

# The Sansoni Commission Evidence

The Story of the Sri Lanka Race Riots 1977

No 14.

Saturday November 18, 1978

Re. 1.

"...From Anuradhapura to Vavuniya, people were pelting us with stones. At Parasangawewa, I saw a Buddhist priest pelting stones at the buses. When his robe came down, he raised it and started pelting again."

So stated Mr. Vethanayagam Ragunathan in the course of his evidence before the Commission on March 6, 1978

VETHANAYAGAM RAGUNATHAN, affirmed, 34 years, Executive Engineer, residing at Ariyalai, Jaffna.

Questioned by Mr. Kodeeswaran.

"I am an Executive Engineer. I am now working at the Irrigation Department, Kilinochchi. In August, 1977 I was working at Mahailuppalama. I was the Engineer in charge of the Mahailuppalama Office. Mahailuppalama is in the Anuradhapura division:

"I remember the 17th of August, 1977. I did both field as well as office work. On that day, in the morning at 8 o'clock, I went in the departmental jeep for inspection. Having finished my work, I returned to office at 2 p. m. The office is at Mahailuppalama.

## 'Mr. Jayatunge came with me'

"When I was attending to some files, my immediate assistant Mr. Jayatunge told me that there is communal tension and he asked me to get back home immediately. So, I took my car and went to my quarters which is inside the farm. That is a farm run by the Agricultural Department.

## I SAW A PRIEST PELTING STONES'

"I went to my quarters in my car and Mr. Jayatunge came behind me in the jeep as there was tension in the area. Then I went to my quarters. My wife was there. She was waiting for me to have lunch. My wife is a research officer working in the Agricultural Department. She went to the office in the morning and returned after attending a seminar. She did not go to office thereafter because she was warned not to come as there was tension in the area.

## 'They wanted liquor or money'

"While I was at home, Mr. Jayatunge came and said to get ready to move out of the house within half an hour and he went back to office. Within a short time, a gang of five people came and asked me to supply them with liquor. Among those men, I was able to identify one person. At that time I did not know his name. He was a casual watcher at the farm gate. He was a watcher employed by the Agricultural Department where my wife was working.

Q: Do you now know his name?

A: I have made inquiries and found that he is one Premaratne. Premaratne and the other four wanted liquor. I said I don't take liquor. They said 'No harm, give us money'.

"They did not depart till I gave money and I had to pay Rs. 50/-. I paid that money

most unwillingly. They said they would protect me from attacks. They took the money and went away. They did not stay there to protect me.

'Within a short time, Mr. Jayatunge came with Dharmawimala, another Technical Officer and asked us to get ready to move out of the house. My child was in Jaffna.

## 'MY FRIENDS JAYATUNGE AND DHARMAWIMALA WERE ALSO ASSAULTED'

My wife and I were occupying the house at that time. So, we were trying to get ready.

"Then I locked one room of the house from inside. Then we, my wife and I, went into the toilet through that room and locked the toilet door. Mr. Jayatunge and Mr. Dharmawimala were standing in the hall. The gang came and broke the door, then they entered the room and broke the toilet door, pulled us out and assaulted both of us.

Q: Were you able to identify anyone of them?

Q: I know one William, a labourer in the farm. He is the trade union leader of the farm. William did not

assault me. He was found inside the compound when I was pushed out of the house. Then they took us out of the room, and asked us to get out to Jaffna, as this was their land.

"My friends, Jayatunge and Dharmawimala were also assaulted. When we came out of the house, one man pulled my wife and she fell face

tached to our office. His house is about one mile from our house. As we were walking to Mr. Ekanayake's house our departmental jeep came with our driver, Weerakoon.

"Then we got into the jeep and went to Mr. Ekanayake's house. We stayed there for the night. The following day, they said Mr. Ekanayake's house also might be attacked. The other Tamil officers from the office were also living with Mr. Ekanayake.

"Technical Officers Mr. Chandrasiri and Mr. Dharmawimala then took us to Mr. Adikari, the Deputy Minister's residence. We stayed there for one day. Mr. Adikari was not there. Mrs. Adikari made arrangements with the Kekirawa police to take us to the police station.

"With police escort, we went in a lorry to Kekirawa and from there we went to the Anuradhapura Kachcheri on the 19th night. At the Anuradhapura Kachcheri

(Continued next page)

Mahailuppalama engineer went to Jaffna in a refugee bus: He says: 'At Parasangawewa....

"Those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it"

— Santayana - American philosopher 1863-1952



# 'I ASKED FOR A TRANSFER BECAUSE IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO EXERCISE DISCIPLINE THERE'

(Continued from page 1)

camp, we had no food. At 7 p. m. the water ran dry and we did not have even a cup of water to drink.

"On the 20th morning, at 10 a. m. we came in one of the refugee buses to Vavuniya. From Anuradhapura to Vavuniya, people were pelting us with stones. At Parasangaweve, I saw a Buddhist priest pelting stones at the buses. When his robe came down, he raised it and started pelting again.

## They abandoned the car

"I learnt that my entire household goods had been looted, and it was recovered in the latter part of October. I went there in the latter part of October and I was able to get the car in the Department stores. My officers said that they found the car abandoned in a jungle and one of our drivers, Banda had kept the car in his custody at Alawa, 14 miles away and later brought it and kept in the stores. My refrigerator was kept inside the farm office. Of course, it was slightly damaged.

## I lost goods worth Rs. 30,000

My car was damaged. The car had knocked against something on the right side. The damage caused to my car was about Rs. 5,000/-. It was a Ford Consul bearing registration No. EL 9815. After the car knocked against something, they could not start it and they had abandoned.

"I had lost a radio set, a sewing machine, gold jewellery, my daughter's chain and my wife's bangles. I have lost approximately Rs. 30,000/ worth of articles.

## Chandrapala, farm watcher

Q: Did you make any attempt to recover these articles?

A: I heard that chandrapala, the farm watcher, had gone to Anuradhapura to sell the jewellery. On that particular day when he went the jewellery shops had refused to buy those articles. Now, I think they are in his possession. I also heard that one Piyadasa is having my sewing machine.

Q: Did you at any time make a complaint to the Kekirawa police?

A: I made a complaint to the Jaffna police on the 29th. When I went to Mahailuppalama, I went to Kekirawa police and checked up whether they had made any inquiries about my complaint. They said the complaint that I made to Jaffna had not been transmitted to them.

