become so westernised that they were unable to speak the language of the people. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, later to follow Senanayake as prime minister, coming from a westernised family converted to Christianity, had to apologise to a delegation meeting him on his return from Oxford in 1925 for being unable to speak to them in Sinhalese. One of the chief propagandists of the Buddhist priesthood, Minidasa Cumaratunga, who had early recognised the power of the ballot box, began to make the masses aware of their power as electors. "If the people whom we send to the legislature cannot come into our midst and speak to us in our language about what is needed for the development of our own country, we will never be able to enjoy the benefits of self-government", he said. "At the next general election let us adopt a new policy; let us say beforehand that we shall not vote for a person who will not pledge himself to speak exclusively in Sinhalese in the Council." In this way, Cumaratunga made Sinhalese a *sine qua non* for political survival. Bandaranaike and his fellow politicians saw the writing on the wall; they learnt the Sinhalese language, abandoned Christianity and re-embraced Buddhism, developing a belated enthusiasm for the historic past of their country. They abandoned western dress and adopted an improvised local costume that they called "Aryan-Sinhalese". After independence, due to their power over the masses, the Buddhist priesthood became more dominant in Sinhalese politics. This dominance passed into the hands of militant extremist factions of the priesthood that had left far behind the Buddhist ideals of peace, compassion and brotherly love, who had strayed so far from the precepts of the Buddha that by the next decade they were inciting their fellow Sinhalese to kill and even themselves to kill, in their growing hatred

and suspicion of the Tamil minority on the island.

The first demonstration of the emerging Sinhala-Buddhist national consciousness was revealed in the issue of the national flag of the new state. The Sinhala lion was adopted, symbol of the ancient Sinhalese kings. It was depicted with a sword held aloft in its right paw against a background of leaves of the pipal tree, under which the Buddha was said to have attained enlightenment at Bodh Gaya. It was thus essentially a Sinhala-Buddhist flag. In concession to Tamil protests, a bar representing the Tamils was added, a poor symbol for a people that had been on the island for nearly 3,000 years.

Senanayake's first cabinet was a closely knit body of Sinhalese Buddhists. It included his son Dudley Senanayake, two nephews and a kinsman, J.R. Jayewardene, now the President of Sri Lanka. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, who was to follow him as prime minister, was the only important minister who was not a member of the Senanayake family tree. The Senanayakes were closely involved in Buddhist affairs, and opened the door to interference in government issues of a Buddhist priesthood that was daily becoming more militant and more extremist. The effects of this influence were soon to become apparent.

Barely had the British departed than the effects of the rising Sinhala Buddhist nationalism began to be felt. One of the first acts of the new government was the passing of the Ceylon Citizenship Act of 1948, which at a stroke, disenfranchised nearly one million Tamils. These were the "Plantation Tamils" (see page 9), descendants of those brought in by the British from south India as indentured labour in the 19th century. The constitution bequeathed by the British had contained no stipulations as to citizenship, leaving the door open to declaring the plantation Tamils non-citizens and rendered stateless. They were now said to be citizens of India and large numbers were forcibly deported there. The following year, a complementary act tied the franchise to citizenship and a million Tamils made stateless, lost their right to vote. The wealth of the country largely depended on their labours in the tea plantations. Now, stateless and voteless, deprived of even local government representation, they were barred from seeking employment outside the estates and ineligible for participation in the government resettlement and land grant schemes. They were, in effect, reduced to a state of serfdom which they have never been able to break out of. Their plight has been described in poignant detail by David Selbourne, who spent some time among them in 1982. The plantations are the source of Sri Lanka's greatest wealth, yet on these vast estates, countless Tamil tea-pickers toil from dawn to dusk in what Dr Selbourne described as "a calvary of labour". From

starvation wages the high cost of pitifully inadequate rations of flour, rice and sugar are deducted, leaving little or nothing over. The rations are advanced on the truck system which leaves the workers debt-ridden, caught in a stranglehold of arrears from which they can never escape. The woefully inadequate rations do not last the month and the last week is lived through in a state of actual or near starvation. Dr Selbourne saw everywhere evidence of malnutrition, sunken cheeks, matchstick limbs, eyes glazed with hunger and exhaustion, and on all sides bemused faces stamped with "the terrible bewilderment of the defeated". These people are without hope. Disenfranchised and rendered stateless they cannot seek employment elsewhere on the island. They will live out their lives on the plantations, the countless unnamed mounds beneath the tea bushes signifying the manner of their final end. "There needs to be a threnody for all this, to reach heaven" wrote Dr Selbourne in *New Society*, "Or better still, one great revolutionary act to sweep it all into oblivion".

The disenfranchisement of the plantation Tamils had its intended effect. The eight electorates in which they had been represented now returned Sinhala MPs to parliament, thus increasing the Sinhala representation, which had been 67 per cent in the 1947 election, to 73 per cent in 1952 and 78 per cent in 1959, a higher percentage than that of Sinhalese to Tamils in the country. From 1953 to 1973 there were no Tamil ministers in government. The Sinhalese had learnt their first lesson in electoral manipulation; the "model democracy" of 1948 was soon to become little more than a hollow sham.

D.S. Senanayaka, architect of independence, died in 1953 and was replaced by his son Dudley Senanayake. Under the Senanayakas, the Sinhala-Buddhist propagandist lobby grew powerful and influential. The Buddhist priesthood were growing more militant and more fanatical in their extreme Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism, which had begun to take an ugly racist anti-Tamil turn. They were beginning to actively campaign on every Sinhala-Tamil issue. In 1954, they set up a commission of enquiry into the education system. They began to gather figures of Sinhalese and Tamil students entering the universities and complained that the proportion of Tamil students was considerably greater than their share of the population. This was true, but only because of the high value Tamils have traditionally set on education and intellectual achievement. An old Tamil proverb says that a good education is the greatest gift any parent can bestow on his child, and Tamil parents made considerable sacrifices to give their children the best schooling they could afford. Consequently the schools in the Tamil territories were superior to those in the Sinhalese areas and a higher rate of university entry was achieved. Now the Buddhists

submitted their figures to the recently set up commission on higher education and quotas and ratios were recommended on the grounds of "equal opportunity".

The Buddhist clergy then turned their attention to the question of the official language of administration; both Sinhala and Tamil had been intended by the United National Party, which had come into power after independence, to be the languages of government and administration when English was phased out. Now the powerful Buddhist lobby began a mounting agitation for Sinhala only to be the official language of the state, claiming that if both languages were given equal status, the Sinhalese would lose their identity and it would lead to the extinction of their race. The 1956 celebrations of 2,500 years of Buddhism gave renewed impetus to the fanatical Sinhala-only propaganda. Agitation was mounted, meetings, processions and demonstrations were organised. In the run-up to the 1956 general election it became the dominant issue. For the sake of their political survival, many politicians dared not oppose the powerful Buddhist clergy and became supporters of "Sinhala only".

The favoured candidate of the Buddhist clergy was S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, leader of the newly formed Sri Lankan Freedom Party, who, perceiving the language issue to be a potential election winner, had promised to make "Sinhala only" a reality within 24 hours if elected to power. For the first time, Buddhist priests actively involved themselves in the election, travelling round the island addressing meetings and turning their seminaries and monasteries in remote country districts into election headquarters. The prestige of the priesthood was high among the villagers. Newspapers were rare and it was the priests who informed them of political events. They therefore looked to the priests for guidance in all matters and gave massive support to the candidate favoured by the clergy. The result was a foregone conclusion. The United National Party of the Senanayakas was decimated, and Bandaranaike, as head of a coalition government, swept into power. The priesthood had had a significant demonstration of the power they could exert in influencing election results and the lesson was not lost on them. Neither was it lost on the politicians. From that time on, Buddhist priests and monks became a force to be reckoned with—they could win or lose an election for any party that aspired to power; their aims and aspirations for the island could never be disregarded in the future by any party that valued its political survival.

Bandaranaike's first measure on assuming power was the "Sinhala only" act of 1956. It was passed with the precincts and approaches to parliament heavily guarded by armed police and soldiers,

and with the public galleries closed. The Tamils responded in a peaceful protest by sitting down outside the parliament buildings, a form of protest that was a hallowed tradition of the country. Part of the tradition was that such protesters were allowed to remain undisturbed. In contravention of this long-established custom, however, the protesters were attacked by a mob organised by a leading member of the Buddhist priesthood. The violence spread and Tamils in Colombo were attacked and beaten. Sinhalese hooligans went on a rampage of arson and looting of Tamil shops and homes. The conflagration spread to other parts of the country and in all 150 Tamils were killed. It was the first episode in what was to become a familiar pattern in later years—the orchestrated use of mobs organised by the ruling Sinhala-Buddhist elite to crush the Tamils into submission.

For the Tamils, the Sinhala-only act was a disaster. They had always had a commitment to their ancient language that went deep into their national consciousness. Their language was a definition of their identity and status as a people, the most powerful symbol of the antiquity of their race and the repository of its culture and history. On a material level, the Tamils, living in inhospitable “dry-zone” lands, excluded from the wealth of the plantations which were owned by the Sinhalese, and because of their high intelligence, love of learning and regard for education, had sought advancement in the professions and government employment. Under the colonial system, government jobs had been won by open competition in which the Tamils has scored heavily. They had consequently entered the Civil Service in large numbers. With the implementation of the Sinhala only act, all employees in the public services and officers of the armed forces were obliged to pass proficiency tests in the Sinhalese language within three years, tests that were deliberately made as stringent as possible. The end result of the Sinhala-only policy was that government employment became virtually barred to Tamils. More important, in view of what was to come, Tamil representation in the police and the armed forces dwindled to a tiny percentage.

In addition to this attack on their language and livelihood, the Tamils were being daily confronted with the spectacle of the systematic encroachment of their ancient territories by Sinhalese. Jungle clearance and land resettlement, begun by the British in colonial days, now became an instrument of deliberate government sponsored colonisation of Tamil lands by Sinhalese. It was a wasteful and profligate scheme. Extravagant loans and inducements were given to the Sinhalese to persuade them to settle in the areas. No action was taken when the loans were not repaid. The inevitable conclusion reached by the Tamils was that the land resettlement schemes were a deliberate and concerted

attempt to destroy the territorial integrity of the Tamil heartland.

They were also designed to bring about a change in the ethnic composition of the Tamil areas, with consequent reflection on voting patterns and representation in parliament. As one example, two new voting districts were created out of the former Batticaloa district in which, at the 1946 census, Tamils had predominated. Both now returned Sinhalese MPs so that by this means, Sinhala representation in the legislature increased to 80 per cent, though according to the 1971 census, they represented only 71.9 of the population. Not only this, but the enclaves of Sinhalese thus created, broke up the geographic continuity of the Tamil territories and separated Tamil communities. In the Trincomalee district which in 1953 had a 2 to 1 Tamil : Sinhalese ratio, the Sinhalese rapidly became the larger share of the population. The same was true of the Vavuniya district. The resettlement policies were plainly designed to render the Tamils a minority in their own heartland and to negate the Tamil nation's possession of a distinct and separate territory as its homeland, one of the foremost elements in the Tamils' claim to nationhood.

Politically, the Tamils at this time pinned their hopes on achieving self-government on striving for a separate state within a federation of autonomous regions under a central government responsible only for matters such as foreign policy and defence. They had not yet plumbed the depths of despair they had reached when one pogrom after another had destroyed their faith in the ultimate intentions of the Sinhalese majority towards their people. So they largely supported the Federal Party which had opted for this solution to their aspirations to self-government. Accordingly the Federal Party entered into negotiations with Bandaranaike. After a series of meetings between the Federal Party leader, S.J.V. Chelvanayakam, and the government, a pact was drawn up—the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact, or the "B-C pact" as it was popularly known. The pact incorporated a scheme whereby regional councils with wide autonomous powers delegated by parliament would be set up as a first step towards a federal state. In return, the Federal Party agreed to drop their demand for parity of status of the Tamil and Sinhalese languages.

In the event, the B-C pact was the first of the many unfulfilled promises made to the Tamils and subsequently repudiated. Whatever Bandaranaike's original intentions may have been, he was quickly persuaded by militant Buddhist pressure groups to abandon the pact. An immediate campaign was mounted by Sinhala militants in alliance with the Buddhist priesthood. Complete Tamil subjugation was their ultimate goal and even the limited amount of self-government afforded by the proposed regional councils was not acceptable. It was in the

midst of this agitation that the man who is now President of Sri Lanka, J.R. Jayewardene, led his famous march to Kandy on October 4 1957 to invoke the blessings of the gods on his campaign against the B-C pact. In the event, this statesmanlike pact which if implemented, could have led to lasting amity between the two peoples was killed by extremist Sinhala-Buddhist agitation. Sporadic acts of violence erupted against Tamils in Colombo. Tamil houses were stoned and there was organised looting of Tamil-owned shops. The campaign gathered momentum with escalating outbursts of violence in 1958. Returning delegates from the Federal Party annual convention were stopped at a railway junction and assaulted, some being knifed and killed. A Jaffna bound train from Colombo was derailed and its Tamil passengers attacked. On May 25 a Sinhalese was shot and killed in a personal quarrel. The killing was treated as a political crime and as such was announced over the radio several times. Immediately violence erupted on a widespread scale. Sinhalese mobs incited by Buddhist pressure groups rampaged through the island, stopping trains and buses, dragging out their Tamil passengers and savagely butchering them. Houses were burnt with their inhabitants inside. Women were raped and even pregnant women assaulted. A Hindu priest performing religious rites at Kandasamy Temple near Colombo was dragged away and burnt alive. Bandaranaike did nothing to stop the carnage. It was finally terminated after two days of mayhem and massacre by the personal intervention of the Governor General, Sir Oliver Goonetilleke, who called in the army and restored order. By that time several hundred Tamils had been killed and 10,000 people made homeless refugees.

Banaranaike's rule was prematurely brought to a close on September 25 1959, when he met his death at the hands of a fanatical Buddhist monk as a result of a conspiracy between Sinhala-Buddhist extremists and the buddhist clergy. Involved in the crime was the Kelaniya temple high priest and the secretary of a leading Buddhist organisation. Bandaranaike's crime was that he had not been rigorous enough in his dealings with the Tamils!

In the 1960 elections, Bandaranaike's widow, Mrs Sirima Bandaranaike, now leader of her husband's Sri Lankan Freedom Party, emerged with an overall majority of 75 seats and became the first woman prime minister in the world. Mrs Bandaranaike came from a prominent Sinhala-Buddhist family long associated with Buddhist causes. She had become endowed with much of the charisma that had accrued to her husband's memory since his death. Buddhist propagandists had persuaded the simple rural voters that her husband had been a *Bodhisatva* (one who would eventually become a Buddha) who had given up his earthly life for the Buddhist cause. This had greatly

influenced the election results in her favour. One of Mrs Bandaranaike's first actions on coming to power was to replace the Governor-General, Sir Oliver Coonetillake with her uncle; another kinsman was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the army and yet another commander of the army volunteer force. Similar replacements were made in other areas of the security and public services which in effect made the state apparatus the exclusive domain of the Sinhala-Buddhist nationalists. Among Mrs Bandaranaike's closest associates were leading Sinhala-Buddhists, including L.H. Mettananda, the father of the Sinhala-only movement.

The Sinhala-only issue now became the dominant force in politics. When all negotiations with the government failed, the Federal Party, which then represented Tamil interests, took the only course left open to them and in February 1961, launched a civil disobedience campaign in the Tamil areas. It called on Tamil government employees not to study Sinhalese, not to transact business in Sinhala and to correspond with the government only in Tamil. It was at all times a non-violent campaign with peaceful demonstrations and sit-down stoppages blocking access to district administrative offices, but Mrs Bandaranaike's response was to declare a state of emergency and to send in the army. For the first time but not the last, the Tamils became subject to an alien army of occupation in their own traditional territories. All five of the Federal Party MPs were arrested and held in detention for six months and the repression by the troops was so horrendous that an official enquiry was later set up by the government.

Meanwhile Mrs Bandaranaike's government went ahead and passed the Language of the Courts Act which required the courts to conduct their business in Sinhala rather than in English. In government administration the Sinhala-only laws were rigidly enforced. Tamil public servants found their very livelihoods threatened as they found their increments stopped and their promotion blocked. It was then that a high-ranking Tamil civil servant, S.Kodiswaran, brought a law suit against the government in the Colombo District Court on the grounds that the Official Language Act of 1956 transgressed the constitution's prohibitions on racial discrimination. His plea was upheld and the trial judge ruled that the act contravened the provisions of the constitution. His judgement was subsequently overthrown by the Court of Appeal which pronounced in favour of the government. Kodiswaran fought his case all the way to the Privy Council in London and in 1969 that body set aside the Supreme Court's ruling and referred back the case to them for reconsideration of the constitutional issue. Then followed one of the typical manipulations of the judiciary processes that were to become established practice in the years ahead. Before

Kodiswaran's case could come back to the Supreme Court with the Privy Council's ruling, Mrs Bandaranaike's government, by act of parliament, abolished appeals to the Privy Council; from 1971 onwards there was no higher court of appeal through which Tamils could safeguard their human rights in a situation where the courts were coming increasingly under the control of the government.

In 1965, adding fuel to an already explosive situation, Mrs Bandaranaike's government published the collected writings of Dharmapala sponsored and funded by the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs. The evocative title chosen for the book was *Return to Righteousness*. The book engendered an accelerated Dharmapala revival. He was extolled as the prophet of the "sweet gentle Aryan children of an ancient race". His idealised version of the supposed past glories of the Sinhalese race, culled from myth and legend were revived. The pre-colonial Sinhalese past was idealised as a superior and glorious Aryan civilisation. By the indiscriminate use of ancient myths and legends, Dharmapala had claimed that the Sinhalese and not the Tamils were the original inhabitants of the island; the Tamils, according to his version of history, were foreign usurpers who had taken from the Sinhalese what was rightfully theirs. "The pagan Tamils," Dharmapala had said, "devastated the land, destroyed ancient temples... and nearly annihilated the historic race". He saw the island as a Sinhala-Buddhist state in which the Tamil people had no place. "The country of the Sinhalese should be governed by the Sinhalese" he said. Dharmapala's sayings developed into a form of Sinhala national faith, Buddhism its holy writ. Sri Lanka was the country of the Sinhalese, the home of the Buddha was the message the new revivalists derived from his works. In the grandiose edifice they began to build, the Tamil people had no place.

The subsequent surge of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism encouraged Mrs Bandaranaike to naked anti-Tamil propaganda. "The Tamil people," she said in 1967, "must accept the fact that the Sinhala majority will no longer permit themselves to be cheated of their rights". The leader of the Buddhist Ramanya sect in May 1967 declared that "If the Tamils get hold of the country, the Sinhalese will have to jump into the sea. It is essential, therefore, to safeguard our country, the race, and the religion and to work with their object in mind". A delusion that the Tamil population constituted a threat to the Sinhalese developed that was to reach almost paranoid proportions in the years that followed.

The accelerated Dharmapala revival progressed. Street names were changed and became Dharmapala Road or Dharamapala Street. The second most important highway in Colombo was renamed

Dharmapala Road and flanked with his statue. On a major site in Colombo a huge concrete edifice was erected. Four huge concrete maps of Sri Lanka faced four directions. Over them spread the branches of a large *bo* tree (that under which the Buddha was said to have received enlightenment). In the middle of each map was engraved a Buddhist precept and at the top of each map was depicted the Sinhalese lion, sword held aloft in one paw. The symbolism was plain. "This concrete edifice", commented the eminent anthropologist, Professor Obeyesekere of the University of California, "expresses a simple but telling fact: the Sinhala-Buddhists are claiming Sri Lanka as their nation".

Under Mrs Bandaranaike's regime, the "Sinhala only" policy was rigidly enforced and the government progressively phased out Tamil recruitment in the civil service, the army and the police. The last hope of establishing Tamil as the official language in the Tamil territories faded. Those educated in the required skills and with the appropriate qualifications were able to get away and they began to emigrate in large numbers. They went to the newly emergent countries of Africa, Nigeria, Ghana and Zambia, where their learning, qualifications and expertise were welcomed. Many went to Australia, Canada, the United States and Britain. There are now scattered all over the world communities of highly educated, articulate and well qualified Tamils in the highest ranks of the professions. Their relative peace and prosperity in their new countries has not made them forget their homeland. Constant rounds of charitable events are continually organised for the relief of the suffering of their people in Sri Lanka. They have established information centres "draw attention to the plight of the Tamil population in the island and to counteract the flood of misinformation emanating from the Sri Lankan embassies in their adopted countries. These expatriate Tamils will have a large part to play in the eventual liberation of the motherland. But for those who stayed behind, the situation became increasingly more difficult with the massive loss of jobs resulting from the Sinhala-only policy and the atmosphere grew increasingly hostile and threatening; so much so that Tamils living in Colombo and other predominantly Sinhala districts began to avoid speaking Tamil in public places.

In the run up to the 1965 elections, the Federal Party entered into a secret pact with Dudley Senanayake of the United National Party, promising to lend him their support in the election and afterwards, in return for Tamil language and other rights. The wide concessions outlined in the pact would have gone far to ameliorate the grievances of the Tamils. Its provisions included regional and district councils with delegate powers which would have established a large measure

of autonomy in the northern and eastern provinces; the language of the councils' administration would be Tamil. The 1961 act which made Sinhala the language of the courts would be amended and colonisation mitigated by a policy of giving first preference to landless Tamils. The Federal Party had high hopes for the pact; they had still not learnt from their experience with the B-C pact. But an independent Tamil MP, Mr C. Suntheralingam, clearly assessed the situation; with prophetic insight he declared that the Sinhalese would never honour political agreements—"Sinhalese politicians", he declared, "be they on the right, centre or left, will never concede to the Tamils their language rights". Subsequent events proved him right.

In 1965, Mrs Bandaranaike was defeated in parliament over an attempt to gag the Lake House newspapers. Her government had become increasingly unpopular and the economy had grossly deteriorated. There were acute food shortages. With the support of the Federal Party, Dudley Senanayake ousted Mrs Bandaranaike and became premier in 1965, head of a coalition government. The Federal Party leaders now looked to him for implementation of the secret pact he had agreed with them in return for their support. But true to form, Senanayake reneged on the pact and abandoned the District Councils scheme. The Federal Party joined the ranks of the opposition but by then Senanayake had new allies and was able to dispense with their support. He remained in power for the full parliamentary term. Many Tamils were to remember Suntheralingam's prophetic words and to agree with him that the only way ahead was for complete separatism and the restoration of the ancient state of Eelam in the north and east of the country. Tamil separatist nationalism was born.

The new parliament was one firmly committed to achieving Sinhala-Buddhist supremacy. The Buddhist priesthood had already demonstrated their power to sway the electorate and all issues had now to be judged on the question of whether or not they served Buddhist interests and Buddhist-Sinhala nationalism. Buddhist priests were now actively organised in political affairs and constituted a veritable veto group; the principle that the priesthood were the advisers of the state had become institutionalised. They now began a campaign of active anti-Tamil propaganda, using the distorted history of Dharmapala to claim that the Tamils had no legitimate place in Sri Lanka. They equated the date of arrival of *all* the Tamils on the island with that of the plantation workers who had come in the 19th century. Regretably Sinhala academics compromised their intellectual integrity to represent the Tamils as recent invaders from south India. This kind of approach was typified by Professor I.D.S. Weerawardena in his book *Ceylon and Her Citizens*:

The Sinhalese who form the largest group in our country came more than 2,000 years ago, probably from the region close to Bengal. You must have read the story of Vijaya and his 700 men. That story illustrates the fact that our Sinhalese ancestors came from North India. They settled in the north-central part of the island and gradually spread over the rest of the country. It is difficult to say when the Tamils came to this country. Some people think that a few Tamils might have been in Ceylon as traders even when the Sinhalese first came. But it is certain that they came in large numbers in the Tamil invasions which began very early in our history. In the 13th century, they were powerful enough to establish an independent kingdom in the north.

The propagandists would cite the plantation workers as evidence of the short duration of the Tamil presence on the island. Small wonder that the Sinhalese began to believe that the real home of the Tamils was in Tamil Nadu in south India, that they had spread out from the plantations to the north and east and were threatening to overpower the rest of the island. The Tamils were seen to be a threat to the integrity of the Buddhist state and the situation fully justified the repressive measures now being taken against them. This propaganda was highly successful and was believed by 99 per cent of the Sinhalese.

Seeing a threat in the close cultural and linguistic links between the Ceylon Tamils and the 50 million other Tamils in Tamil Nadu in south India, Mrs Bandaranaike, while in office, had banned the small Dravida Munnetra Kalazagam group in 1962. Now in opposition, she persuaded Dudley Senanayake to reimpose the ban in 1967. On her regaining the premiership in 1970, she continued to try to isolate the Ceylon Tamils from Tamil Nadu. She refused to allow the visit of M. Karunanithi, the chief minister of the Tamil Nadu state and deported Dr Era Janarthanam back to India. She restricted and eventually banned the importation of Tamil newspapers, periodicals and films from Tamil Nadu and refused visas for cultural visits from there.

Once in power, Senanayake showed his subservience to the Buddhist priesthood by declaring the Buddhist *poya* days national holidays instead of Saturdays and Sundays, a decision which resulted in chaos in the sphere of international trade. The District Council scheme was no more heard of. By the end of his term of office, Sinhala-Buddhist supremacy had been established both politically and culturally. The national flag of Ceylon, the national anthem and the national emblem were Sinhalese.

The 1970 general election swept Mrs Bandaranaike back into power once more as head of a United Front coalition government.

Her first act was to go with her cabinet to Kandy and offer thanks at the Dalada Maligawa temple. On regaining power she immediately turned her attention to the constitution. The Soulbury constitution handed over by the British had contained the proviso against the passing of any law discriminating against persons of any community or religion; thus providing some safeguards against Tamil oppression. Those whose rights were infringed were entitled to appeal to the Privy Council in London, and as we have seen, many availed themselves of the opportunity. The Privy Council had overturned many decisions against the Tamils in the courts. Mrs Bandaranaike as well as abolishing appeals to the Privy Council, in 1971, decided that the constitution with its provisos safeguarding the fundamental rights of the minorities, should be replaced. In addition, it was necessary to incorporate the advances already made towards the establishment of a Sinhala-Buddhist state. There was no referendum or plebescite to afford any semblance of legality to the constitution that replaced the old. Its legality has been questioned by eminent lawyers such as Satchi Ponnambalam, author of *Sri Lanka: The National Question and the Tamil Liberation Struggle*.

The new constitution came into effect on May 22 1972. By its provisions, the Dominion of Ceylon became the Republic of Sri Lanka, embodiment of the *de facto* Sinhala-Buddhist state. Mrs Bandaranaike went to the Dalada Maligawa temple in Kandy and ceremonially invoked the blessing of the sacred-tooth relic on the new constitution. She declared: "Today we are in a proud position of owing no allegiance to anyone else, but totally and in every respect, owing allegiance only to our own country." But it was the country of the Sinhalese, as the provisions of the constitution made very plain. Article 7 declared that "the official language of Sri Lanka shall be Sinhala", thus enshrining the 1956 Sinhala-only act as an inviolate and non-negotiable principle in the constitution. Article 6 stated, "The Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the state to protect and foster Buddhism". Importantly for future events, the constitution contained provisos that were in effect to end the independence of the judiciary: every judge was required to take an oath to uphold the constitution. This was a shrewd move to pre-empt the growing legal doubts about its legality. Once the judges were compelled to take the oath, the question of the illegality of the constitution was removed from their jurisdiction. With this proviso, the 1972 Sri Lankan constitution was the first in the world to bring the judiciary under control of the politicians. Ten years later the Chief Justice of Sri Lanka was laying the charge that the position of the Lord Chief Justice and the judges of the Supreme Court had

been eroded by the executive, and intimidation of judges pronouncing in favour of Tamil litigants was becoming widespread.

Meanwhile, the Tamil national identity was being attacked on another front, the economic one. Since independence, many new industries, largely financed by western governments had been created. But they had been exclusively sited in Sinhalese areas. Of the irrigation projects, dam construction and industrial development, funded by British, American, Canadian and European government grants, not one had been sited in Tamil areas, which were left virtually untouched by the new developments. Between 1970 and 1975, all the millions spent on state industrial ventures were in Sinhalese areas. When a Russian petroleum prospecting company carried out a seismic survey of Sri Lanka and recommended Jaffna and Mannar for oil exploration, Mrs Bandaranaike chose to commence prospecting in Mannar, a borderline area. No oil was found there. The Jaffna area, being Tamil, was not explored. Mrs Bandaranaike similarly failed to implement a recommendation by a World Bank survey for a large sugarcane plantation in the Thunukkai-Pooneryn area, which possessed ideal conditions. But it was a Tamil area. If the recommendations had been implemented, it would have made Sri Lanka self-sufficient in sugar in three years. The ports of Kankasanturai and Trincomalee in the Tamil areas were allowed to run down. A US government offer to develop the port of Kankasanturai was not accepted, while millions were spent in the attempt to turn the uneconomic port of Galle in the south into a second port.

The Tamils were now attacked in the field which had always been of special importance to them—that of education. By a government decree, it became obligatory for children to be educated in their mother tongue—Sinhala for the Sinhalese and Tamil for the Tamils. It was claimed that this measure would obviate any division between school and home, but its practical effect, and indeed the true objective of the policy was to deprive Tamils of any hope of gaining employment in the public services by gaining a knowledge of the official language. This educational policy continues to the present time and Sinhala is not taught, even as a second language in Tamil schools.

Now the government proceeded further and instituted a deliberate policy of squeezing out Tamils from higher education. Prior to 1970, admission to the universities had been on the basis of open competitive examinations held in English. Tamils had entered the universities in large numbers, especially in the faculties of medicine, science and engineering, competing in the entrance examinations more successfully than the Sinhalese. Now, as a result of the Buddhist clergy's commission findings, a stringent campaign was mounted by Sinhalese-Buddhist

pressure groups for the abandonment of the merit system. As a result, the Ministry of Education effectively established a quota system by lowering the qualifying admission marks for the Sinhalese. Thus the number of marks required for admission to medicine and dentistry, for example, was 229 for Sinhalese, while for Tamils the figure was 250. Further measures of "standardisation" and district quotas passed between 1973 and 1976 reduced still further university entry to the Tamil students. By 1975, to cite one example, the percentage of Tamils entering science courses had fallen from 35% in 1970 to 15% in 1978. In dental surgery, veterinary science and agriculture the decline was even greater. Thus Tamil youths who had qualified for university entry by competitive examination had to stand by and see their places taken by Sinhalese who had failed the examinations. In 1970, Mrs Bandaranaike had cut off foreign exchange for the long-established practice of Tamil students going to India for university education and had abolished the examination for external degrees from the University of London, of which the Tamils were the main beneficiaries.

