

SRI LANKA



Years of
Jayewardene
Rule

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SRI LANKA: 10 YEARS OF JAYEWARDENE RULE

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S. Sivanayagam

A  Publication

On July 22, 1987, the President of Sri Lanka, Junius Richard Jayewardene completes 10 years of power; the longest single spell by a politician in that country.

Here is a list of the succession during the near-40 years of independence :-

Don Stephen Senanayake	(UNP)	4½ years	
Dudley Senanayake	(UNP)	1½ years	
Sir John Kotelawala	(UNP)	2½ years	
S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike	(SLFP)	3½ years	
W. Dahanayake (interim)	(SLFP)	½ year	
Dudley Senanayake	(UNP)	—	4 months
Mrs. Bandaranaike	(SLFP)	4 years	8 months
Dudley Senanayake	(UNP)	5 years	
Mrs. Bandaranaike	(SLFP)	7 years	2 months
J.R. Jayewardene	(UNP)	10 years	

While from the very beginning of independence until now all Sinhalese politicians with one exception — Dudley Senanayake — had demonstrated a desire for power, it remains paradoxical that it was the latter, the reluctant “Hamlet of Ceylon politics” who was called upon to serve three terms in office; he was in fact the first Prime Minister to complete the full 5-year tenure permitted under the constitution. He also remains on record as the only head of government who tried consciously to eschew opportunistic policies. It was perhaps not coincidental that his was the only period in post-independence history when Tamils chose to join the mainstream politics.

Two Prime Ministers, D.S. Senanayake and S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike died in office (the former falling off a horse and the latter shot by a Buddhist monk), while the others quit prematurely or were voted out of power. The process of entrenching themselves in power beyond the allotted term began with Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike who added

to her years in office by the simple expedient of changing the constitution and gaining time. J.R. Jayewardene did the same, but in a more imposing style.

When the history of the post-independence period of Sri Lanka comes to be written, there can be little doubt that, irrespective of how longer President Jayewardene continues in office (or is permitted to continue), his years in power will emerge in dark contrast against the rest of the period — a blood-soaked chapter in the life of a country which had for long earned the happy reputation of being a Paradise Isle; a debilitating phase in the life of the majority Sinhalese people, who despite occasional bouts of mob violence against the minority Tamils, had been known for their spontaneity, warmth, hospitality and friendliness; and of course a period of unmitigated tragedy for the Tamils, who, oppressed by the very State to which they were expected to owe allegiance, decided either to fight back or flee the country.

1977 — a Government born in violence

If one were asked to epitomise the ten years of Jayewardene rule from 1977 to 1987 in one word, that word cannot be anything other than VIOLENCE. The very induction of the government with its stunning, unprecedented electoral victory in July 1977 (United National Party — 141; Sri Lanka Freedom Party — 8; Tamil United Liberation Front — 18) was characterised by violence, in which SLFP workers and supporters, apart from getting “pulverized” at the polls, were also physically pummelled by UNP storm troopers who were intoxicated by their overpowering victory. Curiously, within one month of Jayewardene being installed in power, that same flow of violence changed course sharply and metamorphosed into anti-Tamil rioting, resulting in the killing of over 300 Tamils (the official figures given were around 100), the destruction and looting of Tamil-owned property on a devastating scale, and the displacement of 120,000 Tamils of whom 50,000 plantation Tamils of recent Indian origin became permanent refugees in the (then) safety of the North-East. Reporting the violence in its issue of September 5, 1977, under the headline — SRI LANKA — THE BEAST IN MAN, *Newsweek* said : (Kai Bird with Barry Came in Hong Kong and Mervyn de Silva in Colombo) “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”. Seven leading British citizens wrote to the *Times, London* (September 20, 1977) :-

Race Conflict in Ceylon

From Sir John Foster, Q.C., and others

Sir, A tragedy is taking place in Sri Lanka : the political conflict following on the recent elections is turning into a racial massacre. It is estimated by reliable sources that between 250 and 300 Tamil citizens have lost their lives and over 40,000 made homeless. Limitation on travel is making it hard for correspondents in Sri Lanka to let the world know what is happening.

The Tamils are a community of over two million who flourished under the British, but have suffered discrimination since. They have now lost confidence in their treatment by the Sinhalese majority and are calling for a restoration of their separate national status, which they had for many centuries before the British came. At the last elections, the Tamil party advocating a separate state gained overwhelming majorities in all Tamil districts. This, no doubt, triggered off the murders, which are said to have been committed either by police acting without orders or with the connivance of the police.

At a time when the West is awake to the evils of racialism, the racial persecution of the Tamils and denial of their human rights should not pass without protest. The British have a special obligation to protest, as these cultivated people were put at the mercy of their neighbours less than thirty years ago by the British government. They need our attention and support.

yours faithfully,

JOHN FOSTOR
DAVID ASTOR
ROBERT BIRLEY
LOUIS BLOM-COOPER
JAMES FAWCETT
DINGLE FOOT
MICHAEL SCOTT

That was a 10-year flashback. After 10 years, the violence is yet there in an even more virulent form. Mr. Jayewardene is there, armed with the powers of an Executive President and enjoying the kind of authority that rarely comes the way of a leader of a democratic government. To the Tamils living in the North-East, violence has become a daily way of life. Their children are born and bred in an atmosphere reeking with violence. The Sinhalese children are doing no better. They are growing up in an environment which is militarising the human mind; breathing the miasma of irrational fears, fears of the very extinction of the Sinhala race! It has been a period of relentless unceasing violence, all ten years of it; an age of turbulence

weaving new and newer patterns all the time, making the spirit of violence hovering over Sri Lanka increasingly complex.

The Seven Faces of Violence

Violence today wears seven faces in Sri Lanka :-

- (1) **Sinhala mob violence against Tamil civilians.** This has a 30-year history, beginning with 1956.
- (2) **Sinhala State violence against Tamil civilians.** This trend which began in 1961 under the rule of Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike following the non-violent Tamil political agitation of that year has now under Jayewardene reached the proportions of near-genocide.
- (3) **Tamil militant violence against the State.** This assumed organised form and strength under the rule of Jayewardene.
- (4) **Sinhala State violence against Tamil militants.** No one complains about this, least of all the militants themselves.
- (5) **Tamil militant violence against Sinhala civilians.** This is a comparatively recent development, but not a surprising one, given the backdrop of Sinhala mob and State violence against Tamil civilians which failed to arouse either the Sinhala or the world conscience.
- (6) **Sinhala dissentient violence against the Sinhala State.** This is a new tendency, spewed by Jayewardene's own authoritarianism.
- (7) **Sinhala State violence against Sinhala dissent.** One sees in it only the tip of the iceberg, although it had been a consistent feature of the Jayewardene rule. But this may well prove to be in the future the crowning finale leading to the end of the Jayewardene era.

The question may well be asked : How much of this violence is a part of a historical process that President Jayewardene inherited and how much of it is his own individual contributory share ? Let us try to delineate the strands of contemporary history. The linkage between a leader and the historical process could be likened to the pilot and his plane. The pilot flies mostly on his instruments; the human intervention and skill matters most in the take-off and the landing. When Jayewardene assumed power in 1977, his very take-off proved ruinous.

Even as the rioting began to spread in the second half of August, (as Prime Minister then) Mr. Jayewardene addressed the Parliament on 18th August. He said :

"Mr. Speaker, I do not think this is an occasion to quarrel or an occasion to be flippant. Innocent lives have been lost, public property damaged and there have been cases of arson and violence not only in the Jaffna peninsula but also in various parts of the Island. What we have to consider is not

even the cause of what happened (!), but how we are to stop this conflagration immediately and effectively. We have taken the first action that we could. We have declared a curfew in the whole of the North Central Province commencing from 4 p.m. today; a similar curfew has been declared in the Kurunegala district and in the Matale District as well as in the town of Panadura

"The reason for this conflict I do not know (!), but to find it out the Government has decided to appoint a Commission of Inquiry immediately

"When acts of this nature are committed it does not matter who committed the acts (!). Whether such an act is committed by a Sinhala or a Tamil or by a member of the UNP or the TULF or the SLFP is irrelevant (!). Suitable action will be taken against any person, whoever he be, who breaks the laws of the land. (*Prolonged applause*).

"I thought I should give you an account of what is happening. As I said, in Panadura, a curfew has been declared. In Jaffna no curfew has been declared because the Honourable Leader of the Opposition (A. Amirthalingam) said it will be wise if a curfew is not declared and now Jaffna I understand is quiet.... By and large, Jaffna is quieter than many of the places I referred to

Surprisingly, Mr. Jayewardene proceeded to list various incidents of violence in different parts of the country, in which practically all victims were Tamils, by way of loss of lives and loss of property. Having done so, Mr. Jayewardene continued :

"So, that is not in any way a happy story for me to unfold. We should all be sad that innocent people are being killed and their property looted. You see from this account that outside Jaffna all the shops and all the persons injured have been Tamil people. There is I think, the case of one Muslim but all the others have been Tamils. I do not know who is doing this. There may be individuals who are arrested and they will be dealt with according to the law (*Applause*). But whether there is a plan behind it I do not know, I cannot say, and the Commission of Inquiry may be able to help us. But it is obvious that there are people who, one may call, criminal-minded people, who take advantage of a situation like this they feel that if they attack Tamil boutiques they will not be in trouble with the people around them and they will take advantage of that circumstance to loot Tamil shops and boutiques...

Who wants a fight?