## 'O.I.C. did not record it'

"So, I had to go to Anuradhapura S. P's office three times and finally got the complaint sent there. In the early part of November, I went to Kekirawa police. I met the O.I.C. He was a different man. I knew the earlier O.I.C. He said, 'I will send a S.I. to inquire into it'.

"I gave the name of William and said that he was inside the compound during the time we were assaulted. He did not take that very seriously and it was not recorded.

Q: Did the police trace any of your lost articles? A: No.

Q: You feel that some articles are still there?

A: The rumour is that the sewing machine and the gold articles are there. I can give the numbers of the sewing machines that I lost.

Q: You were transferred to Kilinochchi? A: On 1.11.77 I was transferred to Jaffna.

(To Mr. Bartlett:)

I have been in service for 12 years and my wife for seven years.

Q: You have received all payments of salary from Government? A: Yes.

Q: What do you assess your losses at?

A: At Rs. 30,000/-

Q: You ask for Rs. 30,000/- for the losses and Rs. 5,000/- as damages for the car?

A: Yes.

Q: In all you ask for Rs. 35,000/- A: Yes.

Q: You asked for transfer from Maha Illuppalama to Jaffna because of the trauma you underwent?

A: It was not possible to exercise discipline or work in that office.

Q: Some attackers were employees of your department? A: Yes.

## Union man also attacked us

Q: One of the attackers was a trade union employee?

A: Yes. He is William an employee on the farm.

Q: Did you make a statement to the police at Jaffna at any stage?

A: I made a statement on 29th August 1977.

Q: That was after you came to Jaffna?

Q: To whom did you make that statement to the O.I.C?

A: To the Crimes Branch. (That statement of this witness is marked P7)

I also produce a certified copy of my statement which shows the loss I have suffered.

(Witness states that there are some mistakes in the statement.)

(To Mr. Balasubramaniam,

Q: Did you tell any other high ranking officers about the trouble you underwent?

A: I sent a memorandum to the Co-ordinating officer. I attended the conference that was held but I cannot remember the date. At that conference I did not get a chance to speak. At the conference we were asked to go to the station but I did not go. Gamini is alleged to have used my car to transport the looted goods from my house and other houses.

# '15 TAMIL FAMILIES LIVED IN THAT LITTLE VILLAGE OFF A'PURA'

KANAPATHIPILLAI SUBRAMANIAM: Affirmed: 35 years: Cultivator: Murunkan.

Q: In August 1977 you were residing at Periyasena which is a small village about 1/3rd Mile from Anuradhapura Town? A: Yes.

Q: In that village there were about 15 Tamil families and 4 or five Sinhalese families? A: Yes.

Q: On 17.8.77 at about 10 a. m. a crowd of people from outside came to that village? A: Yes.

Q: They were Sinhalese and they were armed?

A: They were armed with clubs.

Q: You all ran to the jungle in different directions.

## 'Some jumped into the river'

A: At that time a boy who stayed in front of our house came and told me that the men were coming. We ran towards the river. Somebody said, "Don't run; you will be assaulted"

Q: Then what happened?

A: I jumped over the barbed wire fence and went towards the jungle. Then all

the other members of the village ran here and there and some jumped into the river. The son of Ramasamy was running ahead of me. This man was 30 or 31 years old.

Q: Was he severely assaulted?

A: Yes. At that time there was a scream from the women.

Q: Therefore did you carry that man who could not run, when you ran towards the jungle? A: No.

## My brother came in search

Q: Then what happened?

A: When he was assaulted I went up to the Milk Board and they asked me not to go that side.

Q: After the assault was that boy brought back?

A: I, with the assistance with the others brought back the boy?

Q: That boy died that night?

A: He died in the early hour of the morning at about 4 a. m.

Q: What happened to the village—were all the houses burnt down?

A: By about 4 or 4.30 a. m. we could see all the houses on fire. Our houses were burnt.

Q: Then what did you do?

A: At about 1.30 p. m. that day, a brother of mine had come in a jeep in search of me. He had come with a police officer. He came to the place where we were hiding. He came in the jeep. I and as many as possible, including women got into the jeep. There was no room in the jeep. Somehow we managed to creep in and go. My brother and I with the P. C. walked to the Kachcheri.

Q: You are not in that village now?

A: We went back and made a statement.

burnt. In all I have lost about Rs. 17,000/-. That is apart from the jewellery.

## Police to remove the corpse

Q: What happened to the corpse?

A: When the police came they said they would look after it. They had made arrangements to remove it. I value the gold articles at Rs. 10,000/-. They were 12 sovereigns in weight.

Q: What happened to his corpse?

## 'One man killed: All our houses were burnt down'

Q: You are not residing there now?

A: I am not there now.

Q: You lost everything that you had in the house?

A: Yes. I lost goods and the house to the value of Rs. 17,000/-. I had pawned some jewellery at Anuradhapura Town and I was informed that shop also had been

A: When the police came they said they would look after it. They had made arrangements to remove it.

Q: How long have you been at Anuradhapura?

A: I have been born and bred at Anuradhapura. My wife is from that village. The land on which we lived was our ancestral property. One of the families have gone here.



# 'P. C. BANDARA WAS ADMITTED TO JAFFNA HOSPITAL AT 2-15 A. M.'

**Dr. VIJAYAN PONNIAH**  
**AMARASINGAM:** Affirmed.  
Medical Superintendent, General Hospital, Jaffna. (6-3-78)

"In 1977 August, I was the Medical Superintendent, Jaffna.

Q: In that month of August, there were some police officers who were admitted to hospital with certain injuries.

A: There was one.

Q: That is P. C. Bandara?

A: Yes.

Q: You have got his bed-head ticket with you?

A: Yes.

Q: Can you tell when he was admitted to hospital?

A: He was admitted, at 2-15 a.m. on the 15th.

Q: That was on the night of the 14/15th? A: Yes.

## 'P. C. Bandara's injuries'

"He was admitted with gun shot injuries on his left thigh. He was warded in Ward No. 17. An X-ray was taken on the 15th at day time. Dr. Ponnampalam, Surgeon, was treating him. He continued to stay in the hospital on the 15th right through the day. On the 16th morning he was there.

Q: What happened to him thereafter?

A: He signed the ticket saying 'I am leaving of my own today — 16-7-1977' and left the ward.

Q: At what time?

A: The time is not mentioned.

## No complaints were made

Q: In fact, the ward sister had to run after him and get him to sign the ticket?