With their deep regard for learning and the benefits they had obtained from higher education in the past, Tamil youth felt its very life blood was being cut off. The difficulty of access to higher education was the force which finally mobilised Tamil youth in its commitment to the state of Eelam and of complete separation from the Sinhalese territories. Young, intelligent and articulate, these youths saw the only recourse left to them was to take up arms in defence of Eelam and their subject people. These young men formed, from the early seventies, the nucleus of the militant Tamil liberation movement in Eelam and operated in guerrilla units against the Sinhalese army of occupation that had invaded their ancestral lands. Different groups adopted different political philosophies ranging from pure nationalism only to liberation of the people linked with social and economic emancipation. In furtherance of the goal of the ultimate liberation of Eelam, one of the groups, Eelam Revolutionary Organisers (EROS) formed in 1975, in addition to its militant activities, instituted educational projects aimed at the involvement of the common man in the social and economic development of the future state; to this end they launched periodicals, *Tharkeekam*, *Pothumai* and *Eelam*, and instituted industrial and agricultural schemes such as the cooperative at Kannaddy, the roofing material project at Batticaloa, and one-acre farms in various parts of Eelam. They are also heavily involved in alleviating the hardships of the refugees from the plantation areas seeking safety in India.

Under the State of Emergency imposed by Mrs Bandaranaike in the Tamil territories, which lasted from 1971 to 1977, arbitrary arrests

under the emergency powers became ever more frequent. Increasing student militancy led to more than 200 young Tamils being held in custody without trial for long periods. When the 1972 constitution had come into force, all public employees had been compelled by law to take an oath to uphold it. When Kasi Anandan, a young Tamil poet in government service refused to take the oath, he was arrested and imprisoned for nearly three years. Tamil youth reacted strongly to these arrests and intensified their campaign for complete separation.

The provisions of the constitution, the cultural and educational discrimination which had by now become blatant, and the continued occupation of their heartland by an alien army, had the effect of uniting hitherto divergent Tamil political parties, pressure groups and student associations. The political parties, pressure groups and student associations met in conference at Trincomalee. Previously divergent factions now spoke with one voice; federalism was dead. Nothing less than complete separation was now the goal. All parties to the conference passed unanimously a resolution demanding that their ancient territory be liberated, Eelam once more to take its place among the sovereign countries of the world. The flag of the rising sun was adopted as a symbol of their new found determination. All the parties, youth groups and student associations united to form the Tamil United Front which was constituted on 14 May 1972. The political leadership of the TUF was conservative and cautious. It was still hoped that its objectives could be achieved through political and constitutional channels, the strategy to be adopted being boycotts, resignation of parliamentary seats, walkouts and peaceful demonstrations. They badly underestimated the hostility of their opponents, now imbued with a fanatical zeal to "save the country from the Tamils", who were determined to stop at nothing, even murder and massacre to prevent the dismemberment of "their" Sri Lanka.

If there had been any doubts about the fundamental hostility of the Sinhalese government to the Tamil national consciousness, they were dispersed by the incidents that marred the International Conference for Dravidology and Tamil Linguistics held in Jaffna in January 1974. The Indus Valley excavations which had revealed the Dravidian civilisation as one of the three oldest in the world, had led to a great upsurge of interest in foreign universities and among scholars all over the world in the study of dravidology, and the Tamil language, as one of the oldest Dravidian tongues still being spoken, was of particular interest. This interest led to the formation of the International Research Conference, a prestigious organisation where academics from all over the world met periodically to discuss research in Dravidology, Tamil linguistics, culture and history. The first of these

conferences had been held in Kuala Lumpur in 1966 and had been hosted by the government of Malaysia, the second in Madras in 1968, by the government of Tamil Nadu; the third, hosted by international cultural organisations, met in Paris in 1970. The 1974 conference was to be held in Jaffna and it soon became evident that Mrs Bandaranaike, far from wishing to host the conference, was strongly opposed to such a conference being held in Sri Lanka at all, though she could not go so far as to ban outright the ingress of international scholars of such high academic standing. To the enslaved people of Jaffna, the congress was a wonderful event, a much needed boost to their declining morale. The thought that scholars should come from all over the world to study and discuss a language that was denied official status gave them renewed courage and inspiration. The congress was an enormous success—until the last day, when disaster struck. As was customary at the end of the conference, the proceedings had been thrown open to public debate. As Professor Nainar Mohamed was addressing the vast gathering on Tamil literature, the meeting was invaded by hundreds of Sinhalese policemen. Throwing tear gas into the assembly, they attacked the participants with the utmost violence and brutality. Nine Tamils were killed and hundreds injured. In the storms of protest that followed, the government failed to either condemn the police brutality or to express any regret for the loss of life. Demands for an official inquiry were denied. The brutal and unprovoked attack on a peaceful gathering had its repercussions. The event had demonstrated to the world the state of oppression the Tamils now lived under. As a result, closer ties were forged between the Sri Lankan Tamils and those of Tamil Nadu in south India, who have ever since been loyal and steadfast friends in times of trouble. The Tamils of Sri Lanka were stiffened in their resolve to obtain their freedom. The next year one of their leaders, S.J.V. Chelvanayakam contested a by-election seat under the banner of a sovereign state of Eelam and won by a huge majority. He declared the verdict was a mandate for Eelam. “On behalf of the Tamil United Front” he declared, “I give you my assurance that we will carry out this mandate.”

Under the near permanent state of emergency that now existed in the Tamil homelands, with arbitrary arrests, imprisonment without trial and even torture, the Sinhalese police had become the *de facto* instruments of government and were given a free hand. Recourse to the courts became problematic and the judiciary had increasingly come under political control and could no longer be guaranteed to exercise impartiality. In the plantation areas, a campaign against the Tamil tea pickers began. Their lines were set on fire, they were attacked and robbed in a systematic drive to intimidate them and force them

out of the plantations. In two separate episodes in 1975 and 1976, the Tamil speaking Muslims were attacked by rampaging police, when more than 200 houses, 50 shops and two factories were set on fire. A mosque was burnt down and the seven Muslims praying inside slaughtered. The government again refused to hold an enquiry into these events.

In this threatening situation, the leaders of the Sri Lankan Tamils, of the plantation Tamils, the Tamil-speaking Muslims, and the Tamil United Front met at Vaddukkodai, and on May 14 1976 reconstituted the Tamil United Front to form the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF). The first TULF convention passed a resolution declaring that the constitution of 1972 had made the Tamils a slave nation ruled by "the new colonial masters, the Sinhalese". The Tamils of Sri Lanka, the resolution declared, "by virtue of their great language, their religions, their separate culture and heritage, their history of independent existence as a separate state over a distinct territory for several centuries till they were conquered by the armed might of the European invaders, and above all by their will to exist as a separate entity ruling themselves in their own territory, are a nation distinct and apart from the Sinhalese." The republican constitution of 1972 had announced to the world that the Tamils had been made into a slave nation ruled by "the new colonial masters," the Sinhalese. The convention resolved on the restoration and reconstitution of the sovereign state of Eelam based on the right of self-determination inherent in every nation.

Across the island in Colombo, the rising Tamil aspirations to liberation were being watched by the ruling Sinhala-Buddhist elite with implacable enmity. In their paranoid obsession with the threat they believed posed to their people by the Tamils, no measure would be too extreme to avert this danger, even genocide itself could not be ruled out if it were the only recourse open to them.

2. The Rise of State Terrorism

The parliament elected in May 1970 had arbitrarily extended its term of office by a further two years, a precedent for the manipulation of the electoral system that was to be developed still further by the succeeding government. Eventually an election was called for July 21 1977.

Mrs Bandaranaike had become increasingly unpopular. Under seven years of her regime, the economy had stagnated. Food shortages had become acute and prices had risen steeply. Unemployment had reached crisis proportions. Mrs Bandaranaike was accused of countenancing police brutalities, abuse of power and family patronage. But nemesis was at hand. Her party was soundly defeated in the elections and the man who is now President of Sri Lanka swept into power with a landslide majority. So decimated was Mrs Bandaranaike's party that it was replaced as the official opposition by the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) which now represented the Tamil population. Once more the Tamil political leadership hoped for a political solution to the grievances and aspirations of the Tamil people. Once more they were to be disappointed. In a Parliament where the Government commanded a five-sixth majority any opposition party could hardly be more than a cipher.

Born in 1906, Junius Richard Jayewardene, the new Prime Minister, head of the victorious United National Party (UNP) had entered Parliament in the 1930s; he could thus claim to be the third world's longest serving politician. He had a long history of anti-Tamil activism ever since, as a young man, he had led the famous march to Kandy. In 1944 he had introduced the earliest Sinhala-only measure into the legislature. Though in his public utterances, especially in those intended for outside consumption, Jayewardene has often adopted a conciliatory attitude towards the Tamil people, his actions have consistently belied his words. This conflict between precept and practice

is explicable in the light of Jayewardene's admitted political philosophy as expounded in an interview reported in the *New Internationalist*, November 1981.

I know they say I am a strategist and a schemer but you cannot be a leader unless you scheme—not in politics or in war or in any human affair. Even a boxer has to scheme—and I was a boxer when I was young—you pretend to hit the face but you hit the stomach. Oh yes, you have to scheme.

Jayewardene had campaigned on a platform of justice and righteousness in accordance with the Buddhist doctrine *dharmista*. He was soon to institute a reign of terror against his Tamil neighbours that contravened all the most sacrosanct precepts of Buddhist teaching. He had promised to rectify the abuses of power practiced by the previous government. Within a year he had vested in himself powers that Mrs Bandaranaike had never dreamt of. In his pre-election campaign Jayewardene had promised to call an all party conference to remedy the grievances of the Tamils, which he conceded were many. "The party, when it comes to power" his manifesto declared, "will take all possible steps to remedy the grievances in such fields as (1) Education, (2) Colonisation, (3) Use of Tamil language, (4) Employment in the public and semi-public corporations." Seven years later, these promises strike a hollow note. They were neither implemented nor, as soon as the UNP had gained power was there any move towards their implementation. In fact, Jayewardene's first act after his landslide victory was to send his army north into the Tamil territories with a mandate to wipe out "terrorists", i.e. the young men now forming the spearhead of the movement for a separate Tamil state. His promise to summon an all-party conference to remedy the grievances of the Tamil minority, repeated at the World Peace Through Law Conference in August 1977 was reneged on.

Within a month of Jayewardene's government taking office, the anti-Tamil pogrom of August 1977 broke out. Mobs of Sinhalese thugs incited by Sinhala-Buddhist activists rampaged through the towns and villages of the Sinhala areas, killing hundreds of Tamil men, women and children and burning their shops and houses. Due to the discrimination in the public service against Tamils, the police and army were Sinhalese almost to a man and made no effort to intervene, a pattern that was to emerge as a consistent feature of later pogroms. Apart from declaring a state of emergency and imposing a curfew, the government did nothing to end the violence and enforce the rule of law. Fifty thousand Tamils became homeless refugees. Most fled to the Tamil areas in the north. "Bewildered children will for all time

remember the refugee camps'' wrote Fr Tissa Balasuriya of those tragic times. The worst affected were the most vulnerable and defenceless of all the Tamil communities, the plantation workers toiling from dawn to dusk in abject poverty and in the most miserable conditions to create the island's greatest source of wealth. Driven out of the tea estates by the concerted attacks of Sinhalese thugs, they fled north. Many reached the Vavuniya area where they eventually found refuge in the humanitarian resettlement schemes organised by the dedicated efforts of Dr S. Rajasunderam and Mr S.A. David, founders of the Gandhiyam Society, who were eventually to fall victim to the government's malice. There, freed from the slave conditions of the plantations, these Tamil labourers found a better life than they had ever known before. They have since become an important force in the liberation movement.

The Sansoni Commission, appointed to investigate the racial violence, reported a number of cases where police had assaulted Tamils and many other attacks where the police had been present but had made no effort to intervene. When presented with this evidence, the government took no action against the culprits. Instead, in 1982, it passed an indemnity act giving immunity to ministers, public officers, members of the security forces and people acting under their authority in respect of acts committed during the disturbances.

Jayewardene now proceeded to take the vital step that was to concentrate all the power of the state into his own hands. He accomplished this by introducing a new constitution, its main proviso the establishment of an executive presidential government. Many eminent lawyers declared the new constitution illegal; there had been neither referendum nor plebiscite to give it any semblance of legality, but with his huge majority, Jayewardene had no difficulty in pushing it through Parliament. He himself was "deemed for all purposes to have been elected as President of the Republic", his term of office to be six years. It was to last a great deal longer than that. The new constitution came into effect in February 1978; thus in little over six months, Jayewardene had become the first President of Sri Lanka, head of state, head of government, and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. He was not responsible to Parliament. He appointed the Prime Minister and all the other ministers and had power to dismiss any minister without reference to anyone.

Other provisions in the constitution entrenched the position of Buddhism as the state religion and confirmed Sinhala as the official language of the country, of the courts, and of the civil administration. Judges were again compelled to take the oath to defend and uphold the constitution. Under other of its provisions, Members of

Parliament were made liable to expulsion and deprivation of their civic rights, a novel method of dealing with political opponents. In fact, Mrs Bandaranaike, Jayewardene's old political adversary was the first to suffer under this provision. She was expelled from Parliament and deprived of her civic rights. Thus Jayewardene's principal opponent was conveniently removed from the political arena.

Having consolidated his power base in Colombo, Jayewardene now proceeded to intensify his campaign to crush the growing liberation movement in the Tamil areas. Large numbers of Tamil youths were arrested and detained incommunicado while they were tortured to extract information. When they finally turned against their torturers, they ambushed and killed the notorious Inspector Bastiampillai and two of his henchmen. Some who participated in that ambush adopted the name "Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam" (LTTE) and others later formed the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOT). Meanwhile EROS were proceeding with their programme of socio-economic projects. These groups determined to go on the offensive and have become the vanguard of the freedom struggle since that time.

In July 1979, the Government enacted the infamous Prevention of Terrorism Act, later to be indicted by the International Commission of Jurists as being fully as rigorous as that in force in South Africa. Its draconian principles made the army and the police superior to the civil law in the Tamil territories. All legal and constitutional safeguards with regard to arrest, detention, and protection against self-incrimination were abrogated. Suspects were made liable to be detained incommunicado without trial for 18 months under an order by the Minister of Defence (a portfolio held by Jayewardene himself). Such an order, the act stated, "shall be final and shall not be called into question in any court or tribunal by way of writ or otherwise". Confessions extracted while in detention, usually under torture, were now admissible in the courts. The police and the army (invested with police powers) were given absolute powers of search and arrest. With the enactment of the new law, Jayewardene declared a state of emergency in the Tamil areas from 11 July 1979; it is still in force at the time of writing. The International Commission of Jurists were later to state that the level of guerrilla activity was low and insufficient to justify calling a state of emergency and certainly not sufficient to justify the draconian powers of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

But the army was now sent into the Tamil areas with all the panoply of modern warfare, tanks, helicopters and armoured cars with orders to "wipe out terrorists by the end of the year." The ancient heartland of the Tamils now became the scene of an alien military occupation;

daily incidents occurred in which ordinary members of the public were suddenly stopped and subjected to search and rough handling and indiscriminate beating. Army jeeps filled with soldiers carrying machine-guns roared through the towns. Young men were arrested in large numbers, tortured and beaten, then released, in a brutal demonstration of army power. Others were incarcerated in army camps without access to either family or lawyers and brutally tortured. The naturally conservative Tamil population began to realise that there could be no accommodation with the hostile central government and that separation and freedom from the alien yoke was the only hope for the future. The young militants in the vanguard of the movement, began to retaliate against the brutality of the security forces, ambushing army units whose excesses had gone unpunished and attacking police stations where the more notorious torturers operated.

The burning of Jaffna in June 1981 was the culmination of a long campaign of intimidation by the security forces with the implicit backing of the government. Local council elections had been scheduled for June 4 and it was tactically important for the government that the United National Party should win at least one seat in the Jaffna area. Hence there was a high presence of government ministers in the city, including the infamous Cyril Mathew, Minister of Industries, and Gamini Dissanayake, Minister of Lands and Mahaweli Development both intimates of the President. Also present was the Secretary to the Ministry of Defence. Cyril Mathew was the author of the notorious book, *Sinhala People—Awake, Arise and Safeguard Buddhism* which contained anti-Tamil speeches by Jayewardene and others from as far back as the 1950s. Numerous pamphlets which contained clear incitement to violence against the Tamils emanated from Mathew's ministry as if they were official government documents. Mathew's presence in the area was therefore regarded with some apprehension, which, in the event, proved to be well founded.

Though there was already a large police force in Jaffna, almost entirely Sinhalese, a week before the poll, the government dispatched another 500 Sinhalese policemen to the city, ostensibly to keep order during the election campaign. There had been no incident to justify this action; Jaffna with its 90 per cent Tamil population was solidly for the Tamil United Liberation Front and there had been little dissent or acrimony in the electioneering. The real purpose of this unexpected contingent of police was to emerge later. At the last moment, the 150 election officials were replaced by Sinhala loyalist UNP members, a move widely interpreted as a clear indication of an intention to subvert the election processes.

On 31 May an unidentified gunman fired random shots in an election

meeting. That night, four days before the vote, a group of about 200 armed police went on the rampage in Jaffna. At 11.30 pm a contingent of about 70 surrounded the house of the local TULF MP, Mr V. Yogeswaran and set it on fire. The MP and his wife managed to escape with their lives by climbing over the wall of their garden. The police then went on to burn down the headquarters of TULF. Arson and looting in various parts of the town continued until 4 am. A temple, several houses and shops were set alight.

The following night the most despicable incident of the whole campaign occurred—the burning down of the magnificent Jaffna Public Library, repository of irreplaceable historic treasures and ancient manuscripts, the cultural centre of the Tamil nation. Its whole collection, almost 97,000 books, was destroyed. The library, opened in 1959, had grown over the years to become one of the most famous in South Asia and its loss was mourned in all parts of the world. Visiting Jaffna soon after its destruction, Francis Wheen reported (*New Statesman*, July 17 1981): “Today its rooms are thickly carpeted with half-burnt pages, fluttering in the breeze which comes through broken windows. Inspecting the charred remains, I met a heartbroken lecturer from the local teacher training college. ‘The Sinhalese were jealous of the library,’ he said. ‘I used to come here every day to prepare lectures and tutorials. Now I shall have to go to Colombo and some of these books aren’t available even there.’” To a people renowned for their love of learning the loss of their library was a grievous blow to the Tamil people, striking at their cherished cultural heritage and national identity. In less than a month of its destruction, money was being raised in Tamil communities all over the world for its restoration and it is fervently believed that one day a new library will rise in Jaffna from the ashes of the old.

On the same night that the library was burnt down, the offices of the local newspaper *Eelandu* were attacked. This small paper had reported the news fearlessly and impartially—“We try to follow the traditions of the *Manchester Guardian*” its editor, Mr V. Shivanandan told James Baird of the *Guardian*. Ironically *Eelandu* had not been an advocate of separatism. “Caxton would have recognised *Eelandu*’s production methods” wrote Baird. “All the type is set by hand—eight pages on weekdays and 12 on Sundays—and the paper is then printed and collated by hand.” The paper was distributed by bicycle and went to the most remote villages where one or two copies would be read by the entire population in the course of the day.

In its late edition of June 1, *Eelandu* had reported the events of the first night of destruction, promising “more details tomorrow”. That night, at 9.30 pm, a group of police surrounded the building

and ordered the staff outside. They then set fire to the offices. Mr Shivanandan and his circulation manager were upstairs at the time. They heard two or three loud blasts and opened the door to an inferno. The two men managed to escape though both were badly burnt. Four days later *Eelandu* was back on the news-stands. "If they burn the press again" said Mr Shivanandan, "the composers will be composing in their own homes. We will still come out".

The targets chosen by the attackers, the destruction of the Public Library and of *Eelandu's* offices, of the town's largest bookshops, the burning of the MP's house and his party's headquarters had clearly demonstrated that these were not random acts but part of a planned programme of intimidation on the eve of elections politically important for the government. As one resident told Francis Wheen of the *New Statesman*, they were designed "to show that the Sinhalese can do this to us whenever they like, and no one in the world outside will take any notice". On June 3, the eve of the election, the "show of strength" continued. The leader of TULF and three other MPs were arrested and detained overnight. While they were in custody, government troops drove round Jaffna in jeeps, randomly attacking the residents. Three were shot dead and a number of others injured. The intimidation continued on election day itself, but in spite of everything, including blatant attempts at ballot rigging by the UNP supporters brought in to supervise the vote, the TULF candidates were returned to a man. The official responsible for these irregularities was subsequently promoted to be Chief Election Officer in Colombo. Though the evidence against the police was overwhelming, not a single person has to this day been prosecuted for any of the attacks.

In Parliament on June 9 the Jaffna MP, Mr V. Jogeswaran, recounted his miraculous escape from burning when his house was set on fire. He told the House that all his possessions had been destroyed and he had been left with nothing but the clothes he stood up in. He declared, "You have let loose—the Government has let loose—on an unarmed people, violence unparalleled in any civilised country during peace time." In the exchanges that followed, he was accused by Cyril Mathew of holding a meeting of terrorists in his house, which he vigorously denied. Then Mr V. Dharmalingam-Manipay said, "It was on the information given by the Minister [Mathew] that his house was burned. He seems to have given such information to the police and the police burned down his house." The revelation was no surprise to the TULF members, who had all along viewed Mathew's presence with disquiet.

On July 24, the TULF members charged in Parliament that the violence had been government sponsored, instigated by the high ranking

ministers present in Jaffna during the election campaign. Their protests were met by the most venomous racist attacks that ever disgraced a parliament. A no-confidence motion was passed against the TULF leader, Mr A. Amirthalingam, accompanied by the most intemperate speeches ever made in any legislature. As the Hansard record reveals, D.M. Chandrapala, MP for Kundasale asked, "What should we do to this so-called leader of the Tamils? If I were given power, I would tie him to the nearest concrete post in this building and horsewhip him till I raise him to his wits. Thereafter let anybody do anything he likes—throw him to the Beire [a lake] or to the sea, because he will be so mutilated that I do not think there will be life in him." He was outstripped by G.V. PUNCHINILAME, MP for Ratnapura, who stated:

There was a punishment during the time of the Sinhalese kings, namely two arecanut posts are erected, the two posts are then drawn towards each other with a rope, then tie each of the feet of the offender to each post and then cut the rope which will result in the tearing apart of the body. These people should also be punished in the same way... The people of this country want and the government is prepared to inflict these punishments on these people."

The speeches were described by David Dodwell in the *Financial Times* as "perhaps the most racially poisonous" in Sri Lanka's history. The London *Tamil Times* claimed that the no-confidence motion was a carefully planned affair, the prelude to the widespread anti-Tamil violence that followed in August. MPs had read their speeches from prepared texts apparently written by others for the occasion and compelled the Speaker to annex translations as appendices to the Hansard record. After the debate, Cyril Mathew ordered 20,000 extra copies of the Hansard report and sent them out to temples, police stations and other public organisations, together with a map showing how many "sacred Buddhist places" would be lost if the Tamils achieved liberation. (The latter refers to Mathew's claim that many of the Hindu temples in the Tamil areas had been the sites of ancient Buddhist shrines. Brand new Buddhist statues mysteriously appeared overnight to give substance to these claims and Mathew urged the Sinhalese to colonise the areas to ensure the safe custody of these holy relics). Prior to and after the no-confidence motion, racist posters like "SINHALA PEOPLE, RISE UP AGAINST THE DRAVIDIANS" had appeared all over the country.

Within a week of the inflammatory speeches in Parliament, the 1981 pogrom engulfed the island. In the Batticaloa-Amparai border

areas 43 Tamil houses were burnt down by Sinhala mobs with the connivance of the security forces. Large numbers of Tamil shops were incinerated in the eastern province and over 500 Tamils fled to refugee camps. Once again the violence spread to the plantation areas and in 43 estates the workers were attacked and beaten and driven from their homes. Over 15,000 took refuge in schools and temples and later fled to the northern Tamil areas for safety. Mr S. Thondaman, the MP representing the "Plantation Tamils" voiced the general opinion in Jaffna when he protested to Jayewardene: "The very fact that even plantation workers, innocent of any political crimes, have been singled out for murder and mayhem, has created a feeling among the people that the thousands of hooligans covertly enjoy the patronage of powerful personalities". Brian Eads reported in the *Observer* of 20 September 1981:

It is also clear that subsequent violence in July and August, which was directed against Sri Lanka Tamils in the east and south of the country, and Indian Tamil tea estate workers in the central region, was not random. It was stimulated, and in some cases organised, by members of the ruling United National Party, among them intimates of the President.

Eads sent his report from Bangkok; his dispatch should have been datelined "Colombo" he said. "That it is not is a measure of the sorry state of Sri Lanka after a summer of racial violence marked by killing, arson and rape". The report Eads sought to telex from Colombo was seized by Sri Lanka's Commissioner of Police 'on the instructions of the Ministry of Defence'. "I would not be allowed to send it, or any other material, and the original would not be returned to me" Eads was told. "It appears that the decision originated with President J.R. Jayewardene himself."

Early in September, a tourist bus broke down in Tissamaharama. Its 43 passengers were Indian pilgrims returning from a shrine at nearby Kataragama. While repairs were being carried out, one pilgrim, a native of Madras, took the opportunity to go to a barber's shop for a hasty shave. Minutes later he was dead, hacked to pieces by Sinhalese thugs who had mistaken him for a local Tamil. He had been a DMK politician and his murder led to a strong protest by the Indian government and in Tamil Nadu, the State Government called a one day hartal. Jayewardene belatedly brought the mayhem to a halt. Embarrassed by the bad press he had been receiving in the west, he engaged the services of a London public relations firm to rebuild his blemished image in Britain, the US and Western Europe. Among the firm's previous clients were the Shah of Iran and the South African

Government. He continued to deny the existence of state terrorism. At the Commonwealth Parliamentary Seminar held in Sri Lanka as part of the ceremonies to mark 50 years of adult suffrage, Jayewardene revealed that he had had a number of telegrams and letters from British MPs protesting against the state terrorism in the Tamil areas. "These telegrams and letters" he said, "accuse this Government of imprisoning people without trial, even murdering them. If I may say so, they are talking through their hat. When you meet your colleagues, please tell them that I said so."

But the detailed reports of the International Commission of Jurists, the highest body of jurists in the world, which appeared in December, gave well documented evidence of arbitrary arrests, prolonged detentions incommunicado, and of violence used on detainees, constituting serious violations of Sri Lanka's obligations under the International Covenant on Human Rights. The Sri Lankan Prevention of Terrorism Act was compared to the South African Terrorism Act which had been called "a piece of legislation which must shock the conscience of a lawyer". Many of the provisions of the Sri Lankan Act were "equally contrary to accepted principles of the Rule of Law" the report stated. Sri Lanka finds itself "a member of the same notorious league of despised regimes of Chile, Argentina, El Salvador et al" commented the *Tamil Times* of London. The deteriorating respect for the rule of law on the island was deplored by the jurists.

It is regrettable that certain government and United National Party members, the actions of security forces, the stripping of the civic rights of Mrs Bandaranaike; the Parliamentary vote of no confidence in the leader of the Tamil United Liberation Front as well as the adoption of the Terrorism Act have undermined respect for the rule of law in Sri Lanka.

The International Commission of Jurists' report made many recommendations none of which were implemented. Among them it was urged that the army and police should be strictly controlled. "In this regard" it continued, "the government should pursue a vigorous policy of investigation and prosecution of police officers responsible for the burning of many areas in Jaffna in May-June 1981." This recommendation had still not been complied with by the time of the Commissioners' second visit to the island in early 1984. In spite of the Commissioners' condemnation, the reign of terror continued unabated. *When the second report of the International Commission of Jurists appeared in March 1984 it had to report that 112 individuals had died in custody since 1979.*

Queen Elizabeth's projected state visit to Sri Lanka in October

on the occasion of the celebrations of 50 years of universal suffrage, brought a temporary lull in the state terrorism. Jayewardene hastened to admit that some problems existed for the Tamil community and invited the TULF leaders to talks to discuss these grievances. It was a familiar ploy, used whenever international eyes were turned on the island. The talks would, as always, prove abortive, but they served to keep the TULF leaders occupied and optimistic, while presenting a facade to the world of a genuine desire to redress the grievances of the minority people. But the Tamil leaders, slow to learn the devious ways of the government, entered into the negotiations with renewed hope. On her visit, Queen Elizabeth was shown the wonders of the island, the oldest tree in the world, the casket said to contain the Buddha's tooth, a carnival of elephants. She opened the magnificent Victoria Dam, showpiece of the achievements of Sri Lanka since independence. But she was kept well away from the trouble-torn territories of the Tamils. She would have seen a different Sri Lanka there—blackened outlines of burnt out buildings, the army policing the streets, and the economic evidence of the complete lack of industrial investment by the central government.

In these areas the reign of terror continued. The torture of Tamil detainees at Elephant Pass and Panagoda army camps was now routine. The chief torturers, Inspectors Godegama and Karunaratne, and Assistant Superintendents Gurasinghe, Juranpathy and Pereira operated from police stations that had become notorious and hence a target for militant attacks. So successful were these that by mid-July nine of the 16 police stations in the Jaffna district had been closed. The legal defence in court of freedom fighters was taken on by only the bravest and carried out under threats of assassination. "I do it pro deo" one of these lawyers told David Selbourne who spent some time in the troubled areas in 1982. Selbourne, whose impressions of the situation appeared in the article *Sinhalese Lions and Tamil Tigers* in the *Illustrated Weekly of India* of October 17 1982 interviewed both army commanders and guerrillas. He described the latter as "clean-cut young men, with moustaches as close clipped as Brigadier Ranatunge's, the army commander in the Northern Province," and better disciplined and less frightened than their army opponents. By this time two more militant organisations had emerged, Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) and the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO). The turning point for most had been the 1977 anti-Tamil riots, when they realised that armed insurrection was the only force that could help them. For the liberation of their people they were prepared to stake everything. "I do not mind giving up my own life if there can be a permanent solution to our problems" one of them told Selbourne.