Mr. Jayewardene departed at this point to address specifically Tamil leaders and the Tamil people. He said :

"I would like to impress upon the Honourable Leader of the Opposition that I am not going to deal now with their demand or agitation for a separate State. We are one nation, and this Government is elected to govern the whole island. *(Prolonged applause)* You yourself want me not to shirk my responsibility for the portion which you think is part of the Tamil Eelam. I do not intend to, because to my mind all citizens of this country, to whatever race they may belong, whatever religion they profess, are citizens which this Government has been elected to protect (!) *(Prolonged applause)*. I intend to do that, without casting any aspersions on any political views they may hold. However, if I may advise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues, please be careful in your words when you use them in the **Sinhala areas** (!) I understand that speeches were made in Colombo which under the normal law would be considered sedition and inflammatory. *(Cries of Shame, Shame)*. The vast majority of people in this country have not got the restraint and the reserve that Members of Parliament, particularly those in the front ranks (!) have been used to. They become restive when they hear such remarks as that a separate State is to be formed; that Trincomalee is to be the capital of that State; that Napoleon had said that Trincomalee was the key to the Indian Ocean; and therefore Trincomalee is going to be the capital of the State of Eelam.

"Whatever it is, when statements of that type are made and the newspapers carry them throughout the Island, and when you say that you are not violent but that violence may be used in time to come, what do you think the other people in Sri Lanka would do? How will they react? **If you want to fight let there be a fight; if you want peace let there be peace.** *(Prolonged applause)*. **That is what they will say. It is not what I am saying**

On superficial reading, the speech does not seem to damage the man who spoke the words, except perhaps that concluding flourish. But there are several hidden messages in it, which although expressed in the English language, carry a load of meaning only to the Sinhalese and the Tamil people. It has the cleverness of a Mark Antony oration and the craftiness of a Machiavelli. The speech was intended (as all subsequent speeches of J.R. Jayewardene, and like all speeches of all Sinhala Prime Ministers since 1956) to : (a) Appease the Sinhala constituency; (b) Threaten the Tamils with dire consequences if they did not behave. It was a double-edged threat, that of attack by Sinhala mobs on Tamils in the south, and repression by the armed forces in the North-East (where no Sinhala mobs are available!). A perceptive comment on this was made by a Western commentator,

Martin Woollacot, who writing in the *Guardian, London* in August 1977, said : "The central problem of Sri Lankan politics is well illustrated by the fact that Mr. Jayewardene in spite of his large majority, and although he was faced with a situation that Sinhalese were clearly the aggressors, still felt it politically necessary to warn the Tamils".

There are several questions that emerge that need answering by independent commentators. In a country that has its laws on sedition, law officers to prosecute, law courts to decide, and a government to enforce the laws, how does it become the responsibility of the Sinhalese people to see that sedition is punished? How can it **not** matter to the Prime Minister of a country, (as he says) not to know who has committed the acts of violence? Why is it irrelevant to find out whether it is a Tamil or a Sinhalese who has committed a murder? In which case what was the need for a Commission of Inquiry to be announced even while the rioting was going on? How come Mr. Jayewardene refers to "Sinhala areas" in his speech, when the Sri Lankan government vocabulary does not admit anything called "Tamil areas"? Can there be "Sinhala areas" without "Tamil areas"?

If the history of relations between the Tamils and the successive Sinhala governments has been a series of missed opportunities, as many observers have commented, it was Mr. Jayewardene who had the best opportunity in 1977, and possibly the last one. He had a steam-roller majority in Parliament; he did not have to fear opposition from his traditional rivals of the SLFP who were absolutely demoralised. Almost all the plantation Tamils had voted for him, as well as the indigenous Tamils outside the North-East. Even the TULF leader A. Amirthalingam who had come to Colombo with a mandate for Tamil Eelam was safely ensconced in the chair of the Leader of the Opposition. What was Mr. Jayewardene waiting for? His own party manifesto had stated: "The United National Party accepts the position that there are numerous problems confronting the Tamil-speaking people. The lack of a solution to their problems made Tamil-speaking people support even a movement for the creation of a separate state. In the interests of a national integration and unity so necessary for the economic development of the whole country, the Party feels such problems should be solved **without loss of time.**(*this writer's emphasis*). The party when it comes to power will take all possible steps to remedy their grievances in such fields as (1) Educa-

tion (2) Colonization (3) Use of Tamil language (4) Employment in the Public and semi-public Corporations. We shall summon an All-Party conference as stated earlier and implement its decisions". How does one explain Mr. Jayewardene's shilly-shallying therefore? Was it a lack of political will, as charitable academics would prefer to interpret it, or was it sheer political deceit? Mr. Jayewardene's track record over the past ten years would seem to suggest that it was the latter.

Tyranny of the majority

History never waits for Prime Ministers and Presidents. There is a "Take it or leave it" relentlessness about all historical processes. As it turned out, history began to overtake Mr. Jayewardene, and with him the Sinhalese as well as the Tamil people. To the Sinhalese, the opportunity has been lost. To the Tamils the die has been cast. The more Jayewardene tried to preserve Sinhala interests at the expense of Tamil rights, the stronger became the Tamil militancy. Nations, like individuals become oppressors in mind when they lack — not "political will" which is an evasive concept — but a keen sense of justice. Writing on the "Tyranny of the Majority" in his book DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA (described as the "first philosophical book ever written on Democracy), Alexis de Tocqueville said :

"I regard it as an impious and detestable maxim that in matters of government the majority of a people has the right to do everything, and nevertheless I place the origin of all powers in the will of the majority. Am I in contradiction with myself? There is one law which has been made, or at least adopted, not by the majority of this or that people, but by the majority of all men. That law is justice. Justice therefore forms the boundary to each people's right. A nation is like a jury entrusted to represent universal society and to apply the justice which is its law. Should the jury representing society have greater powers than that very society whose laws it applies? Consequently when I refuse to obey an unjust law, I by no means deny the majority's right to give orders; I only appeal from the sovereignty of the people to the sovereignty of the human race.....

"(So) when I see the right and capacity to do all given to any authority whatsoever, whether it be called people or king, democracy or aristocracy, and whether the scene of action is a monarchy or a republic, I say : the germ of tyranny is there, and I will go look for other laws under which to live..."

If the Tamil in Sri Lanka today has become either a refugee or a militant, it only means that, each in his own way is looking "for other

laws under which to live" Every law and every Constitution in Sri Lanka since Independence has gone against the Tamils, both by commission and omission. The 1948 Constitution made no provisions concerning citizenship. That was an omission. The Ceylon Citizenship Act, 18 of 1948 deprived one million plantation Tamils of their nationality and citizenship. The Ceylon (Parliamentary Elections) Amendment Act of 1949 deprived the same people of their franchise, thereby making them both stateless and voteless. These were both acts of commission and a violation of Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which says "Everyone has the right to a nationality" In 1956, the Official Languages Act made Sinhala the only official language, violating, as did the previous laws, Section 29 of the Soulbury Constitution which provided, "No... law shall... make persons of any community or religion liable to disabilities or restrictions to which persons of other communities or religions are not made liable; or... confer on persons or on any community or religion any privilege or advantage which is not conferred on persons of other communities or religions". While Prime Minister D.S. Senanayake and Prime Minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike disregarded this very minimal protection given to the minorities, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike went one better by sweeping it away altogether under the new Republican Constitution that she enacted in 1972. That constitution enshrined Sinhala as the only official language, and gave "foremost place" to Buddhism, thereby conferring premier status upon both the language and the religion of the majority Sinhalese. The 1978 Constitution promulgated by Jayewardene brought more subtlety. It accorded Tamil the status of a "national language", on paper, while giving nothing away to Tamils in practice. But the clever Mr. Jayewardene, unlike the brash Mrs. Bandaranaike, was in a position to tell a dupable world that he had made "concessions" to Tamils! Academic researchers who base their knowledge more from dusty bookshelves than from empirical study, have been faithfully recording this point in Mr. Jayewardene's favour.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act

Mr. Jayewardene who has been ruling Sri Lanka under a continuous, uninterrupted State of Emergency for the past four years (since May 1983) has however proved to be the worst law-maker for the Tamils. His crowning "achievement" has been the Prevention of Terrorism Act. LAWASIA report (*Democracy in Peril. Sri Lanka: A Country in Crisis, Report to the LAWASIA Human Rights Standing*

Committee, by Patricia Hyndman, Senior Lecturer in Law, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. Secretary, LAWASIA Human Rights Standing Committee) observes :

"This legislation (The Prevention of Terrorism Act) was enacted in 1979 as a temporary measure and entitled **The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act**. In July 1982, the Act, despite the indications of its temporary nature still contained in the title, was made a part of the permanent law of the land. This step gives cause for considerable concern as the legislation (hereinafter, for the sake of brevity, referred to as **The Prevention of Terrorism Act**) contains provisions which are in conflict with several of the Articles of **The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** to which Sri Lanka is a signatory.

"Any government undeniably has an extremely difficult task when dealing with intransigent militant groups bent on achieving their aims through violent methods. However, removal of the causes, the grievances which are seen to provide a rationale for the violence, is the only effective way to resolve the problem in the long-term. Further, on the practical side, there is a good deal of evidence, both from experience within Sri Lanka and elsewhere, which suggests that harsh legislation of this kind does not in fact assist in combatting insurgency.

"In Sri Lanka it seems clear that support for the militant groups has grown in the northern and eastern provinces as more and more has been heard about the ill-treatment of those held in detention under the authority of **The Prevention of Terrorism Act**.

"Under the legislation those "connected with or concerned in or reasonably suspected of being connected with or concerned in any unlawful activity" become, without any further justification, subject to the exercise of very wide powers. "Unlawful activity" is a concept which receives an extremely wide definition and embraces comparatively minor offences. The powers conferred by this legislation have been used almost exclusively against Tamils. They permit arrests, without warrant, of **Prevention of Terrorism Act** suspects, search of premises and vehicles, seizure of documents, the taking of persons "to any place" for interrogation, the taking of measures for identification, and the restriction of these persons' movements and activities.

"The Act brings within its ambit even actions committed **before** its enactment, although, at the time the acts were committed they may not have contravened any law then in existence ... Section 9 provides that suspects under the Act may be detained "in such place and subject to such conditions as may be determined by the Minister" and that detainees

may be held without trial for successive periods of three months up to a maximum of eighteen months. Detainees are often held, not in ordinary prisons, but in army camps, and sometimes in Police stations. Even when charged and awaiting trial, and during trial, the Secretary to the Minister may order the detained to be held in any place and subject to any conditions he directs.