A: That is what I have heard.

Q: Can you let us have the bed head ticket?

A: Yes.

(The Bed-head ticket is marked X59)

**Mr. Bartlett:** We have marked the documents of the earlier witness Kandiah Nagarajah as X 58. Now we mark the letter dated 23-9-77 as P5, X58A as P5A and what was marked as X58B as P5B.

**Examination, ctd.**

X58 indicates that pending the X-ray report coming in, treatment had been given to him. He had been given Penicillin, Anti Tetanus Serum, Gangerine injection and Tenenus Toxide.

Q: To your knowledge, was any police officer who was admitted to hospital, not given treatment? A: No.

Q: Has any complaints, whatsoever, been made to you as M. S; of the hospital that any police officer had not been given proper treatment or not given any treatment at all in the hospital?

A: No such complaint had been made to me.

Q: Have you attended any conference held by the G.A. or the Co-ordinating officer in Jaffna?

A: I attended the conference convened by the Co-ordinating officer.

Q: Did you attend the conference convened by the G. A. at which Mr. Ana Seneviratne, D. I. G. was present? A: No.

## Policemen had no numerals

Q: The S. H. S. went for that conference?

A: I think so.

Q: Has it been brought to your notice that police officers without numerals were entering the hospital premises at any time?

A: On the 16th I saw a number of police officers without numerals entering the hospital premises.

Q: Did you hear any reports of any hospital employees being assaulted by police personnel?

A: Yes, reports were made to me. (Shown a copy of a letter dated 17-8-77 written by Dr. Dissanayake, SHS, to the Superintendent of Police, Jaffna, with copy to the D. I. G. and to the G. A. Jaffna. — marked X59) X59 read.

**Mr Shanmugalingam.** I wish to refer again to this particular portion of the letter, Sir "At the conference it was decided by the DIG, Mr. Seneviratne, that all police officers who came to hospital should have their identity fixed to their uniforms".

## Bandara left on his own

**Commissioner:** Walter Perera, was he an Inspector?

**Mr. Shanmugalingam:** He was a Sub-Inspector, Sir.

**Commissioner:** His name transpired earlier. So, he was a S. I. And this happened on the 17th at what time?

**Mr. Shanmugalingam:** 2-30 p.m.

**Questioned by Mr. Bartlett.**

Q: The bed-head ticket you produced are in two sheets, X58 and the annexure to that is a continuation of the bed-head ticket? A: Yes.

(Annexure is marked X58A)

Q: It is in X58A that PC Bandara has signed and stated 'I am leaving of my own today — 16-8-77' and his signature appears in X58A? A: Yes.

**Commissioner:** Q: On top, somebody has said 17-8-77? A: That is by the clerk. The bed-head ticket came to office, two days later, Sir.

**Questioning by Mr. Bartlett, ctd.**

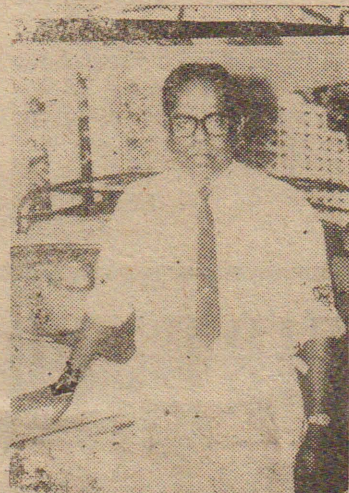
Q: There appears the signature after the words "I am leaving of my own today - 16-8-77? A: Yes.

## The normal treatment

Q: Bandara's initials are H. M. K Bandara, PC 7674 on the ticket? A: Yes.

Q: The bed-head ticket No. is 25834/1663 in X58? A: Yes.

Q: And he also sets out his age as 29 years and that he was warded in Ward No. 17? A: Yes.



Dr. Amarasingam

## 'Tell that bastard that he will be shot like a dog'

Q: There is no question that according to X58, the treatment given was a normal treatment one should receive for gun shot injuries and he was getting the treatment without any kind of obstruction from the medical personnel?

A: Yes, and the normal treatment was given.

Q: Even Bandara does not say that "I am leaving because treatment is not good"? It is not mentioned in the ticket? He just leaves and signs? A: Yes.

## S. P. Liyanage's request

Q: If one was not receiving proper treatment, he would leave some kind of statement to the effect that "I am leaving because no treatment was given"? That sort of statement does not appear in X58? A: Yes.

**Questioned by Mr. Underwood;**

Q: The bed-head ticket that was just marked is not a discharge ticket? A: No.

Q: Do you remember on the 16th night, I think it was S. P. Liyanage asking some Doctors to come to the police station to treat an injured party? A: Yes.

Q: And what was your reply?

A: I said, we cannot send officers to the police station and if the injured are brought to the hospital, we will be able to give proper treatment.

Q: They did not do that? A: No.

Q: In spite of that, they removed an injured from the hospital without the consent of the Doctors who were there, not even told to give a proper discharge certificate that he was in a condition to be removed? A: Yes.

## Threat over the telephone

Q: Normally when you discharge a patient, the Doctors satisfy themselves that the patient is in a fit condition to be removed?

A: Yes.

Q: A copy of this letter was shown to you by the S. H. S.? A: Yes

Dr. Amarasingam

Q: It was following the complaint of Dr. Dissanayake to the D. I. G.? A: Yes.

Q: On the 18th what happened? A: On the 18th Dr. Dissanayake left Jaffna and never came back.

Q: On the 16th a truck load of police came and stopped on the road?

A: There were many who came there and caused a nuisance. They went all round the hospital.

Q: On the 16th about how many dead bodies were lying in the hospital?

A: About three. They had died of gun shot injuries.

Q: About how many policemen were detailed to guard these bodies?

A: About 15 policemen.

Q: Did the mortuary labourer complain to you that he was assaulted? A: Yes.

Q: You remember the case of a Sinhalese nurse who refused to go on a convoy out of Jaffna?

A: She had not gone.

Q: The police came in connection with that? A: Yes.

Q: They came to look for her and they made several visits to the nurses quarters?

A: Yes.

Q: The nurses complained to you?

A: No. This nurse was found to stay with another Doctor. She had been kept by that doctor somewhere else.

To Mr. de Silva, Deputy Solicitor General:

Q: You are the medical superintendent? A: Yes.

Q: You had no occasion to examine P. C. Bandara?

A: No.