Branded as “terrorists” by the government, the young Tamil militants are the freedom fighters of the emergent Tamil nation, pledged to lay down their lives, if necessary, in the struggle for Eelam. There are five strong, disciplined and dedicated groups, PLOT, LTTE, TELO, EROS and EPRLF (the latter three have recently come together to form the largest single force of freedom fighters). Their targets are the alien army of occupation waging an undeclared war on their people. They do not detonate bombs in public places to “draw attention to their cause” or practice any of the other familiar methods of intimidation associated with international terrorism. “We think very deeply into the question of violence” a freedom fighter told David Selbourne. “Our targets for assassination are the armed agents of the state, and we select them only after careful study and full inquiry”. Not a single innocent Sinhalese civilian has so far been killed through their activity. Neither are they rabid red revolutionaries; they are, in fact, dismissed by Marxists as being “politically low level”. Their only commitment is to Eelam and to a free and just society.

In contrast Selbourne found morale in the army low. He met Major-General Tissa Weeratunge, Army Chief of Staff in Colombo, “one of the many relatives of President Jayewardene in high places”. Surrounded by regimental awards and brigade trophies, the general was honest about the situation. “We are not on top” he told Selbourne, an impression Selbourne had already gained. “In Jaffna, they say that a whole truck-load of troops goes out to buy a tube of toothpaste, or a box of matches,” he wrote. The initiative was with the terrorists, the general continued.

‘They choose the time and place. We can only be reactive’. He also claims, as paranoia deepens, that the political training of the Tigers is being ‘coordinated from Britain’ and that there is a ‘west Asian connection’. A six-month tour, he added very frankly, is ‘about as much as you can take up there’.

Selbourne then proceeded to Jaffna.

When I arrive at Gurunagar army camp in Jaffna—where it is all spit-and-polish, with junior ranks springing to attention like jack-in-the-boxes—they are combing the pages of the Jaffna *Saturday Review*, with its open editorial support for Tamil Eelam. On the wall is a chart of military vehicle dispositions; on a desk, files marked ‘TULF: Secret’.

Brigadier Ranatunge, who forgot his impartiality sufficiently to tell Selbourne that “we are a majority Buddhist nation”—was bitter, not merely about the ambushes and killings, but about the political response

to them. "We have taken a hell of a beating" he said, "from the terrorists and the politicians". When a policeman was shot, he complained, no politician attended the funeral service. "But the politicians are scared too" commented Selbourne, "Jayewardene does not set foot in Jaffna."

Meanwhile, Amnesty International had been watching the situation in Sri Lanka closely. They had been receiving disquieting reports since the imposition of emergency rule in 1979 and had, in fact, sent a delegate to the island at that time to investigate further. The delegate on that occasion was particularly concerned with the fate of six young Tamils arrested in the early hours of July 14 1979 and subsequently tortured. The mutilated bodies of two were found under a bridge near Jaffna on the morning of their arrest. Another was admitted with multiple injuries to Jaffna prison hospital where he died five days later on 21 July 1979. The other three men had simply "disappeared" without trace and their bodies were never found. The government subsequently denied their arrest, though their families produced witnesses to the fact. Amnesty International found that a particularly horrendous provision under the emergency laws had been in force for five days during this period. From 11-16 July 1979, Emergency Regulation No 14 had allowed the police to dispose of dead bodies without inquest or other legal formality—a licence to kill as it was subsequently described. Amnesty International linked the fate of the six young Tamils to this regulation.

Notwithstanding the emergency regulations, inquests *were* held on the first three victims. On January 8 1980 the magistrate in Jaffna delivered his verdict in the case of Irathurai Indrarajah.

The verdict of the Judicial Medical Officer is that death was due to cardio-respiratory failure consequent to renal tubular necrosis consequent to shock and haemorrhage resulting from multiple injuries. There is evidence of assault by the police. I return a verdict of homicide.

Following the subsequent outcry, Amnesty International says, the Government set up an inquiry by a parliamentary select committee. As late as July 1983 the committee had not submitted its report.

In a memorandum to President Jayewardene of 23 May 1980, Amnesty International gave a detailed summary of their findings. Pointing out that torture was specifically proscribed in the constitution they listed the tortures their investigations had discovered and voiced their concern that confessions under these tortures were admissible in court. They specifically condemned the threats and intimidation made to prisoners on their release—"such persons, on release, were warned

by the police and army officials not to disclose any fact about the treatment they were given in detention, otherwise they would 'suffer the same fate as Inpam and Selvaratnam' '' (Inpam and Selvaratnam were the two young Tamils whose mutilated bodies were found shot on July 14 1979). No reply was received to their memorandum by Amnesty International nor were their recommendations implemented.

Amnesty International continued to follow the situation on the island with concern and in early 1982 another delegation was sent to Sri Lanka in response to the many disquieting reports they had been receiving. The delegation spent from 31 January to 9 February on the island; they found that the Prevention of Terrorism Act had now become part of the permanent law of the land. A recent amendment, strongly condemned by Amnesty International, had given the Minister of Internal Security power to determine the *place* where detainees were held and they could be removed from the jurisdiction of the court if need be. It gave the Minister power to order the detention of suspects for a period of 18 months without a court order. The propriety or legality of the detentions could not be challenged or questioned in any court. The amendment had been rushed through parliament in the wake of a Supreme Court decision which had recently declared illegal the detention and custody by the army of a youth named S. Murugiah, and had directed that he be transferred to custody in a normal remand prison and charged if he had committed any offence. This Supreme Court order had the effect of rendering the detention of several other youths in military custody illegal. Amnesty International strongly condemned this amendment, believing it could facilitate ill-treatment and even torture of detainees, who might face retaliation from their custodians if they made statements during their trials that their interrogators did not want them to say or if they retracted confessions. Amnesty International also noted that the amendment had been passed by parliament on 11 March 1982 by a two third majority *only a few days after the Supreme Court had ruled it contrary to the constitution* and they quoted an affidavit from one detainee that he was threatened by army officers with assault and reprisals against his family for having disclosed details of torture to the Court of Appeal.

On their arrival in Sri Lanka the Amnesty International delegation had found "the classic conditions in which serious human right violations can easily occur"—midnight arrests by large contingents of army and police officers who did not identify themselves or produce arrest warrants and who did not inform relatives present of the grounds for arrest. In every case, the delegation found, officials subsequently refused to give relatives information on the whereabouts of the victim

so they were unable to make habeus corpus applications. Access to lawyers was refused as a matter of official policy. Five of the cases investigated by Amnesty International had been kept in solitary confinement for over eight months after arrest.

Torture was consistently used to obtain "confessions".

Alleged methods included prolonged beatings on many parts of the body, including the soles of the feet; suspension upside down accompanied by beating, insertion of needles under toes and fingernails and in the arms, and inserting chilli powder into sensitive parts of the body. Forced drinking of salt or chilli-infused water after prolonged denial of food and water and burning or assaults on the sexual organs and other parts of the body have also been reported. Statements or 'confessions' were reported to have frequently been extracted under actual or threatened torture or ill-treatment, and, in several cases, were taken down in a language the detainee did not understand. Detainees were forced to sign statements the contents of which were not read back to them. Torture of detainees was reported still to be occurring in army camps in the north, but a recent allegation also mentioned torture being inflicted in police stations, including a police station in Colombo (known as the 'Fourth Floor'). Those released have, in several instances, been threatened with reprisals if they disclosed details about torture or ill-treatment. Some of those released are still being harrassed and intimidated by the security forces, who, in some cases, arbitrarily restrict their movement.

Numerous individual testimonies are included in the appendix to the Amnesty International report. A typical account was given by a former detainee held for 10 days in November 1981:

When I was being taken to Mankulam Army Camp, they put about 10 or 15 army helmets on my head. While I was carrying this heavy load, they told me to balance a 45 litre plastic barrel of water. This continued for about one hour. If I failed to keep up the can, I was assaulted... At about 11.00 pm we arrived at Gurunagar Army Camp in Jaffna... A man who told me he was a corporal brought a needle and pricked me with it. Two or three men were holding me at the time. They were all in civilian clothes. They inserted needles in the muscles of my arm and under my fingernails. They also pierced the underside of my arm. They took a thread which they put under the tendon and pulled it through backwards and forwards while asking me questions about terrorist leaders, who they were and where they were. [The

witness shows two marks at the underside of his arm of this treatment] ... Then they handcuffed me and tied me with my right hand and my right leg to a wooden bench. In that position I was allowed to sleep. I got food the next day. I was taken for further interrogation to an office. One army captain conducted the investigations and one other man in civilian clothes was also there... during that interrogation I was not assaulted. Then I was taken outside to the verandah, where there is a concrete platform, three or four feet high. I was told to lie down on that platform, face downwards. I lay down on that platform, from my feet to the waist, the top of my body hanging outside. An army man in civilian clothes kicked me with a S-lon pipe on the soles of my feet. (I know it was an army man because others were calling him Sergeant). [The S-lon pipe is one inch thick and about four feet in length.] It was heavy... stuffed with a hard substance... When they started hitting the soles of my feet, this gave me a pain in my neck. The pain was like an electric current. Some 10 other people stood around, all were in civilian dress. After that they put broken glass on the concrete floor, on which I was told to kneel down with my hands put above my head. When I was about to fall, they put me up again in the same position, beating me. This continued several times. After that, they brought chillis in powdered form which they stuffed into my nostrils... They stuffed it in my nostrils with a nail so that it entered my forehead. This happened while I was still kneeling on the glass. I was thirsty. It was now about 5.00 pm. I had not been given any drink and no food. They then gave me very salted water to drink. They had added pepper and chilli powder into it and forced me to drink this mixture. I started vomiting, but when I was about to vomit, they assaulted me saying I should not vomit.

This treatment lasted for 10 days but the detainee could not give any information. On the tenth day Captain... told him "We took you in custody on suspicion. Now we find you are innocent. So you can go". He was, in fact forced to remain another four days as he could not walk on his injured feet.

When released, ex-detainees suffered from acute fear of repercussions. One detainee at Vavuniya Army Camp told Amnesty International how an army major "put his two thumbs into my eyes and pushed them in until the blood came out." His eyesight had since been bad. "After dark I cannot see very well. I do not dare to go to an eye specialist. I am afraid that they might tell officials that I told them how I got my injuries." Worse, perhaps than the actual

torture, were the inhuman conditions in which the prisoners were detained.

Several claimed to have been chained to the wall lying on the ground for as long as several months, in unhygienic conditions and without getting any exercise. Reading and writing materials were reported to have nearly always been denied. Some individuals complained of seriously restricted food and water rations, of physical assaults by the detaining authorities and of difficulty in getting medical treatment.

A disquieting feature of the Government's attitude, Amnesty International considered, was that police actually convicted of misdemeanours in the courts were subsequently promoted. The Government was reported to have said that "it was necessary that public service officers should do their jobs and follow orders without fear of consequence from adverse court decisions." (*Ceylon Daily News* March 4 1983). Thus the security forces were absolved by the Government from the judicial processes of the law. Further, according to the *Sun* of February 5 1982, the Justice Minister had introduced a bill for the enactment of an "Indemnity Act" to prevent legal proceedings against those responsible for the riots of August/September 1977. The Act had become law on May 20 1982.

Amnesty International presented a detailed report to President Jayewardene on February 7 1983 inviting the Government's reaction before publication and comment on their plans to implement the reforms recommended in the report. As by mid April no reply had been received, the organisation decided to publish its contents and on July 6 1983 the report was presented to a shocked world. Its appearance just before the great pogrom of July 1983 was timely; it was thus to an alerted and better informed international media that the news of the holocaust finally broke.

Meanwhile, the TULF leaders were still persevering in their dialogue with the Government. The TULF leader, Appapillai Amirthalingam explained his position to David Selbourne when he visited the island in the summer of 1982. "If I had told Jayewardene to go to hell, so many more Tamils would have gone to heaven. We are not fighting from a position of strength. We are walking on the edge of a razor". The carrot dangled before the TULF leadership was the prospect of District Development Councils which were supposed to bring about some form of devolution to the Tamil areas. The 1981 local elections which had led to the outbreak of police violence against the city of Jaffna, had, in fact, been for these District Development Councils. But as time dragged on, it had become apparent that the

councils were a mere cosmetic exercise for the benefit of the outside world; they were to be allotted neither powers nor funds nor specific functions and duties. President Jayewardene is still regularly exhuming the corpse of the District Development Councils whenever it becomes necessary to make a display to the world of his good intentions towards the Tamil population.

Still the negotiations continued. The TULF leadership though sceptical of the outcome felt that the talks enabled them to buy time, and to regroup themselves. But TULF had already lost the support of the younger generation. The more far-seeing members of TULF too were beginning to appraise the situation realistically and starting to lose faith in a dialogue that they knew from past experience would never come to anything. These members broke away from TULF to form the Tamil Eelam Liberation Front in May 1982. TELF was sympathetic to the freedom fighters and began to form a closer liaison with them. They were growing in numbers and gathering momentum. Veterans of prison and torture by now, they were growing into a well-disciplined force, increasing their activity in the occupied Tamil territories. Their attacks and ambushes on the Sinhalese army units and notorious police headquarters were increased. Now in battle dress and armed with sophisticated automatic weapons they had become a force to be reckoned with. After an ambush and shoot-out in Nelliaddy in July 1982 it was reported that several more police stations were shut down and officers in those remaining open were afraid to venture outside without security cover.

In Tamil Nadu, in south India, the freedom fighters won influential support and established bases and contacts there. By now they had considerable financial backing. They established contact with the leading politicians and gained the full sympathy of M.G. Ramachandran, Chief Minister of the Tamil Nadu state, and of M. Karunanidhi, leader of the opposition. These two politicians brought to Mrs Gandhi's attention the perilous situation of the Tamils in Sri Lanka and she subsequently rejected Jayewardene's demands for the extradition of wanted militants.

In July 1982 the first world Eelam Tamil Conference was held in New York attended by the militant groups, expatriate communities and the political leadership. The Tamil cause had entered the international arena. The 200 delegates from several countries, including India and Sri Lanka, resolved to set up a Tamil Eelam Liberation Council to lobby the international community, to co-ordinate the activities of all groups committed to Eelam and to usher in the birth of the new nation. Jayewardene meanwhile was biding his time. His plans were being laid for the final solution and it was not long in coming.

In June 1982, the reckless extension of state terrorism was carried to the last bastion of human rights against tyranny with the blatant attempt at the intimidation of three judges of the Supreme Court. The three judges had, a few days previously, awarded compensation to Mrs Vivienne Goonewardene, a former MP. She had gone to the American Embassy with some others in Colombo to present a letter of protest. On the way back their banners were seized by police officers. The press photographer who had taken photographs of the incident had been arrested. When Mrs Goonewardene heard this, she went to the police station to enquire after him. Soon after, she found herself under arrest, thrown to the floor and kicked. In awarding her compensation, the judges had recommended that the behaviour of the sub-inspector concerned should be subjected to investigation by the police authorities. But almost immediately after the judgement, the Defence Ministry, with much publicity, announced that the sub-inspector in question had been promoted. On the night of June 11 the homes of the three judges who had give the judgement came under attack, though one was absent, having recently moved. In a co-ordinated operation, three separate gangs, each comprising about 50 thugs, simultaneously attacked the houses. Carrying placards and posters referring to the recent verdict, they shouted obscene, abusive and threatening slogans. Appeals to the police were not possible—the telephones were mysteriously out of order. In a joint press statement after the attacks, the three judges stated, “The demonstration appeared to be planned and co-ordinated. State owned buses have been used to transport the demonstrators.” They reiterated their determination to discharge their duties independently in spite of the attacks.

If previous outrages had gone virtually unpublicised, the situation was now very different. The widespread outcry that followed must have taken even the government by surprise. Law students staged a demonstration and pledged support for an independent judiciary. The English language daily *Island* warned of the lurch towards state tyranny. At a specially convened general meeting, the 7,000 strong Bar Association of Sri Lanka unanimously passed a resolution condemning this blatant attempt at intimidation and expressed its disapproval of the promotion of the police officer in the recent court case and the wide publicity attendant on it. The eminent lawyer Dr Colvin R. de Silva, who had appeared for the plaintiff in the case said, “The country witnessed how promotions were given to two police officers whose actions were considered illegal by the Supreme Court.” He had now heard of an inspector, he said, who had thought of getting his long awaited promotion by striking him (de Silva). He condemned the use of armies of thugs to carry out the state’s bidding. “There

appears to be a private army," he said, "of the party in power which is regularly used to break up strikes and meetings of even members of the clergy and of university students." The London based *Tamil Times* was even more trenchant. In one of its most outstanding editorials since it began publication, it condemned this "concrete manifestation of the growing fascist trends" in Sri Lanka. "To those who have closely observed with awe the blatant and open use of thuggery as a political weapon in the recent past against opposition political parties and individuals, this attack on the judges must have appeared a logical and inevitable development in the inexorable march towards authoritarianism." The editorial cited the evidence for government involvement and police complicity and claimed, "Ever since this government came to power, not only has it interfered with the appointment and transfer of judges, but also it has sought to undermine the integrity and independence of the judiciary. Judgements of the Supreme Court were rendered inoperative overnight by blatant abuse of the legislative process. Orders of the courts were flagrantly disobeyed by the country's security forces on executive directives." The Chief Justice himself had complained to President Jayewardene about the erosion of judicial power through executive action, the paper continued, and it condemned the promotion of officers found guilty of violating the rights of citizens as "a slap in the face of the judiciary" that made a mockery of the constitutional provisions. With prophetic insight the paper continued, "What is worse is that it gives the green light to the security forces to commit whatever excesses they choose against the civilian population.

Though the Prime Minister announced that the Inspector-General of the Police was being instructed to investigate the attacks on the judges houses, the guilty parties have never been apprehended. The relevant records of the bus station from where the mobs' transport emanated were stated to have been "lost". As for the promotion of the police officer concerned, however, it emerged later that this had been ordered by no less than Jayewardene himself. Seeking fresh information on the issue, Paul Sieghart, a delegate of the International Commission of Jurists who visited Sri Lanka in January 1984, after enquiry at one ministry after another, was finally led to the President himself. "The President freely conceded that he had personally ordered the promotion of the two police officers," Sieghart writes in the report of the International Commission of Jurists (1984), "and the payment out of public funds of the damages and costs." This, he said, had been necessary to maintain police morale. Jayewardene also volunteered the information that he had been out of the country at the time of the attacks on the judges' houses, but pointed out that

the right to peaceful protest was always available to the people of Sri Lanka. "I do not suppose for a moment that President Jayewardene had any personal hand in the organisation of the mobs before he left the country" continued Sieghart. "But he has now conceded that the promotion of the two police officers, and the payment of damages and costs out of public funds, were his personal decisions—at a time when he found the Supreme Court a hindrance to some of his policies. The conclusion is inescapable that he was deliberately seeking to teach the judges a lesson, in order to make them more pliable to the executive's wishes. If that is so, these were grossly improper acts; but for the immunity from all suit which the President enjoys under Article 35(1) of the Constitution, they might well have been criminal offences under Article 116(2)."

Nowhere had Jayewardene shown as clearly as this his contempt for basic human rights. Yet at the UN seminar on Human Rights in Asia held in Colombo in late June that year he told the participants: "In Sri Lanka, the government has protected human rights by legislation. The new constitution included a chapter on Fundamental Rights according to the UN Charter. The violation of Fundamental Rights is now justiciable."

By the end of 1982 the government appeared to be in the grip of a momentum which they unable or unwilling to break out of. In November, for the first time, the Sri Lankan government extended the arm of repression against intellectuals and the clergy. On November 14 and 15, three Roman Catholic priests, Fr. A. Singarayer, Fr. S. Sinnarasa, and Fr. Jayatilakarajah were arrested and held at the notorious Gurunagar army camp, by that time well endowed with its sinister reputation for brutality and torture. There they were held incommunicado and denied access to friends or lawyers. On 18 November, Nirmala Nithiyanandan, a sociologist and political scientist, as well as a popular writer and promoter of feminist causes became the first woman to be arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act when, with her university lecturer husband, she was arrested and detained in the infamous Gurunagar army camp. There she was beaten up soon after her arrest. Though subsequently spared further physical assault, other methods such as sleep deprivation were used in the attempt to "extract a confession." The charges were of harbouring terrorists and withholding information. In Gurunagar she was held in the custody of male guards, a circumstance that caused grave concern among the Tamil community as previous women detainees there had been raped, and one sadistically murdered.

Their arrests sparked off mass protests and thousands of Tamils, including priests, nuns and students took part in protest demonstrations.

pickets and hunger strikes. Leaders of religious denominations, politicians and human rights groups denounced their arrests in the strongest terms. The Rt Rev. V. Dogupillai, Bishop of Jaffna registered a vehement protest to President Jayewardene. On 15 December 1982, police invaded St Anthony's Church in Vavuniya, where about 500 people had assembled to observe a day of prayer and fasting in protest against the recent arrests, particularly those of the Christian clergy. At about 9.35 a.m. police arrived in force, threw tear gas grenades into the crowd and then proceeded to attack the congregation, striking out with their batons. Women were seized by their long hair and kicked and beaten. The event was a profound shock to the Tamil people, who had hitherto regarded places of worship as sacrosanct.

The trial of the priests and intellectuals eventually began on June 23 1983 after the accused had been in custody for over six months and then only after a public outcry and pressure from all quarters. David Selbourne, the British academic and writer, who had for long interested himself in Tamil affairs, attended the trial. He afterwards described in the London *Tamil Times* the scene in court on the first day of the trial. The accused arrived in a long procession of army trucks escorting their van, accompanied by shrieks of sirens. The judge was an hour late, during which time they were kept sealed up in their van in the stifling heat of the day. The three priests and the Nithiyandanans filed into court, all except Mrs Nithiyandan handcuffed, and guarded by soldiers carrying sub-machine guns. Even so, said Selbourne, "they seemed to embody a triumphant moral superiority over their accusers". David Selbourne was unable to report the rest of the trial. On June 25 he was served with a deportation order, given 10 minutes to pack his bags, and put on a plane for London. A ministry spokesman accused Selbourne of writing a series of "unfair and unbalanced" articles about the Tamil minority problem and said he had reentered the country despite being on the Defence Ministry's blacklist.

The trial dragged on, postponed again and again by lengthy adjournments requested by the prosecution, while the priests and intellectuals languished in prison. It would have proved a major embarrassment for the government if it had been allowed to continue to completion. The ultimate fate of the accused will be told in the next chapter.

As 1982 wore on, election fever began to infect the island. The life of the sitting parliament with its five-sixth UNP majority was drawing to a close. Two years later, President Jayewardene's term of office was due to expire. Hopes began to rise that the people would at last be freed from the stranglehold of despotism and tyranny that

now enveloped the island. The prospect of the United National Party winning the election and returning to power was remote. During its term of office, the country had slipped further into economic chaos. The ailing economy had been kept afloat since 1977 only with the help of massive aid from western countries and loans from the International Money Fund. The revision of the rupee against the dollar at the insistence of the IMF had increased the prices of essential commodities like rice and bread as well as raising transport fares. The annual budget showed gross deficits which would have to be bridged by still further loans. In an interview with David Selbourne, Jayewardene candidly confessed his helplessness about the economy. " ' We have been able to survive,' he told me frankly, 'because of the aid the World Bank is giving us. I really don't know what to do about the economy. Nobody knows.' " But though the country had grown steadily poorer, many had enriched themselves at their country's expense. Ministers, *mudalalis*, *protegés*, were given lucrative posts as pay-offs for services rendered and underworld thugs had become exceedingly rich during the five years of UNP government.

But the UNP had had long years in the wilderness under Mrs Bandanaïke's regime and were not going to relinquish power without a struggle. In addition, they had their own reasons for fearing the exposure of their years of misrule to the close scrutiny of an incoming hostile administration. The first straw in the wind of their intentions was when the President unaccountably announced his intention to stand for re-election two years before the expiry of his term of office, the presidential election to be held in October 1982, i.e. *before* the general election. Cynical observers of the political scene saw this as a measure to ensure that he would once more be firmly ensconced in the presidency before the election of a hostile parliament which might have made his re-election two years later untenable if not impossible. But Jayewardene had still more tricks up his sleeve.

Jayewardene did, in fact, win the presidential election in October 1982. His chief opponent, Mrs Bandaranaike still had considerable charisma as a victimised mother figure; many people felt that like Mrs Ghandi, she had suffered enough, and would have supported her candidacy. But she was unable to stand as Jayewardene had deprived her of her civic rights. Her deputy did not have the same charisma and her party was deeply divided over many issues. Unfortunately, a misguided decision led the Tamil United Liberation Front to boycott the election. So Jayewardene succeeded in gaining just over 50 per cent of the votes required on the first count, and resumed the presidency. He then revealed the full extent of his grand strategy to gain near-permanent ascendancy over parliament. There was, in fact, to be no

general election! Using the excuse that it was "in the interests of the government development plans" he announced his plan to extend the life of the present parliament for a further term of six years without holding an election. Many commentators were to recall the president's words in an interview in the *Ceylon Daily News* when he said, "Not even with a 100 per cent majority will elections be postponed." To give the manoeuvre a flavour of legitimacy he referred the issue to a national referendum in which the electors simply voted yes or no to the postponement of the election. Civil rights movements, opposition parties and even some sections of the UNP itself, argued that the holding of a referendum for this purpose was unconstitutional, all to no avail.

Immediately the referendum campaign began, a state of emergency was declared. Under its regulations publications opposing the proposal were banned. The International Commission of Jurists were later to declare in their report of March 1984 that emergency rule on this occasion was completely unjustified and certainly not as a measure to close down these papers. During the campaign, leading members of the Sri Lankan Freedom Party, which Mrs Bandaranaike led, and which was the strongest opposition party, were taken into custody on charges of "creating disaffection" and kept in detention. Bands of pro-government thugs attacked opposition campaign meetings and intimidated voters. Although the election laws prohibited the putting up of posters, placards exhorting the people to vote "yes" for the extension of Parliament were on display everywhere, including government buildings and state transport vehicles. The state-owned press and the radio and television networks (both under government control) were used in the most scandalously partisan way to campaign for a "yes" vote. On the day of the poll itself, reports of thuggery and intimidation came in from all quarters. Opposition polling agents were attacked and driven away from the polling stations by pro-government thugs. The scale of impersonation was such that even the vote of Mr Hector Kobbekaduwa, the SLFP candidate in the presidential election, had been cast by the time he went to the poll. When the results were finally known, the voters learnt that they had given up their right to parliamentary democracy by a clear majority.

In its analysis of the voting results, the *Tamil Times* of January 1983, pointed out that the voting constituted only 70 per cent of the total registered votes, whereas the usual turnout was 85 per cent. The 3,141,223 "yes" vote constituted 38 per cent of the electorate! Sixty-two per cent of the electorate either voted against the referendum or did not vote at all. Thus, on this small proportion of votes, the government party, with its five-sixth representation in parliament, was

ensured another six years in power. Closer examination of the results showed that the government was defeated in 48 out of the 168 constituencies. These included those represented by five cabinet ministers, five deputy ministers, the Speaker and Deputy Speaker, and 19 UNP MPs. While the voters in these constituencies had clearly rejected the government by their "no" votes, they would continue to be represented by these MPs for the next six years.

The referendum coincided with the completion of an imposing new parliament building costing over a thousand million rupees. A political observer was heard to say that once it had been opened with all due pomp and ceremony, Jayewardene had done away with parliament. Other commentators noted that it was just a year since the celebration of 50 years of parliamentary democracy which Queen Elizabeth had attended. She might just as well have been present at its demise.

3. The Year of the Holocaust

The year 1983 was the blackest in the history of the Tamil population in Sri Lanka. It was the year of the July holocaust, an organised massacre, an exercise in the genocide of a people that in scale and ferocity, in sheer barbarism, exceeded anything they had previously endured at the hands of the Sinhalese majority. Accustomed as they were to living in daily fear of their lives, even the Tamils were unprepared for the blind and insensate fury unleashed on them in July 1983. The pogrom will forever remain a scar on the face of civilisation that can never be effaced, an affront to the conscience of the whole civilised world. Tamils all over the globe are pledged to ensure that it will never be forgotten.

In the build-up to the July massacres, there had been a progressive escalation in blatant state terrorism. In March the widely respected Gandhiyam Society had come under attack. The society had been founded in 1976 by Mr S.A. David, a man from humble village origins who had risen to become an architect and town planner. He had left his post under the Sri Lankan government after the 1958 act established Sinhalese as the only official language of the country, and worked in Australia, the United Kingdom, Nigeria and Kenya. He had returned to Sri Lanka in 1972 determined to devote the rest of his life to the sufferings of his fellow Tamils. Together with a medical practitioner, Dr S. Rajasundaram of Vavuniya, later to be martyred in the July massacres, he had, in five years, built up a network of centres throughout the traditional homelands of the Tamils. There were no roads, little water and no health facilities when they began their project but with the devoted technical help of a dedicated band of volunteers from many countries, they cleared jungle, dug wells and built roads. The soil proved fertile and large crops of manioc and cow-pea, chillis and groundnuts were raised. Twelve model one-acre farms on Vavuniya, Trincomalee and Batticaloa showed the villagers the

simplest, safest, and quickest way to economic, social and cultural revival. David had chosen the model adopted by Gandhi as that most suited to the genius and traditions of the soul of his people, hence the name Gandhiyam. During the last few years, Gandhiyam's main activity had been to provide a place of refuge and rehabilitation for those thousands of Tamils who had fled from the plantations in 1977 after attacks by Sinhala racist mobs. Over the years it had succeeded in resettling more than 85,000 people for whom the government had provided no relief. Mobile health clinics were established, teachers trained and schools built and settled communities established. Gandhiyam had received no government grants for this vast undertaking and relied solely on contributions from Tamils settled overseas and from international organisations which included OXFAM, the World Council of Churches, NOVIB in Holland and Bread for the World in Germany.

All this was viewed with paranoid suspicion by the Sinhalese army of occupation dominating the Tamil homelands. The dedicated young Gandhiyam volunteers were suspected by the army of being members of the Liberation Tigers disguised as social workers. David Selbourne, visiting the area in 1982 found evidence of mounting paranoia. "Every striped shadow is now a tiger" he wrote. "They are supposed to be running farms", Brigadier Ranatunge said to me with asperity, holding up Gandhiyam brochures between thumb and forefinger, 'but they are terrorist centres.'" From time to time the army invaded the settlements in strength, driving their armoured cars across the new crops to harrass the settlers, search for Tigers and beat up suspects. Torture was used on suspects undergoing interrogation. One former plantation worker told David Selbourne how he had been tied, struck in the face with fists and hung upside down from the roof beams, face bleeding, for hours. "He crosses his thin arms on his chest to show how they tied him; but if this is a crucifixion there will be a resurrection here also."