"The Act provides for prison terms which range from five to twenty years, and life imprisonment, for accused persons who are convicted. There is no requirement that detainees be brought before a magistrate upon detection

Eight years after the passage of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, it has now been proved by experience that if the Act was intended to curb violence, it has not merely failed to do so; it has spawned even more violence. But there is more to it in violence than the gun and the bomb. During his ten-year dispensation, Mr. Jayewardene has not only intensified it, he has perpetuated violence and institutionalised it. There is an all-pervasive aura of disquiet in the whole island, let alone the killings in the North-East and the fear of bombs in Colombo. The Sri Lankan mass media has been actively disseminating violence in thought, word and spirit. It can be said without hesitation that in no other country in the world, democracy or otherwise, will one find language being used with such barbarous intent as in the political columns of the daily Press in Colombo. The fierceness of editorial expression, sometimes bordering on hysteria, along with reader responses which are equally frenzied (particularly in references to neighbour India) would seem to be a manifestation of a sad decline in moral sensibility; and a grievous blot on Sinhala society which despite occasional violence in the mass, has produced generations of men with refinement, poise, grace and good humour in all professions, and in a variety of callings. This writer who has over a period of twenty five years worked in Colombo, and associated himself with several men and women of the Sinhala community in the fields of Journalism, Literature, Advertising, Broadcasting, Tourism promotion, is appalled at the shocking degeneration in thinking of a growing cross-section of persons manning these fields today. This is a distressing phenomenon, the blame for which should be placed fairly and squarely at Mr. Jayewardene's door.

On the 3rd April, 1979, during the second year of rule of President Jayewardene there took place a debate, if it could be called one, in the Parliament of Sri Lanka. A Minister in Mr. Jayewardene's Cabinet, Mr. Cyril Mathew, Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs, had

moved a motion condemning the Leader of the Opposition Mr. A. Amirthalingam (the first Tamil to hold that office) and his wife Mrs. Amirthalingam for statements alleged to have been made by both of them while they were on a visit to India. Two years earlier, speaking as Prime Minister on 18th August 1977, Mr. Jayewardene said : (read above) "The vast majority of people in this country have not got the restraint and the reserve that Members of Parliament, particularly those in the Front ranks have been used to". The total absence of "restraint" and "reserve" in the language used by Mr. Jayewardene's "Front rank" Minister Mr. Mathew on this particular day and in the country's highest forum, the Parliament, will surely rank among the worst displays of verbal violence in any forum in the world. (*Hansard*, Vol. 4, No. 13, 3rd April 1979).

Two years later, on the 23rd and 24th July, 1981, there took place in Mr. Jayewardene's Parliament an unprecedented bizarre occurrence. The ruling Government party decided to move a vote of no-confidence on the Tamil Leader of the Opposition! With the diminutive Opposition consisting of the TULF and the SLFP boycotting the proceedings, it became an all-Government show of verbal pyrotechnics. The motion was nevertheless pressed to a vote, and good it was for the soul of everybody that it was done, because it demonstrated effectively how few of Mr. Jayewardene's Members of Parliament to whom he attributed "restraint" and "reserve" could be depended upon to detach themselves from the spirit of rancour and abuse that prevailed in the House those two days. The House divided with 121 Members voting for the motion, and two declining to vote. It is worth recording for posterity the names of the two who declined. One was the Minister for Rural Industrial Development and Plantation Tamils leader Mr. S. Thondaman, and the other, a Sinhalese, the Deputy Minister of Justice Mr. Shelton Ranaraja.

What transpired during the two days of proceedings could best be described as "verbal terrorism". At least two of the Members of Parliament speculated on the possibility of killing Mr. Amirthalingam and suggested ways and means of how best it could be done. One suggested the traditional punishment meted out to traitors by the Kandyan Sinhalese kings : rope two arecanut trees together, tie his legs to the two trees and cut the rope, so that he would be torn into two. Another member came out with a more ingenious idea. He said :

"... Even during the time of the Sinhalese kings the kings of every country, when there was war, they had to fight back. Even King Asoka, before he came to that prestigious position of world history, was a person who fought tooth and nail for his country, for his people, and prevented wars. Now, Sir, if you take it in that stride, what should we do to this so-called leader of the Tamils? If I were given the power, I would tie him to the nearest concrete post in this building and horse-whip him till I raise him to his wits. Thereafter let anybody do anything he likes — throw him to the Beira (lake) or to the sea, because he will be so mutilated that I do not think there will be life in him...."

Violence by word and thought

The spirit of violence during the Jayewardene rule was sustained as could be seen, not merely by deed, but by word and thought. But this itself was part of a vicious cycle in which unjust laws bred resistance; resistance, even when non-violent, was put down with violence; and this in turn breeding counter-violence; and counter-violence sought to be met with tougher laws. On the 22nd May, 1978, the Government introduced the "Proscribing of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and Other Similar Organisations Law, No. 16 of 1978". In its pathetic belief that a law is substitute for wisdom, the Government limited the period of the proscription to one year. One year later, on the 21st May, 1979, it was found necessary to bring another Bill, amending the earlier Act by substituting in Section 15 the words "two years" in place of "one year".

But when it was discovered by July the same year that the exercise was becoming profitless, it was decided to replace the earlier law proscribing the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam by a wider one — the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act. By continuously misguiding himself into thinking that if one law does not work, a more tough one will, he believed that he was assured of success this time. This belief was fortified by his faith in some measures he had already taken. On July 11, 1979, he had appointed his kinsman, Brigadier T.I. "Bull" Weeratunga, then Chief of Staff of the Sri Lanka Army as "overall Commander of the Security Forces in the administrative district of Jaffna", and on July 14 issued the following "imperial" decree :

"It will be your duty to eliminate in accordance with the laws of the land the menace of terrorism in all its forms from the island, and more especially from the Jaffna district. I will

place at your disposal all resources of the State. I earnestly request all law-abiding citizens to give their co-operation to you. This task has to be performed by you and completed before the 31st December, 1979."

On the same day the Cabinet decided to clamp down a state of emergency in the Jaffna district, and the President invoked provisions of the Public Security Act which gave the Police and the armed forces the power to dispose of dead bodies without an inquest. This resulted in the indiscriminate arrests and torture of Tamil youths and the disappearance of another three within the first twenty four hours of the expected gazetting of the "disposal of dead bodies without an inquest" order. Unfortunately for the Brigadier, in his urge to dispose of dead bodies without inquests he jumped the gun, and even before the gazetting of the order was notified, the bodies of two Tamil youths, Inbam and Selvam, were discovered in the Pannai causeway, badly mutilated and showing evident signs of prolonged torture. The inquests were held, and several unsavoury facts came to light. Referring to the reign of Army and Police terror in Jaffna during this period, Amnesty International in its memorandum to the President (1980) said :

"Various methods of torture have been used by both the police and the army in the period immediately after the emergency declaration, including suspending people upside down by the toes while placing their head in a bag with suffocating fumes of burning chillies, prolonged and severe beatings, insertion of pins in the finger tips and the application of broken chillies and biting ants to sensitive parts of the body and threats of execution. After these and other methods of torture had been applied, statements were extracted and recorded".

On the 31st December 1979, Brigadier Weeratunga duly reported to Mr. Jayewardene that as envisaged in the Presidential decree of July 14, his mission was accomplished. As his reward today, he is in charge of another mission — the Sri Lankan High Commission in Canada. That Mr. Tissa Weeratunga had failed in his mission is no longer a debating matter in 1987. But it is certainly a moot point whether President Jayewardene should have chosen to present a Brigadier with a black record as "quid pro quo" for the consistent kindness shown to his country by an aid-giving liberal democracy such as Canada! A posting in Pakistan, for example, would not have been thought too inappropriate because soldiers of fortune are not unknown in that country. Jaffna was in an angrier mood by the time the Brigadier left the place; and so, understandably was President

Jayewardene because Tamil militancy was gaining a bigger motivation. The vast mass of the Tamil people both within as well as the growing numbers of expatriates in India and in the West were beginning to accept armed struggle as the only option that remained. This of course left Mr. Jayewardene facing a defiance that he had hardly expected from a people who for generations had produced meek, obedient quill-drivers in Government departments and studious Tamil youths with text books always tucked under their arms, and whenever set upon by Sinhala mobs in the South had offered no resistance, whatever, but only fled.

If any State could virtually declare war against its own citizens, and in a part of its own territory (Jaffna) and do it unashamedly, that happened in Sri Lanka in the year 1981. Today, six years later, it is continuing to happen. But also, it is a more ferocious, but a pathetic scenario. In early July, as this is being written, here is President Jayewardene completing 10 years of rule this month, trying to invade his own territory (Jaffna) by land, sea and air!

What happened in 1981? Writing in the summer of 1984, Nancy Murray, a member of the Campaign against Racism and Fascism, and of the Council of the Institute of Race Relations, says:

"By 1981, the Liberation Tigers had killed perhaps twenty policemen, many of them notorious torturers. In April and May of 1981, following the Neerveli bank robbery, twenty seven men were arrested, and at least twenty-two of them, according to an Amnesty International report, tortured in a number of ways and then chained to walls at the Elephant Pass army camp and elsewhere for six months at a time. Against the background of relentless state repression, Jayewardene's effort to defuse the situation by calling elections for District Development Councils was probably doomed from the start, even if he had not aroused Tamil suspicions by sending up a contingent of 300 specially-trained Sinhalese policemen to oversee the election proceedings in Jaffna.