Q: You are unable to say whether P. C. Bandara needed urgent treatment or not?

A: Yes.

## An X-ray was taken

Q: (Shown X. 58) All you can say is that an X-ray has been ordered.

A: It had been taken.

Q: And that certain injections had been given? A: Yes.

(To Commissioner: The surgeon was attending on him.)

Q: Who has signed X.58?

A: It has been signed by the House Officer. The examination has been done by the House Officer. He could have informed the surgeon of the patient's condition. There is nothing to that effect on the bed head ticket. The surgeon has not written anything on the bed head ticket. The House Officer should have informed the Surgeon.

Q: On hearing this you went to meet either Dr. Navaratnasingham or the S. H. S.?

A: The S. H. S. got down Dr. Navaratnasingham and he informed about it

Q: You all expressed concern over the safety of Dr. Dissanayake because there was anxiety hanging over him? A: Yes.

Q: Was there anything to indicate that this message was from the police?

A: I cannot remember.



# 'I SAW ARMY MAN BREAK MY IRON SAFE'

**SARAVANAMUTTU-  
NAVARAJAH** affirmed, 39  
years, Manager, Ambal Cafe,  
Bus stand, Jaffna.

'Ambal Cafe is situated at No. 218/1, Hospital Road, Jaffna. On 19th August, 1977 in the night, I closed the shop at about 9.30 p. m. There after, I slept in the room which is in the rear portion.

'After I went to bed, at about 1.30 a. m. I heard a noise of smashing of glasses. When I went to bed, I had put out the lights in the hotel section. When I got up, the lights were on. Between the rear portion and the front portion, there is a window and I was able to see what was happening in the front portion.

## 'I saw four Army men'

'So, I switched on the rear portion light and through the window I saw four Army men, one taking the tape recorder and smashing it, the other army officer breaking the iron safe and the other lifting the biscuits. The bis-

cuits were in boxes. In my shop I had toffee and lozenges in bottles. Those were smashed. I had a wall clock. They smashed that wall clock also. I saw them taking the bottles containing the lozenges. I was frightened.

'Then I put up the others who were sleeping and went through the rear door to Brindavanam Hotel. I put up those boys who were sleeping there and returned back to my shop at 3.30 a. m.

## Front door wrenched open

'In the morning I discovered that the front door had been wrenched open. All the

cross-bars fixed on to the front door were bent.

'I know the person called Tharmakulasingham who works in the Power House. He told me that he was a witness to this incident. He gave me the number of the vehicle.

## Night of the 19th August

Q: You have lost goods as a result of the action of the army?

A: Yes. I have lost about Rs. 10,000/-. I had Rs. 2,150/- with me. That was removed. The damage to the shop was Rs. 10,000/-. The value of the biscuits and sweets was Rs. 5,000/-.

'I made a statement to ASP Mr. Jayasooriya at the Jaffna Kachcheri. I produce a certified copy of the statement that I made to the A. S. P. marked X64. I also made a statement to the M. P. for Jaffna.

Questioned by Mr. Kodeeswaran:

'I said that certain army men came and removed biscuits from my cafe. I had large quantities of biscuits. That was on the night of the 19th. Adjoining my Cafe is the City bakery. That is owned by Sinhalese. The employees are all Sinhalese.

'Ambal Cafe faces the Hospital road. On the other side of the road, you find a row

of shops. Those shops were burnt. There is a big shop in one of those row of shops called the Jaffna Cool Bar. I don't know whether the owner of that shop is called Thangarajah. The Jaffna bus stand is opposite those row of shops. Further to that, you find the CTB office. There is an open verandah in front of the CTB office.

Questioned by Mr. G. P. S. de Silva.

In X60 my name is mentioned as Nadarajah. My name is Navarajah. I have signed in X60 as Navarajah. I am the Manager and not the proprietor of Ambal Cafe.

# 'POLICEMEN SET FIRE TO OLD MARKET MAT STALLS'

**NAGA'INGAM EAHAM-  
BARAM**, Affirmed, 52 years,  
Trader in betel Old Market,  
Jaffna.

Questioned by Mr. Shanmugalingam.

Q: On the night of the 15th August, 1977, were you sleeping in the old market premises? A: I was not sleeping there.

Q: Did you come there in the following morning?

A: At about 7 or 7.30 a.m. I came to my shop. That was on the 16th.

Q: After you came there, did the police officers come to the old market? A: Yes.

## They assaulted with guns

Q: Did they set fire to the mat shop?

A: At about 7.30 a.m. policemen came, chased the people who were around the area and went away.

Second time they came and assaulted the people.

(To Commissioner: At about 9 a.m. they assaulted the people on their heads with guns.)

'After assaulting they went away. Then for the third time they came and dispersed the crowd. Then I ran to Krishna Bawan and hid myself there. I saw tyres burning at the C. S. K. junction. Then the police lifted those burning tyres and threw them at the mat stalls. At the junction, there is a shop dealing in tobacco. Police threw the burning tyres into that shop also.

Q: How did the police do that? A: They lifted the tyres with their guns. Then a number of shops in the vicinity of the old market caught fire and got burnt.

Q: In fact, an attempt had been made to burn the mat shop the previous night?

A: Actually they set fire to the mat shops and the people put out the fire.

## 'Chose that shop deliberately'

'When I came on the 16th morning, I saw a mass of burnt particles in the mat shop. This mat shop, besides mats made of ola leaves, they also had baskets made of Ola leaves.

Q: And this mat shop, besides mats of ola leaves, has baskets made of Ola leaves and

various other items made of ola leaves? A: Yes.

Q: These are easily inflammable? A: Yes.

Q: The police officers deliberately chose that shop to set fire to? A: Yes.