Finally the government struck. At 9.0 am on March 14 1983, officials, acting on the instructions of the Assistant Government Agent of the area, moved into the Pankulam settlement near Trincomalee; huts were burnt down, farm buildings destroyed and crops set on fire. Tractors and trucks donated by NOVIB were destroyed. On April 6 a joint police and army operation raided the head office of Gandhiyam at Vavuniya, seizing documents, files and books. The offices were sealed. Volunteer staff were questioned about the activities of Gandhiyam, accused of lying and beaten up. Dr Rajasunderam, the 46 year old organising secretary of the society, as well as three visiting German students were arrested and taken away. All efforts by his wife to find out where Dr Rajasunderam had been taken proved abortive. Only

much later, through the efforts of the Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition, was she told that the doctor was at the infamous Gurunagar army camp. He was refused access to a lawyer.

On April 8 Mr S.A. David, president and founder of Gandhiam, was arrested. He too was taken to the Gurunagar camp. There he and Dr Rajasunderam experienced the same regime of brutality and torture with which Amnesty International had earlier indicted the camp. "Almost every other day and whenever he was in the mood" David later recalled, "Commander Udugampola would come drunk, with a glass of arrac in his hand, and opened the cells, stripped the detainees and assaulted and kicked and cursed them. I could hear cries of pain and groans throughout the nights and early mornings and see naked colleagues hanging head down from high window bars." (*Tamil Times*, November 1983). He himself experienced Udugampola's sadism on one occasion when he was forced to lie down while guards trampled on his naked body.

David's treatment was mild, he said, compared to what was meted out to the other detainees. Dr Rajasundaram was severely beaten, his left hand dislocated, his ear drums broken. On several occasions he was left unconscious on the floor after beatings. Worse than the physical torments to men of the calibre of David and Rajasundaram were the sadistic mental cruelties they had to endure. One day the doctor was ordered to walk on all fours and bark like a dog. Parties of school cadets were regularly brought in to watch their degradation and jeer as the detainees were ordered to run and remove their food placed on the floor in front of them. "The army is taking care to raise a new generation of Tamil-haters" David wrote later.

The other detainees were subjected to equally sadistic and brutal treatment. Their "crimes" included carrying posters, attending classes on Marxist philosophy, having books on Eelam in their possession and so on. The detainees included the 75-year old President of the Tamil Eelam Liberation Front, Dr S.A. Dharmalingam, who, after the savage massacres of Tamils at Trincomalee by Navy Personnel, had called for a United Nations peacekeeping force in the Tamil areas, and Kovai Mahesan, editor of *Suthanthiran* who had openly advocated Eelam over the past decade. All were classed as terrorists and tortured, irrespective of age or status. David and Rajasundaram eventually ended up at the ill-famed Welikade high security prison, where Dr Rajasundaram was to meet a horrible death in the July massacres. David miraculously escaped and lived to tell the whole tragic story of Dr Rajasundaram's incarceration and eventual murder. The horrendous details were published in full in the *Tamil Times* (London) of November 1983.

In the Tamil areas meanwhile, the reign of terror continued unabated. In April a three-day peace march calling for the repeal of the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act was attacked by police with tear gas. The city of Jaffna responded with a hartal, with shops and cinemas closed. On April 7 young men and girls distributing leaflets calling for a hartal in protest against the arrest of Dr Rajasundaram were seized and incarcerated. While in custody they were subjected to beatings and torture.

All over the country anti-Tamil feeling was being whipped up by posters and inflammatory articles in the state-owned Sinhalese newspapers. The ideal of a Sinhala-Buddhist state in which the Tamil people had no place was being propagated by a fanatical Buddhist priesthood that had long since renounced the Buddhist ideals of non-violence and brotherly love and replaced them by a gospel of racial hatred towards the Tamils and a false doctrine of the Sinhalese as a superior and glorious people. It was a gospel that had much in common with the Nazi propaganda of the Third Reich and the ultimate fate of the Tamils was to be very much akin to that of the Jews in Hitler's Germany. The priesthood had over the years achieved an even greater dominance over the government and the ruling party with whom they shared the common objective of the subjugation and if necessary, annihilation of the Tamil population on the island.

On the night of May 11-12 Tamil students at the University of Peradeniya experienced a night of terror when they were attacked by mobs of Sinhala undergraduates who broke down their doors and dragged them out of their hostel rooms. Attacking them with clubs and iron bars, they ordered them to leave the campus by 6.0 a.m. Their lecture notes were destroyed, a greater calamity perhaps to the students than the physical attacks. Organised "search parties" roamed the university searching for "subversive literature", abortive, as it happened, as the Tamils were mainly medical and engineering students who had not involved themselves in politics and who had kept a low profile at the university. They were obliged to flee the campus before taking their final examinations. No action was taken against the Sinhalese students by the university authorities.

The political repression meanwhile continued unabated. The presses of the English-language *Saturday review* and the Tamil-language paper *Suthanthiran* were closed down by the police and their editors arrested. As we have seen, Kovai Mahesan, 46-year-old editor of *Suthanthiran* ended up with David and Rajasunderam in the notorious Gurunagar camp where he was subjected to the same regime of torture and brutality as the other detainees. The closure of these two papers was a grievous loss to the Tamil cause. The *Saturday*

Review had begun publication only a year before and had already established a high reputation for fearless reporting, notwithstanding constant threats to its continued existence and close surveillance of its contributors. In a recent editorial the editor had stated, "The axe might fall on us at any time" but had reiterated the steadfast determination of himself and his staff to continue to raise their voices against tyranny and oppression. With the demise of these two papers there was only the Sinhala press to inform the public, most of it state-owned, papers described by the *Tamil Times* of February 1983 as "servile instruments in the hands of government". It was, in fact, becoming hazardous for anyone to speak out against the forces of repression. Soon after, the Vatican's representative on the island for five years, Monsignor Nicola Rotunno was expelled, his alleged offence that he had been in touch with priests accused of collaborating with Tamil terrorists.

On May 18, for the second time in two years, the city of Jaffna went up in flames. After a shoot-out between guerillas and army personnel in which a corporal was killed, the army descended in force on the city, arriving by helicopter, truck and jeep. Six hundred troops armed with petrol bombs and torches surrounded one of the most densely populated areas of the city. Using their trucks to break down the gates, they looted the houses of their contents before setting them on fire. Men, women and children ran for their lives, taking refuge in temples, churches and in the precincts of the university. Another group attacked the shopping area, burning down the vegetable market as well as numerous shops and petrol stations. Passing vehicles were halted and set ablaze. Innocent passers-by were attacked. When eventually the last vehicles rumbled out of the city there was only rubble and devastation left behind. Close on a thousand people had been rendered destitute overnight.

Throughout June, sporadic outbreaks of anti-Tamil violence continued all over the island. On June 1, following a shoot-out between Tigers and Air Force personnel when two of the latter were killed, Vavuniya town was set ablaze. Within minutes of the incident, servicemen arrived at the scene and began indiscriminately assaulting bystanders and passers-by. Shop-keepers hurriedly put up their shutters and school children were sent home. Soon the market area of the town was ablaze and the billowing clouds of smoke were visible two miles away. Vavuniya was left "like a blitzed town" with streets empty apart from armed patrols. Trains and buses had stopped running and the people dared not venture out of their homes because of the risk of being beaten up by servicemen.

In the eastern Tamil city of Trincomalee, attacks began in early

June and continued for several days. On June 4 the Mansion House was burnt down. Bombs were thrown at the house of the city's M.P. Mr R. Sampanthan and he narrowly escaped with his life. All these acts of violence had occurred during curfew hours which raised the well ventilated suspicion in Tamil circles that they had been perpetrated either by the security forces themselves or by thugs acting in connivance with them. The London *Tamil Times* forthrightly declared, "The pattern of violence reveals that there are forces at work which have connections with at least certain sections of the government". Hand bombs were thrown at the residence of Mr Kumar Ponnampalam, President of the All Ceylon Tamil Congress. He had recently withdrawn his party's candidates from local elections in response to a call for a boycott by the Liberation Tigers and had further described the Tigers as "freedom fighters" instead of giving them the customary "terrorist" label. After the attack Mr Ponnampalam said that the bombs had been aimed directly at his bedroom, so the intention must have been to kill rather than merely frighten. And so events moved inexorably towards the holocaust of July 1983.

The July terror was claimed by the government to have been a spontaneous reaction to the ambush and shoot-out between Tigers and a convoy of army lorries that had occurred a few days previously. The action by the Liberation Tigers had been in retaliation for crimes against the Tamil people which had gone unpunished, the shooting of six innocent schoolboys waiting at a bus stop by army personnel and the recent abduction and subsequent multiple rape of three young Tamil girls, one of whom had later committed suicide. These crimes had gone uncondemned and unpunished.

But retrospective examination of the events immediately prior to the massacre suggested that far from being a spontaneous outbreak, it was the culmination of premeditated, orchestrated and well-organised plans and that the guerilla incident was merely a convenient peg on which to hang an orgy of violence that was to strike the final blow the the Tamil nation, a blow from which it could never recover. To many experienced commentators, the July pogrom was a sinister portent of the Sri Lankan government's ultimate intentions towards the Tamil nation, intentions that were nothing less than the systematic genocide of an entire people—the "final solution" in fact, of the Tamil problem.

There were two indications in the days immediately prior to the pogrom which lent support to this view. The first was that on July 19, only five days before the outbreak of the violence and *before* the guerilla incident claimed to have been its cause, President Jayewardene had issued an emergency order imposing censorship of the press and

restricting the movements of journalists around the island. Thus a blanket of silence over the events that were to follow was ensured.

Secondly, earlier in July, when the situation was comparatively quiet, Jayewardene had promulgated the sinister Public Security Act regulation permitting the security forces to immediately bury or cremate dead bodies *without post mortem examination, inquest, or judicial enquiry of any kind*. David Selbourne, himself expelled in late June, writing of the measure in the *Guardian* of July 7, reported: "President Jayewardene has announced that it 'ensures that security personnel... will in no way be harrassed by the law in the event of being compelled to use their fire power'". The president had long shown his contempt for the law by his policy of blatant intimidation of impartial judges and open use of his power to overrule their decisions in upholding human rights. Two impartial judges were currently "under investigation" by parliament for their defence of these rights. Recent inquest verdicts had proved embarrassing to the government. A case that had given particular concern to Amnesty International earlier that year and which was mentioned in their July report, was that of a young farmer, K. Navaratnarajah, who, on March 27, had been arrested without charge under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and died in army custody on April 10. The army had given bronchial asthma as the cause of death, but medical reports submitted at the inquest had listed 23 external and 10 internal injuries to the body. Now there were to be no more of these embarrassing inquests.

This notorious edict, without precedent in any country in the world, was widely interpreted by civil rights lawyers as nothing less than a licence to kill. As we have seen, a similar provision, in force for five days only in the violence of 1979, resulted in the deaths of six young Tamils in police custody. The mutilated bodies of two were found later and another victim died in hospital from multiple injuries but the other three prisoners had simply "disappeared" without trace and their bodies have never been found. In retrospect the edict was more than a licence to kill—it was an *invitation* to do so. Its barbaric provisions contained an unmistakable message to the security forces—that from henceforth they could, with impunity, dispose of the lives of whomsoever they pleased and would be accountable to no one for the lives they took. Power of life and death was gratuitously handed over to the violently anti-Tamil armed forces whose past record alone should have given pause to anyone not blinded by racial hatred.

With hindsight, these two measures, the imposition of press censorship and the regulation for the disposal of bodies, brought into force in a comparatively quiet period, were viewed by many commentators as having been *specifically designed* to accommodate the

events that were planned to follow at the end of July. But at the time, the Tamil people were totally unprepared for the devastation that was to strike them on the 25th of July 1983.

The terror erupted suddenly in the morning of July 25, its immediate cause ostensibly the Tiger ambush. Subsequent reports however revealed pre-planning that must have preceded the carnage by weeks if not months. It began in the north, in the traditional Tamil homeland, where the army went on the rampage with an orgy of rioting, looting, arson and murder. Tamils were arbitrarily shot while waiting at bus stops; they were dragged out of buses, or pursued into their homes and killed. One army unit stopped a bus and shot dead all 12 of its passengers. In Colombo and other towns in the south where the Tamils lived in scattered enclaves among the Sinhalese, organised parties of thugs hunted down Tamils on the streets, in their homes, on buses. In a series of atrocities well documented by western journalists on the scene, hundreds of men, women and children were ruthlessly clubbed or hacked to death or doused with petrol and burnt alive and their homes destroyed in a reign of terror unparalleled in the history of any civilised country in recent times. Hundreds of Tamil homes went up in a hideous conflagration, in many cases with the inhabitants trapped inside. Truck loads of troops passing through were seen actively encouraging the mobs. Fire brigades arriving on the scene were turned away by army personnel and the attackers. Eyewitness accounts and the testimony of returning tourists caught up in the conflagration described how Tamil motorists were dragged out of their cars and hacked to pieces, or drenched with petrol and set alight, atrocities carried out in full view of the security forces, who made no attempt to intervene and in many cases were seen to be actively assisting at the carnage. After the first day of the violence corpses and burnt out vehicles littered the streets. Colombo and other towns rapidly assumed the appearance of war-ravaged cities as smoke and flames ascended into the sky. But the violence continued unabated.

Foreign correspondents on the scene reported to their papers in the west atrocities they personally knew of. Ian Ward reported to the *Daily Telegraph* in London:

“A Sri Lankan friend told me by telephone last night how he had watched horrified as a mob attacked a Tamil cyclist riding near Colombo’s eye hospital, a few hundred yards from the home of President Junius Jayawardene, 76. The cyclist was hauled from his bike, drenched with petrol and set alight. As he ran screaming down the street the mob set on him again and hacked him down with jungle knives.” (*Daily Telegraph* July 26 1983.)

David Beresford reported to the *Guardian* an interview obtained

through an interpreter with one of the survivors. Mrs Ganesan said that at 10 a.m. on the morning of July 27 a crowd gathered near her home. Her family telephoned the police but no one came. The mob began to attack the home of a neighbour and started to break down the gate. Mr Ramanathan a camphor dealer who had a shotgun, fired a single round through a window to frighten them off. The army then arrived and took up positions behind the mob which began to attack the gate again. Mr Ramanathan fired again. One of his sons climbed on to the roof and was shot by a soldier from the street. Mrs Ganesan fled to her aunt's house nearby with her children, hiding with them in the bathroom. She heard firing outside and then an explosion. They ran out to find the house on fire. They were running away when they were stopped by a soldier, who led her and her children down a lane at the back of the house to the main road. There were pools of blood in the lane. On the main road in front of Mr Ramanathan's house they saw a pile of bodies, including those of her husband, her brother-in-law and father-in-law and a sister-in-law's husband, Mr Ramanathan and his four sons and one of her aunt's tenants and his *three-year-old little daughter*. They all had gunshot wounds. She and her daughters, aged nine and seven, and a son of five, saw her husband's intestines falling out and his head staved in. Diesel fuel was then poured over lorries and other vehicles parked around the house. A brand was handed to Mrs Ramanathan's daughter, who, with her mother, was being questioned as to whether there were any Tigers in their house. She was made to set on fire the vehicles and her home. The bodies were then thrown onto the flames. Soldiers started to push the women and children towards the fire but they were stopped by a policemen in the crowd who took them away to the safety of a police station.

Tourists who hurriedly flew out of the stricken cities had harrowing tales to tell on their return to their own countries. Mrs Eli Skarstein, a Norwegian who had just returned to Stavanger told reporters: "A mini-bus full of Tamils was forced to stop just in front of us in Colombo. A Sinhalese mob poured petrol over the bus and set it on fire. They blocked the car doors and prevented the Tamils from leaving the vehicle. Hundreds of spectators witnessed that about 20 Tamils were burnt to death".

A Tamil family arrived back in England after having narrowly escaped death while on holiday in Colombo. They were staying with an aunt when a group of about 50 Sinhalese, their leader carrying a flaming torch, broke down the door with iron bars. "They were armed with bricks, axes, knives, bottles and bars" said the father of the family who asked for his name to be withheld for fear of

reprisals against Tamil relatives living in Sri Lanka. They had seen the mob coming down the street and had armed themselves with iron bars. They were able to hold the attackers back and force them out after a battle lasting 20 minutes. "There was blood everywhere" the father told reporters. "Before they left they set fire to the bottom of the stairs and burned our lorry parked nearby. For four hours we waited for help. The police were standing outside, just watching. It appeared to us that the men had been dropped in our street by lorry. The leader was reading addresses from a piece of paper he was carrying".

His observation on the lists carried by the leaders of the mob were confirmed by many other reports. It had early become apparent that the attackers were showing a surprising selectivity in the buildings they attacked. Tamil houses would be burnt to the ground while those of Sinhalese on either side were left untouched. In the business and industrial areas Tamil-owned premises were precisely targeted and set on fire. It became evident that the lists carried by the mob leaders obviously carried information about the ethnic ownership of the properties, that the lists of Tamil houses must have come from the rating registers held by the local authorities while the lists of industrial premises, shops and businesses could only have come from the Ministry of Industries itself. These lists must have been prepared and made available some time before and held in readiness for the signal for action. In fact, a large element of pre-planning and orchestration *at government level* was emerging. The mobs were transported in state-owned buses and trucks. Many individuals among them were identified as those previously used by the ruling United National Party to break up the election meetings of opponents. The suspicions raised in former pogroms were amply confirmed by the evidence now emerging, and impartial western journalists now voiced these suspicions to the world.

Perhaps the most revolting of all the atrocities committed during the reign of terror was the slaughter in their prison cells in the high security prison of Welikade of 35 defenceless Tamil detainees allegedly by their Sinhalese fellow-prisoners on July 25. That they were actually murdered with the active participation of prison officers was confirmed by Mark Tully of the BBC.

According to other Tamil prisoners who survived, a crowd of over four hundred, including Sinhalese prisoners, jailers, and other unidentified men in civilian dress, broke into the section where the Tamil prisoners were held. The jailers unlocked the cell doors and the Tamils were attacked with knives, crowbars, axes and iron bars with sharp points. Most of the prisoners were hacked or clubbed to

death. Those killed were nearly all political detainees, imprisoned under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Among them was Sellarasa "Kutimani" Yogachandiran, leader of the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation and a political writer, and Ganeshanathan Jeganathan, both under sentence of death. In speeches from the dock at their trial the two men announced that they would donate their eyes in the hope that they would be grafted on to Tamils who would see the birth of Eelam. They were now jeeringly reminded of the vow by their attackers, then forced to kneel and their eyes were gouged out with iron bars before they were killed. One report from a surviving prisoner adds that Kutamini's tongue was cut out by one of the attackers who drank the blood and cried, "I have drunk the blood of a Tiger". S.A. David, on his escape from prison, added further horrific details. A boy of 16, Mylvaganam, who had been spared by the attackers, was crouching in terror in his cell. A jail guard spotted him and stabbed him to death. Then the 35 dead were heaped in front of the statue of Gautama Buddha in the prison yard like a "sacrifice to appease the blood-thirsty cravings of the Sinhala demons." Some who were still alive, added David, "raised their heads and called for help, but were beaten down to death in the heap."

The official explanation for these hideous crimes—that the Tamils had been killed by Sinhalese prisoners, was received with open scepticism not only in Tamil circles, but in the world's media. The likelihood of these prisoners being able to break out of high security cells and attack the Tamils without the connivance of the authorities was plainly not credible. The London *Tamil Times* forthrightly declared, "Based on very reliable authority, we assert that they were murdered in their cells by military personnel in civilian dress with the help of prison officers". The extreme convenience to the government of the elimination at one stroke of so many important Tamil activists was noted. By their murder the government was spared the embarrassment of bringing them to trial without any evidence to support a prosecution. In addition, no attempt appeared to have been made to punish the perpetrators or even to hold an investigation. But not all the political detainees had been disposed of. Two days later the attacks were repeated.

The targets this time were the catholic priests, the Gandiyam leaders, Kovai Mahesan the editor of *Suthanthiran*, the aged Dr Dharmalingam and the university lecturer Mr Nithiananthan. They had been herded with three others into one compound. Martyred in this attack was the dedicated Dr Rajasundaram who had committed no crime but who had devoted his life to the alleviation of the sufferings of others. A.S. David, who survived, wrote the whole tragic story

of Dr Rajasundaram's last moments in the *Tamil Times* of November 1983.

At 2.30 on July 27, David and his party heard shouting outside and armed prisoners were seen scaling the walls and breaking down the gates to the compound.

Nearly 40 prisoners armed with axes, swords, crowbars, iron pipes and wooden legs appeared before our door and started to break the lock. Dr Rajasundaram walked up to the door and pleaded with them to spare us as we were not involved in any robberies or murders and as Hindus we did not believe in violence and as Buddhists they should not kill. The door suddenly opened and Dr Rajasundaram was dragged out and hit with an iron rod on the head. He fell among the crowd.

The rest of the detainees broke up tables and chairs, and using them as weapons fought desperately for their lives. Though greatly outnumbered, they succeeded in keeping the mob at bay until, after about half an hour, the army belatedly arrived and dispersed the mob with tear gas. The detainees were lined up against a wall and soldiers took aim to shoot them when they were stopped by the commander who ordered them to be brought down to the yard outside, now littered with the corpses of their fellow prisoners. They had escaped the same fate by a miracle.

The party were evacuated the same day to Batticaloa high security prison in the east. Batticaloa has a 70 per cent Tamil population and the detainees were kindly received in the prison. Though behind bars, they were well treated—"there was human dignity" David later wrote. But they learnt that a maximum security prison was being built with feverish haste at Homagama in the Sinhala area. With their nightmarish experience of the past they could well imagine what hell it would be there for the rest of their lives. They resolved to break jail "even in the face of death". After meticulous coordinated planning from within and without, they were finally freed on September 27 by a group of freedom fighters disguised as soldiers who overwhelmed the guards and tied them up. This daring coup was the joint undertaking of all five groups of freedom fighters. Particular mention must be given to the EPRLF for their meticulous organisation and planning which contributed so much to the success of the venture. In the *Tamil Times* of November 1983 David paid tribute to their rescuers.

The ingenuity and the expertise with which they organised and executed my escape is a thrilling episode in the history of the Tamils and I hope some day to relate it in detail so that future

generations of Tamils may know that, even in the darkest hour, there was courage and bravery among the Tamils reaching down to humble homes in villages and jungles.

Sadly Father Singarayar elected to remain behind among the other prisoners. Kovai Mahesan also was forced by ill-health to do so. It is good to be able to report that he was eventually released from prison. Of those who did make the break, Mr David said, "We have dedicated ourselves, if necessary at the cost of our lives, to free the Tamils from the strangle-hold of the Sinhala demons." David voiced his apprehensions for the future and the massive military preparations backed by financial, material and technical skill from other countries which he feared would be directed to the genocide of his people. "I cry out to the conscience of men of goodwill around the world," he said, "particularly to the Tamils spread around the globe, to do their utmost to prevent this holocaust and save the Tamils from the clutches of the Sinhala racists. For myself, I dedicate my body and soul, every breath of my existence, to this cause."

The wanton murder of Dr Rajasundaram, who had given his life to the service of the voiceless and oppressed plantation workers driven from the estates by Sinhalese mobs, shocked the entire world. Tributes to his selfless, dedicated work flowed in from all parts of the globe. His memory will be kept alive. Already a campaign has been mounted for his nomination for the next Nobel Peace Prize. No one could have been more deserving of the honour.

In the confusion of the Batticaloa Prison break-out, Mrs Nirmala Nithiyandan had been inadvertently left behind in her cell. Nine months later, the hazards were now much greater, as security precautions had been intensified after the previous break-out, but in a daring coup, the Tigers succeeded in gaining access to her cell and in getting her out of the prison. Though an intensive sea and air search by the Sri Lankan security forces was immediately launched, Mrs Nithiyandan reached Madras safely, where she was at last reunited with her husband. She had been imprisoned for nearly two years.

Meanwhile, in Colombo and the south, the holocaust raged unabated. From the first the Sri Lankan government made no attempt to halt the carnage. No appeal for law and order was heard from them. The officially promulgated attitude was that the riots were a spontaneous and expected reaction to the Tiger incident. After 48 hours of unremitting violence, the only editorial in the leading Sinhala newspaper was on "Saving our Forest Cover".

On July 28, at the height of the carnage, President Jayewardene appeared for the first time in public and made an inflammatory speech,

declaring that the events were “the expected reaction of the Sinhalese” to the guerrilla incident. Thus he effectively branded his own people, adherents to the Buddhist faith with its tenets of non-violence and brotherly love, as a barbarous race, to whom the burning alive of men, women and children was normal and acceptable practice. The president’s speech was the catalyst for still further atrocities. The next day alone, an estimated 100 or more murders took place. And so, for six bloody nights and days the slaughter continued.

In this dismal catalogue of man’s inhumanity to man, nothing can give a greater idea of the depth of barbarism and cruelty plumbed by the Sinhalese racists in those terrible days in July than the story of a young Tamil survivor of the carnage, who wrote down his experiences as they occurred in a diary which was eventually smuggled out of the refugee camp where he had found shelter, from whence it eventually reached London. The writer was forced to withhold his name—“otherwise the Sri Lanka government would murder me and my family” he wrote. We will for convenience call him Nathan. “I am starting this diary” he said, “in the fervent hope that some day I or somebody else will be able to get it across to the outside world—the civilised world—so that they will know the atrocities committed by people who call themselves Sinhala Buddhists”.

Early on Monday July 25, Nathan left for his work from his house in Maharagama. As he reached the bus stop on the main road, he saw scores of people gathered in the middle of the road. Wayside shops were burning. Two people were being assaulted by a group of men. He did not then realise that he was witnessing the first indications of the holocaust that was to come, and asked a bystander what was happening. The answer was chilling. “They have killed thirteen of our people in Jaffna. We must avenge their deaths. We must kill all the Tamils. That is what we are doing.” Fearing the consequences if it were known that he was a Tamil, Nathan hurried away. He decided to continue his journey to work. With difficulty he managed to board a bus which was travelling very slowly as the road was crowded with people. Shops were burning on both sides of the road. People were screaming. The bus came to a standstill at Nugegoda Junction where thugs armed with knives and axes were stopping passing vehicles demanding to know if there were any Tamils in them. “I peeped out of the window and I saw one thug raising an axe to fell a helpless young boy” said Nathan “I shuddered and looked the other way. I prayed to God that nothing should happen to him.” On the other side of the road two cars were being smashed. “There was what looked like a Toyota Hi-all van just catching fire. Suddenly I heard blood-curdling screams. I realised to my horror that there were people inside

the van. Unable to look at this gruesome sight I helplessly turned my head away." A little later a group of thugs came towards his bus.

One of them asked the conductor whether there were any Tamils in the bus. The conductor gleefully pointed out a Tamil lady who was seated in front of me. Seeing the men come towards her, she panicked and hurriedly erased the Kumkum on her forehead. (Kumkum is a sort of red powder sacredly anointed on the upper forehead by married Tamil females.) One hefty bearded thug stabbed her in the stomach with a broken bottle. She started screaming and there was chaos in the bus. All the people started getting out of the bus. I hurriedly glanced back before getting down. They were pushing the lady out of the bus through the small window. I got down and mingled with the wayside Sinhalese crowd who were enjoying the fun. The lady was covered all over with blood. One of the men poured petrol over her and set fire to her. The other men were clapping and dancing. I could not believe my eyes. I was shivering all over. In all my life I had only seen funeral pyres—not humans being burnt alive. There was a procession of Buddhist monks walking towards the junction from the other end. They were waving and shouting. One of them called out to the thugs to kill all the Tamils and not let a single one escape.

Nathan decided he had better return home as quickly as possible, walking the four miles as it was unsafe to travel by bus. On the way he saw people looting goods from the roadside Tamil shops. After they were completely ransacked they were set on fire. He sighted an army jeep at a distance. "With a sigh of relief I hurried my steps. But a shock awaited me. There were about six soldiers on top of the jeep and they were directing the mob to loot and plunder. I stared in dismay. Surely they were there to maintain law and order!" Nothing had so far happened at Maharagama. Nathan went into his house and started praying. After a while he went into the back garden and dug three trenches in which he buried most of the valuables in the house. At 11.30 a.m. he heard a loud commotion outside. Going to the window he saw several government jeeps and buses belonging to the Ceylon Transport Board come speeding down the road. Brakes screeching, they halted suddenly and about 200 men with knives and swords in their hands emerged and ran towards the houses.

About ten people who appeared to be the leaders had sheets of paper in their hands. (I later came to know that they were electoral register lists). They were directing the mob to the Tamil houses.

Two of the men were very familiar. I had seen them speak at an election meeting of the ruling government party (United National Party) recently. There were three Tamil houses opposite mine. The men smashed the windows and threw petrol bombs inside. With a blaze the houses caught fire and the flames rose to the sky. People were screaming. The fire was so intense it compelled the mob to move further away.

He closed the window and lit a candle to St Anthony to protect all Tamils. He could not pray with concentration as he could hear screams in the distance.

I was still praying when I heard noises outside. I opened the window slightly and looked out. Some men were dragging two girls by their long hair. I recognised them as two sisters living further away. The elder Tamil girl was eighteen years old and the younger one eleven years. They were brought just near my house. The mob gathered around them and started conferring. Apparently they were discussing what to do with the girls. Then one man pulled the younger girl by the hand and started chopping her with a knife. I stared in horror. The elder girl was speechless and looked as if she had been turned into a statue. Then suddenly she fell on her knees and begged them not to harm her little sister, amidst the insane derisive laughter from the men. Then, one of the men took an axe and chopped the head off the younger girl. The elder girl looked dumbfounded. The mixed feelings of incalculable fear and horror, which she had just experienced when her little sister was killed brutally were replaced by a vague sense of helpless impassivity. She did not protest when the men stripped her of her clothes violently. She was impervious not only to the pain inflicted on her, but also, in her innocent ignorance, felt no shame at the irreparable humiliation forced on her. It was only after about twenty men had raped her that one of the men cautioned the others and shook her up roughly. She began to scream and struggle and looked all round her and realized for the first time that she was bleeding. I made an effort and continued to be a helpless onlooker. She suddenly clenched her fists and then with a sudden look of helpless surrender on her face she looked up at the sky and began to mutter under her breath. I could almost imagine her saying 'Oh Lord, forgive them for they do not know what they do.' She let off a sigh and swooned into unconsciousness. The men then poured petrol over her and burnt her. This was the second time in a day that I had seen a person being burnt alive. I wondered whether we had gone back

in time to the middle ages. But I am sure the pre-historic men—the savages—were much more civilised than the present day Sinhala Buddhists.