"The run-up to the elections was predictably violent. Tamil youth groups denounced the TULF for going along with the elections — they viewed the DDCs as toothless and TULF cooperation as a sell-out. On 24 May, a UNP candidate was assassinated and the army went on a rampage of looting and torture. And then, on 31 May, an unidentified gunman fired some shots at an election meeting, and the tense atmosphere exploded into State-sponsored mayhem. With several high-ranking Sinhalese security officers and two Cabinet Ministers, Cyril Mathew and Gamini Dissanayake (both self-confessed Sinhala supremacists), both present in the town, uni-

formed security men and plainclothes thugs carried out some well-organised acts of destruction. They burned to the ground certain chosen targets — including the Jaffna Public Library, with its 95,000 volumes and priceless manuscripts, a Hindu temple, the office and machinery of the independent Tamil newspaper Eelanadu, the house of the MP for Jaffna, the headquarters of the TULF, and more than 100 shops and markets. Four people were killed outright. No mention of this appeared in the national newspapers, not even the burning of the Library, the symbol of the Tamils' cultural identity.

"The government delayed bringing in emergency rule until 2 June, by which time key targets had been destroyed. On 4 June, emergency rule was extended throughout the country, and lifted five days later. Meanwhile, the government had no intention of postponing elections, despite the fact that the signs were hardly auspicious. It was determined to win at least one seat in Tamil territory. On the morning of polling day, TULF leaders were arrested; and they were released, with no explanation given. After the elections, several of the ballot boxes were tampered with, and some were never produced for counting. But in spite of this, TULF won all the seats...." (*The State against the Tamils, Sri Lanka: Racism and the Authoritarian State, Institute for Race Relations, London, 1984*).

Footnote : Senior Tamil polling officers were replaced a few days before the elections by Government party supporters from the South. Six ballot boxes were found missing, one of which was later discovered in the hotel room occupied by a Cabinet Minister!

Further attacks on Indian Tamils

If the Jaffna calamity cum fiasco took place in May-June, July brought that crazy reversal of Parliamentary traditions that we have already told you about — the Government motion of no-faith on the Tamil Leader of the Opposition. The inflammatory speeches made on that occasion were soon printed and distributed widely in the Sinhalese areas, and these led to new tensions in August, resulting in rioting in several areas, particularly Ratnapura and Negombo. The victims were mostly Tamils of Indian origin. On 17 August, a state of emergency was declared and a government communique stated : "Within the last ten days, seven deaths by violence, 196 incidents of arson, and 35 incidents of looting have been reported by the police... It has also been reported that there has been damage to estates and estate property, particularly in the Ratnapura district". *The Hindu*

of August, 21, reported: "Several thousand Indian estate workers had to trek through snake-infested jungles and cross high hills to escape persecution by organised armed gangs of hoodlums over the past 15 days, according to eye witness reports. The refugees presented a pitiable sight, dragging their weary feet with children in arms and little bundles of clothes slung over their backs". An Indian journalist, S. Venkat Narayan of *India Today* was detained by the police at Kahawatte and his camera impounded. A few days later an Indian national from Tamil Nadu, S. Dhanapathi, who was a member of a pilgrim party to the Hindu holy shrine of Kataragama in the south-east of the island, was axed to death, by Sinhalese hoodlums, while he was waiting for a shave in a barber shop. On August 21, President Jayewardene imposed a Press censorship.

British journalist Brian Eads who visited Sri Lanka wrote in *The Observer*, London, of 20 September:

"... It is 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 organized, by members of the ruling UNP, among them intimates of the President. In all 25 people died, scores of women were raped, and thousands were made homeless, losing all their meagre belongings. But the summer madness, which served the dual purpose of quietening Tamil calls for Eelam, that is, a separate state, and taking the minds of the Sinhalese electorate off a deepening economic crisis is only one of the blemishes on the face of the island. Since Jayewardene came to power four years ago, a system of what his critics call "State Terrorism" has brought an Ulster-style situation in the Tamil-majority areas of the north and east..."

President Jayewardene had preempted this kind of criticism. Adroitly, he side-stepped, freeing himself of all personal blame by issuing an ecclesiastical censure on his own partymen. Addressing the executive committee of his party on 4 September, Mr. Jayewardene poured forth this anguish. He said:

"I speak more in sorrow than in anger. Recent events throughout the island, North, Centre and South show that the religion we profess does not seem to influence for the good some of our people. I regret that some members of my party made speeches in Parliament and outside that encourage violence and murders, rapes and arson that have been committed... I must have reasons to be proud of the party of which I am the leader. If I cannot, it is better for me to retire

from the leadership of this party and let those who believe that the harming of innocent people and property that has happened recently is the way to solve the problems that face this multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-caste society, take over the leadership of the party."

In fact, there was an urgent need to polish up images and do some political interior decoration, because the Queen was coming. Queen Elizabeth was to be special guest at the government's celebrations to mark 50 years of universal franchise in the island in October. Confident as he probably was, that Leader of the Opposition Mr. Amirthalingam had been sufficiently "softened up" by the barrage of abuse and threats that his partymen launched on him in Parliament, he invited him for face-to-face talks. To use diplomatic language, Mr. Jayewardene was setting in motion fresh initiatives to settle outstanding problems of the Tamil community. It was characteristic of Mr. Jayewardene's private style of functioning that he extended a special invitation to a non-political professor of Political Science in farway Canada to help in the negotiation process. The special invitee was Professor A.J. Wilson of New Brunswick University who was of course a Sri Lankan, a Tamil, and the son-in-law of the widely respected Tamil leader S.J.V. Chelvanayakam Q.C., the founder of the Tamil United Liberation Front and for twenty five years earlier the propagator of a Federal solution for Sri Lanka. On 18 August the first of the meetings, later to get described as "amity talks" took place at the President's official residence. Those present, apart from the main actors, included : Minister of Trade Lalith Athulathmudali, Minister of Education and Youth Affairs Ranil Wickremasinghe, Minister of Transport M.H. Mohamed, Minister of Justice Nissanka Wijeratne, Minister of Rural Development S. Thondaman, and Dr. A.J. Wilson. The Jayewardene-TULF honeymoon had begun, and like all honeymoons did not last for long.

The year of the Referendum

Referring to the year 1982, Nancy Murray has said : "1982 is, from a safe distance, regarded as a "quiet" year, sandwiched between the ferocity of 1981 and 1983". (*Racism and the Authoritarian State*). This writer who was in no such safe distance — barely a mile from the then Army headquarters in Jaffna, and editing a paper, the *Saturday Review*, hardly lovable by Army standards — thinks nevertheless that Nancy Murray was right. The level of mob and State violence had become relatively muted, with no let-up however armed Tamil militancy; which only goes to prove that even mob vio-

lence in Sri Lanka happens only when engineered or supported by State machinery. There were various reasons why in that year, State and mob violence had to remain muted. President Jayewardene kept dangling before the TULF leadership District Development Councils, mere skeletons, neither fleshed with authority nor clothed with finances, but yet hoping that the TULF will accept them and retain them in their cupboard. The monthly dialogues continued. Mr. Jayewardene had also other fish to fry, in the south. 1982 was the year of the Presidential election and the Referendum. Mr. Jayewardene who should have continued as President, under the Constitution for six years, until February 1984, ("shall hold office for a term of six years") thought that the time was just ripe to cut short his first term and ensure his second 6-year term thereafter. His only major opponent Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, remained effectively side-lined from direct political participation. Her party itself was in such a state of disarray that it would not be able to throw out a candidate to match Mr. Jayewardene. He proceeded to amend the Constitution for the purpose. With his rubber-stamp two-thirds majority in Parliament, the Third Amendment became law on 27 August.

Mr. Jayewardene and the Judiciary

The Fourth Amendment followed. Delighted at the prospect of extending its own life, the Sri Lankan Parliament did it without blushing — on 4th November, 1982. The ruling party's freewheeling two-thirds majority were perpetuated until 4th August, 1989, which otherwise under the pre-amended constitution would have ended on 4th August 1983. The democratic device of a Referendum, pressed into service for the first time in the country, in December 1982 (accompanied by electoral skullduggery and governmental rough-stuff) satisfied constitutional requirements. "The most gigantic farce to be enacted in this country since the introduction of universal franchise over fifty years ago", commented Professor W.A. Wiswa Warnapala of the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka (*Recent Politics in Sri Lanka : The Presidential Election and the Referendum of 1982 — Navrang, New Delhi, 1983*). The judiciary was there too, in full regalia, but since its role was merely to interpret the law and the constitution as it stood, there was very little it could do to help preserve the democratic spirit. Moreover, governmental pressure was applied on judges, in more ways than one, to make them "behave"

It will be found that President Jayewardene took scrupulous care to play the political ball game according to the rules; except that he changed the rules as he went along. The cost of the Referendum in terms of democracy was that nearly 1.5 million new voters, as at 1982, were denied their right to elect their representatives. Today in 1987, the total number of disenfranchised voters (mostly Sinhalese) could well have swelled to double that number. One cannot think of any other contemporary national leader who has used the democratic apparatus with such skill and single-minded irreverence as President Jayewardene has, in his relentless pursuit of power. But if in the pursuance of power he has stopped on his tracks by any resistance, he was ready to deal with it, irrespective of the means employed. The last bulwark to fall was the Judiciary.

The judiciary in Sri Lanka had long enjoyed an enviable reputation for its sturdy independence and courageous judgements. While even under Mrs. Bandaranaike's years of power, the Executive had often taken adversary positions in respect of the judiciary, and paved the way for devaluation of its authority, it was President Jayewardene, (the son of a judge), who exhibited a cynical disregard towards the role of the judiciary. Although the following sequence of events was well known within the country, it hardly received adequate attention outside. We shall allow an eminent British jurist, Mr. Paul Sieghart to tell you the story :-

"During the campaign for the December 1982 referendum to extend the life of Parliament without a general election, a Superintendent of Police, Mr. P. Udugampola seized 20,000 pamphlets of "Voice of the Clergy", opposing the referendum proposal. A Buddhist monk, the secretary of the organisation concerned, complained to the Supreme Court, under Article 126 of the Constitution, that this Act had infringed his fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression. On 8 February 1983, the Supreme Court held in his favour, and awarded 10,000 rupees damages against the Superintendent personally, together with costs. On 2 March 1983, the Government announced that the Superintendent would be promoted, and that the State would pay the damages and costs.