Q: You made a statement to A. S. P. Mr. Jayasuriya? To Mr. deSilva, Deputy S/G:

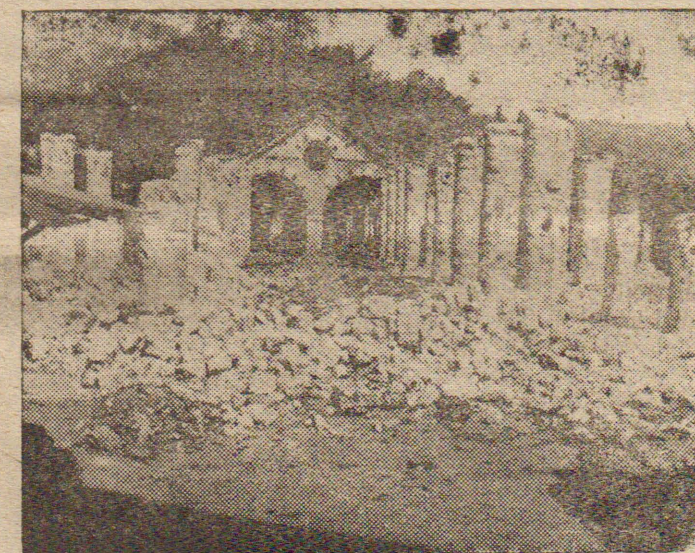
# Refugee bus conductor collected the fares

Mr. Underwood calls:

**SINATHAMBY SELVA  
RAJAH**, recalled, reaffirmed.

'I am a bus conductor attached to the Kondavil Depot. I was the conductor of the bus No. 23 Sri 2227 which was driven by Driver G. James taking the refugees from Navatkuli to Kurikattuvan and I have already spoken as to how the bus was hi-jacked.

'As a Conductor, I make entries in a document called the "Way Bills". The "Way



Q: You said the police threw burning tyres? A: Yes.

Q: Did you see how the tyres came to be on fire?

A: I only saw the tyre-burning at the C. S. K. junction and those tyres were thrown into the shops.

Bill' has been marked X21 This Way Bill contains, among other things, my name and signature as the Conductor and also the Driver's name and signature as the Driver. I have also entered there the ticket numbers of the tickets that I sold to the refugees on that day.

## First load of refugees

'That was the first load of refugees that we have transported and because I did not get any instructions, I collected the fare from the passen-

gers. I sold about 87 tickets that day and I recovered Rs. 71/-.

Q: That day when you were returning from Kurikattuvan to the Depot and when you were near the Jaffna bus stand, did any other employees of the CTB get into the bus?

A: Yes, Parameswaran, Security Guard, got into the bus.

Q: Where did he get down again?

A: He got down at the Wellington junction.

No question by Counsel.



**C. W. E. Clerk says his fellow workers told him:-**

# 'PACK UP AND GO TO YOUR EELAM'

**KANDIAH NAGARAJAH**, affirmed, 40 years, Clerk, in the C. W. E. Colombo. Now unemployed.

Questioned by Mr. Bartlett. (4.3.78)

'I was a victim of the August disturbances. I was residing at No. 58/4, Wekanda Road, Slave Island. I was employed as the Chief Clerk, Stock Control Retail Dept, C. W. E. Colombo. 11 Tamil residents including myself lived at Wekanda Road, Slave Island.

'My house was attacked on the 21st August, 1977. My house was looted; I have lost

all my articles. My mattress was set on fire. When they came to attack my house, I ran to my neighbour's house. This incident took place at 7 p. m. The curfew commenced at 8 p. m. The other Tamil houses were also attacked.

## 'I have lost all my savings'

'I have two children. My eldest child is 6 years old. I have been living in Colombo for the last 17 years and I have lost all my savings. I estimate my loss in the region of Rs. 35, 000/-.

'Just before the general elections I did some repairs to the house. That cost me Rs. 1, 800/-. I estimated my household and personal goods at Rs. 29, 850/-. I have now abandoned my house.

'From there, I went to the refugee camp at Bambalapitiya and from there I came to Jaffna. After coming to Jaffna, I informed my Personnel Manager about my displacement from Colombo and asked for some relief to rehabilitate myself.

'I wrote to him on 30.8.77. I don't have a copy of that letter, but I have with me the registration receipt No. 9537 of 30.8.77.

'I subsequently sent another letter on 23.9.77 by registered post to the Board of Directors, C. W. E. on this subject. I mark my letter as X58 and the registration postal receipt as X58A. In that letter, I have stated the various reasons why I could not report at Colombo and I have also stated that I have lost my belongings to the value of Rs. 30, 000/-. I stated that my life was in danger and I feared to return to Colombo.

## 'My appeals were ignored'

'The Management ignored all my appeals and served notice of vacation of my post by a letter dated 24.11.77 which I mark as X58B.

Q: The letter is dated 24.11.77 and addressed to you?

A: Yes. (The translation of that letter is read out to the Commission)

Q: You state you had no intention of vacating your post and you were compelled to keep away because of the trouble you went through on 22.8.77? A: Yes.

Q: You had no intention to vacate? A: Yes.

Q: You informed them of your troubles? A: Yes.

## 'We hear all sorts of stories'

Q: You wanted a transfer to Jaffna or full compensation and gratuity and other payments due to you for termination of duties that way?

A: Yes.

Q: Up to the time of this incident the situation was tense, and the officers - how did they treat you?

A: Up to the 19th I attended office. My fellow workers stated, "We hear all sorts of stories and your people kill Sinhalese; Why are you here. Pack up and go to your Eelam".

## 'They resented my being C.C.'

'I told them that they were false stories meant to create misunderstanding between the two communities. I said nothing had happened to the Sinhalese in Jaffna, where they say Sinhalese women had been assaulted and nailed to the walls etc.

Q: But this did not receive their ears and you were nearly assaulted that day when this exchange of conversation took place?

A: I was the Chief Clerk of over 52 employees. Only four of them were Tamils. They resented my being the Chief Clerk. Disgruntled elements wanted to assault me.

According to the information I received it did not take place because I did not attend office after 22-8-77.

Q: If you attended office after the 22nd August, 1977 you would have been dealt with? A: Yes.

Q: There is a branch of the C. W. E. in Jaffna?

A: Yes. There are three branches and the Regional Office.

Q: They can give you a transfer to Jaffna? A: Yes

Q: You say they did not give you a transfer? A: Yes

Q: You say you did not intend to vacate your post? A: Yes.

## 'I am penniless and jobless'

"I have put in 17 years and 4 months service and I can work for another 15 years. At this time my salary was Rs. 500/- and Rs. 90/- as allowances. I am in Grade II and I have a chance of getting into Grade I which carries a salary of Rs. 600/- to Rs. 800 p. m. Unfortunately this happened and all these are denied to me.

"I am penniless, jobless and destitute.

## A Muslim lady brought my son

"At the time I slipped into my neighbour's house I missed my first son. We heard our show cases being damaged and my wife was crying for my son. I asked her not to cry. I was under the table with my second son.