By 3.15 in the afternoon, though a curfew was in force, the entire area was “like a carnival ground” with people carrying away looted goods that ranged from clothing to furniture. An army truck went by but the looters made no attempt to run. “Apparently they were well informed that the security forces would do nothing to stop them” Nathan believed.

Surprisingly his house had not yet been attacked, probably because he had not yet registered himself on the Maharagama electoral roll. But somebody was sure to warn the mob, he felt. Luckily his family were away in Jaffna to attend a relative’s wedding and he was alone in the house. At 7.00 p.m. he heard a knock at his front door. Terrified, he felt it was death knocking on the door. Summoning all his courage he opened the front door slightly. To his relief it was his Catholic Sinhala neighbour who cautioned him to silence. He told him the situation outside was dangerous and that he should get away to a refugee camp. Nathan hastily packed a bag with a few clothes, a water bottle and foodstuffs. He also put in paper and pens. With the help of his neighbour he reached a police jeep parked nearby which already held six other Tamils from the area. On the way to the refugee camp they could see houses burning. They passed the massive Hirdaramani garment factory ablaze. He could hear screaming and shouting, but “this was a common occurrence now”. The others in the jeep sat silent with stark fear on their faces. He thought of Nazi Germany. “I could remember seeing a war film in which Jews were suffocated by gas in vehicles which were supposed to take them to the safety of the refugee camps”, he wrote.

The makeshift refugee camp was at the Ratmalana airport. Over five thousand people were already crowded into a hanger, though the camp had only opened that day. Exhausted, he drank some water and went to sleep. When he awoke it was morning and most of the other people were awake. Children were crying with hunger. Nathan went to a group of crying children and gave them the food he had brought with him.

He walked round the camp. He found there were only three toilets and one water tap for all the refugees, who were pouring in at the rate of about 250 an hour. “There were men without wives, children without their parents, wives looking for their husbands and mothers for their children. They were all waiting in stark mute fear. There were young women yet in their nakedness after they had been stripped

on the streets. They had escaped death but not degradation.”

By midday there was no food and there was a mile-long queue for the solitary water tap. By the afternoon there were about 8,000 refugees in the camp and still no food. Later Dr Ariyaratne, the Sarvodaya leader arrived bringing milk for the babies and two volunteers to help.

By Wednesday no food had yet been provided and most of the refugees had not eaten since Monday. Nathan met two friends wandering about the camp. They decided to form a voluntary group to organise the camp welfare. They found 30 volunteers, mostly in their own age group, 18-25, and named themselves the Refugee Action Committee. They managed to find some final year medical students and set up a medical station; many refugees had been burnt or stabbed and one had already succumbed. Pits were dug as the three toilets were insufficient. They made a rough count of the refugees. There were 12,000 in the camp. Fifteen soldiers and four policemen comprised the guard.

That afternoon CARE biscuits from an American relief agency arrived and were gratefully devoured. “On behalf of the refugees” wrote Nathan, “we would like to thank the people of America.” At 4.45 p.m. food parcels arrived. There were only three thousand so they were distributed to the women, children and old men. Later that afternoon a diversion was caused by a journalist who had slipped into the camp and was roughly ejected by the soldiers. That night the soldiers began to search the refugees, smashing two cameras they found. “Clearly the government didn’t want the outside world to know what was happening inside the camp” said Nathan.

Later that night when most of the refugees were sleeping, the volunteers were still awake. Suddenly they heard shouting, and could see fire brands in the distance. Running outside, they saw hordes of men carrying weapons and fire brands advancing along the runway. The camp was being attacked. The volunteers woke all the refugees. The soldiers on guard opened fire on the mob and a few were hit. After some time they managed to drive the mob off but there was no more sleep for anyone that night.

The next morning, Nathan met a young girl of 13 crying bitterly. “She had come to the camp the previous day. On Monday morning, people had come in government 504 Peugeot cars and buses to their house in Dehiwela. She was inside with her father and eldest brother. Her mother was in Germany and the second eldest brother had gone to school. The mob had come to the gate and forcibly opened it. Since they came suddenly, they had no

chance of escape. The father fell down and the mob caught him and poured petrol over him. He managed to escape into the house and brought out his shotgun. He began to shoot at the legs. But the men overpowered him and set fire to him. They had also caught her brother and set fire to him. Then they had cheered and made victory signs while they were screaming in pain. She was watching through the bathroom window. The mob had then invited the neighbours to loot and all the neighbours had come and taken all their things. She had managed to escape to the Dehiwela Police Station. She knew the Inspector since he was a family friend. The Inspector had told her that they could not take any action without government orders. She had then gone to a friend's place and from there was brought to the camp on Wednesday. I put her in the hands of one volunteer's family to console her and see to her needs.

From other refugees, Nathan learnt that hordes of white-uniformed schoolboys from Ananda College, a leading Sinhala Buddhist school had surrounded Tamil houses in Borella, smashing them with stones and sticks and assaulting their occupants. Then Buddhist monks from the temple in Maradana arrived carrying firebrands and set fire to the houses. Other refugees told him that two professors, one from the University of Moratuwa and the other from the University of Kelaniya had been seen in one of the mobs. Army men and Buddhist monks had also been clearly recognised. A refugee from the housing scheme in Delhande testified that government officials had come in government buses armed with weapons, with the familiar lists in their hands. Soldiers, Air Force men and university students had led the mob. He had recognised two Buddhist priests from Pangaramaya Temple.

Thursday was a great day for the camp. SAVE THE CHILDREN had arrived. Mr Wakely of Save the Children (UK) came with food and clothing and began to organise the camp. More volunteers were recruited, drilling rigs were brought and wells and bathing pits dug. The food he brought was more than enough for everyone. The refugees were happy. There was hope in their faces again. Desire to live arose once more. "At last we had some people among us who were genuinely interested in our welfare" Nathan said.

Someone had a radio and they gathered round to hear the news and the presidential address to the nation. "All the refugees who heard the speech were distinctly shocked and startled. He seemed to endorse the actions of the majority Sinhala Buddhists. He said that he would never go against their wishes. Clearly this was a most disturbing

speech. Nobody expected this from him of all people.”

The next day, Friday July 20, Nathan and some of his friends decided to go into the town in the brief hours when curfew was lifted to trace their missing relatives. On the way they saw shops and cars burning. “I saw something burning on the road and realised it was a body.” Something was happening; people were running. Shop windows were being closed. People were shouting, “Tigers are coming. Tigers have come to destroy Colombo”. On the way back to the camp Nathan saw several dead bodies along the Galle Road and cars burning. He reached the camp safely to learn that two boys who had gone out in search of their relatives had been burnt alive just outside the camp not ten minutes before.

That afternoon the radio broadcast appeals to the public to ignore the rumours that the Tigers were coming. A friend who had been to the refugee camp at Thurstan College during the day told him that when the soldiers guarding the camp had heard the rumour that “Tigers were coming” they selected 25 refugees as hostages, to be shot if the Tigers attacked the camp.

Later in the day, five people were brought to the camp by ambulance. They were placed in a room that had earlier been an airport office.

A foreign journalist was interviewing them. He had slipped in with them and was eyeing the door cautiously. The family consisted of father, mother, daughter and two sons. Their legs and spines were broken. The daughter’s hands, too, were broken. They were living in a house in Wellawatte just behind a Tamil cinema. On Monday morning, a mob had come and burnt their house. They had run to the adjoining cinema and run upstairs. The mob had come and set fire to the cinema too, and the family were trapped upstairs with flames all around them. Then, the whole family had taken a suicidal leap from the second floor and landed with their spines, legs and hands broken. They were later admitted to the Kalubowila hospital just two miles away. On Friday afternoon (today) the hospital was attacked by a mob. There were many other Tamil patients there with burns and injuries. Attendants and nurses took off the saline drips, and other life giving apparatus was disconnected in sheer hatred. The mob had come to their ward and a Tamil Inspector who had come to visit them was chopped and killed when he had gone to defend this helpless family. He did not give his life in vain, because the family managed to come to this camp with the assistance of two Norwegian medical students. They had a miraculous escape, for all the other patients in the hospital were killed.

Life was steadily improving at the camp. The refugees were able to bathe in the bathing pits that had been dug, a necessity in such a hot climate. The wells were supplying plenty of drinking water, and they had enough food, largely due to Save the Children. Mr Wakeley was there every day, bringing food and supplies. Dr and Mrs Ariyaratne of the Sarvodaya movement brought milk and Triposha daily. But they had been attacked and threatened because they were helping Tamils and Mrs Ariyaratne hinted that they had been pressurised from all sides. "It was quite obvious that they were helping without the government's blessings" said Nathan. It was largely due to these dedicated people and the organisations behind them that the refugees fared so well. Other camps were not so fortunate. "One friend had gone to the refugee camp at Bambalapitiya Temple" said Nathan, "He told us that they were starving there and that we were better off than them. I wondered where all the foreign relief supplies were directed to. Surely, those kind foreigners did not send them to be stacked in government officials' houses!"

But refugees were still coming in, all with their different horror stories.

I met a lady who was dazed with shock. With great difficulty I managed to make her talk. On Monday morning, her small twin daughters aged 8 years had gone to school as usual. Her husband was in Nigeria. At about 9.00 a.m. she had heard that there was trouble and that schools were closing early. She had hurried with great difficulty to bring her daughters from a convent school in Banbalapitiya. They couldn't get a bus so, with her two daughters, she had walked back home. At Kiralapone, they were stopped by a mob and were asked to recite a Buddhist prayer. Since they were unable to do so as they were Tamil Catholics, they held the lady firmly and made her watch while they tied the two small girls together and threw a firebrand on them. She was made to look on at this gruesome sight. After they were completely burnt, she was set loose and was chased away. I couldn't control myself when I heard her story. These Sinhala Buddhists were worse than animals.

On July 30 an outbreak of gastroenteritis struck the camp. Nathan himself became ill with a high fever. When he recovered, he was told he was to be one of those to be transferred to St Thomas' College, Mt Lavinia. On Friday the 4 of August 1,600 refugees in a fleet of 40 buses were transferred to the college, running a gauntlet of jeering and stone throwing mobs even though the journey was being made in curfew hours. The next day they were served with a sumptuous

breakfast in the college dining room—"food was served on plates for the first time. We were also given forks and spoons. Dishes full of good looking food were laid on the table. Everyone was surprised." Soon the reason became clear. As they started eating, some men began filming them with a video camera. "Now I realised why we were transferred and all the fuss was to film us and show to the outside world that we were looked after very well." They were filmed again during lunch.

That afternoon Nathan received an urgent message. His parents had telegraphed from Jaffna to a Muslim friend to trace him and send him to Jaffna. "I said good-bye to my friends and went off with my friend. Although I hated life at the camp, I felt sad at leaving my friends and other refugees who were all like one family to me." Nathan's diary ends at this point. He concludes with a solemn affirmation: "I have only related incidents which I have personally seen or heard. There are other thousands of horror stories to be told—the murders committed by Sinhala Buddhists. I swear by the Holy Bible that everyting written in this diary is true."

Before he left the camp Nathan handed over the diary to his friend who had connections in the United Kingdom. And so this story of courage and endurance reached the west. If Nathan should ever see this book he will know that his labours were not in vain. (The complete diary is published in Appendix A).

4. The Aftermath

For six bloody days and nights the terror raged. In the entire period, no word of condemnation, no plea for law and order was heard from the government. With its implicit condoning of the violence, President Jayewardene's broadcast on July 28 led, as we have seen, to a renewed escalation of the slaughter. A fresh upsurge occurred on July 29 when the rumour that the Tigers were coming swept through Colombo. The government later discountenanced the rumour but the London based Campaign for the Defence of Tamils later traced its origin to none other than Douglas Liyanage, secretary to the Minister for Information. On July 29 Reuters' representative in Colombo had sent a dispatch to London stating:

Panic swept through Colombo today and thousands of office workers rushed home early after reports that the Sri Lanka capital... had been infiltrated by guerrillas. Government spokesman Douglas Liyanage confirmed to reporters that 12 men suspected of belonging to a guerrilla movement had been arrested and taken to a police station in the centre of the city. There was no confirmation of rumours that the 12 had been sniping at troops from buildings...

Fresh evidence of government involvement was now beginning to emerge. That the carnage was a spontaneous and unplanned reaction to the guerrilla incident was negated by the fact that reports of the ambush had not yet appeared in the newspapers before the violence began. Moreover, when eyewitness reports from all over the island had been correlated, a definite pattern had emerged, one that was identical in widely separated parts of the country. The gangs had been simultaneously mobilised in many places as if at a given signal. They were all equipped with identical white plastic cans with which to siphon petrol from the cars they had stopped, the distribution of which, as

well as that of the iron rods and clubs used for their deadly work must have presented considerable organisational problems. The mobs' transport from place to place was efficiently organised and many witnesses testified that it was in government vehicles and Ceylon Transport Board buses. The precision with which the mobs attacked exclusively Tamil property was impressive. Homes of shopkeepers were attacked at the same time as their shops were burnt down. When shops were rented by Tamils from Sinhalese landlords, the buildings were left untouched but the goods taken out and destroyed. Where Tamil shops stood adjacent to those owned by Sinhalese, the mobs separated the connecting roofs before setting them alight. For many people, however, the incontrovertible evidence of government involvement was the complete unconcern shown by the mobs for retribution by the law in no matter what district they operated and by the fact that they roamed freely in curfew hours, facts pointing to prior assurance of immunity from prosecution. This immunity could only have been granted from the highest level. As commander-in-chief of the armed forces and Minister of Defence, President Jayewardene had direct control over the operations of the army and the appointment of senior officers, and the army was commanded by his own nephew. As we have seen, the president had personally ordered the promotion of a police officer found guilty in the courts of unlawful arrest.

The ruling party, the United National Party were known to have employed mobs of thugs for many years to achieve their political aims, using them to break strikes, to disrupt the election meetings of opponents and to intimidate voters. They were popularly known as "goon squads" and the largest contingent was known to be recruited from the trade union wing of the United National Party, the Jathika Sevaka Sangamaya, a union founded by Jayewardene himself and whose president was none other than the virulently anti-Tamil Industries Minister, Cyril Mathew, nominated to that office by the president himself. Many mob leaders during the violence had been recognised and identified as being connected with the government or actually in the government itself. The *New Statesman* report of August 28 1983 stated:

In Mount Lavinia, a suburb of Colombo, thugs were led by UNP Councillor Tissa Abeysekera. In Jaela and Wattala, Joseph Michael Perera, Deputy Minister of Labour led his thugs. In the Maradana area of Colombo, thugs brought in from up to 100 miles away and loyal to Prime Minister R. Premadasa, to Transport Minister M.H. Mohamed and Industries Minister Cyril Mathew were identified by eyewitnesses.

Other identifications too numerous to list here were made but they add up to a formidable body of evidence of UNP and indeed government involvement.

At the height of the carnage, President Jayewardene chose his television broadcast of July 28 to make the first public announcement of a cabinet decision to introduce the measure that was to effectively silence the voice of the Tamil people in parliament. In a brief address, Jayewardene blamed the violence exclusively on the reaction of the Sinhala people to the Tamil movement for a separate state. The measure he announced, which was eventually to become the sixth amendment to the constitution, provided that even peaceful supporters of separatism could not sit in Parliament. In addition, "those who advocate the separation of the country lose their civic rights and cannot hold office, cannot practice professions, cannot join movements or organisations in this country". Many commentators were later to draw the conclusion that the whole program had been engineered to provide the *raison d'être* for this extreme measure which offended all the canons of free speech and democracy. When it finally passed into law as the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution, the measure specified that:

"No person shall, directly or indirectly, in or outside Sri Lanka, support, espouse, promote, finance, encourage or advocate the establishment of a separate state within the territory of Sri Lanka."

The penalties for its contravention were loss of civic rights, forfeiture of property, loss of passport, the right to sit for any public examination, the right to engage in any trade or profession requiring a licence, registration or other authorisation. If the offender were a member of parliament he forfeited his seat; if a public or judicial officer or servant of a local authority or public corporation, he lost that office.

The Sixth Amendment, as was later pointed out by the International Commission of Jurists, was actually inconsistent with the Sri Lankan constitution itself, which guarantees freedom of thought and conscience and freedom of speech and expression, the very fundamentals of democracy. It was condemned by the Commission as "a clear violation by Sri Lanka of its obligations in international law under the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights". The Tamil United Liberation Front was committed by its party conference resolution of 1976 to the establishment of an independent Tamil state; the consequence of the sixth amendment was, as it was intended to be, that the TULF MPs forfeited their seats in Parliament. As the

International Commission of Jurists pointed out, the end result of the sixth amendment was the increase in the parliamentary representation of the United National Party from 83 to 93 per cent and it was regarded by opponents as "a piece of political chicanery designed to move Sri Lanka even further towards a one-party state". The amendment was rushed through Parliament in a one-day sitting at the height of the violence, under emergency conditions and during curfew hours, at a time when the Tamil United Liberation Front MPs were prevented by the rioting from travelling from Jaffna.

On July 30 the riots spread to the tea plantations in the central highland areas. There, 6,000 Tamil plantation workers were made homeless in the Matala area alone. The violence was at its worst in Nuwara Eliya, "Lipton's teagarden" where the choicest varieties of tea are grown. Here, in colonial times, English planters, with their stone cottages and Tudor-style clubs, had created "a little bit of home" and former tea planters still make nostalgic pilgrimages to the area. In attacks which mirrored those in Colombo, virtually all Tamil shops and homes were wiped out. Only a handful of shops owned by Sinhalese traders survived the incineration of the town centre. "For the nostalgic former planters who still make the annual pilgrimages to Nuwara Eliya" commented Ian Ward in the *Daily Telegraph*, "the impact will be severe".

The full facts of the massacres in the tea plantation areas were collated and published by the Tamil Information Centre in London in a document entitled *Sir Lanka: July 1983 Violence against "Indian [plantation] Tamils"*. Among the more horrifying incidents revealed by this publication was the attack on the government hospital in Nuwara Eliya where helpless patients were murdered in their beds by the mobs. An estimated number of 56 patients were killed.

The document gives further details of the murder of the camphor dealer Mr Ramanathan of Badulla (see page 64). Trapped in his house by the mob, he had managed to hold them at bay by firing his pistol into the air. The mob had retreated in fear, but urged on by their leader who shouted, "Is there no Sinhalese blood in your veins?" they surged forward again hesitantly and were again repelled by a shot from Ramanathan's gun. It was only when the mob was reinforced by armed police and two jeep-loads of soldiers that he finally surrendered. Emerging from the house unarmed, he was holding with one hand a two and a half year old little girl relative. She was torn from his grasp by the mob and dashed to death against a tree. The mob then set upon Ramanathan with iron rods and clubs and beat him to death, burning his face with lighted torches.

A son of Ramanathan, Packianathan, surrendered, embracing

his three year old daughter Kausik.

The terrified child spread her arms on her father's shoulders and hid her face on his chest. A bullet pierced her arm and entered her father's chest. He died on the spot, but little Kausik survived with her injury. One soldier in the crowd of army men who could not bear to see the blood on the tender hand of the child, had the humaneness at the moment to shout: 'Enough, stop, stop...'

Two little boys who tried to escape from a burning shop were prevented from doing so by a policeman who took aim at them with his gun. Frightened, they rushed back into the shop and jumped into the water tank. But the tank exploded in the heat and their bodies were later found by their parents burnt, locked together in embrace.

There was a high presence of known United National party activists among the leaders of the mobs. In Badulla, the three brothers of the UNP MP had reportedly led detachments of thugs and Francis Rajapakse, a prominent UNP member and member of the District Development Council had been seen touring the district on a motor bicycle encouraging the mobs. Newton Dias, a UNP organiser and member of the local Municipal Council is alleged to have been seen inciting a mob in front of the tourist hotel in Badulla. "I will look after the police, you go ahead without fear," he is reported to have said. At this assurance it was alleged, the thugs, with some hesitation, set fire to "Rayana" and the Cheapside Stores. High ranking police officers hurrying to the scene retreated on seeing Dias, and thereafter made no attempt to stop the attacks.

In Nuwara Eliya, the police officer in charge had shown a genuine desire to prevent violence and had, at the first intimation of trouble, rounded up and taken into custody all the known Sinhala thugs in the area, including "Market Rajah", a well-known bully and henchman of the Minister for Mahaweli Development, Gamini Dissanayake. The next day the Minister arrived by helicopter and ordered the release of the thugs. Within an hour of his departure, a well-organised orgy of burning and killing began.

The Buddhist clergy had also shown a high profile during the riots. In Badulla, the thugs operated from the Muthiangana Buddhist Vihare, whose chief incumbent had been notorious for his racist sermons. He had supplied them with their implements of destruction and with petrol, as well as food and drink, the latter evidently liberally, as it was reported that while in action they seemed either drugged or drunk. At the height of the violence the priest was seen shouting over a loudspeaker, "The Tigers are coming! Buddhists unite!" At Bandarawela a Buddhist priest actually led the mob surrounding the

house of the local doctor and personally killed him and his wife when they tried to escape from their burning house.

By now the first reactions from the outside world were reaching Colombo. There is no doubt that Jayewardene and his government had made a major miscalculation in grossly underestimating the extent and force of the world reaction to the massacres. They had evidently relied on the remoteness of Sri Lanka and the blanket of silence conferred by the imposition of press censorship to keep the news from the outside world. Previous pogroms had received relatively small notice in the western media. But they had been in the far north and remote highland districts of the island. The July terror reached its zenith in Colombo itself where the correspondents of the major western newspapers and the heads of foreign missions were stationed. They now saw the almost unbelievable facts for themselves. Tourists had been attracted to Colombo in increasing numbers by the advertisements for "paradise isle". On their hasty return to their own countries they recounted their tales of horror on the television screens and the violence was brought into ordinary homes all over the west. The world was witness to the slaughter and the world expressed its outrage.

Despite the efforts of the Sri Lankan government and its missions overseas, the Tamil problem had, in recent years, become internationalised. Early in 1983, Tamil expatriates in West Germany in association with civil rights groups, had organised a demonstration at the Sri Lankan stand at the ITB Berlin Fair and were given wide coverage by foreign media representatives present.

Eelam associations had sprung up in many different countries and expatriate Tamil groups all over the world, often working in collaboration with civil rights groups had been successfully lobbying the members of their respective legislatures for some time. On 9 May 1979 as a result of such action, the Massachusetts State Assembly had passed a resolution declaring for Eelam. In Britain, the *Tamil Times* had begun publication in October 1981. Circulated world-wide, this paper has since become a highly respected organ, both for its high standards of journalism and for its fearless condemnation of the state terrorism in Sri Lanka. Its sober and even understated reports alerted many informed sections of opinion to the situation on the island and helped to fill the void left by the closure of the Tamil newspapers in Sri Lanka. The newly opened Tamil Information Centre in Britain had also begun to put out a wide range of high quality pamphlets and publications.

The incarceration of the Catholic priests had focussed the attention of church circles overseas on Sri Lanka and the imprisonment of the

intellectuals had mobilised the forces of human rights organisations both in Sri Lanka and the west. The Gandhiam movement was well known and highly respected outside Sri Lanka and the arrest of its leaders had caused deep concern to the organisations such as OXFAM, NOVIB and the World Council of Churches that had given it their support. The earlier report of the International Commission of Jurists in 1981 had already alerted western observers to the situation that had developed in Sri Lanka. Now the Amnesty International report, appearing on July 6 only a few weeks before the beginning of the holocaust, had focussed the attention of the world's media on the island. So the climate of opinion was very different to that which had prevailed at the time of the earlier pogroms. It was to an alerted and better informed world that the news of the July massacres broke.

As the appalling details were revealed, shock and horror reverberated around the globe. Demonstrations, marches and picketing of Sri Lankan embassies organised by expatriate Tamils took place all over the world. Petitions were signed by thousands of people. British MPs at meetings organised by Tamil activists voiced their condemnation. A ten-deep mass demonstration in London took 45 minute to pass a point. Dave Nellist, MP for Coventry South, raised the matter in the House of Commons where it was condemned by all sides of the House. Demonstrations outside the Sri Lankan High Commission in London were organised by the Eelan Solidarity Campaign. Similar demonstrations took place in Paris, New York, Sydney, Melbourne and Toronto. Trade unions passed resolutions. News of the massacres sent shock waves through India and through Tamil Nadu in particular. Leaders of all political parties condemned the outrages and demanded immediate action by India to put an end to the killings. Mrs Gandhi spoke on the telephone to President Jayewardene and sent an emissary to Sri Lanka. A petition to the United Nations was lodged by the TULF president, Mr M. Sivasithamparam. Telegrams and protests poured into Sri Lanka. Jayewardene and his government were confronted by an outraged reaction they had never anticipated.

It was only when the outraged protests from all over the world reached Sri Lanka that the full enormity of what had occurred appears to have dawned on the president and his government. Faced with the obloquy now visited on them from every quarter of the globe, they hastily brought the carnage to halt, after having let it rage unchecked for six days and nights. Desperate attempts were now begun to extricate themselves from a situation they had brought on themselves by their reckless anti-Tamil obsession. The fact of the orchestration and organisation of the violence had to be admitted; the accumulation of evidence was too strong for any plausible denial. But the burden

of guilt for this orchestration the government desperately tried to lay on other shoulders. The Minister of Information blamed "certain foreign elements". His cabinet colleague Cyril Mathew saw behind it all "the dirty hand of India". *But Mr S. Thondaman, Minister of Rural Industrial Development, himself a Tamil, as reported by the International Commission of Jurist, indicted "the racist elements" in "our own people", led by "important people... part of this government, just as I am."* President Jayewardene blamed the communists. Addressing the parliamentary group of the UNP on August 4, he charged that the violence was a carefully orchestrated prelude to a military takeover by anti-government elements in the armed services, instigated by Marxist and Trotskyist political interests in the country. With much publicity he banned the three far left parties, the Jatika Vimukthi Peramuna, the Nava Lanka Sama Samaja party and the Ceylon Communist Party and closed down their newspapers. The move was received with scepticism both in Sri Lanka and in the outside world. "The government is still maintaining press censorship and carefully feeding out its own version of events," said the London *Observer* on 14 August. "But no evidence has been produced to corroborate the claim of the 'hidden hand' of an 'unnamed great power' involved in a plot to overthrow the regime." Many observers pointed out that the far left parties had neither the capacity nor the organisational ability to carry out such a widely orchestrated programme. Their influence in the country was minimal and Jayewardene had, the past, actually accused them of encouraging the Tamil separatists. The army had always been anti-communist; it had put down a "Che Guevarist" rebellion against the former Prime Minister, Mrs. Bandaranaike in 1971 with the utmost severity. Army involvement had occurred all over the island, so could not have been the work of one rebellious faction. Moreover, the army was commanded by the president's own nephew and as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, Jayewardene himself had appointed all the senior officers in recent years. The targets for the violence had been exclusively Tamil—no government establishments, no multinational "capitalist" businesses had been attacked. But in casting the blame on the communists, Jayewardene shrewdly surmised that he had only to raise the spectre of a communist presence in the Indian ocean to gain the sympathy and support of the United States.

On the other hand, strong evidence of government complicity was beginning to emerge. Identification of government personnel and supporters as mob leaders had been made in many different parts of the country. Most damning of all, however was the consistent failure of the government to institute an investigation into the violence, in spite

of insistant pressures from many quarters to do so. If anti-government forces had indeed been involved, a concerted search for the perpetrators and speedy punishment would have been expected. The perpetrators had gone completely unpunished.

President Jayewardene has frequently posed as the unwilling prisoner of the hard-liners in his cabinet, in particular of the notorious Cyril Mathew, Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs, whose anti-Tamil books and pamphlets had done so much to inflame Sinhala feeling against the Tamils. When the facts are examined, however, Jayewardene cannot be exculpated from the guilt of the July massacres. He has pursued a ruthless policy of discrimination against the Tamils ever since 1944, when he introduced a resolution in the State Council to make Sinhala the official language of the island. Under the constitution, which is largely of his own making, President Jayewardene is vested with enormous powers. Not only is he head of state, he is also head of the executive and of the government. He appoints the Prime Minister and all the other ministers and deputy ministers, and can dismiss any of them without reference to anyone. The permanent officials of every ministry are his nominees as are the Chief Justice and all the judges of the supreme Court and the High Court. Jayewardene had recently used these powers to appoint a District Court judge over the heads of the entire High Court.

Immediately after his re-election as president, Jayewardene had announced his intention of removing MPs who had not performed well or had become unpopular. He then demanded and obtained undated letters of resignation from all MPs, including cabinet ministers. Thus any MP opposing Jayewardene does so at his own peril; his undated letter of resignation would be dated and submitted to the Secretary to the Parliament, upon which he would automatically cease to be an MP. Jayewardene had already used the power these letters gave him in the case of 18 MPs who had "resigned" early in 1983.

As President, Jayewardene is not only Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces but he has appropriated to himself the portfolio of Minister of Defence. Under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, detention orders under Section 9 have to be made by the Minister of Defence.

Under Section 35 of the constitution, Jayewardene is immune to prosecution or any legal action against him. He is, in fact, as Paul Sieghart comments in the International Commission of Jurists' report, above the law. With these enormous powers and dispensations, President Jayewardene cannot be the unwilling captive of any faction. The ultimate responsibility for the July massacres must rest with him. His own words at the UNP annual conference in December 1983 reveal

his own awareness of the extent of his power, which verges on the despotic. Responding to a call of Cyril Mathew to become a hero to fight for the cause of the Sinhalese, Jayewardene declared, "I would like to be a hero and not a traitor. I can ask the armed forces to kill all the Tamils, but I won't do that." (*Tamil Times* January 1984).

The mobs dispersed, the troops back in their barracks, a calm descended, the terrible calm of a stricken city, the stench of death and decay all around. It will probably never be possible to estimate the total number of deaths that occurred in the holocaust of July 1983. Under the notorious Public Security Act regulation 15A which allowed the security forces to dispose of the dead without inquest, many of the bodies will probably never be found. The government's admitted total was 300 but the estimate of Dr Sjeff Teunis, general secretary of NOVIB, who said that between 1,000 and 2,000 people lost their lives is the most realistic, even though this figure itself may be an underestimate. When the ruins of the burnt-out buildings are finally cleared still more bodies may be found. The final count may well exceed three thousand, a fact which highlights the full horror of the genocidal nature of the riots. No estimate of the number of injured is obtainable, but it is known that the city hospitals had had to cancel all routine operations during the violence in order to cope with the influx of the injured.