"That history soon repeated itself. On 8 March 1983, International Women's Day, a Mrs. Vivienne Goonewardene (a former MP), together with some others, went to deliver a letter of protest to the American Embassy in Colombo, where she was courteously received by a First Secretary who promised to forward it to the appropriate quarters. On their way back, some police officers took away their banners. Shortly

after that, Mrs. Goonewardene heard that a press photographer who had taken pictures of this incident had been taken to the police station. She proceeded there to enquire after him, and soon after found herself under arrest, thrown to the floor, and kicked. She too complained to the Supreme Court under Article 126 about an infringement of her fundamental rights In the event, it (the Court) found that the arrest was unlawful, and directed the Inspector-General of Police to conduct further inquiries, and to take appropriate action in accordance with the law. That judgement was delivered on 8 June 1983. On the following day, the Acting Inspector-General of Police announced the promotion of the Sub-Inspector who arrested her.

"Two days after that, two of the judges of the Supreme Court who had heard this case found their private houses surrounded by unruly mobs, shouting obscenities at them. (The third judge had in fact moved house sometime before, but his former residence was similarly invested). It was a frightening experience, and no policeman was in sight. They tried to telephone the police, but found the lines mysteriously out of order.

".... Such events are hardly calculated to encourage the judiciary to remain independent, or to enhance public respect for its members, their judgements, or the Rule of Law. I therefore sought further information about them during my visit. The Additional Solicitor General told me that the promotion of police officers was the sole concern of the Inspector-General of Police and the Ministry of Defence, as were enquiries about alleged offenders and their apprehension, up to the point where reports and statements were presented to him with a view to formal prosecution. The Secretary to the Ministry of Defence told me that these were matters for the Minister, and not for him. The Minister for Internal Security suggested that I should raise them with the President, which I duly did.

"The President freely conceded that he had personally ordered the promotion of the two police officers, and the payment out of public funds of the damages and costs. This, he said, had been necessary to maintain police morale

(Sri Lanka : A Mounting Tragedy of Errors. Report of a Mission to Sri Lanka in January 1984 on behalf of the International Commission of Jurists and its British Section, Justice. March 1984).

This then was the backdrop; this the man, with absolute untrammelled power in his hands in matters both big and small, who began his sixth year of rule by leading the already battered island nation and its 15 million citizens into a new, bloodier phase of life and a

state of civil war. The holocaust that occurred in that last week of July 1983 (interestingly the first week of Jayewardene's sixth year of rule) shocked the world and startled it into a new awareness of this comparatively little known island strung up on the map hidden by the vast land mass of India, and sometimes thought by Westerners to be a part of it. President Jayewardene's Sri Lanka suddenly began to dominate international headlines and Television screens. But only the victims, the Tamils, knew the series of torments that preceded that black week of July.

An Indian reader writing in *The Hindu* (Sept. 3, 1983) made the following perceptive assessment :

"... If terror has been "State-sponsored" for the decimation of a section of the population and destruction of its property and means of livelihood where then are the affected to look for sympathy and redress? The position of the Tamils in Sri Lanka today seems to be as desperate and unenviable as that ... the killing and the arson and the destruction and the looting were done with a high professional expertise and diabolical sophistication. Rioting mobs? Blood-thirsty thugs? Certainly, but led by cold-blooded arsonists and vandals who knew exactly what they were doing, what they had to do, or had been asked to do. It was deliberate, methodical and thorough, and entirely one-sided. In a riot there is loss on both sides, though not necessarily to an equal degree. But during the recent holocaust in Sri Lanka, the Tamils were always at the receiving end, resulting in the slaughter of perhaps 2,000, the ejection of about 135,000 from their homes, and the destruction of property valued at Rs. 400 crores. And the insults and indignities heaped on the dying or scattering Tamils could only have emanated from a fanatic and senseless hatred and the insane desire for the near-total destruction of the Tamil power and presence in Sri Lanka. No, it was not an ethnic riot : it was a pogrom, an organised massacre of an ethnic minority by the power-wielding majority...."

What was the President doing while all these happened? If our words cannot carry enough credibility, we shall allow a Human Rights activist, a Sinhalese himself (whose life was threatened in distant Australia as a result) to speak on this. Says Dr. Brian Senewiratne, MA, MBB Chir. (Cantab) MD FRCP (Lond), FRACP, as "a concerned human being" (*The July 1983 Massacre : Unanswered Questions by Dr. Brian Senewiratne, Consultant Physician, Princess Alexandra Hospital Brisbane, Australia*) :-

"One might wonder what the President was doing during this time. The impression one gets is that his main concern

was safeguarding his position as President. With hundreds, if not thousands of Tamils killed and 100,000 in refugee camps, there was no sign of the national leader on the State run radio or television. His silence was deafening. When he did appear on television on the evening of Thursday 28th July a full four days after the outbreak of violence, his broadcast to the nation was pathetic and partisan. Not a word of sympathy or of regret to the thousands whose lives, livelihood and property had been destroyed due to a breakdown of law and order for which he was responsible. His main regret was that he had not proscribed the party that represented some 3 million Tamils an omission which he was now rectifying, thus removing the representation of the Tamil people in Parliament. This he was doing to "appease the natural desire and request of the Sinhala people...". If ever there was a tactless and unstatesmanlike address by any leader at a time of national crisis, this was it. Moderate Tamils to whom the author spoke, declared that the President's address was more devastating than anything that had happened in the previous four days. With that address to the nation, Jayewardene abdicated his right to lead the Tamil people in Sri Lanka. In an attempt to find some rational reason for this extraordinary address, the author sought as many opinions as was possible. The most charitable was that the President was "forced" to read the statement by extremists, including an extremist Cabinet Minister, and that he had delayed it as long as was possible (hence the four day silence), refusing to read it. He finally read it purely for political and possibly, physical survival. For those who know the stranglehold Jayewardene has had on the political scene over the past seven years, this explanation is hardly plausible. The performances of the Cabinet Ministers who followed their President in nightly television appearances were no better. One senior Minister was concerned about the long queues and consequent hardship to the Sinhalese people rather than the fact that some 2,000 Tamils had been killed and 100,000 were in refugee camps. To say that the Tamils have lost confidence in Jayewardene and his Ministers would be an understatement.....

"It would be too revolting and unprofitable to recount details of the acts of barbarism committed by Sinhalese mobs. All that the author a full blooded Sinhalese, can say is that for the first time, he has felt ashamed to be a Sinhalese. It is not that one necessarily identifies oneself with the hooligan mobs, but there inevitably is a collective responsibility for the behaviour of one's countrymen — hooligan, barbaric or civilized. He who watches while a fellow human being has his limbs cut off, belly slit open, petrol poured in and burnt, is only marginally less guilty than he who does it. In the General Hospital, Colombo, desperately ill Tamil patients had their intravenous

infusions disconnected and were thrown out of wards because they were Tamils. Tamil doctors had to take refuge in toilets to avoid assault.....

Even before the disgraceful events of July 1983, as early as June 4, Government sources had begun to talk of war. The Colombo newspaper *Sun*, of that date quoted a Defence Ministry spokesman as saying that what the Army faced in Jaffna was a "war situation" and that the forces there had to be given the "freedom of the battlefield". That "freedom" was given by the tiring President by the beginning of 1984. Indisciplined soldiers ran amok, killed civilians on sight, sometimes any moving object in bad light such as goats and cows, but the "war" was nowhere near getting won. "Jaffna is a city of fear", reported David Graves in the *Daily Telegraph, London (July 2, 1984)*. The President meanwhile was getting more desperate. During May-June he visited no less than four world capitals. On May 19, he was winging his way to Beijing, on June 16 he was in Washington, five days later in London and a few days later in Delhi. Russel Warren Howe reporting for the *Washington Post*, said :

"President Junius Jayewardene of Sri Lanka, now on a two-day official visit here, is expected to plead with the United States to intervene in his country if India uses force to protect Sri Lanka's Tamil (Indian) minority from growing ethnic violence. Although the US ambassador in Sri Lanka, former Republican Gov. John Reed of Maine has told Mr. Jayewardene that there is no prospect of America sending in the Marines to help the Sri Lankan government, the 78-year old president seems convinced that he can change Washington's mind, Western diplomats in Colombo are reporting. At a briefing for State Department correspondents on Friday, a senior US official stressed that there would be no security alliance between this country and Sri Lanka.... Although US-Sri Lanka relations are relatively warm, Western diplomats here are more and more concerned about the often eccentric behaviour of the aging South Asian leader, who has proclaimed his country to be the fulcrum of a campaign to save the world through Buddhism...."

In London, the *Sunday Times (24 July 1984)* published a despatch from Mary Anne Weaver in Colombo, which said :

"Sri Lanka's president J.R. Jayewardene flies to London this week to seek Mrs. Thatcher's support for his war against the "Tamil Tigers".... The president has already made an agreement with the Israeli intelligence organisation, Mossad, and has hired a group of mercenaries, veterans of the SAS to set up an intelligence organisation and a paramilitary force to

combat the guerrilla threat. The Britons arrived in Sri Lanka from the Sultanate of Oman, to begin a year's training programme.... Before Sri Lanka made its decision to hire mercenaries it asked Britain and the United States to set up an anti-terrorist assistance programme to be run by the CIA and M15. President Jayewardene has conceded that, because of pressure from large Tamil lobbies, London and Washington had turned down the request.... The Mossad's help has proved "invaluable", according to a Sri Lankan security force. Physical conditions in the Jaffna Peninsula are identical to those in the Gaza strip. Some of Jayewardene's advisors are worried about the consequences. One western intelligence official said: What happens when an SAS-directed hit team goes against the Tigers in Madras? It is just this kind of foolhardy behaviour that could lead to an Indian invasion....?

What happened in Delhi? *The Times, London (July 3)* in a report from its correspondent, said :

"Two days of rather prickly talks between President Jayewardene and Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Indian Prime Minister ended yesterday with the President marking off the proposals he is making on the future devolution of power within Sri Lanka as none of her business. In the formal statement he made at the end of the talks, he said: "I reiterated to the Prime Minister my view that the political resolution of this matter is an internal matter of Sri Lanka, to be settled between the various Sri Lankan parties concerned". He added "and she entirely agreed".... Although Mr. Jayewardene told reporters that he would be happy to use the good offices of anybody towards solving what he called "not the Tamil problem — the Tamil disaster", he was adamant that the Indian view would not influence him...."