"After the thugs went away we came back to my house and found the house in smoke. The wife was in a faint and wanted her son. I said that if he is alive he would come back. One Mrs. Ameer a Muslim lady brought my son back to me.

"The salary and allowances I drew came to Rs. 500/- p. m. If I am treated as having vacated my post I ask for 10 years salary as compensation according to what the Labour Tribunals would offer.

(Commission adjourns for the day. Further hearing on Monday 6th March 1978 at 9-30 a. m.)

## 2 TRADERS TESTIFY:

**KATHI SADEYAN:** Affirmed 67 years: Textile Dealer: Grand Bazaar: Jaffna.

Q: Your shop is numbered 17 and 18 Grand Bazaar, Jaffna? A: Yes.

Q: These premises are on the fringe of the old market? A: Yes. By the side of the road.

Q: You remember the fire that occurred in the old market on 16.8.77? A: Yes.

Q: Your shop was completely gutted? A: Yes.

Q: You are one of the leading textile merchants in Jaffna? A: Yes.

Q: You had a stock of over 2 3/4 lakhs of rupees in your shop? A: Yes

Q: The entirety was lost? A: Yes;

Q: The damage that you incurred is Rs. 2 3/4 lakhs.? A: Yes,

To other Counsel: Nil.

## The fire of August 16

**ABDUL CADERMOHAMMED KAREEM:** Affirmed: 48 years: Trader: Ready Made Store: Bazaar Road: Jaffna.

Q: Your shop also was destroyed by the fire that occurred on 16th August 1977? A: Yes.

Q: What is your assessment of the value of the goods that was damaged in your shop at that time?

A: All goods including furniture and fittings were worth 1 lakh and 300/- (Rs. 1,00,300/-)

Q: You say you are entitled to compensation in that sum? A: Yes?.

(To other counsel: Nil



The Power Station, Jaffna

## JEWELLERY SHOPS WERE CLOSED, FEARING TROUBLE

**SINNAVELU RAJAMANICKAMPATHER:** Affirmed 26 years: Jeweller (4.3.78)

Q: You are the proprietor of Vel Jewellers? A: Yes.

Q: It is right opposite Krishnan jewellers?

A: Yes. And opposite Kadiravel's shop.

Q: Your house is also along Kannathetti Road? A: Yes.

Q: On 17.8.77 all the shops were closed? A: Yes.

Q: For fear of disturbances? A: Yes.

Q: You were in your house? A: Yes.

Q: You discovered your shop and Krishnan Jewellers were on fire? A: Yes.

## 'My loss was Rs. 10,600/-

Q: And you have lost a lot of goods from your shop? A: Yes.

Q: May be that a part of the goods had been looted? A: Yes.

Q: You estimate that the loss suffered by you is Rs. 10,600/-? A: Yes.

Q: That is the goods and the damage to the building? A: Yes.

Q: You made a complaint to the police? A: Yes.

(To other Counsel: Nil.



# 'THEY SPRAYED SOME LIQUID & SET FIRE'

**AMBALAVANAR SOTHILINGAM:** Affirmed: 25 years: Trader: Old Market: Jaffna.

Q: You are a trader in the Old Market, Jaffna? A: Yes.

Q: In August 1977 also you were a trader? A: Yes.

Q: What was your business? At I dealt in groceries.

Q: In the night where do you sleep? A: In my stall.

Q: On the night of the 15th August 1977 did you sleep in your stall? A: Yes.

Q: On that night and in the early hours of the 16th did you notice anything happening in the Old market?

A: When I was sleeping in the verandah of the Stall No. 43 -the mat shop-about 15 people came and they were armed with clubs. Those people sprayed some inflammable liquid to the opposite shop and after that they set fire to it with the aid of a light. When it was burning one of them threw my verti which I used as a bed sheet into the fire.

Q: Did you notice how they were dressed?

A: They were dressed in white bannian and khaki shorts.

Q: Did they have towels on their heads?

A: Yes. Some were covering their heads with handkerchiefs and some with towels

## Heads partly covered

Q: Did you think them to be Muslims?

A: They covered a part of their heads.

Q: Thereafter they went away?

A: They assaulted me. Then I ran. They got to the eastern side of the market and smashed up the shops. Then they went away.

Q: Did you and the other in the market put out the fire in the mat shop?

A: Yes.

## 'I FOUND MYSELF IN A HOSPITAL SARONG

**MANUEL THOMAS:** Sworn: 54 years of age, Railway Head Guard, Anuradhapura.

Mr. de Silva: Q: On 17th August 1977 you were the Head Guard working on the day train from Talaimannar to Anuradhapura? A: Yes.

Q: This train arrived at Anuradhapura on the 17th August, 1977 at about 6 p.m.?

A: Yes

Q: How did you put it out?

A: By throwing buckets of water.

Q: What was the damage to the other shops?

A: Bottles of gingely oil and vinegar and other things were smashed up.

Q: On the next morning were you there in the old Market?

A: Yes. I continued to stay there.

Q: Did you observe in the morning the police setting fire to the old market?

## Got assaulted I went home

A: Next morning I was there till about 8.30 a.m. After that I went home. They came and assaulted us and I went home.

Q: At 8.30 a.m. they assaulted you? A: Yes.

Q: You ran home? A: Yes.

Q: Did you come in the evening to see your shop? A: No.

Q: When did you come next? A: Next morning - on the 17th.

Q: You saw the entire market burnt down? A: Yes.

Q: What is the damage caused to you? A: Damage to the extent of about Rs. 20,000/-

Q: Yours was a grocery shop? A: Yes.

Q: You claim damages in a sum of Rs. 20,000/-? A: Yes.

Q: Did you complain of this to the police?

A: An A.S.P. was recording statements at the Kachcheri and I made my statement to him. I made a statement to the Magistrate also at the Magisterial inquiry. I made my statement at the Kachcheri also.

Q: There was a certain amount of tension at the Railway Station on the 17th and you were directed to occupy the Retiring Rooms at the Anuradhapura Railway Station? A: Yes.

Q: Accordingly on the 17th in the night you were occupying one of the Retiring Rooms of the Anuradhapura Railway Station?

(Continued next page)



Photograph of a partly wrecked shop in Jaffna town, alleged to have been smashed up by Police personnel

## 'POLICE SOUGHT DATA FROM GRAMA SEVAKA'

**THAMOTHARAMPILLAI-SIVAPATHASUNDRAM,** - affirmed, 46 years, Grama Sevaka, Jaffna town.

Questioned by Mr. Shanmugalingam. (4.3.78)

Q: Sometime before the General elections, 1977 did some police officers come to see you? A: yes.