The refugee problem was enormous. There were 30 refugee camps in the Colombo area alone and the official estimate of 20,000 refugees in Colombo is evidently well short of the true total. In the case of Ratmalana Airport the official figure was 6,000 and we have already seen that the count made by the refugees themselves was 12,000. Most of the refugees were eventually sent to the Tamil areas in the north by government provided sea transport on which they were given neither food nor water. Large supplies of emergency foreign aid had poured into the country but many reports reaching the west indicated that these were not being distributed to the camps. An *Observer* report of August 7 stated: "Foreign aid for the relief of Tamils is failing to reach the refugee camps where it is needed. Instead foreign aid and essential medical supplies are being stored in government depots. The government stores are full but the food is not being distributed." Journalists were discouraged from visiting the camps. The *Daily Telegraph* of August 2 carried a report: "Fearing adverse international reaction to photographs and TV footage depicting the aftermath of the violence, the authorities yesterday imposed strict censorship on all still and moving pictures." An ITN correspondent was expelled for being too curious. Two regional delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr. Jean Michel Monod

and Mr Nicholas de Rougemont, were ordered to leave the country; they had asked permission to carry out a survey of displaced persons throughout the island in order to report to Geneva on the most immediate needs of the refugees.

In addition to the refugees in the camps, an estimated number of 40,000 young Tamil men fled across the Palk Strait to India. In Madras almost all joined one of the five groups of freedom fighters that had by now been established. Their baptism of fire in the July riots has hardened their spirits and strengthened their resolve to bring about, at whatever cost to themselves, the birth of Eelam.

Meanwhile, back in Sri Lanka, the government had announced one of the most blatant acts of injustice towards the Tamils in the history of the republic. Not only was no reparation to be paid to the victims of the arson attacks, who had lost everything they possessed, but the government, on the grounds that it would facilitate more speedy reconstruction, announced its intention to expropriate, without compensation, all damaged property—"a piece of backdoor nationalisation" as it was widely interpreted in the western press. Under pressure of international opinion, the government eventually backed down on this callous act of victimisation. Tamils whose property had been damaged were allowed to retain it, provided they repaired at their own expense, the damage for which the government had been responsible. This supposedly magnanimous gesture occurred in spite of the government's appealing for and receiving, large sums in foreign aid for the rehabilitation of those very properties. Thus the government made considerable gains, while achieving one of their most important objectives, the destruction of the economic foothold of the Tamils in the south.

The Sri Lankan government were now faced with the economic consequences of where their obsessive racial hatred had led them. According to their probably underestimated statistics, 116 industrial units and 2,500 small businesses had been destroyed or damaged. Fifty per cent of the steel-based industries and 70 per cent of the plastics and paint industry had gone up in flames. The polyvinyl chloride pipe industry was the worst affected, about 80 per cent of the country's total capacity being destroyed. The loss of nine coconut oil mills had seriously affected the position of Sri Lanka as the world's second largest exporter. Tourism, Sri Lanka's fifth largest foreign exchange earner, giving direct or indirect employment to nearly 100,000 people, had suffered disastrously; there had been wholesale cancellations by charter groups. The flight of Tamils from the plantation areas had jeopardized the tea yields. Sinhalese as well as Tamils were now suffering unemployment as the direct result of the July slaughter.



Joe Dominic standing in the ruins of the house he had saved for 19 years to buy. He had just moved in when it was destroyed by Sinhalese mobs. He was not insured.

Photo: Liba Taylor



Ratmalana Refugee Camp, Colombo.

Photo: Liba Taylor



Tamil refugees from the plantations on the boat to India.

Photo: Liba Taylor

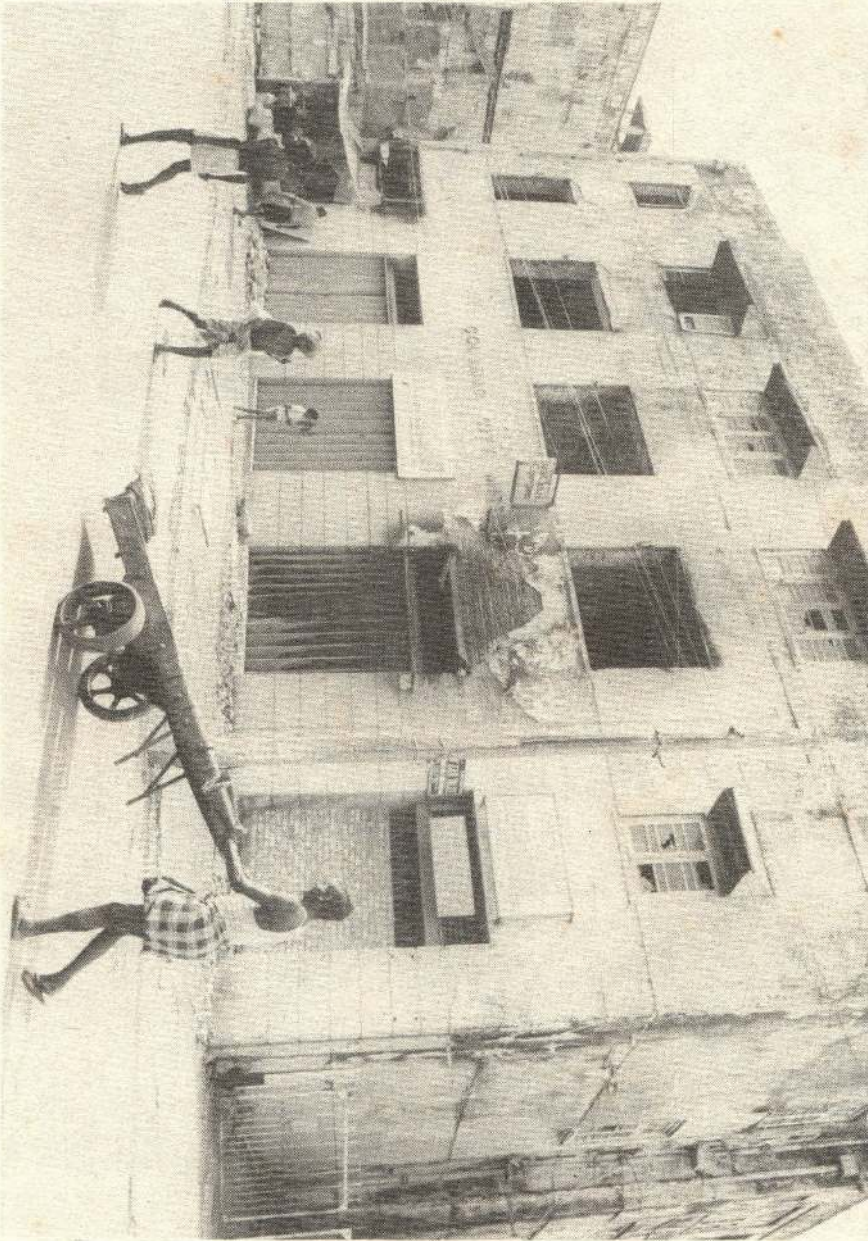


Refugees from the plantation areas on the boat to India.

Photo: Liba Taylor



The empty case of the shell that killed 19 year old Kalavathi Thangathurai on 15 September 1984. The markings clearly discernable on the case identify it as the property of the Sri Lankan Navy. (top)
House shelled by the Sri Lankan Navy on 15 September 1984. (bottom)



The ruins of Colombo City Mission.

Photo: Liba Taylor



Tamils protest in London on the anniversary of the massacres in July 1984.

Photo courtesy of 'Newstime'



Tamil protest in London against the massacres in July 1983.

Photo courtesy of 'Newslime'

An intense effort was now undertaken to restore President Jayewardene's battered image in the western world. The services of an international advertising agency were recruited and prominent advertisements appeared in the world's press, including the *Guardian*. The "showcase" Tamils in the cabinet were paraded, the aged Mr S. Thondaman, Minister for Rural Industrial Development, head of the nearly defunct Ceylon Workers' Congress party, possessing neither power nor influence. A few Tamils in ambassadorial positions overseas were cited; they had held their positions for many years, long before Jayewardene's accession to power. As an exercise in misinformation the stream of material emanating from the Sri Lankan government would be difficult to equal by any propaganda machine.

A particularly unsubtle exercise in the propaganda effort was the publication in an Indian magazine *India Today*, which gave a sensationalised account of large units of Tamil guerrillas undergoing military training in Tamil Nadu in South India. It was quoted widely in the western press. What the western newspapers did not know was that though it appeared in an issue dated March 31 1984, it was actually published in Sri Lanka on *March 21*, ten days before, by a Sinhala-owned daily, which had at all times consistently supported President Jayewardene. The article described the Tamil liberation struggle as "left-inspired" a familiar epithet of Jayewardene's government, which had described Amnesty International as "communist", and David Selbourne's interest in the Tamil cause as "left inspired". In Madras, the *India Today* story was described as a "diabolical lie" and copies of the magazine were publicly incinerated in a demonstration by Indian and Sri Lankan Tamil youths. In New Delhi, the Indira Congress MP, Mr Chandrapal Chalani tore up a copy of the journal in the Lokh Sabha. Another Indira Congress MP, Mr K.K. Dhiwari categorically refuted the magazine's claim that Tamil terrorists were being trained on Indian soil and berated the magazine for its unpatriotic, treacherous act. In contrast, the Sri Lankan Minister for Information, Dr Ananda Tissa de Alwis announced that the government were purchasing large numbers of the magazine for distribution to embassies abroad as proof of the threat to Sri Lanka.

Time passed. Sri Lanka gradually faded from the news headlines. New international crises filled the television screens. The July holocaust gave way to the Lebanon fighting. The advertisements for "paradise isle" began to reappear. Jayewardene and his government could begin to believe that the world had forgotten July 1983. The efforts of the propaganda machines had started to pay off. Mr Carl Weinberger, an emissary of the US government visited Colombo in January 1984 and met the president. He was followed by Mr Joseph

Addabo, Chairman of the Defence Appropriations Committee of the US House of Representatives. Mr Addabo is reported to have thanked the Sri Lankan government for having approved the revival of the "Voice of America" broadcasts from the island, transmissions that had been stopped for more than 25 years. He promised that immediately on his return to the United States, he would recommend that funds be released to Sri Lanka for defence purposes. In February 1984, Deputy Assistant Secretary Mr Howard B. Schaffer held discussions with President Jayewardene in Colombo. He announced that relations between Sri Lanka and the United States were "excellent" and added that the US had a high regard for President Jayewardene. Mr Schaffer is reported to have described the Sri Lankan embassy in Washington as a small embassy which had done well in countering Eelam supporters in the United States". Finally the visit of President Jayewardene himself to the United States in June 1984 was announced.

The proposed allocation of funds for defence purposes and other military aid by the US was viewed with concern in many quarters; the Sri Lankan defence budget for 1984 had been doubled and many observers had expressed disquiet at the build-up of the Sri Lankan armed forces and its massive stockpiling of armaments. The International Commission of Jurists report of March 1984 had discussed this point in unequivocal terms.

As Mr Moore rightly pointed out in his report, the Sri Lankan army has never fought a war. Nor is it likely that it ever will, since Sri Lanka is in the happy position of having no foreign enemies. There is no prospect at all that India, its only close neighbour, would ever wish or attempt to invade it—and if it did, even the largest army that Sri Lanka could muster would be unable to resist such an attack for long.

In fact, the report continues, the only function ever performed by the Sri Lankan army since independence was "the maintenance of internal security", a function which armies are "inherently unqualified to perform". It might be understandable, the Commissioners state, if a professional soldier like General Attygala should see himself and his troops as being engaged in a "war against terrorism" but less understandable that President Jayewardene, in his capacity as Minister of Defence should have a similar perception. This course could very easily escalate into civil war. The Commissioners discuss the need for the high army presence in the Tamil areas:

To the Tamils in the Jaffna peninsula, the army base at Elephant Pass on the isthmus which connects that peninsula with the rest

of Sri Lanka can only be perceived as the encampment of a foreign army of occupation, and even to the independent observer it is difficult to see any useful purpose for it.

The report cogently points out that the level of guerrilla activity in the Tamil areas "hardly constituted a state of emergency and certainly one not that would justify such extreme measures". Comparing the situation in Sri Lanka with that existing in Northern Ireland, they point out that the level of such activity in the latter, in a population one sixth the size of Sri Lanka, was 57 times as high. In all, the report condemns the government's measures as "a gross overreaction" to the real situation. Less polite observers called it a paranoid obsession.

The dangers of this military build-up were emphasised in the International Commission of Jurists' final comments. "I see the country metaphorically trembling on a knife-edge" wrote the distinguished lawyer Mr. Paul Sieghart, who compiled the report. "Persistent shortsightedness, yet more over-reaction to perceived threats and further attempts to derive short-term political advantages from tension and trouble could quite readily tip it into chaos, revolution or tyranny."

For a country trembling on a knife-edge, is the supply of ever increasing arms and money for arms a prudent and justifiable policy? Reports have been circulating that the US is proposing to switch its major naval base in the Indian Ocean to Trincomalee in the event of the base in Mauritius being no longer made available. If these reports are well-founded, can the American people countenance the bartering of the lives and continued existence of the Tamil people by their government in their name, for the sake of port facilities? This is a question that should trouble the consciences of the American people. The breakaway state of Biafra was subjugated by government forces of Nigeria in 1970 with the aid of massive supplies of arms from the British government, a fact which forever alienated former friends of Britain in the third world. Does the American government wish to follow the same repressive course?

When President Jayewardene was invited to visit Washington in June 1984 he evidently regarded it as an auspicious omen. To their everlasting credit the British Government had under pressure from the Tamil community in London, cancelled his scheduled state visit to London in the autumn of 1983. Now he was being invited with full panoply and ceremonial to the USA. His public relations exercises had evidently paid off handsomely; his rehabilitation in the eyes of the world was complete. The events of the previous July had been

forgotten; he could continue with his former policies as if nothing had changed, apart, perhaps, from confining them to Jaffna instead of displaying them to the eyes of the world in Colombo.

And nothing in Sri Lanka *had* changed. The army of occupation still patrolled the north; all the abuses regarding the detention of prisoners condemned by Amnesty International were still in existence. The Prevention of Terrorism Act and its sinister Regulation 15A allowing for the disposal of dead bodies without inquest was still in operation. When the International Commission of Jurists' mission revisited the island in January 1984 it had still not been repealed. Describing some of the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act as "an ugly blot on the statute book of any civilised country" the Commission described Emergency Regulation 15A as "a dangerous and abnoxious measure" that should be revoked as soon as possible.

Regulation 15A was, in fact, used to good effect in the renewed eruption of state terrorism in March 1984. Encouraged by the friendly overtures of the United States to believe that the world had forgotten the events of the previous July, Jayewardene had, in early March, posted Brigadier Nalin Seneviratne, described as a "tough soldier" to the Tamil area in the north. The Tamil Government Agent in Jaffna was replaced by a Sinhala officer. The infamous army camps in the north where Tamil prisoners had been tortured in 1981 and 1982 were reopened. Indiscriminate arrests began again in Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Vavuniya and Jaffna, many of those arrested being taken as hostage for wanted youths. The army presence in the Tamil areas had increased dramatically. The *Guardian* of April 19 reported: "The military deployment in the north had changed beyond recognition. The army is no longer playing soldiers. A company of hard-looking infantrymen, armed with submachineguns and barricaded behind a wall of sandbags and old lorry tyres, guards Jaffna airport. Others patrol the town in armoured personnel carriers, and control the Elephant Pass which links the Jaffna peninsula with the rest of the island."

Sinhala settlement of Tamil areas in Trincomalee and Batticaloa was intensified. Food supply to the Jaffna peninsula was curtailed and rationing introduced. Observers were to recall President Jayewardene's words in an interview with Ian Ward published in the *Daily Telegraph* of July 26 1983: "Really, if I starve the Tamils out, the Sinhalese will be happy."

On 28 March 1984, overt state terrorism recommenced. On that day, more than ten Tamil civilians were killed and more than 25 injured by units of the Sri Lankan Air Force, firing at random in and around the market town of Chunnakam in the north of Sri Lanka.

According to the communiqué issued by the Defence Ministry, the air force personnel had been “ambushed”. But observers noted that all telephone communications were jammed until the government released its official version of “an ambush”. The communiqué calmly claimed that the murders were “revenge shooting” in retaliation for the alleged ambush. No word of regret was expressed, no assurance that the perpetrators would be punished. When President Jayewardene was later asked why no inquest had been held, he replied that there was no purpose since the bodies had already been burnt. Regulation 15A was operating in earnest.

In the ten days after the massacre at Chunnakam, over 70 Tamils were killed by the armed forces firing at random in and around crowded market towns and in the streets of Jaffna. The victims included women and old men. Their bodies were set on fire with old car tyres. Hundreds of young Tamils were taken into custody and held hostage for wanted men. The *Guardian* reported on April 17, “Most of the dead are admitted to have been passers-by, shot at random by vengeful infantrymen. They reportedly included men and women in their sixties... when they (the security services) cannot find known suspects, they detain their fathers or brothers.”

In Jaffna, the newly formed committee of citizens told William Stevens of the *New York Times* (May 2 1984) that when the curfew was lifted for a day, a teen-aged youth went to a neighbouring store to buy coconuts. On his way back, soldiers stopped him, asked were he had been, and, despite the coconuts, shot him dead. A few days earlier, the committee told Stevens, Air Force men had rolled up to a crowded open-air market where men, women and children go every day to buy bananas and watermelons, potatoes, pumpkins and chillis. Without warning, the troops sprayed the crowd with machine-gun fire.

Michael Hamlyn in the *London Times* of May 17 1984, reported the case of the 62 year-old Mr Sinniah Ponnampalam, a retired clerk from the Attorney-General’s department. He had been standing at the gate of his sister’s compound in Wyman Road, Jaffna, on a day in April, when he was shot by two soldiers standing at the end of the road. It was 11.15 a.m. and there was no curfew at that time. He died later in hospital at 1.10 p.m. The official version of his murder said the shots were fired at 2.30 p.m. a time when the curfew was in operation. Mr Ponnampalam had been dead for over an hour by then.

In the wake of the Jaffna murders, the Jaffna Citizens Committee courageously moved into the people to make a survey of the loss of life, an exercise in which they were aided by the *Eela Nadu* newspaper, which threw its columns open to them. The committee found that 78

people had been killed on the successive days of violence from 9 to 12 April though the list was by no means exhaustive as many of the bereaved might have been afraid to volunteer information for fear of reprisals. Where the victims could be identified, their names are given, but there are sinister entries throughout the list indictating that this was not possible: *April 9 1984*: Two unidentified bodies, found burnt inside a car at Sundaralingam garage. *April 11 1984* Seven dead bodies found on Rasavinthodam Road, Jaffna (names not known). Four partly charred dead bodies, unidentified, found at the railway crossing on Navalar Road, Jaffna. Fourteen partly charred dead bodies, unidentified, found under the culvert adjoining the Buddhist temple in Jaffna. *April 24 1984*: Six decomposing dead bodies, unidentified, washed ashore on the sea beach, Jaffna. Fifteen names were listed of men who had simply disappeared without trace since the violence began. The *Tamil Times* in London published the committee's findings in full, together with photographs of the victims which gave the lie to the Minister of National Security's claim that those killed were "terrorists". Most of the photographs are of women or middle-aged or elderly men; there are only three young men among them.

Soon after the killings the church of Our Lady of Refuge in Jaffna was shelled by troops who mistook the wiring for new electric lamp posts for a wire they claimed was to be used to detonate explosives in an attempt to blow up a military convoy. Extensive damage was done and the parish priest had to throw himself to the floor to save his life.

The latest outrages were reported extensively in the western press where fears of another holocaust on the scale of the July 1983 massacres were expressed. "We do not want another descent into hell" said one paper, expressing the general consensus. In India several MPs demanded that a UN peacekeeping force be dispatched to Sri Lanka and Mrs Gandhi is reported to have advised President Jayewardene that another outburst of racial riots in Sri Lanka would create inevitable repercussions in India. In Tamil Nadu the Chief Minister, M.G. Ramachandran, summoned an all party conference to formulate a strategy to aid the Tamils of Sri Lanka. According to an interview reported in the *Guardian* of April 17 1984, President Jayewardene's reaction was, "If India invades us, then that is the end of the Tamils in the country. Now we only have guerilla warfare in the North. Suppose it starts in Colombo... are you going to stop the slaughter of Tamils in Colombo?" Other ministers made no secret of their intention to use the whole Tamil population as hostage in the event of an invasion by India.

Meanwhile, in Colombo, the round-table talks between the

government and the TULF leaders instituted through the good offices of Mrs Gandhi dragged on. The TULF leaders were under no illusions that the talks were anything other than a cosmetic exercise to present a facade to the world of a peaceful government endeavouring to find a solution to the problem by negotiation. The TULF politicians had had a long experience of similar negotiations that had come to nothing and bitter memories of promises made and subsequently repudiated. But in deference to Mrs Gandhi's wishes they persisted. The talks grew ever more protracted due to the frequent and prolonged adjournments requested by the government negotiators. To David Selbourne in an interview reported in the *Guardian* of April 30, the TULF leader Mr A. Amirthalingam described the negotiations as "already dead". President Jayewardene, he said, was merely "keeping the corpse on view" to enable him to tell the Americans when he visits Washington in June that he is negotiating with us."

If President Jayewardene believed that the passage of time would ever erase the memory of the July holocaust from the consciousness of the world, his illusions were rudely shattered by the appearance of the report of the International Commission of Jurists in March 1984. Once more the story of the massacres was recounted; once more the same pertinent questions asked, the same sceptical comments made. About the start of the riots the report was uncompromising. "One thing is quite clear; they did not start spontaneously."

Clearly, this was not a spontaneous upsurge of communal hatred among the Sinhala people—nor was it, as has been suggested in some quarters, a popular response to the killing of 13 soldiers in an ambush by Tamil Tigers on the previous day, which was not even reported in the newspapers until after the riots began. It was a series of deliberate acts, executed in accordance with a concerted plan, conceived and organised well in advance.

The report once more raised the subject which had been exercising the minds of every independent observer of the pogrom. "But what I find most extraordinary is that to this day, *there has been no attempt to find out the truth through an official, public and impartial enquiry*, when the situation in the country cries out for nothing less." Paul Sieghart, author of the report, specifically examined the murder of the 53 prisoners in the high security Welikada. "I have now been told," he writes, "that it has not been possible to find enough evidence to enable anyone to be prosecuted—a proposition which must stretch credulity."

Referring to the notorious regulation 15A for the disposal of bodies, Sieghart stated, "It may of course be pure coincidence, but

I feel bound to draw attention to the fact that this regulation was made precisely three days after the Jaffna Magistrate had returned a verdict of homicide at the inquest into the death in army custody on 10 April 1983 of K.T. Navaratnarajah, who died from no fewer than 35 external and internal injuries inflicted by blows and weapons—an incident in respect of which no one has yet been charged.”

The President’s inflammatory television broadcast at the height of the violence was noted, with its failure to utter “one single word of sympathy for the victims of the violence” and the announcement of his intention to bring in what was to become the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution. The President himself, and the extraordinary powers vested in his person were critically examined.

The report went still further back, bringing out into the light of day the irregularities in the referendum campaign when leaders of the opposition parties were placed in detention, the intimidation of judges, and the President’s promotion of police officers found guilty in the courts of unlawful acts. “The conclusion is inescapable” reads the report, “that he was deliberately seeking to teach the judges a lesson, in order to make them more pliable to the Executive’s wishes. If that is so, these were grossly improper acts; but for the immunity from all suit which the President enjoys under Article 35(1) of the Constitution, they might well have been criminal offences under Article 116(2).

In Washington, President Jayewardene assured Congress that his government was not violating human rights. There had been free elections he claimed—“we are a five star democracy.” Similar statements were made in London. His words evidently carried conviction, as the favourable editorials in some newspapers testified. Thus encouraged, Jayewardene returned to Sri Lanka to begin a fresh offensive against the Tamils in the north. It became increasingly difficult to get information from the sealed off northern province, access to which was barred to journalists, but reports reached the west of fresh outrages, including the burning down of over 100 Tamil houses in Valvettiturai and of 109 shops and the destruction of the bazaar in Mannar, as well as the indiscriminate shooting of unarmed civilians. The reports were denied by the Sri Lankan government, but a two-day unauthorised visit by a party of foreign journalists to the sealed off Tamil heartland reported in the *International Herald Tribune* of August 14 1984 found them to be only too true. Their visit had been barred by the Ministry of National Security and they were forced to cancel their chartered flight, but they nevertheless succeeded in reaching Jaffna by other means. Despite the government’s denials, they found “credible evidence that Sri Lanka security forces have

repeatedly engaged in reprisals against civilian population centres in the northern province of Jaffna, burning houses and shops and randomly shooting civilians because of attacks by Tamil guerrillas.' Interviews with local Tamil civic leaders, professional people, clergymen and civilian victims of gunshot wounds in hospital, produced evidence of scores of Tamil victims to rampages by Sinhalese soldiers, and numerous witnesses to such incidents as the burning of blocks of shops in one coastal town, the indiscriminate firing of machine guns at crowds of civilians in central Jaffna town, and the blowing up of a police station in which 19 Tamil political prisoners died in their cells.' In September the small fishing port of Valvettiturai came under attack from the sea when gunboats of the Sri Lankan Navy began firing shells at random into the town. The port was believed to have been used by militants travelling to and from India and the attacks were evidently in reprisal for this usage. The shells, fired indiscriminately, struck a girl's school, a Christian church, a fisherman's shelter, a public library and a number of private houses. On September 15 nineteen year old pregnant Mrs Kalavathi Thangathurai was killed when a shell entered the hut where she was sleeping and injured her husband. The authorities denied the shelling and claimed their gunboats were incapable of firing shells, but the shell fragments collected by the townspeople gave the lie to this. The case of the shell that killed Mrs Thangathurai is shown in Plate 5. The markings are clearly discernable in the photograph.

In instigating this renewed offensive on his return from his successful tour of the west, President Jayewardene had evidently been led to believe that the world had forgotten the holocaust of July 1983, and that he could safely return to his undeclared war against the Tamils. But the world had not forgotten. Already the committee empowered by the Conference on the Violation of Human Rights in Sri Lanka, an international congress held in Madras on April 21 and 22, was engaged in setting up an international tribunal of justice to enquire into the July massacres.

The 25 of July 1984—the first anniversary of the holocaust—was marked by processions and demonstrations all over the world. In the Tamil heartlands of Sri Lanka, a general strike and a week of mourning were called. In London, a prominent statement appeared in the *Guardian* over the names of over 50 Members of Parliament and distinguished academics. The statement, entitled: *Sri Lanka: Remembering the July 1983 Violence Against Tamils*, reiterated once more the terrible events of the holocaust and again called for the setting up of an impartial international commission to inquire into the violence, including the killing of the 53 Tamil detainees held in custody

by the government. (The statement is reproduced in full as Appendix C.) The world had not forgotten.

But the Sinhalese government were too firmly in the grip of their obsessive racial hatred to be deflected from their purpose. Moreover, they were winning the propaganda war. Their version of the situation had evidently been accepted uncritically by both the British and American governments. During her visit to the island in October, Baroness Young, British Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Minister was reported as having said that Britain "sympathised with the Sri Lankan government in its efforts to combat terrorism." In December, Jayewardene was visited by General Vernon Walters, roving ambassador of President Reagan and, incidentally, ex-CIA chief. According to the pro-government *Daily News*, a "shopping list" of military supplies was high on the agenda of their talks. The previous week, the United States had strongly deplored the activities of the Tamil militants as "a serious and unwarranted challenge to the government of a practising democracy". There was a strong possibility, the *Daily News* added, quoting "authoritative sources", of Britain supplying helicopters and naval patrol boats to the Sri Lankan armed forces.

Thus did the representatives of the British and US governments feed the mounting paranoia of the Sinhala-Buddhist rulers of Sri Lanka. Thus, too, did they display their ignorance of the true situation in the north—neither General Walters nor the Baroness had apparently taken the trouble to visit the Tamil homelands to discover the true situation for themselves.

There is a simple solution to the problem of Tamil "terrorism" which apparently occurred to neither of them—a solution needing neither guns nor helicopters nor patrol boats—and that is the complete withdrawal of the alien Sinhalese army of occupation from the Tamil homelands. This single action would bring about immediate cessation of guerrilla activity on the island. The young Tamil militants are not making revolution for revolution's sake. They are fighting to defend their lives and property against the alien army of occupation that has inflicted a reign of terror on their people. They are in a war situation. Their ambushes and acts of sabotage are the same responses to invasion as were those of the Dutch and French when the Germans occupied their lands and as those of the British would have been if their country too had been invaded. Though the Sinhalese army of occupation has never officially declared war, they are, in fact, waging war on the Tamil nation. The Tamil response is not terrorism. As David Graves of the *Daily Telegraph* discovered when he visited the Tamil areas in mid December, the "terrorists" are

“simply people’s sons, brothers and husbands—fighting, in the eyes of Jaffna Tamils, to protect and liberate the community”.

What the official emissaries of the British and US governments failed to do, two British journalists achieved, succeeding in penetrating to the Tamil areas in the north in spite of every obstacle. David Graves of the *Daily Telegraph* spent three days in Jaffna in mid-December “listening to a series of appalling stories of rape, massacre, and intimidation”.

A sobbing young woman, eight months pregnant, whose husband is working overseas, told me she was raped by a soldier at gunpoint the night before while other troops burned her mother’s home.

I saw two bodies lying in the fields at Vadducoddai, eight miles west of Jaffna, where Dr Neelan Tiruchelvan, a former MP for the area, claimed troops shot dead 40 civilians last week. Either the Tamils of Jaffna are the world’s most astute propagandists or the Armed Forces are committing the most grotesque crimes away from international notice. The people are in fear for their lives. On Saturday an Army patrol stopped in the centre of Jaffna town, and immediately dozens of men, women and children ran away. They say there have been so many cases of troops opening fire indiscriminately.

Trevor Fishlock’s dispatches published in the London *Times* of December 31 revealed a new and sinister development. President Jayewardene had begun to implement his veiled threat, hinted at in his interview with Ian Ward (page 92) to use the ultimate weapon of starvation to bring the Tamil people to their knees. It was the most serious threat to the Tamils yet posed. Through the establishment in November of prohibited zones embracing wide stretches of coastline, lengthy curfews, the institution of systems of permits necessary to move from one district to another, and the banning of all private transport, Jayewardene had effectively strangled the economic life of the Tamil nation. The uprooting of those living in the no-go areas had created another refugee problem overnight. When Trevor Fishlock arrived in Jaffna at the end of December he found the people on the edge of starvation. “The army has its grip on the jugular of commerce” he reported in the *Times* of December 31. “Rigid curfew and a plethora of complex regulations and permits have reduced transport to overworked skeleton services. People find it hard to get to work and to transport food and raw materials. Factories are closing, trade in most shops has dwindled away. It is becoming impossible to freight goods to and from Colombo by road. People are dying because they

cannot be taken to hospital in the 6 pm to 5 am curfew. Jaffna Hospital is running out of vital drugs, oxygen and anaesthetics." The staff of the hospital, he said, had written to President Jayewardene protesting that doctors were not issued with curfew passes, that there was no fuel for ambulances, that drugs were in short supply, that it was becoming hard to find food for patients and staff and that the treatment for patients suffering from diabetes, asthma and hypertension had been so disrupted that many were dying at home.