In the event that Mrs. Gandhi had smiled, as Mr. Jayewardene's back was turned, certainly no one saw it, and no one reported it. The President might not have been full of beans on his homeward journey as when he set forth on his Washington-London-Delhi foray but his sense of bravado did at no time leave him. Back home he ordered another offensive on the Tamils. *Time* magazine said in its issue of 27 August (by Spencer Davidson. Reported by K.K. Sharma/Colombo) :-

For two weeks the violence had spread through Sri Lanka's Northern province, a bloody tit for tat of ambush and attack, pitting government forces against insurgents fighting for independence for the country's predominantly Hindu Tamil minority. Roads lay deserted, banks and offices were shuttered, and shops opened for only a few hours each day. By the time a measure of calm had been restored last week, at least 150

people had lost their lives, including 25 government troops — the worst bloodletting in Sri Lanka since July 1983. Said a Western diplomat in Colombo : "This is the first sustained and significant challenge to the government's authority in a year".

"The violence reached a climax early last week when troops rampaged in Mannar, about 50 miles southeast of Jaffna, in retaliation for a Tiger ambush in which ten military men were said to have died. By the time the soldiers' destructive fury was spent, 123 shops had been burned, and five Mannar residents lay dead. A local army commander promised that those guilty would be punished and that "no government would condone the army's running amuck". Said the officer : "The soldiers were incited by the sight of the bodies of their dead comrades".

President Jayewardene might not have made any policy breakthroughs in Beijing, Washington or London, but he was certainly getting arms. Minister of State Anandatissa de Alwis told newspaper editors in Colombo on December 7 that part of the foreign military equipment had already arrived. The government had ordered a significant military build-up, he said. In London, *Jane's Defence Weekly* reported that Sri Lanka will get five more Chinese naval craft by the end of the year. The deal was concluded during Mr. Jayewardene's Chinese visit. The Sri Lankan Navy was already known to have five Chinese "Shanghai-II" class fast attack craft, besides two large patrol boats capable of offshore operations and 22 coastal patrol craft. On December 23, the Government announced in Colombo that armed forces will now use rockets, bombs and small-calibre artillery against "Tamil separatist guerrillas". On December 31 the Colombo Sinhala newspaper, the *Divaina*, quoting a government spokesman said five friendly countries, both Western and socialist, have offered military aid to Sri Lanka, the aid to include fighter planes and ships. They are expected to reach the country in January, the paper said.

It was obvious during the last month in 1984 that the Government was getting confident that with this massive military assistance, it could go in for a military solution. A war psyche was being built in order to prepare the Sinhalese people to accept more sacrifices. They were being told through the columns of the racist State-controlled media that an invasion of Sri Lanka was being organised from India, thus proving how true was that hoary maxim by Dr. Samuel Johnson : "Patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel." As the year ended, on December 31, the top-thumping Minister for National

security was quoted as saying that for every man that the Tamil militants trained in any part of the world, "we will train a hundred persons".

The month of December 1984 was to prove decisive in many other ways. The Colombo All-Party Conference was reconvened for December 14, and the TULF delegation had arrived three days ahead. But it appeared doomed even at that point of time. US special envoy General Walters had just concluded two days of "intensive talks" on the military solution with President Jayewardene and Lalith Athulathmudali (Dec. 10, 11). On the 10th itself, the Government-owned *Daily News* announced that Gen. Walters was expected to discuss "a shopping list of military supplies necessary to meet the terrorist threat". The paper also reported that there was a strong possibility of "Britain providing helicopters and patrol boats to overcome the terrorist menace". The Round Table Conference met as scheduled on the 14th and President Jayewardene went through the motions. He proposed the amendment of the constitution for the setting up of Provincial Councils and a second chamber for resolving the "ethnic problem". The Buddhist clergy boycotted the talks, and on the following day when Mr. Amirthalingam was talking of "studying the President's proposals in depth", the Buddhist clergy warned the President not to try to rush the proposals until "terrorism was completely eliminated". On December 21, the All Party Conference ended abruptly. Delegates, including TULF leaders who had gone ready to discuss the proposals were told, if not in so many words, that there was nothing to discuss. On December 22, it was announced that the President's proposals had been rejected by all Sinhalese parties, including an influential section of the President's own party. On December 24, the President sacked his racist Minister of Industries Cyril Mathew. It was like bolting the stable door after the horse had fled. By year end, the mass psychosis had reached fever-pitch. The Colombo newspaper *The Island* in its Sunday issue of December 30 ran a lead news item under the headline : LANKA PONDERES STEPS IF EELAMISTS DECLARE UDI. The report said :

"The Sri Lanka Government is considering counter-measures in the event of Eelamist groups making a Unilateral Declaration of Independence. Sources said that information had been received of such attempts being made by expatriate Tamil groups, abroad According to intelligence sources, the Eelamist strategy is to proclaim a new state called Eelam on January 14, Thai Pongal Day ... Sources also said that the

assistance of the Pakistan Embassy had been sought in this respect. The Embassy was asked by the Foreign Ministry what action was taken by the Pakistan government when Bangladesh was declared an independent sovereign state in the aftermath of the war

Came Thai Pongal Day, January 14, 1985 and there were no signs of any UDI. It was either that some panic merchants or arms dealers had sold Sri Lanka that story, or that the Government itself had spread the hysteria in order to gain international sympathy. But as it happened during Jayewardene's 10-year rule, with every passing year getting more dreadful than the previous one, 1985 proved no different. A quick run-through of major incidents of that year may reveal a pattern.

January: Coastal village of Mathagal in Jaffna shelled by cannon fire from the sea. Reports of starvation. Two boat loads of Tamil refugees arrive at the Indian coast of Nagapattinam. Shocking army atrocities in Vankalai in Tamil district of Mannar. Under curfew, soon after midnight, a young Catholic parish priest, Fr. Mary Bastian is shot to death in the presbytery along with two others, and his body taken away. (Minister Lalith Athulathmudali claims that Fr. Bastian had escaped to India with Tamil separatists!) Tamil militants blow up Colombo-bound Yal Devi train carrying army personnel at Muri-kandy. A government spokesman says in Colombo that 22 soldiers were killed and 25 others seriously injured, but the death toll could be more. *UNI* reports that Government had imposed a blanket ban on Indian journalists. Chinese Foreign Minister Wu Xue Qian arrives in Colombo.

February: Ten gun boats costing £1.3 million each to be acquired from Britain. Refugee influx into India, from Mannar villages. Colombo-bound Zaire Airways cargo plane with arms and ammunition bearing Portuguese markings makes distress landing at Trivandrum, but is allowed to proceed after refuelling on the personal intervention of Lalith Athulathmudali. Tamil militants blast approach road to Gurunagar army camp within Jaffna city, making movements of armed forces difficult. 32 Tamil men shot dead in cold blood, some in front of their wives and children, in the Mannar area, according to *London Times* report. Three British media people including Nicholas Coleridge arrested and jailed in Welikade prison (For a hilarious account of his experience, read Sri Lankan imprisonment/How I spied for Russia in Sri Lanka, *Spectator*, London, 23 Feb. 1985). Liberation Tigers attack Kokkilai army camp, in Mullaitivu. *Jane's Weekly* reports that Sri Lanka has purchased from Israel two twin-engined double aluminium hull "Dubar" coastal patrol craft, equipped to carry missiles. J.N. Dixit posted to Colombo.

March: Militants attack Kilinochchi police station. Refugee influx continues at Rameswaram. Liberation Tigers attack Madawachchiya police station in Sinhalese district. Air Force helicopter damaged by militant fire, off Nagerkovil in north coast. Colombo rejects G. Parthasarathy as mediator. Indian Foreign Secretary Romesh Bhandari arrives in Colombo. New Delhi circles take note of concern in Tamilnadu over a possible shift in India's policy on the Sri Lankan Tamil question. President Jayewardene visits Pakistan.

April: Madras Customs seize large quantity of arms and ammunition at the harbour. A West Berlin reports says 1800 Tamils had sought asylum in the first 3 months of this

year. All four active Liberation groups — LTTE, EROS, TELO and EPRLF agree to function as a united front. Liberation Tigers storm Jaffna police station. Mrs. Thatcher in Colombo. At a banquet in her honour President Jayewardene makes implicit request for stationing of British troops in Sri Lanka. Indian government expresses astonishment. Violence between Muslims and Tamils in Eastern province. Athulathmudali describes as "rubbish" Minister Devanayagam's charge that STF commandos had instigated the violence. Movements of busloads of thugs to the East, from Colombo reported. State-owned bank at Nikaweratiya, a Sinhalese area, robbed of Rs. 60 lakhs. Sinhalese observer Dr. Frank Jayasinghe reports to President that police commandos were involved in Muslim violence against Tamils. 6500 out of total population of 8300 in Tamil village of Karaitivu become refugees.

May : Karainagar naval base, Gurunagar army camp and Jaffna Fort camp, all come under militant attack. TELO attack on army camp at Kokkavil near Murikandy. PTI correspondent in Colombo Krishan Anand arrested and detained in Welikade prison. Army rampage on north coast; an orgy of killing, looting and raping. Over 50 Tamils locked up inside Valvettiturai community centre building and blasted alive with bombs. Nearly 200 Tamil civilians believed killed. Five days later, over 150 Sinhalese civilians massacred at Anuradhapura, sending shock waves in Sinhalese areas. On the following day, Sinhalese navy men attack Tamil passengers, including women and children with axes and clubs on the boat named "Kumudhini", off Nedunthivu, a Jaffna islet. 48 killed. Mannar police station attacked. In Jaffna, Gurunagar army camp closes down! Government to purchase 9 British-built "Cougar" naval boats, and two British-built 46-seater Avros to transport troops. China to supply more patrol boats and T-56 assault rifles. Pakistan to furnish AK-47 and M-16 rifles.