Q: Roughly about how long prior to the elections?

A: About two weeks.

Three police officers came to see me. One Sub-Inspector and two police constables, one was a Muslim. The other two were Sinhalese. They came to my office. They wanted the names and addresses of the Sinhalese people who are residing in my division.

## Expecting trouble they said

"I told them that it will take sometime for me to get this information. If they are in a hurry, I told them to go to the A.G.A.'s office. You find the householders list and these particulars can be obtained in that list. From higher authorities, they had received instructions to obtain this list urgently. That is what they told me.

I told them that it will take sometime for me to get this information. If they are in a hurry, I told them to go to the A.G.A.'s office.

Q: Did not ask them why they were in such a hurry?

A: Yes; they told me that they had received this order to protect the Sinhalese residents, they wanted this list.

Q: Did you ask them what sort of trouble they anticipated?

A: When they told me that they are expecting some trouble after elections, I got a little excited. Then I asked them whether they are collecting information about the Tamils who are living in the Sinhalese areas also. They replied that they did not know anything about that. After that, they did not come.

## 'There was no written request'

Q: Normally, when such a request is made, can the police officers come and ask from you orally or should they bring a request in writing from somebody?

A: When they told me that they had received information from higher authorities, I asked them to bring a letter from the higher authorities. They did not bring any such letter.

"I spoke to the other Grama Sevakas also about this matter. They told me that they too had received similar requests.

Questioned by Mr. G. P. S. de Silva:

Q: You said a Sub Inspector came. Do you know his name? A: I don't know.

Questioned: by Mr. Kodeeswaran.

"I said that the other Grama Sevakas also received similar requests. G. S. Thaliyasingam also received a similar request.

## KUNDASALE INCIDENT

**VELAYUTHAM SITHAMPARAPPILLAI KANDAPPU:** Affirmed, 64 Years, Retired Manager, Bank of Ceylon, Point Pedro.

Mr. Bartlett: Q: You have sent a memorandum dated 3.3.78? A: I sent a memorandum to the Commissioner to the Press and to the A.G.A. Vadamaradchi.

Mr. Bartlett: I move to mark the memorandum dated 3.3.78 as "P6".

Q: In P6 you set out the loss sustained by your son Sivapatham in his house at the School of Agriculture No. 18, Kundasale? A: Yes.

Q: This is a Government bungalow? A: Yes.

Q: The total loss sustained by your son is Rs. 12,925/-? A: Yes.

## He was away in Japan

Q: Your son K Sivapatham was a lecturer at the School of Agriculture? A: Yes.

Q: Your son went to Japan on a Government Scholarship on 31.5.77? A: Yes.

Q: At that time you were kept there to look after his wife and children? A: Yes.

Q: On 13.8.77 your daughter-in-law, her children and you left for Jaffna? A: Yes.

Q: You had locked up the house and brought the keys? A: Yes.

Q: Subsequently the Sri Lanka School of Agriculture informed you that your house was looted and the entire contents taken? A: Yes.

Q: Where is your son at the moment?

A: At the moment he has come back and he is still at Kundasale. His wife and children are now in Jaffna at Karaveddi. He is still at Kundasale with a friend of his.

## Lost all his possessions

Q: You are claiming Rs. 12,925/- as compensation on behalf of your son? A: Yes.

Q: He had left all his possession in this house? A: Yes.

Q: He knew nothing about the looting? A: Yes.

Q: That is why you have come to testify before this Commission? A: Yes.

Q: Is there anything that you wish to tell this Commission? A: Three students took shelter in these quarters and the looters assaulted them.

Commissioner: I will probably hear more about it in Kandy when I go there.

Mr. Bartlett: This witness will not be able to come to Kandy.



# TOPPLING OF SIVAKUMARAN STATUE: 'ARMY MEN CAME IN 4 TRUCKS & 2 ARMoured CARS'

MUTUTAMBY PUNNIYAM

Affirmed: 29 years: Trader:  
Urumpirai Junction:

Q: On 19. 8. 77 in the morning at about 11 a. m. were you in your vegetable stall at Urumpirai market at the junction? A: Yes.

Q: How far is Urumpirai from Jaffna? A: Within four miles.

Q: The market at the junction? A: Yes.

Q: By the side of the market is the statue of Sivakumaran? A: Yes.

Q: At about 11 a. m. on the 19th, can you tell this Commission what happened

## Army trucks and armoured cars

A: From 10. 30 to 12 noon we have brisk business. At that time four army trucks and two armoured cars came there. The army men started assaulting the people who were there. People scattered and ran away.

"The army men came to our shop and spoke in Sinhala and got our shops closed. They assaulted the people next to my shop. In 1958 also I was assaulted. Immediately I closed my shop.

Q: Before you closed your shop did they take anything from your shop? A: No.



Q: Did they say anything in regard to the statue?

A: All these vehicles were halted opposite the Sivakumaran statue. They said some thing in Sinhala. I could not understand. The others told me that they said they wanted to damage the statue. I closed the shop and went away.

Q: All the others were assaulted and they ran helter skelter? A: Yes.

## Statue turned upside down

Q: The following day, did you come to your shop? A: Yes

Q: Was your shop in good condition?

A: All the things were scattered. I had about 50 lbs. of grapes. I had about

Rs. 100/- in cash and Rs. 500/- worth of other goods. I saw the loss the following day. On the 21st there was curfew the full day.

Q: On the 22nd when you came to the market what was the condition of the statue?

A: It was bent. The entire statue had been turned upside down.

Q: What is its condition now?

A: It is in the same condition.

## The son of a teacher

Q: Who is Sivakumaran and what is the significance of this statue?

A: I know only that he is the son of a teacher.

Q: Urumpirai was his native place? A: Yes.

Q: He died in police custody? A: Yes.

To Mr. Bartlett:  
Q: Sivakumaran was a boy assaulted, harassed and tortured by the police?

Q: I have heard about that.

Q: He finally took his life while in police custody?

A: I only heard about it.

Q: You do not personally know that he took his life while in police custody-you do not know about it?

A: I do not know.

**The Sansoni Commission Evidence**  
The Story of the Sri Lanka Race Riots 1977

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# I FOUND MYSELF IN A HOSPITAL SARONG

(Continued from page 6)

A: Yes.