The fishing ban, introduced to create a no man's land around the coast to prevent "an invasion from India" had rendered the fishing communities destitute. Visiting Myliddy by a circuitous route to avoid army patrols, Fishlock found the usually prosperous community on the verge of starvation. One fisherman, with four children, told him that his wife had sold everything saleable but the family were going hungry. It was not just the fishermen who were hit, he said, but all the other people dependent on the fishing industry.

Meanwhile army terrorisation was continuing unabated. "Thousands of youths have been rounded up and held in Army camps. Their parents do not know where they are, they have become Sri Lanka's disappeared ones" Fishlock said. He met a woman trying to trace her son aged 20, seized by soldiers in Jaffna on December 14 while in the company of a teacher. After a fruitless visit to the army camp she was now in a lawyer's office, seeking help. The lawyer had her sworn statement and put it into a folder. "He pointed to a cupboard. 'On these shelves alone I have 500 files, all dealing with missing boys' ". The staff at Jaffna General Hospital said they saw many victims of army beatings. "Typically, boys emerge from interrogation and spells in custody with multiple bruises caused by thrashings with PCV pipes filled with sand. Some have heel fractures, having been suspended and beaten on the feet". The parish priest at Myliddy told Fishlock, "The soldiers terrorise. They steal jewellery from women and go into houses to harrass people." The people were living in fright and despair, the Bishop of Jaffna told Fishlock; Father Michael Samy, Vicar-General of Jaffna described a "reign of terror".

The churches themselves were increasingly coming under attack; their fearless condemnation of the excesses of the armed forces had rendered them suspect by the regime. A methodist minister, G.N. Jeyarajasingham was shot dead on December 13 when his car was stopped by army personnel, and his body, together those of his passengers set on fire. On January 6 the Roman Catholic Church of Vankalai, near Mannar, was attacked and the parish priest killed. In justification the troops claimed to have found explosives and ammunition as well as subversive literature in the church, a claim that was

vigorously denied by the Bishop of Mannar, who protested against the dissemination of the falsehood by the Sri Lankan Broadcasting Corporation and other Government media.

At the end of January 1985, yet another western journalist, Mary Anne Weaver, of the *Sunday Times*, succeeded in reaching Mannar, scene of some of the worst atrocities of the conflict. "Every village on the way to the city had burnt-out homes and shops" she reported in the *Sunday Times* of January 27. "A hospital lay in ruins. Nervous, arrogant soldiers dragged passengers from trucks and buses in their search for weapons".

Mannar still bore the scars of a recent massacre. "We saw evidence of the massacre of December 4 all around us" she wrote. "It began early in the morning when three army jeeps hit a landmine. One soldier was killed and three were injured. Thirty soldiers then went on a six-hour rampage around Mannar. They attacked the central hospital, stopped vehicles and shot the occupants dead on the spot. They lined up 15 employees of a post office and killed eight. They opened fire on peasants in fields, attacked a convent and stripped nuns of watches, gold crucifixes and chains. At the end, nearly 150 people lay dead; 20 are still missing, mostly young male Tamils taken to army camps. 'It took three days just to transport all the bodies,' one social worker said, 'There is no longer any petrol, no longer any movement. Life is dying here.' "

There was a further sinister development. "Long stretches of the narrow island of Mannar look like Vietnam did 15 years ago, after defoliation by American napalm. Many groves of palmyrah and coconut palm lie black and charred; others have been attacked with saws and cleared". The citizens of Mannar told Mary Weaver that the army were determined to transform the island into a huge sand dune so as to deprive "the terrorists" of cover.

This is the reality of the situation that the emissaries of the British and American governments declined to face. It is one that is fraught with peril for the Tamil people. Starvation could achieve for Jayewardene what pogrom and army terrorism failed to do. Is the world to stand mutely by while the annihilation of the ancient Tamil nation takes place? Odd Nansen, describing the extermination of the Jews in Nazi concentration camps, wrote: "It was the indifference of mankind that let it take place". Let it not be said that the world's indifference allowed a similar fate to overtake the Tamils.

5. Conclusion

Today the Tamil people are going through dark days. Their voice in parliament silenced, their presses closed down, their ancient territory occupied by an alien army, in these critical times the goal of Eelam seems further away than ever. Yet Eelam has never been so firmly rooted in the national consciousness. The fiery furnace they have been through has only strengthened the resolve of the Tamil people to win their freedom at whatever cost.

They are not dismayed by the enormity of the task before them. There might seem to be insuperable difficulties in the establishment of a sovereign state of Eelam in the north and east and parts of the hill country of the island. Yet it existed as a viable, independent kingdom for centuries before the advent of colonisation. Other flourishing independent nations have been forged out of far less promising material. The neglect of the decades of Sinhalese rule has taken its toll and the region is underdeveloped. But the Tamils have seen what can be done in the Gandiyam settlements in Vavuniya, where, by a prodigious collective effort, jungle has been cleared, wells dug, roads built and small scale industries established. Out of the fertile land thus reclaimed, large quantities of high quality crops have been grown. The climatic conditions of the dry-land areas are ideal for the cultivation of crops such as sugar cane or grapes, which could be grown on a large scale and subsidiary industries developed. The earlier geophysical findings indicating the presence of oil could now be implemented. Free ports could be established in the territory's deep water harbours. But the greatest asset the Tamils possess is their own people. All over the world Tamil expatriates have shown what they can do when they are free. Thrifty, hardworking, intelligent and innovative, the full genius of the Tamil people has yet to be exploited. Moreover they will have the incentive that they will be fighting for their very survival and that they must and will succeed.

The Tamils are not without friends. All over the world their expatriates are working and planning for the new state. They will give freely of their knowledge and expertise when the time comes. India, and Tamil Nadu in particular, have shown their friendship and solidarity with the Tamils in their hour of need. They will not be lacking in aid and support for the new nation. It is hoped that their example will be followed by other developed nations who will give of their overabundance to a courageous small country in its early struggles towards self-sufficiency.

Geographically and economically, Eelam as a viable independent state is a perfectly feasible proposition. The Tamils are determined that it can and must come. For them, the only question is the manner of its coming. If armed conflict is the only way of achieving freedom, they will face that challenge. They will be fighting for the sake of the coming generation, for a better life for their children and their children's children, than they themselves have ever known. But they do not seek such a solution. They have no animosity towards the Sinhalese as a people. It is a remarkable fact that not a single act of revenge towards Sinhalese living in the Tamil areas was reported after the July holocaust. But if Eelam is to come without armed conflict, there must be a massive change of heart in the Sinhalese. They must pause and ponder on where their fanatical leadership is leading them. The German people blindly followed their megalomaniac leaders to the crime of the genocide of the Jews for which they were condemned by the whole world. The country of Bach and Goethe has now to live with this everlasting shame. Do the Sinhalese wish to tread the same path as the Nazis, to taint their Buddhist religion forever with the atrocities committed in its name? The Sinhalese people must draw back from the abyss before it is too late. Many incidents of Sinhalese going to the aid of Tamils in the July massacres, at great risk to themselves, have been reported. The Sinhalese academics and intellectuals known to have expressed privately their abhorrence of the massacres must make their voices heard. The Sinhalese must use the remaining democratic processes of Sir Lanka to replace the leaders who have brought them to such a sorry pass and redeem their guilt towards the Tamil people by granting them their independence now.

The Western democracies keeping the present government in power by monetary, military and undercover operational aid and who extend credit facilities for the purchase of massive quantities of armaments should pause and consider where their policies are leading. These armaments can only be used against the Tamil population—Sri Lanka has no external enemies. The solemn warning of the International Commission of Jurists must be heeded. How will history judge those

nations who contributed to the extermination of the Tamil people by such aid? If this book has won any friends for the Tamils among the ordinary people of these countries, can they live with the fact that their taxes are indirectly supporting a government committed to genocide on a scale fully comparable with the extermination of the Jews in Nazi Germany?

Jayewardene's propaganda machine is a practiced exponent of the application of Goebbels' dictum that if a lie is big enough and repeated often enough, it will eventually come to be believed. So a flood of misinformation emanates from the Sri Lankan embassies in the west painting an utterly false picture of the situation on the island and concealing the genocidal nature of the recurring onslaughts on the Tamil population. Tamil information centres have been set up by expatriates in major capitals to counterbalance this flood of false propaganda. We ask the policy makers of the west and all who tread the corridors of power in the world to make use of these agencies to discover the real truth of what is happening on the island. We ask editors and journalists to probe, to question and to expose. Hitler was only able to implement his policy of genocide because so many of his own people and those of other nations were either ignorant of what was happening or refused to believe that such things could occur. So they "passed by on the other side".

We appeal to the free nations of the world to renounce their support for the corrupt and genocidal government of Sri Lanka, to withdraw monetary aid and to halt the flow of armaments to the island. We ask them to recognise the just and rightful claim of the Tamil people to independence and to give them help and support in their struggle. There are many separatist movements in the world today, many of them legacies from the days of imperialism. But some are merely imitative creations of fashion formed on the flimsiest of pretexts and this has engendered a spirit of boredom and scepticism towards separatist movements in general. We beg that this spirit is not extended to the Tamil bid for freedom. The Tamil cause is just, is vitally necessary and is *urgent*. If this book does nothing else we hope it will bring this truth home to all who read it.

With the Tamil newspapers of Sri Lanka closed down, we look to the press of the free nations to put the Tamil case to the world. We ask editors and journalists to continue to direct the penetrating searchlight of truth on the unhappy island of Sri Lanka. Finally we ask that they keep alive the memory of the holocaust of July 1983 as a burning issue that must be forever a reproach to the conscience of the whole civilised world. It is a debt owed to the dead and an obligation to the living, those who have to live out their lives in Sri

Lanka in the shadow of terror and death.

Through all the horrendous events recorded in this book, the indomitable spirit of the Tamils of Sri Lanka shines like a beacon in a dark sky. Their superhuman courage and endurance in the face of the terror that has been unleashed on them must arouse the admiration of the world. Their sufferings must move it to action. The same indomitable spirit that defied the might of the Sinhalese army will prove the invincible force that will break the chains that bind them. United under the banner of Eelam, Tamils not only in Sri Lanka but all over the world, will strive, will fight and will prevail. No cause could be more just than theirs and no prize more worthy of their striving.

Appendix A

From Inside The Refugee Camp—The Horror Story

Diary of events recorded by an inmate.

Wednesday 27th July 1983

5.00 p.m. (Sri Lanka time) I decided to maintain a diary at the refugee camp in the Ratmalana Airport premises. I made this decision after seeing thousands of Tamils in a state of despair and shock after being rendered homeless due to the unexpected violence which was unleashed upon them since the dawn of Monday the 25th. Many had lost their dear ones—murdered by Sinhalese savages. Young girls had lost their virginity through brutal Sinhala rapists.

I am going to start this diary in the fervent hope that someday I or somebody else would be able to get it across to the outside world—the civilised world—so that they would know the atrocities committed by people who call themselves Sinhala Buddhists.

I have been at this refugee camp since Monday night and am going to reflect back on events which had occurred in this camp since then and also on my personal experience before taking refuge at the Ratmalana Airport. I also intend interviewing other refugees of this camp and narrating their experiences here so that the world will know the real story.

Monday 25th July 1983

6.30 a.m. I left for my work place from my house in Maharagama. When I reached the bus halting place on the main road, I saw scores of people gathered in the middle of the road. Wayside shops were burning. Two people were being assaulted by a group of men at a distance of about thirty yards from me. Little did I guess that these were the early indications of a communal holocaust. I called aside a man who was not involved in any activity and asked him what was happening. The answer came like a Jack in the bus and jolted me. "They have killed thirteen of our people in Jaffna. We must avenge their deaths. We must kill all the Tamils. That is what we are doing." Realising the consequences if this man knew that I was a Tamil, I quickly hurried away. The man's words stirred my memory. On Sunday evening I had heard that a group of thirteen soldiers were ambushed and killed by a Tamil guerrilla group in the suburbs of Jaffna in retaliation for the raping of three Tamil girls by the armed forces in the north. Still I did not think that this was the beginning of a major riot and decided to continue on my journey to work. With great difficulty I managed to get into a bus. The bus travelled very slowly because the road was crowded with people. On both sides of the road I could

see shops burning. People were screaming. When we reached the Nugegoda Junction the bus did not seem to move at all. Thugs were stopping passing vehicles and demanding Tamils who were travelling in them. They were armed with knives, axes—(they seemed to have an unlimited range of weapons). I peeped out of the window and I saw one thug raising an axe to fell a helpless young boy. I shuddered and looked the other way. I prayed to God that nothing should happen to him. On the other side two cars were being smashed. There was what looked like a Toyota Hi-all van just catching fire. Suddenly I heard blood-curdling screams. I realised to my horror that there were people inside the van. Unable to look at this gruesome sight I helplessly turned my head away. A little while later a group of thugs came towards our bus. One of them asked the conductor whether there were any Tamils in the bus. The conductor gleefully pointed out a Tamil lady who was seated in front of me. Seeing the men come towards her, she panicked and hurriedly erased the *Kumkum* on her forehead. (Kumkum is a sort of red powder sacredly anointed on the upper forehead by married Tamil females.) One hefty bearded thug stabbed her in the stomach with a broken bottle. She started screaming and there was chaos in the bus. All the people started getting out of the bus. I hurriedly glanced back before getting down. They were pushing the lady out of the bus through the small window. I got down and mingled with the wayside Sinhalese crowd who were enjoying the fun. The lady was covered all over with blood. One of the men poured petrol over her and set fire to her. The other men were clapping and dancing. I could not believe my eyes. I was shivering all over. In all my life I had only seen funeral pyres—not humans being burnt alive. There was a procession of Buddhist monks walking towards the junction from the other end. They were waving and shouting. One of them called out to the thugs to kill all the Tamils and not let a single one escape. I was terrified. I thought for a while and decided that the best course of action would be to get home as soon as possible. I decided to walk back home since it was very dangerous to travel by bus.

9.30 a.m. I started to walk towards my home which was about four miles from the Nugegoda junction. People were looting from the wayside Tamil shops. After the shops were completely ransacked they were set on fire. I sighted an army jeep at a distance. With a sigh of relief I hurried my steps. But a shock awaited me. There were about six soldiers on top of the jeep and they were directing the mob to loot and plunder. I stared in dismay. Surely they were there to maintain law and order!

10.45 a.m. I arrived at my house in Maharagama. Nothing had happened here yet. I went into the house and started praying. After awhile I took a spade and went to the back garden and dug three trenches. I then took most of the valuables in the house, covered them with cloth and polythene and buried them.

11.30 a.m. I heard a big commotion outside. I went to the window and looked out. Several government jeeps and buses belonging to the Sri Lanka Central Transport board came speeding and halted suddenly with their brakes screeching. People started alighting from the vehicles with knives and swords in their hands. There were about 200 men. They systematically started to run towards the Tamil houses. About ten people who appeared to be the leaders were holding sheets of paper in their hands. (I later came to know that they were electoral register lists.) They were directing the mob to the Tamil houses. Two of the men were very familiar. I had seen them speak at an election meeting of the ruling government party (United National Party) recently. There were three Tamil houses opposite mine. The men smashed the windows and threw petrol bombs inside. With a blaze the houses caught fire and the flames rose to the sky. People were screaming. The fire was so intensive that it compelled the mob to move further away.

11.45 a.m. I closed the window and went inside. I lit a candle to St. Anthony to protect all the Tamils.

12.45 p.m. I switched on the radio and tuned into the news bulletin from the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation. The defence ministry announced that curfew would be in force from 2.00 p.m. I switched off the radio and continued to pray. I could not pray with concentration as I could hear screams in the distance.

1.30 p.m. I was still praying when I heard noises outside. I opened the window slightly and looked out. Some men were dragging two girls by their long hair. I recognised them as two sisters who were living further away. The elder Tamil girl was eighteen years old and the younger one eleven years. They were brought just near my house. The mob gathered around them and started discussing. Apparently they were discussing what to do with the girls. Then one man pulled the younger girl by the hand and started chopping her with a knife. I stared in horror. The elder girl was speechless and looked as if though she had been turned into a statue. Then suddenly she fell on her knees and begged them not to harm her little sister, amidst the insane derisive laughter from the men. Then, one of the men took an axe and chopped the head off the younger girl. The elder girl looked dumbfounded. The mixed feelings of incalculable fear and horror, which she had just experienced when her little sister was killed brutally were replaced by a vague sense of helpless impassivity. She did not protest when the men stripped her of her clothes violently. She was impervious not only to the pain that was inflicted on her, but also, in her innocent ignorance, she felt no shame at the irreparable humiliation forced on her. It was only after about twenty men had raped her that one of the men cautioned the others and shook her up roughly. She began to scream and struggle and looked all around her and realized for the first time that she was bleeding. I made an effort and continued to be a helpless onlooker. She suddenly clenched her fists and then with a sudden look of helpless surrender on her face she looked up at the sky and began to mutter under her breath. I could almost imagine her saying "Oh Lord, forgive them for they do not know what they do." She let off a sigh and swooned into unconsciousness. The men then poured petrol over her and burnt her. This was the second time in a day that I had seen a person being burnt alive. I wondered whether we had gone back in time to the middle ages. But I am sure the pre-historic men—the savages were much more civilised than the present day Sinhala Buddhists.

3.15 p.m. Curfew was supposed to be in force since 2.00 p.m., but the entire area was like a carnival ground. People were carrying away looted goods. The looted goods ranged from clothing to furniture. An army truck came by and the looters made no attempt to run. Apparently they were well informed that the security forces would do nothing to stop them.

4.30 p.m. The same activity was going on. The looters were taking their own time. Surprisingly they had not attacked my house yet. Probably because I had not registered myself in the Maharagama electoral voting list. Anyhow, somebody is sure to warn them that I was a Tamil. Luckily, I was alone in the house since my family were away in Jaffna to attend a relatives wedding.

6.15 p.m. The crowd was lessening but still the looting was going on. I got a shock when I saw two girls carrying a pedestal fan. Another group of girls (I consider them to be in the age group 14-18) were carrying away bundles which I supposed contained clothes.

7.00 p.m. It was dark. Suddenly I heard knocking on my front door. I was terribly frightened. I had a feeling that death was knocking at my door. Summoning all my

courage I opened the front door slightly. To my relief it was my Catholic Sinhala neighbour. He cautioned me not to make any noise and came inside. He informed me that the situation outside was dangerous and advised me to go to a refugee camp for safety. I agreed and told my neighbour to make the necessary arrangements. He told me to get ready immediately and went away.

7.10 p.m. I began to pack a small bag with a few clothes and some tinned foodstuffs. I also packed a bottle of water and put in some sheets of paper and two pens. I prayed and waited till my neighbour arrived.

7.30 p.m. My neighbour arrived and told me that a police jeep was waiting outside to take me to the refugee camp at the Ratmalana airport. I locked the front door and gave the key to my neighbour and begged him to look after my house. He said he would do so, but feared the other Sinhalese neighbours will point out my house to the mob. I was then escorted to the police jeep which was parked a few yards away.

7.50 p.m. I was travelling in the jeep with six other Tamils. They were all living in the area where I lived. I could see houses burning. After a few minutes we saw a massive building on fire. It was the Hirdaramani garment factory belonging to an Indian. Regularly I heard screaming and yelling, but this was a common occurrence now. The others in the jeep were silent with stark fear on their faces. I could well imagine how the Jews would have felt when Hitler of Nazi Germany sent them to the gas chambers. I could remember seeing a war film in which Jews were suffocated by gas in vehicles which were supposed to take them to the safety of refugee camps.

8.30 p.m. I arrived at the refugee camp at the Ratmalana airport. I got down from the jeep and strolled around. There were about five thousand people crowded in a hangar. This was a good measure of the intensity of the riots since the refugee camp was opened only today.

9.15 p.m. I began to feel weary after the tension I had undergone. I drank some water and went to sleep.

Tuesday 26th July, 1983

6.00 p.m. I awoke from a nights sleep at the refugee camp. Most of the people were wide awake. Children were crying in hunger. I got up and went towards a group of children who were crying and gave them the foodstuffs which I had packed in my bag.

7.15 p.m. I went around the camp. There were only three toilets and one tap for all the refugees. Most of the refugees were housed in a hangar. The rest were on the tarred area outside the hangar. There are two hangars at the Ratmalana airport. The larger one was 100 × 60 square yards (approximately) in area and the smaller one approximately 75 × 40 square yards in area. The refugees were housed in the small hangar while the large one housed three air taxis (small airplanes) belonging to a private organisation. The tarred area outside the small hangar was about 100 × 60 square yards in area. The smaller hangar was open at one end to the west and the larger one open at both ends to the north and south. The two hangars were interconnected by a passage of about 10 yards in length and 5 feet in width.

8.30 a.m. I had walked around the camp and observed that about 15 soldiers and 4 policemen were guarding the camp. Refugees were pouring into the camp at the rate of about 250 per hour. There were men without wives, children without their parents, wives looking for their husbands and mothers for their children. They were all waiting in stark mute fear. There were young women yet in their nakedness, after they had

been stripped on the streets. They had escaped death but not degradation. They did not feel any sense of shame, after their minds had been paralysed at what they had experienced and witnessed. They stood or wandered about the camp like so many automatons, not feeling the gaze of strangers on them, or the rude remarks of perverted soldiers who were enjoying a grandstand view of what some of their sadistic minds had conjectured but never in reality beheld until that day.

10.00 a.m. There was no sign of food being provided for the refugees. There was no medicine available and no doctors to attend to refugees who had been partly burnt and stabbed. One refugee had succumbed to his injuries just a little while ago. The dead body was still there with no one to take it away.

12.00 p.m. People were beginning to feel the heat. There was still no food provided and refugees were queuing in their hundreds to fill their stomachs with water from the solitary tap provided.

2.30 p.m. There was still no food provided and refugees were pouring into the camp. There were about eight thousand refugees in the camp now.

3.00 p.m. Dr. Ariyaratne, the Sarvodaya leader visited the camp and provided some milk for the babies. He also brought two volunteers to help.

4.30 p.m. I heard that there was a massacre at the Welikada prison. The other refugees were saying that thirty-five prisoners were killed in prison. The government says that the Sinhala prisoners had killed the Tamil prisoners. Most of the Tamil prisoners who were killed were taken into custody for advocating a separate state for the Tamils. One refugee entered into conversation with me and asked how it was possible for the Tamil prisoners to be killed without government assistance. Surely, he said "if the Sinhalese prisoners had enough power to break open their cells and find weapons, why the hell hadn't they escaped earlier instead of killing fellow Tamil prisoners and extending their sentences. I am terribly sure soldiers opened their cell doors and provided them with weapons." Though I didn't say so, I heartily agreed with him and wondered what would happen to us if the soldiers went berserk and massacred us. The government would give some excuse to the world and hush the thing up.

6.15 p.m. The sun was beginning to go down but yet there was no sign of food being provided. Only milk was provided and that too only for the children, as there was not enough supplies. Sarvodaya volunteers distributed the milk.

7.45 p.m. I heard from somebody who had listened to the radio that the curfew which was in force the whole day today would be lifted for a few hours tomorrow. I wondered what use the curfew was since refugees were continuing to pour into the camp. The curfew was a warning for all the Tamils to be inside their houses and for the Sinhalese to loot and plunder.

9.00 p.m. Most of the people were preparing to go to sleep. None of them had eaten a morsel of food for the last two days. Thank God—at least the children got some milk.

9.30 p.m. I was so tired and hungry that like the rest I lay down and fell asleep.

1.00 p.m. I suddenly awoke, disturbed by some sound. Some other people too had got up. Someone had yelled or screamed in their dreams. I looked all around. The Airport control tower searchlight was sweeping the entire area systematically. I could see the beam being flashed far away. I could faintly see the outline of the soldiers who were guarding the perimeter of the airport.

1.15 a.m. I lay down and fell asleep.

6.00 a.m. I woke up and was feeling terribly hungry. I had not eaten anything since Monday morning. Most of the refugees were wide awake now. They were beginning to feel the pangs of hunger. Children were crying.

6.30 a.m. I met two friends while wandering about the camp. We decided to form a voluntary group to see to the welfare of the refugees.

7.15 a.m. We had managed to find 30 volunteers—mostly young boys and girls in the age group 18-25. We called ourselves the refugee action committee. The girls began to prepare a list of things the refugees needed most urgently. Five volunteers went to speak to the authorities in charge of the camp. We asked them to provide the refugees with food or otherwise that they would die of starvation.

8.00 a.m. We began a rough count of the refugees.

8.30 a.m. There were twelve thousand refugees in the camp. The volunteers were told that Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali, Minister of Trade and M.P. for Ratmalana will see that food parcels are provided in the afternoon. The food parcels were to be prepared by the Sri Lanka Ports Authority.

9.15 a.m. We requested the authorities to clear the larger hangar and provide it to the refugees. After much persuasion the authorities conceded to our request.

9.30 a.m. Both hangars were full of refugees. Refugees were continuously coming into the camp.

11.00 a.m. Somebody who had heard the radio told us that most of the Tamil owned industries were completely destroyed. Seventeen major manufacturing concerns had also been gutted—among them the industrial giants—the Maharjah organisation and the St. Anthony's group. The only major firm which escaped was MASCONS Ltd. It was very surprising because the factories situated in the same vicinity had been destroyed. Someone remarked that it was not surprising since Industries Minister Mr. Cyril Matthew—An ardent Sinhala Buddhist leader had shares in it.

12.30 p.m. Dr. Ariyaratne, head of the Sarvodaya movement came with some volunteers. As requested by the Refugee action committee (RAC—I will refer to ourselves as the RAC in future), Dr. Ariyaratne's volunteers brought feminine towels. They were distributed by the girls. They also distributed milk for the children—although there wasn't enough to go round.

2.00 p.m. Still no signs of the promised lunch parcels. Some people had fainted. There was a temporary red cross post with one volunteer. We managed to find final year medical students among the refugees and they volunteered to see to the patients. Some medicine was provided by the Sri Lanka red cross.

3.00 p.m. CARE biscuits were provided by some foreigners and they were distributed by the volunteers. They were packed in boxes on which it was written—A gift from the people of America. The biscuits were grabbed gratefully and gobbled up. On behalf of the refugees we would like to thank the people of America.

4.30 p.m. A foreigner was manhandled by soldiers and taken out of the camp. He was a journalist and had slipped in somehow.

4.45 p.m. The lunch parcels arrived. The volunteers made the refugees queue up and the parcels were distributed. There were only three thousand parcels. They were

distributed to the women, children and old men.

5.30 p.m. The volunteers dug pits since the three toilets were insufficient. I was writing my diary while the pits were being dug.

8.00 p.m. Soldiers began to search the refugees. The refugees were scared. They found two cameras and smashed them. Clearly the government didn't want the outside world to know what was happening inside the camp.

11.00 p.m. Dinner parcels arrived. There were not enough parcels. The parcels contained a handful of rice, dhal curry and coconut sambol. I shared a parcel with two other volunteers. We drank water and managed to fill our stomachs. All the refugees were doing the same.

2.30 a.m. Most of the refugees were sleeping. The volunteers were awake. Suddenly we heard yelling and in the distance we could see fire brands. We wondered what was happening. We went some way down to the runway. There were hordes of men carrying weapons and fire brands. We couldn't believe it. The camp was being attacked. We ran back and woke all the refugees. The army soldiers shot back. A few of the mob were hit. But the soldiers initially shot in the air. After some time the soldiers managed to chase the mob off.

3.00 p.m. Nobody slept. All were terrified by that attack. It could happen again. All were talking of the refugee camp massacre in Lebanon. It had come close home.

Thursday, 28th July

6.30 a.m. Most of the refugees had not slept the previous night. They were scared to death. There was a long queue at the tap to wash their faces. The queue was about one mile long.

7.30 a.m. I met a young girl of 13 years who was crying very loudly. She had come to the camp the previous day. On Monday morning, people had come in government 504 Peugeot cars and buses to their house in Dehiwela. She was inside with her father and eldest brother. Her mother was in Germany and the second eldest brother had gone to school. The mob had come to the gate and forcibly opened it. Since they came suddenly, they had no chance of escape. The father and the brother got on top of the roof and began throwing tiles at the mob. The father fell down and the mob caught him and poured petrol over him. He managed to escape into the house and brought out his shotgun. He began to shoot at the legs. But the men overpowered him and set fire to him. They had also caught her brother and set fire to him. Then they had cheered and made victory signs while they were screaming in pain. She was watching through the bathroom window. The mob had then invited the neighbours to loot and all the neighbours had come and taken all their things. She had managed to escape to the Dehiwela Police Station. She knew the Inspector since he was a family friend. The Inspector had told her that couldn't take any action without government orders. She had then gone to a friends place and from there was brought to the camp on Wednesday. I put her in the hands of one volunteer's family to console her and see to her needs.

9.00 a.m. I met a lady who was dazed with shock. With great difficulty I managed to make her talk. On Monday morning, her small twin daughters aged 8 years had gone to school as usual. Her husband was in Nigeria. At about 9.00 a.m. she had heard that there was trouble and that schools were closing early. She had hurried with great difficulty to bring her daughters from a convent school in Bambalapitiya. They couldn't get a bus, so, with her two daughters she had walked back home. At Kiralapone, they

were stopped by a mob and were asked to recite a Buddhist prayer. Since they were unable to do so as they were Tamil Catholics, they held the lady firmly and made her watch while they tied the two small girls together and threw a firebrand on them. She was made to look on at this gruesome sight. After they were completely burnt, she was set loose and was chased away. I couldn't control myself when I heard her story. These Sinhala Buddhists were worse than animals.

9.45 a.m. Dr. Ariyaratne arrived. He brought milk for the refugee children and Triplosa. He is such a wonderful man—a complete contrast to all the other Sinhala people.

10.00 a.m. I met a couple who were living in Borella. On Monday morning hordes of schoolboys in white uniform from ANANDA COLLEGE—a leading Sinhala Buddhist school—had surrounded the Tamil houses in Borella and smashed them with stones and sticks. Then they had pulled all the Tamils out and had assaulted them. Then some Buddhist monks from the temple in Maradana had come carrying firebrands and set fire to all the houses. I wondered what the country was coming to. The Sinhala people did not seem to have a conscience or fear for God although they practiced a philosophy taught by a God fearing leader—Gautama the Buddha.