This, by end-May, was the lead-up to what might be termed as the beginning of the Bhandari-Thimpu chapter. But wasn't there more than one significant pointer during this 5-month period which explains why President Jayewardene had to pocket his pride and look up to Delhi for succour? There were several in fact. Government was meeting reverses on two fronts — the military and the "demographic". On the military front, police stations in the north were getting dismantled, the Gurunagar army camp in Jaffna city was given up, and the Government was losing territory in both Jaffna and in the tourist belt north of Trincomalee. The successful frontal attack on the Kokkilai army camp by the Liberation Tigers showed that guerrilla warfare was entering a new phase — offensives against fortified positions. The North was gradually getting cut off, physically, from the rest of the country. Rail links between Colombo and Jaffna was getting snapped, and so they remain till this day. Army mobility in Jaffna was getting curbed. Not a pretty picture from the Government point of view.

On the demographic front, the situation was even worse. State-sponsored Sinhala colonisation in Tamil-dominated North-East had been a sore issue with the Tamils for well over a quarter century.

Successive Sinhalese governments had apparently envisaged a demand for a separate homeland long before the Tamils did. The colonisation process served two purposes, one, to change the demographic composition in the North-East and reduce Tamil representation in Parliament; two, to delink the contiguity of Tamil majority area between North and East. President Jayewardene thought of a third purpose — export the difficult lumpen elements in Sinhala society to where Tamils lived in a majority. It was demographic aggression with an extra dimension. A classic instance was Dollar Farm and Kent Farm in the north. Plantation Tamils who had fled mob fury during 1977 and 1981 had been settled in these areas on the initiative of Tamil humanitarian organisations like the Gandhiyam and the Tamil Refugee Rehabilitation Organisation, with the help of Western aid-giving bodies. On the plea that these had become "terrorist-infested" areas, Government troops launched search-and-destroy missions, and literally chased these helpless plantation Tamils from the areas, making them refugees on the run again. In their place were settled convicts with their families, an interesting experiment the Government claimed, of a liberal open prison system ! It was also another way of relieving the congestion in Sri Lankan jails which were getting flooded with Tamil "terrorist suspects" ! Army camps were also set up, in order to give protection to the "open prison" inmates and their families. On December 1, 1984, Tamil militants launched a surprise attack on these Sinhalese "civilians", resulting in the death of at least 42 convict settlers and the fleeing from the area of several hundred others. The militants followed it up with an attack on two Sinhalese fishing settlements in Nayaru and Kokkilai. Members of these new settlements were migrant seasonal fishermen who had got on well with Tamil fishermen of the area for generations and had gone back to their homes in the south-west once the fishing season was over. They had now been settled permanently in these areas with Government aid, along with their families, and had become in course of time fishermen as well as army informers. Sinhala casualties as given by Government spokesman Dr. Wickrama Weerasoria on the morning of 2 December were 27 killed at Nayaru and 30 at Kokkilai. In the afternoon, the State-owned radio said 29 were killed at Nayaru and 30 at Kokkilai. But by the night the government had "drastically reduced the figures of those killed to only 11". *The Times, London* headlined the news by saying : SRI LANKA RIDDLE : CONFUSION ON DEATH TOLL. On 3 December Minister Athulathmudali admitted in Colombo that guns had been given to Sinhalese fishermen at these two places.

There was little doubt that this had stung the government badly. On January 8, 1985, the government removed its mask. It was announced that plans are finalised to settle 30,000 Sinhalese families in the North this year, with the ultimate aim of creating "parity" in the population of the two communities. Settlements would be created in Kilinochchi, Vavuniya, Mullaitivu and Mannar districts and extended to Jaffna peninsula next year. The new settlers would be given military training and provided arms. On January 18, the National Security Minister reiterated Government intention to settle the 30,000 Sinhalese families in the North "with total protection". On February 20, President Jayewardene, speaking on the Address to Parliament, made the ponderous statement: "The borders of Sri Lanka are Point Pedro and Devinuwara in the North and South; Batticaloa and Colombo in the East and West. The terrorists are attempting to shoot their way into the heart of Sri Lanka to the borders of what they call the State of Eelam. If we do not occupy the Border, the Border will come to us. We intend to act before they succeed". Alas, the "terrorists" acted first. On 13 March the Liberation Tigers launched at 3 a.m. an attack on the Madawachiya police station and railway station. On 14 May occurred the awesome but daring massacre of Sinhalese civilians at Anuradhapura and the even more daring escape through territory dotted with army camps and police stations; the first act of undeniable terrorism, in an area which was certainly beyond "the Eelam Border" President Jayewardene had in mind. The message was unspoken, but it was clear: "Mr. President, before you settle 30,000 Sinhalese families in our homeland, how capable are you in defending your own heartland?"

Within a week of the Anuradhapura massacre, while the armed forces were engaged in reprisal slaughters of Tamils, at Nedunthivu in the North and Kalmunai in the East, President Jayewardene set in motion a series of diplomatic moves. His Foreign Affairs adviser, ex-Press baron Esmond Wicremasinghe was rushed to Delhi to meet the Indian Premier, on 16th May. On the 28th, Indian Foreign Secretary Romesh Bhandari flew to Colombo. On 1 June Mr. Jayewardene himself arrived in Delhi. Did Indian policy on Sri Lanka, and on the Tamils, diverge sharply at this point of time? If so, how and why? That story might best be left to future researchers. But the fact was, there was a rush of events from the second half of 1985 and into 1986, some of which seemed to be surreal, and packed into a drama that had elements of the Theatre of the Absurd. Whoever did the scripting, the play was certainly picking up; a lot of toing and

froing; diplomatic hustle and bustle. Quick-Fixing. Camaraderie was in the air between Colombo and Delhi.

The Thimphu phase & Fall-out

President Jayewardene announced a Ceasefire beginning June 18. But that had nothing to do with Delhi; he had an eye on Paris where the Sri Lanka Aid Consortium was meeting on the 20th. (It is customary for the government to develop an insatiable thirst for peace every year around this time). The Tamil militants accepted the Ceasefire "in deference Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's wishes", said TULF leader Amirthalingam in Madras. It was suddenly announced that the Bhutanese capital of Thimphu would be the venue for secret talks between the Sri Lankan government delegation and the Tamil groups — TULF, LTTE, EROS, TELO, EPRLF and PLOT. A marked reluctance of the Tigers to make the journey to Thimphu was soon set right; an Indian journalist reported that they were being "frog-marched". In Jaffna, where the action really is, a massive protest was mounted against militants' participation at Thimphu. People there thought it was an act of Himalayan folly.

Came July, and Thimphu which to most of the participants was as unknown a place as Timbuctoo, was invested with special security and secret importance. *India Today's* Madras correspondent S.H.Venkatramani who at this time developed a sudden desire to sample the tourist attractions of this Himalayan capital was himself "frog-marched" from his hotel room to the helipad. The climate there was otherwise bracing, but the absence of LTTE leader Prabhakaran was noted with concern. On the other hand, the presence of the out-of-the-blue outspoken TELO spokesman Nadesan Satyendra was also noted with equal concern. The mountain climate produced one notable result — the cross-grained Tamil groups arrived at a rare, refreshing unanimity to present a 4-point charter as a basis for negotiations: 1. Recognition of a separate Tamil national identity; 2. Respect for the integrity of the Tamil traditional homeland; 3. Recognition of the Tamil right to self-determination; 4. Citizenship rights to all Tamils who have made Sri Lanka their home. The President's brother Harry Jayewardene, a legal expert, who led the Lankan delegation did not only reject the four points totally but questioned the credentials of the Tamil side in raising the fourth point. Although some hopes were raised in Colombo that Phase II of the Thimphu parleys scheduled for August 12 would result in an agreement, and President

Jayewardene was himself quoted as saying: "Come what may, there will be peace in December", the situation on the ground, both political and military, could not have encouraged any compromise unless the President was prepared to risk his political future. Iqbal Athas in Colombo, in his despatch to *Sunday Times, London (28 July)* said :

"The dynamic for a settlement has largely been provided by the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who is reported to have threatened the guerrillas with arrest and the closure of their bases in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu ..."

The obstructions to any political settlement, beginning with the torpedoing of the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact of July 1957, had always come from the Sinhala side; to hope that Indian pressure on the guerrillas could force a decision was to miss the point altogether. In fact, a very powerful Sinhala lobby was already being built up demanding that Jayewardene abandon the Thimphu dialogue, led by influential members of the Buddhist clergy — the Mahanayake Thero of the Asgiriya Chapter, Ven. Madhihe Pannasseha, Ven. Sobitha — and backed by Mrs. Bandaranaike herself. Indian policy perceptions were flawed, at that stage, by an inadequate appreciation of this same point. What was called for, was not the exerting of pressure on the Tamil militants merely because the leadership was based on Indian soil and therefore vulnerable. The answer did not lie in twisting President Jayewardene's arms either. If Indian policy makers thought that the aging President could be persuaded to offer, **and implement**, a reasonable political settlement in keeping with the bottom-line aspirations of the Tamil people, they should help Mr. Jayewardene to face, and overcome opposition on his own side of the ethnic fence. In other words, the pressures should be aimed directly at the Sinhala constituency. The recent parachuting of food and medicine in Jaffna, accompanied by the violation of Sri Lankan air space by Indian Mirages, was, whatever some sections of Indian opinion think, a step in the right direction.