Q: On the night of the 17th at about 11-30 p. m., some persons forcibly entered your room where you and some other officers were staying and attacked you?

A: Yes.

Q: You forwarded to Commission a communication dated 29th December, 1977 which is marked "A.26"?

A: Yes.

Mr. de Silva: I will read out A.26.

Q: You have also brought a further communication addressed to the Chairman of the Commission dated 3. 3. 78 which is marked A.27?

A: Yes.

(Mr. de Silva reads A.27)

Commissioner: Does he want to retire?

Mr. de Silva:

He says that he is unfit to work and therefore he will have to retire. This he says is premature retirement. He says that if he continued in service he would have got more pension. Now he has lost his overtime and other benefits by his premature retirement.

## W. & O. P. office did not respond

Mr. Shanmugalingam: There seems to be delay in the payment of W. & O. P. They have to get datas regarding the career of the public servant and other particulars

Q: You want the medical board to be held in Jaffna?

A: Yes.

## Guards on the staircase

Mr. Shanmugalingam: Q: To go to the Rest Rooms upstairs there is a staircase?

A: Yes.

Q: On the 17th when all Tamil public officers were up-stairs police guards were placed on this staircase? A: Yes.

Q: So that, the gang of people who came to attack would not have come up stairs in the normal way? A: Yes.

Q: Either they should have overpowered the police and come there or they should have come there with the connivance of the Police Officers? A: Yes.

Q: In the room where you were, can you tell the Commission who the other people were?

A: Mr. Wigneswaran the driver and the others whom I have mentioned in my statement.

Q: You are aware that as a result of the attack two officers died? A: Yes.

Q: One is the Station Master of Anuradhapura?

A: Yes.

## In hospital sarong

To Shanmugalingam:

I was in sarong at the time of the assault. At the Kurunegale hospital I found myself in hospital sarong.

Q: What happened to your sarong?

A: I do not know what happened to my sarong. All other things were looted.

I was unconscious at the time and I heard there was no one to treat me at Anuradhapura. The Police who were guarding were armed.

**"Nothing is ever settled until it is settled right"**

— Rudyard Kipling



# The Sansoni Commission Evidence

The Story of the Sri Lanka Race Riots 1977

# the Beast in Man

The following is the full text of the NEWSWEEK report dated September, 5th 1977 SRI LANKA:

## 'THE BEAST IN MAN'

"The killings began, improbably enough with a seemingly harmless brawl at a school carnival in the little town of Jaffna in northern Sri Lanka. Four off-duty Sinha-

Confronted with mounting mob violence, much of it aimed at pockets of Tamil communities throughout the island, and saddled with a police force either incapable of containing the crowds or unwilling to do so, Jayewardene was finally forced to mobilize the armed forces. A 24-hour curfew was imposed and military units cordoned off isolated Tamil neighbourhoods besieged by roving bands of angry looters.

"Thousands of Tamil tea-plantation workers-descendan-



'His first major crisis'

NEWSWEEK September 6, 1977

to obstruct the endeavors of the government to provide speedy relief".

"BONDAGE: But such pronouncements could not hide the deep-seated grievances that had sparked the violence in the first place. "We are for a peaceful solution," said Appapillai Amir thalingam, the leader of the separatist Tamil United liberation Front (TULF). "But



'Peaceful solution..... but no bondage'

## NEWS FLASHBACKS '77

lese policemen brusquely tried to push their way past a gatekeeper without paying the entrance fee. They were challenged by a crowd of angry Tamil youths who unceremoniously tossed them out. When uniformed police later arrived to investigate, a young man in the hostile crowd fired a shot that tore through the thigh of a police constable. The edgy police replied with an indiscriminate volley of fire, instantly killing four people and wounding 30.

## EXODUS OF FEAR

"The Jaffna incident sparked two weeks of bloody communal war-fare between members of the island's 10 million-strong Buddhist-Sinhalese majority and a Hindu-Tamil minority of about 3 million. Fifty-four people died, 300 were wounded and 25,000 Tamils were made homeless before the government was gradually able to restore order. "I have seen the beast in man," said one official describing the scene. "I have seen men burnt alive and women raped and houses set ablaze". The disorders confronted Prime Minister Junius Jayewardene with his first major crisis since he was swept into power more than a month ago with an overwhelming mandate at least from among his fellow Sinhalese. But the communal violence underscores the enormous difficulties that must be faced by Jayewardene in dealing with the separatist demands of Sri Lanka's Tamils—a people originally of South Indian Dravidian stock.

## A Reign of



## Terror

ts of indentured South Indian labourers imported by the British a century ago—were driven from their homes in the central highlands. In the aftermath of the riots last week, the government announced a program to resettle 25,000 of these refugees in the Tamil-dominated provinces in the northern portion of the island. In what one Tamil leader called "an exodus of fear, convoys of buses loaded with Tamil refugees fled northward under heavily armed escort.

"By the time the army had contained the violence, more than 3,000 people had been arrested and charged with incitement to riot, many of those arrested were supporters of defeated Prime Minister Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, including her security chief. A communique issued by Jayewardene's Cabinet left no doubt as to who was being blamed for the crisis: "It appears that some people who were in power and have now lost that power have attempted

if there is no solution we will not live forever under bondage." As a result of what Tamils claim has been severe discrimination by successive Sinhalese-dominated governments sentiment for a separate "Tamil Ealam" state in northern Sri Lanka has grown in recent years. While Tamils once had more than their fair share of positions in the civil service and universities, now they are handicapped by language legislation that favours those who speak Sinhalese.

"The Sinhalese respond by claiming that the measures are only restoring a balance between the two communities that was upset by the British colonial rulers. It is true that British rule favoured the education and promotion of the minority Tamils but the modern resurgence of Sinhalese nationalism is also a response to the age-old fear of being swamped by the 50 million Tamils living in south India—a mere 22 miles from Sri Lanka across the Palk Strait. Fears of cultural annihilation on both sides have now dangerously polarized the two peoples. Jayewardene made a clean sweep of Sinhalese votes in the recent elections, but all the



Defeated Prime Minister Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike

seats in Tamil territory were captured by the separatist TULF. And the bloody events of the past two weeks have obviously done nothing to bring the two sides together.

Kai Bird with Barry Came in Hong Kong and Mervyn de Silva in Colombo

## next week

- \* Inspector Gurusamy denies
- \* 'Thug assaulted my wife'
- \* P. C. Bandara flown to A'Pura