10.30 a.m. Mr Lalith Athulathmudali, Minister of Trade and M.P. for Ratmalana arrived. Hundreds of refugees flocked around him. Although they knew that there would be no assistance from the government since most of the cabinet ministers and M.P.s were anti-Tamil, most of the Tamils had great faith in this dapper Oxford graduate. He was considered a sympathetic moderate by most of the Tamils and therefore it was not surprising to see him surrounded by refugees. The volunteers told him the problems the refugees had and he replied that he would personally look into them. He also informed that he would provide them with ships for refugees who wished to travel to Jaffna.

12.30 p.m. Breakfast arrived. Plain bread and tea without milk or sugar.

2.30 p.m. A foreigner drove a white jeep into the camp. He came in and began to set up two speakers and a microphone. On one side of the jeep there was a label—Save The Children (U.K.). I was overjoyed. At last we are in safe hands. There were three soldiers looting on. They were clueless as to what was happening. Then suddenly a Colonel came. (I recognised the stripes) and held him. They had a heated argument and his jeep was searched while hundreds of refugees looked on. I later came to know that he was Mr Wakely—Director—Save the Children (U.K.). I and other volunteers heard every word that passed between the Colonel and Mr Walely, and am going to put it down here.

Colonel: What the hell are you doing here?

Mr Wakely: I am from SAve the Children (U.K.).

Colonel: How did you get in here?

Mr Wakely: I have got a permit.

Colonel: Have you got any photographic equipment?

Mr Wakely: No. You can search me if you like. I have no such equipment. I have come here to organise the refugee camp. I hear that they have no food and water and other basic necessities.

Colonel: All right, we'll search you, but we have got orders not to allow anyone into the camp, particularly foreigners with photographic equipment.

Mr Wakely: I am not a journalist. I am a social service volunteer. Please allow me to do my job.

He was then searched.

3.00 p.m. Mr Wakely addressed us through the microphone. One of our volunteers translated into Tamil. I will put down his speech exactly as I heard him.

‘‘I have come from Save the Children (U.K.)—a voluntary organisation to help to organise this refugee camp and to provide you with all what you need. I have a few volunteers from my own organisation, but I need about 100 volunteers to help me. We must dig more pits and water wells. We must distribute stuff—foodstuffs and clothing to all the refugees. I have plenty—it is from the people of Great Britain.’’

There was thunderous applause from the refugees. Everyone was overjoyed. Thank God for Great Britain for having such wonderful people.

3.30 p.m. Things began to get moving. More volunteers were recruited. Drilling rigs were brought and wells were dug. Volunteers started to sweep the place.

3.45 p.m. True to his work, Mr Wakely brought lunch parcels. There were more than enough and the refugees were very happy. There was hope in their faces again. Desire to live rose again. At last we had some people among us who were genuinely interested in our welfare.

5.30 p.m. Some bathing wells were dug and completed. There was a big rush for baths. People were having an opportunity to wash themselves after four days.

6.30 p.m. Care biscuits were distributed and tea was provided. Mr Wakely supervised the distribution and everything went smoothly. There was enough to go around.

9.00 p.m. Someone had a radio and we gathered around it to hear the News and the Presidential address to the nation. We were shocked at his speech. All the refugees who heard the speech were distinctly shocked and startled. He seemed to endorse the actions of the majority Sinhala Buddhists. He said that he would never go against their wishes. Clearly this was a most disturbing speech. Nobody expected this from him of all people. One refugee said ‘‘After all, we Tamils voted him to represent the Colombo South electorate which was predominantly Tamil. His actions were no different to those of Hitler’s. In Hitler’s time, he never called himself the dictator of Germany. He called himself ‘‘The Fuhrer’’. Similarly, Junius Richard Jayawardene, the Racial Dictator, is calling himself the President of democratic Sri Lanka.’’

10.00 p.m. Dinner had not arrived yet and Mr Wakely was not to be seen.

10.30 p.m. Dinner parcels arrived. There were only 3000 parcels. Mr Wakely did not come. We were told that he was unable to come since he hadn’t a curfew pass. The government had refused him a curfew pass. This news came as a big blow to us. Surely, the government was not so inhuman.

11.00 p.m. I did not have dinner. I drank some water and fell asleep.

Friday, 29th July, 1983

7.00 a.m. I and some of my friends decided to trace some of our friends and relations who were in this camp. We decided to set out early and return before 2.00 p.m.—the curfew deadline. Since the situation outside was dangerous we decided to go in batches of two.

7.30 a.m. We reached the main Galle Road. We managed to get into a bus. On the way we saw shops burning. At Dehiwela my friend and I parted. He went further to trace his relatives. I went to a Brugher friend’s house and had a bath and a meal and went to sleep.

1.00 p.m. I set out to Colpetty to trace my relatives. At Wellawatte I got caught in

a traffic jam. Two cars were burning. I saw something burning on the road and realised that it was a body. People were running. Shop windows were being closed. I wondered what was happening. People were shouting. "Tigers are coming. Tigers have come to destroy Colombo." They were referring to the Tamil guerilla group operating in the North. Some people were being assaulted.

1.15 p.m. I decided to return to the refugee camp. I got into a speeding private bus. On the way back I saw several dead bodies along the Galle Road. There were cars burning.

1.35 p.m. I returned to the camp safely. Two boys had been burnt alive just outside the camp ten minutes ago. They too had gone out in search of their relatives and had met with a drastic end to their lives.

2.00 p.m. I heard the radio announcing to the public not to believe rumours that Tigers were in Colombo.

2.30 p.m. My friends and I discussed the day's events. One friend had gone to the refugee camp at the Bambalapitiya Temple. He told us that they were starving there and that we were better off than them. I wondered where all the foreign relief supplies were directed to. Surely, those kind foreigners did not send them to be stacked in government officials' houses!

Another friend had been to the refugee camp at Thurstan College, Colombo 3. There at 12.30 p.m. when the soldiers guarding the camp had heard the rumour that "Tigers were coming", they had selected 25 refugees and sent them to the middle and had warned them that they would be held hostage and shot if the Tigers attacked the camp. We were shocked. We had thought Hitler's firing squads were a thing of the past.

4.00 p.m. Five people were brought to the camp in an ambulance. They were kept in a small room (earlier an airport office). I managed to get into the room. A foreign journalist was interviewing them. He also had slipped in with them and was eyeing the door cautiously. The family consisted of father, mother, daughter and two sons. Their legs and spines were broken. The daughter's hands, too, were broken. They were living in a house in Wellawatte just behind a Tamil cinema. On Monday morning, a mob had come and set fire to the house. They had run to the adjoining cinema and run upstairs. The mob had come and set fire to the cinema too, and the family were trapped upstairs with flames all around them. Then, the whole family had taken a suicidal leap from the second floor and landed with their spines, legs and hands broken. They were later admitted to the Kalubowila hospital just two miles away. On Friday afternoon (today) the hospital was attacked by a mob. There were many other Tamil patients there with burns and injuries. Attendants and nurses took off the saline drips, and other life giving apparatus was disconnected in sheer hatred. The mob had come to their ward and a Tamil Inspector who had come to visit them was chopped and killed when he had gone to defend this helpless family. He did not give his life in vain, because the family managed to come to this camp with the assistance of two Norwegian medical students. They had a miraculous escape for all the other patients in the hospital were killed.

6.00 p.m. CARE biscuits were distributed.

6.30 p.m. My friends and I went to bathe in the well.

8.30 p.m. Mr. Wakely brought dinner parcels and they were distributed.

9.00 p.m. We tuned into the radio. It was announced that there was an unprecedented amount of deaths today due to rumours and that the curfew will be imposed over the whole weekend.

9.30 p.m. I ate my dinner and went to sleep.

Saturday, 30th July, 1983

7.00 a.m. Dr. Ariyaratne and Mrs. Ariyaratne brought milk and Triposha as usual. Soon word got around that they had not come the previous day because they were attacked and were threatened if they helped the Tamils. Mrs. Ariyaratne also hinted that they were being pressurised from all sides. It was quite obvious that they were helping without the government's blessings.

9.00 a.m. Mr Wakely brought hot bread for breakfast. There was tea with milk to go with it. Mr Wakely was not at all bothered at the scowling faces of soldiers.

11.30 a.m. I met a girl who was working as a receptionist at Dasaprakash—an Indian vegetarian restaurant. According to her, on Monday morning boys from nearby St. Peters College had come and looted the restaurant.

12.00 a.m. I met two families who lived in Wellawatte. Two Professors, one from the University of Moratuwa and the other from the University of Kelaniya had come along with the mob—army men and Buddhist monks. Some affected refugees—university students, clearly recognised one as Professor J.

1.00 p.m. Mr Wakely came and said that lunch would be delayed and to please excuse him. Though he didn't say so, he gave the impression that something was wrong. Soon word was going round. Mr Wakely had come in the food lorry with 2 soldiers as escorts when at Dehiwela a mob had got in and sprayed something. Fearing that the food will be poisoned, as a precautionary measure, the parcels were dumped into the sea by him.

3.30 p.m. CARE biscuits were distributed.

5.00 p.m. Some people were having diarrhea. I too was not feeling well.

6.30 p.m. I was having high fever.

9.00 p.m. Dinner parcels arrived. There was no lunch today. I couldn't eat. I swallowed a disprin and fell asleep.

Sunday, 31st July, 1983.

7.00 a.m. Volunteers organised, and Catholic and Hindu devotional songs were sung. It was superbly co-ordinated and I was surprised and at the same time proud of the response. I too joined in although I was terribly sick.

8.30 a.m. 1500 refugees left for Jaffna by ship.

10.00 a.m. I fainted and was taken to the medical post.

12.30 p.m. Lunch parcels arrived but I couldn't eat. I lay in the sick room with high fever.

Monday, 1st August, 1983.

I was in the sick room the whole day.

Tuesday, 2nd August, 1983.

I was in the sick room the whole day. The fever had gradually reduced but I was feeling very weak.

Wednesday, 3rd August, 1983.

I was feeling better but I was not allowed to leave the sick room in case there was infectious diseases. A foreigner from Save the Children (U.K.) with a slight limp was supervising the medical post.

Thursday, 4th August, 1983.

7.00 a.m.

Harrah! I left the sick room. I began to wander about the camp. I was feeling very active now.

8.30 a.m. I met someone who was staying at the housing scheme in Delhande, Nugegoda. According to him, government officials came in government buses. They had come armed with weapons and their leaders had sheets of paper in their hands. No doubt they were electoral register lists. Soldiers, air force men and university students had led the mob. He had recognised two Buddhist priests from the Gangaramaya Temple.

10.30 a.m. We were informed that most of the refugees would be transferred to St. Thomas' College.

1.00 p.m. Lunch parcels were distributed.

4.30 p.m. CARE biscuits and plain tea was supplied. We were asked to get ready to be transferred to St. Thomas' College, Mt. Lavinia.

6.30 p.m. We were transported during curfew time in 40 buses (1600 refugees) to St. Thomas' College, Mt. Lavinia. The others were left behind in Ratmalana. While we were transported, although it was curfew time, people were on the Galle Road. They jeered, hooted and clapped at us. The two army trucks which were escorting us went one in front and one behind. The soldiers did not make any attempt to stop the crowd jeering. They even threw stones. It was like Jesus being taken to Calvary.

7.00 p.m. We arrived at St. Thomas' College, Mt. Lavinia.

7.30 p.m. We occupied all the classrooms in the College.

9.00 p.m. Dinner parcels arrived and were distributed. I ate and went to sleep.

Friday, 5th August, 1983.

8.30 a.m. Breakfast was served. We were made to sit in the Hostel dining room and food was served on plates for the first time. We were also given forks and spoons. Dishes full of good looking food was laid on the table. Everyone was surprised. We started eating. Some men were filming us with a video camera. Now I realised why we were transferred and all the fuss was to film us and show to the outside world that we were looked after very after very well.

12.45 p.m. Lunch was served and we were filmed again.

1.15 p.m. There was an urgent message for me. My parents had wired from Jaffna inquiring after me. They had sent a message to a Muslim friend to trace me and send me to Jaffna. I said good-bye to my friends and went off with my friend. Although I hated life at the camp, I felt sad at leaving my friends and other refugees who were all like one family to me. I am giving the diary over to a friend of mine who has friends in the United Kingdom, as he has a better chance of getting this diary across to the outside world. I have only related incidents which I have personally seen or heard. There are other thousands of horror stories to be told—the murders committed by Sinhala Buddhists. I swear by the Holy Bible that everything written in this diary is true. For security reasons—otherwise the Sri Lanka government would murder me and my family, I am not disclosing my name.

THE END

Appendix B

Testimony of a student aged 19, interviewed by the authors in London on 16.9.84 on his recent captivity and torture.
(His name is withheld for fear of reprisals on his family).

The army arrived at my home at 5.30 in the morning of 30.4.84 in five trucks and three jeeps. They broke down the doors and smashed the windows and put guns through them. Soldiers poured into my room and pulled me from the bed while other soldiers searched the house. My father asked why I was being taken away and they said "For questioning". They would not tell him where I was being taken. I was put in a truck and taken to the next village where another boy was picked up. We were handcuffed with our hands behind our heads. Several boys in the village between the ages of 15 and 25 were rounded up and I was asked whether I knew them. When I said "No" I was kicked. At 11.30 a.m. we arrived at Palaly camp the biggest in the Northern Province, containing large numbers of army personnel. We were thrown into a cell. By this time it was 12.30. We had been given no food or drink. One of the boys asked for water but it was refused. I was asked what movement I belonged to and I said I did not belong to any movement. They said I was lying. So the following morning at half past 11 they took me to another camp at Elephant Pass, 50 miles away. No food or water was given on the journey. On the way to Elephant Pass they changed trucks four times as a precaution against attack. We reached Elephant Pass at 12.45 pm. I was put in a cell.

At 2.0 p.m. they took me to another room for questioning. An army captain was in charge. He asked me what movement I belonged to and I told him I did not belong to a movement. They took off my clothes. I was then told to hang on to an iron bar overhead and they beat me with an S-lon pipe filled with sand. This was repeated eight or nine times. The other boy arrested with me was brought in and they did the same thing with him. Then they asked him to tell them the names of his friends. He gave them the names of friends and classmates. Then we were told to put on our clothes and taken back to our cells. After half an hour they took the other boy to Palaly camp because they wanted him to identify boys they were going to arrest. They did not find any of the boys—they had escaped to another village.

When they heard this news my captors became angry. They brought me out of the cell and took me to the same place I had been the day before—"the butcher's shop" as I now learnt it was known by the prisoners. I was told to lie down on the floor. They took off my sarong and tied my ankles. My wrists were put in handcuffs beneath

my knees. I was then hung upside down from a cross-bar on the ceiling 10 or 12 feet from the floor. Five guards surrounded me—two beat me with S-lon rods on the feet and two others beat me all over my body. The fifth held his hand over my mouth to prevent me crying out. The army captain stood watching. After some time he asked me again to name my movement. I said I was a student. He asked other questions such as whether I knew how to use a gun and whether I had been to India. I said “No” to all the questions. After one hour my torturers took off for a tea break. While they were away someone brought a large cube of ice which he placed on my private parts where it was left for twenty minutes. [This is believed to be used to freeze the tissues to prevent external evidence of injury while still enabling the victim to feel the pain.] The soldiers then started beating me over my private parts. The pain was intense. I cried out and they held a hand over my mouth to stop me. This torture lasted for two hours. After this I had to yield and untruthfully said that I belonged to the Tigers. I named about 20 people, giving some true and some false names. Only when I had done this did they stop torturing me and put me down. My whole body was swollen and painful and I could not stand up. They forced me to stand, striking me with thick pieces of rope. But I couldn’t walk, so they dragged me to a tank of muddy water and put me in it. I bathed my body in the muddy water and after five minutes I was hauled out and taken once more to the same army captain. After he had seen all the damage to my body, he said, “Why didn’t you tell the truth before?” He said that if I had told the truth they wouldn’t have beaten me up. I told the captain that I had lied to stop them torturing me and that I was not involved in any movement. He replied, “If you don’t confess you will be tortured every day.”

So every day for a week they repeated the same torture. Then they gave me a pill which caused my body to become numb. [Other similar reports mention this pill. It is believed that like the use of ice, it is used to minimise the external evidence of injury to the tissues.] After that they tortured me again, this time for only half an hour. The following day they gave me the same pill. I didn’t swallow it but spat it out when the guards were not looking. So I didn’t have the same numbness. They tortured me again, but this time not for so long.

All this time I was kept in a small cell with 10 or 12 other prisoners. We slept on the floor but there was not enough room to sleep properly. When we tried to sleep the guards threw water over us to wake us. They gave us our food through the bars of our cell, a piece of bread in the morning and a little plain rice midday and evening. When we asked for water we were told we could drink our urine. Every 36 hours we were released, one at a time, to go to the toilet. We were not allowed out to pass urine. We were each given four drachms of water morning and evening for washing. We could not shower or clean our teeth. If we talked to each other the guards poked a rod through the bars and hit us. When the guards were drunk they opened the cells and pulled out the prisoners and did whatever they liked with them. Many of the boys had been wounded during their arrest. One had damage to his feet. Another had broken ribs and a wound in his side. He lay in the cell for 24 hours without treatment. He was not even given a cup of water. Every day they brought new batches of boys from the villages, 30 or 40 at a time. They were asked if they knew me. When they said they didn’t, they were beaten up. One boy had a snake put into his mouth. Some of the boys had chillis put up their back passages and in their nostrils. One boy who resisted arrest and fought with the soldiers made them so angry that they took him to the camp and tortured him with an electric drill, drilling wounds all over his body and he died. There was no inquest. It was given out that he had died while resisting arrest and fighting with the army.

After being tortured, one boy being brought back to his cell picked up a piece of broken

glass and later tried to commit suicide by stabbing himself in the stomach with it. He was taken to a hospital in Colombo to be treated. He was then brought back and his torture began all over again.

On the 21st day I was released. My parents, through an intermediary, paid 50,000 rupees (£1,500) to the army captain to set me free. My father had to sell a piece of land to raise the money. This happens a lot now. The army officers are taking advantage of the situation to become rich.

Comment

When we interviewed him on 16.9.84 he was still badly shaken by his experiences. He was little more than a schoolboy, slight of build, young for his age, simple and unsophisticated in his manner. It would be difficult to imagine anyone less likely to fit the popular conceit of a "terrorist" than this quiet and inoffensive young boy.

His story is typical of many in the barbarous cruelties inflicted on hundreds of young Tamil boys by the army and bears eloquent testimony to the complete impunity and unaccountability of the occupation force. Typical also were the "overkill" methods employed in his arrest. The trucks and jeeps, the smashing of doors and windows to arrest one inoffensive young boy underlines the mounting paranoia of the army. The use of torture to extract "confessions" that implicate other innocent boys, while being self-defeating, must obviously feed this paranoia.

Most disturbing is what is apparently a recent development—the extortion of money from parents to obtain their sons' release. This is obviously a lucrative racket and may account for the increasing number of arrests of young boys in the Tamil areas. A government that has given seemingly unlimited powers of life and death, freedom and captivity, to a brutal and sadistic army of occupation must take the ultimate responsibility.

Appendix C

Advertisement in *The Guardian* Saturday July 28 1984

SRI LANKA

Remembering the July 1983 Violence Against Tamils

The ethnic violence which erupted in Sri Lanka in July 1983 brought untold misery to the Tamils. They were beaten, hacked and burnt to death in a frenzy of racial hatred. Their houses and businesses were selectively looted and destroyed. The Sri Lankan government had admitted that the violence was pre-planned and well organised and that even sections of the security forces joined in the attacks against the Tamils. 53 Tamil detainees held in a maximum security prison in Colombo were brutally killed on July 25th and 27th. Yet, to date, no impartial inquiry into these violent attacks has taken place.

Amnesty International (AI) recently reported a number of cases of extrajudicial killings and secret disposal of bodies without inquest or post-mortem. The AI and the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) have also reported on a number of cases of torture and death in custody, of persons detained incommunicado for periods of up to 18 months under the Sri Lankan Prevention of Terrorism Act. "No legislation conferring remotely comparable powers is in force in any other free democracy... such a provision is an ugly blot on the statute book of any civilised country" (ICJ). The Sixth Amendment to the Constitution has virtually disenfranchised the country's 3 million Tamils by reason of the ban imposed on their political parties. This Amendment according to the ICJ, "constitutes a clear violation by Sri Lanka of its obligations in international law". The one million Tamils working in the tea plantations, who were deprived of nationality, citizenship and franchise in 1948 continue to remain stateless persons.

WE ARE OF THE OPINION THAT :

- ★ An impartial international commission should be set up to inquire into the violence against the Tamils in July 1983 including the killing of 53 Tamil detainees held in custody by the government.
- ★ The Prevention of Terrorism Act should be repealed and the powers given to the security forces which facilitate arbitrary killing of civilians and disposal of their bodies without inquest or post-mortem should be rescinded.
- ★ The use of torture and incommunicado detention in violation of Sri Lanka's obligations under International Conventions should be discontinued.
- ★ The rights of nationality, citizenship and franchise to the Tamils working in the plantations should be restored.
- ★ The Sri Lankan government should repeal the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution and take meaningful steps to arrive at a political solution to the country's ethnic problem by the granting of the legitimate rights of the Tamil people of Sri Lanka.

Signed by:

David Alton MP
Paddy Ashdown MP
Norman Atkinson MP
Tony Banks MP
Prof John Barrett
Kevin Barron MP
Tony Benn MP
Gerry Berningham MP
Alan Beith MP
Sydney Bidwell MP
Prof Tom Bottomore
Malcolm Bruce MP
Dale Campbell-Savours MP
Dennis Canavan MP
Alex Carlile MP
Tom Clarke MP
Bob Clay MP
Anne Clwyd MP
Harry Cohen MP

Jerome Corbyn MP
Ron Davis MP
Eric Deakins MP
Alf Dubs MP
Prof Michael Dummett
Derek Fatchett MP
Mark Fisher MP
Martin Flannery MP
Michael Foot MP
Roy Hattersley MP
Simon W. H. Hughes MP
Lord Jenkins
Russell Johnston MP
Robert Kilroy-Silk MP
Archy Kirkwood MP
Ted Knight
Sir David Lane
Terry Lewis MP
Bob Litherland MP
Ken Livingstone

Tony Lloyd MP
Eddie Loyden MP
Max Medden MP
Joan Maynard MP
Willie McKelvey MP
Bill Michie MP
Dr Paul Noone
Bob Parry MP
Alan Roberts MP
Ernie Roberts MP
Allan Rogers MP
Aubrey Rose
Ernie Ross MP
Steven Roas MP
Clare Short MP
Dennis Skinner MP
Prof Peter Townsend
Jim Wallace MP
Gareth Wardell MP
Dafydd Wigley MP
And many others

Appendix D

THE PRESS COUNCIL

No. 1 Salisbury Square, London EC4Y 8AE

Tel: 01-353-1248

PRESS RELEASE No. U10477/1730

THE GUARDIAN was praised by the Press Council today for its sincere attempt to give a fair and balanced account of events in Sri Lanka following communal rioting.

The Council rejected complaints about this coverage made by two organisations—the United National Party of Sri Lanka Central Organisation (UK & Europe) of 9 Janson's Road, London N15 (UNPSLCO) which complained of significant inaccuracy with no right of reply, and the Sri Lanka Association of Britain (SLAB) of 9 Audley Road, London W5, which alleged systematic distortion and falsification.

Reporting violence against Tamils David Selbourne said in THE GUARDIAN that much of it was by Sinhalese gangs protected by security forces and even "saffron-clad Buddhism" was armed with sub-machine guns. He referred to an Amnesty International report detailing increasing violation of human rights, systematic maltreatment of detainees, and torture to obtain confessions. He said a police sub-inspector found guilty of wrongful arrest was promoted next day. The newspaper printed a photograph which it said showed troops arresting "Tamil insurgents".

A fortnight later THE GUARDIAN reported that after 13 Sinhalese soldiers were killed by Tamil insurgents Colombo mobs attacked Tamils, burning and looting homes, shops and vehicles and leaving 12 corpses. Most Tamils were Hindus and most Sinhalese Buddhists. A small map showed the Ceylon Tamils occupied a narrow strip along the north-east coast. With a later report of British holidaymakers trapped in their hotels THE GUARDIAN published a larger map indicating Ceylon Tamils occupied about a quarter of the island.

In a leading article the newspaper commented that President Jayawardene disenfranchised the great mass of the minority by outlawing the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF).

THE GUARDIAN published a correction saying the photograph it published as showing Tamil youths really showed soldiers founding up Sinhalese rebels in 1971. It had appeared in only one edition and was changed.

In an advertisement in THE GUARDIAN the SLAB complained of distortion of news about Sri Lanka, said there was a campaign of terrorism to support the Tamil

minority's call for "almost half the country as a separate state" and listed the advantages they enjoyed in Sri Lanka.

Mr Ivan Corea of the UNPSLCO wrote to the editor saying his organisation—including Tamils, Sinhalese, Muslims, and Burghers—called on everybody to search for peace. The Sri Lankan Government had done much for Tamils but extremists churned out propaganda.

In a feature article David Beresford referred to a booklet by Mr Cyril Mathew, Sri Lankan Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs: titled "Sinhalese Arrive to Save Buddhism", it promoted Buddhist expansion in Tamil areas, he said.

The UK president of UNPSLCO, Mr. A. Azahim Mohamed, told the Press Council THE GUARDIAN misled readers irresponsibly and sensationally. His party felt that a fire at a Hendon restaurant and death threats made to prominent Sinhalese in Britain stemmed from media bias. Although a correction followed publication of the old picture the damage was done. The police sub-inspector was promoted under Government policy to put Tamils into high office. The portrayal of saffron-clad Buddhist clergy as murderers was untrue. The maps published were misleading and the second was one circulated by Tamil terrorists calling for a separate state. The newspaper had not published Mr Corea's letter, Mr Mohamed said.

Reporting from Geneva Iain Guest said in THE GUARDIAN that the UN sub-commission on Human Rights was under strong pressure from governments including Sri Lanka to prevent investigation of their policies and Sri Lankan ambassadors in several countries tried to intimidate the more independent sub-commissioners.

On the same day the Diplomatic Correspondent, Patrick Keatley, quoted Mr Appapillai Amirthalingum, leader of 18 Tamil MPs in Sri Lanka, who alleged genocide, saying the TULF reckoned over 2,000 people died in rioting, not the 362 the Government claimed.

Mr G.W. Ediriwira, chairman of the SLAB, complained to the Press Council that THE GUARDIAN's photograph was a deliberate fraud and the apology would not be noticed by most readers. Mr Selbourne's phrases about violence against Tamils came two weeks before the Sinhalese retaliated for four years of terrorism. The government did not disenfranchise TULF or Tamils: it merely disenfranchised anybody advocating separatism. As to intimidation by ambassadors, tiny Sri Lanka could hardly intimidate anybody. In 2,500 years not a drop of blood was spilt in the name of Buddhism and reference to saffron-clad Buddhists with machine guns was a lie. Although the newspaper said the riots were a Buddhist atrocity against Hindus and mentioned Buddhist expansionism, they were Sinhala reaction to terrorism. The newspaper vilified the majority religion.

Mr K.G. Dodd, executive editor, told the Press Council both complaints were part of a campaign to prevent the media reporting the truth of the Tamil's position. He denied distortion and said THE GUARDIAN published many letters from supporters of both sides.

Mr Selbourne said he had written down his forebodings of what actually broke out, reporting outbreaks of Sinhalese violence before the Tamil ambush of soldiers. There was no separation of religion and the state which was armed in protecting and fostering it, so Buddhism was effectively an armed religion. He had not claimed that Buddhist clergy carried guns.

Mr Beresford told the Council Mr Mathew's booklet justified what he said about Buddhist expansionsim and his reference to "Buddhist atrocity" justifiably concerned the identities of the Sinhalese and Tamil communities.

Mr Guest said people on the receiving end of pressure could not tell the difference between lobbying and "attempt to intimidate" and there were diplomatic representations.

Mr Keatley said the SLAB had misquoted what he wrote about the Tamil MP's fear of fresh violence, seeing it as suggesting Sinhalese violence. Yet they conceded the article did not state this. The complaint itself was inaccurate and paranoid, he said.

The Press Council's adjudication was:

The Council is satisfied that THE GUARDIAN's reports published during July 1983 following outbreaks of communal rioting in Sri Lanka were a sincere attempt by experienced reporters, working in extremely difficult situations, to give readers a fair and balanced account of events taking place there.

While the Council regrets the use of an 11-year-old photograph which accompanied one of the reports, it notes this was published only in early editions and was removed from other editions as soon as the error was drawn to the newspaper's attention. It is satisfied that the old picture was published by inadvertence and not in an attempt to mislead.

The complaint against THE GUARDIAN is rejected.

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SRI LANKA

ISLAND OF TERROR

AN INDICTMENT

This book reveals for the first time the full horror of the terrible events in Sri Lanka in July 1983 when the Tamil population on the island were ruthlessly hunted down and slaughtered in their thousands by Sinhalese mobs and their homes and property put to the torch. The story unfolded here is one that must appall and outrage all who read it.

But the July holocaust was not the spontaneous eruption of anti-Tamil feeling in the Sinhalese-dominated island. It was a carefully organised and skilfully executed operation planned well in advance. This book presents evidence that points the finger of guilt unequivocally at the highest levels of the Sri Lankan ruling elite.

The Sri Lankan government cultivates an image of the island as a model third world democracy. The harsh reality is described in this book—the police state, the horror of the prison camps, the widespread use of torture and extra-judicial execution against the defenseless Tamil population.

The voice of Tamil newspapers on the island has been silenced, the Tamil representation in Parliament outlawed. This book by a prominent expatriate Tamil and a British sympathiser with the Tamil cause, was written to speak for those no longer able to speak for themselves. It is a chilling exposé that must trouble the conscience of the entire civilised world.

This book provides a clear and timely account of one of the most brutal passages of events in contemporary political history. The afflictions of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka—a story of unpunished murder, barbarous rapine, political disenfranchisement and wicked forms of discrimination of every kind—are a challenge to the conscience of the world. Yet it is also clear that the Colombo regime will reap the whirlwind for what it has sown; and no dispassionate reader can fail to look forward, with the authors of this book, to the day when justice is done in Sri Lanka, and a suffering people's legitimate aspirations are vindicated.

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