Viewed in this perspective, the series of policy measures adopted by Delhi, beginning with the "frog-marching" of the Tigers to Thimphu, the deportation orders on LTTE theoretician and spokesman S.A. Balasingham, TELO spokesman at Thimphu Nadesan Satyendra and the well-known Tamil Human Rights activist S.C. Chandrasekaran, followed by the Tamilnadu police swoops on militant offices executed with what seemed attempts at deliberate humiliation, in November 1986, the seizing of the Tiger communication apparatus, and culminating in the pressures imposed on LTTE Prabhakaran at the Banga-

lore SAARC summit setting, had not only weakened the pathetic faith Tamils reposed on India, but had brought to no tangible returns to either solving the problem or in improving Indo-Sri Lanka relations. Indian hopes of achieving these two policy targets receded further. If as they say nothing succeeds like success, failures tend to bring in other complexities. Tamil disenchantment with India was becoming vocal in Jaffna, which had a long tradition of emotional dependence on India — the Indian polity as a whole, not just Tamilnadu, as incorrectly understood by North Indian opinion. "Mother India" was a phrase in common parlance, long before the Dravida movement took roots in the south. A letter addressed to Indian Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi in August 1983 from "Eelam Tamils" (smuggled from Jaffna to Colombo and sent in the diplomatic pouch of a friendly embassy), said :

".... We have been nourished by Indian culture and bred on Indian thought. Four hundred and fifty years of western colonialism did nothing to shake us from that sense of belonging to India. The Himalayas and the Ganges and the Mahabharata and Ramayana are very real to us. During the days of the British Empire our sense of identity with India was near-complete, the narrow strip of ocean notwithstanding. The Indian freedom movement was one in which we felt we were direct participants. The honour of inviting Mahatma Gandhi to Ceylon for the first time in 1927 belonged to the Youth Congress of Jaffna. Our affection for the Nehru family was so close that it was not an unusual sight, in the thirties and forties, to see portraits of Jawaharlal Nehru, Kamala Nehru and Motilal Nehru in village homes in Jaffna. When Gandhiji died, we grieved in a way as only Indians would. When India became free, we rejoiced in it as if it was our own freedom..." (For full text — TAMIL INFORMATION magazine, 15 November 1984).

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As was characteristic of the ten years of Jayewardene rule, with every passing year proving more disastrous than the previous one, the Tamils faced the worst in 1986. Constant massacres of Tamil civilians and intensified confrontations between Government forces and Tamil Tigers, both of which had a mutual rebound effect; depopulation of whole Tamil villages particularly in the East; incessant induction of arms and men into Tamil-majority areas; bombing; strafing; shelling, in which neither temples, nor churches, nor schools nor hospitals were spared — it was an unending trail of blood, terror, misery and human suffering. Even as the year began, a Colombo newspaper (*Sun* — 3.1.86) noted that Sri Lanka's prisons were getting over-crowded, with 66,500 unconvicted remand prisoners adding to the congestion. Another Colombo report said that 3,000 unemployed

Sinhala youths between the ages of 18 and 22 have joined the Auxiliary Force, who after two weeks' training will receive a monthly salary of Rs. 3,400/- plus a risk allowance of Rs. 65/- per every kilometre foot patrol! In Jaffna, the President of the Tamil Refugees Rehabilitation Organisation said that according to documents maintained of "recorded" deaths, approximately 6,000 Tamils had been killed between 1977 and end of 1985, out of which roughly 2,000 were heads of households on whom their families had depended.

In Colombo, President Jayewardene told Indian Journalist Kuldip Nayar : "I shall have a military solution to what I believe is a military problem. After doing so, I shall tackle the political side". In a despatch to the *Times, London (January 27, 1986)*, Kuldip Nayar writes from Delhi :

"President Jayewardene of Sri Lanka pins little hope on negotiations between his government and the Tamils but expects the Army to eliminate "violence" by the end of the year....

"President Jayewardene admitted "indiscriminate killings of civilians" but saw no way out until the militant Tamils, described by him as killers and murderers, stopped fighting....

"He was in buoyant and confident mood in sharp contrast to the figure of diffidence and worry a year ago when I last interviewed him. Asked what had happened to change his tone and tenor, he said : "I am winning the war"

"I find Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi more accommodating than his mother. He must do in Sri Lanka what he did in Punjab and Assam".

"President Jayewardene said India had privately admitted the existence of training camps and "some highly-placed men have offered their apology to me". He refused to divulge their names in spite of repeated questioning....

"In addition to the increasing strength of his security forces, President Jayewardene also listed two other reasons for his confidence. Firstly, the level of Indian involvement had dropped. Now the Centre was not generally helping the militants, although Tamil Nadu continued to do so

"In any case, I have come to realise that only success matters. I do not care what New Delhi, London, or for that matter, any other country says", he said. How quickly and effectively I can exterminate the militants is the crux of the problem and I am on the point of achieving this".

There is no disputing the fact that, from newspapermen's point of view, whether they catch him in moods of diffidence or confidence, the Sri Lankan President makes "good copy". But from the point of view of the suffering Tamils, they know him as a man who does not give away anything for nothing. The wily President has been gaining considerable amount of propaganda yardage by honouring visiting journalists with "special interviews". Looking back at the President's pontifications, at a distance of one and a half years, many things that he said sound hollow. It matters little now. Arrogance of power and Journalism have after all one thing in common — they are both ephemeral!

What was happening in the Tamil areas in Sri Lanka while Kuldip Nayar sat talking to President Jayewardene in Colombo? Everything what the world should have been told, but had little chance of knowing; and that includes the Sinhalese people who lived in their own world in the south, effectively brain-washed by the Colombo media, a media which started misinforming the people as part of a calculated Government policy but ended up by brain-washing itself. On Good Friday this year came the Trincomalee district massacre of 127 Sinhalese, including at least 60 Army, Navy, Air Force and Police personnel. A curfew was imposed, and the hunt for the estimated 50 gunmen began. Sri Lanka was stunned said Western media reports. "Christians thronged churches and heard emotional sermons by the priests", said the Independent, London. On 20th April, 15 more were killed in the Sinhalese settlement of Jayanthipura. John Rettie wrote in the *Guardian, London (21 April)*: "The Sri Lankan Government is looking more shaken today, following last Friday's massacre near Trincomalee, than at any time since 150 Sinhalese men, women and children were shot by the Tamil Tigers in Anuradhapura two years ago". He added: "The Government is left with an awkward question to answer. If all this brutality can be laid at the door of the Tamil Tigers — and perhaps it can — then does the Government's military writ run at all in the eastern areas around Trincomalee and Polonnaruwa?". And then came the bigger disaster, that same day as Rettie's report appeared, the Colombo bus station bomb. Victims: 150. All these naturally affected the Sinhalese people. Hate, fear, a sense of revulsion were feelings that were understandable. But they were also in a state of daze; and bewilderment. Somewhere in the back of their minds, was there a gnawing doubt that terrible as these developments were, there was more to it than what they saw? That more of it was all happening elsewhere — in the Tamil areas.

While Kuldip Nayar was talking to the President in the third week of January 1986, not one mention appears to have come up about the massacre of Tamil civilians on the Sunday of 19th at Iruthayapuram in the Batticaloa district. Why? Three Church workers including the Catechist were pulled out of the church of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, by STF commandos, sprayed with bullets, and in the course of a violent 2-hour spree 21 other Tamils were left dead wherever they happened to be. On the 25th, 11 helpless plantation Tamil refugees waiting for a train at Kilinochchi Railway station, men, women and children, were mowed down in a matter of minutes. On 10th February, black-uniformed "commandos" in Vavuniya waylaid a Tamil businessman in a Peugeot car, robbed him of Rs. 75 thousand cash and jewellery, locked him and his two companions in the car and set fire to both vehicle and occupants. On the 19th February nearly 100 farmers, farm labourers and some "gypsies" working in paddy farms in an isolated hamlet called Udumbankulam in the Amparai district were surrounded by members of the armed forces; they were hacked with their own reaping knives, kicked with boots, tied up in twos, and shot down finally and made into a vast human heap. Stacks of paddy, straw, and timber and cadjan pulled out from a nearby hut were used to make a mass cremation. Three women chased away earlier hid themselves behind a bluff and watched the gruesome scene in terrified fear. Documented eye witness accounts of all these brutalities are available, with the names of practically all victims. Why were the Sinhalese people not told about these, some might ask? No, strangely enough, they **were** told. But what were they told? It makes fascinating fiction

The Iruthayapuram frenzy of Jan. 19th got transformed into a heroic battle. "FIERCE BATTLE — MANY CASUALTIES" said the *Sun* headline of the 20th. "Two Policemen and nearly 50 terrorists lay dead in the wake of a 10-hour face-to-face confrontation between the security forces and Tamil separatists near Batticaloa town yesterday... The security forces then called in reinforcements and Air Force helicopters joined the battle. Amidst the raging battle there were conflicting accounts of the number of terrorists dead... Batticaloa Police confirmed the deaths of 30 terrorists, but the Defence Ministry in Colombo could only confirm the death of 21 terrorists... the Defence Ministry added that of the 21 terrorists who had died, 14 died of gunfire and seven committed suicide by taking cyanide capsules..." It merely showed what level of sophistication the Colombo media had achieved in myth-making. The Kilinochchi killing was

explained thus : "A demented soldier went berserk and fired his personal weapon in a frenzy at the railway station killing ten persons including some women and children. The other soldiers immediately overpowered the demented soldier and took his weapon away..." As for the Vavuniya car incident, the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation did not show much imagination. It said that in a clash between two terrorist groups three terrorists were shot dead and burnt inside the car? The Udumbankulam massacre turned out to be another gun battle between the heroic forces of Sri Lanka and the dirty terrorists, except the locale was changed from Udumbankulam in Amparai to Lahugala. "40 terrorists killed in hour-long battle in the Lahugala jungle" said the Colombo report.

Perhaps it was Machiavelli himself who said that it is a fool who fights his own battle. The poor Sinhalese youths who are sent to battle for some of them to come back home in polythene bags, the vast mass of ignorant Sinhalese who think that their government is fighting for the survival of the Sinhalese nation, the middle-class simpletons who write patriotic letters to the Editors of newspapers, — none of them have woken up to the fact that they are **not** fighting for their survival. No nation or people, whether they be Tamils or Sinhalese could be wiped away so easily, by internal or external forces. What they are all fighting for, is for the political survival of one man — President Jayewardene! That probably is his biggest achievement in 10 years of rule.

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