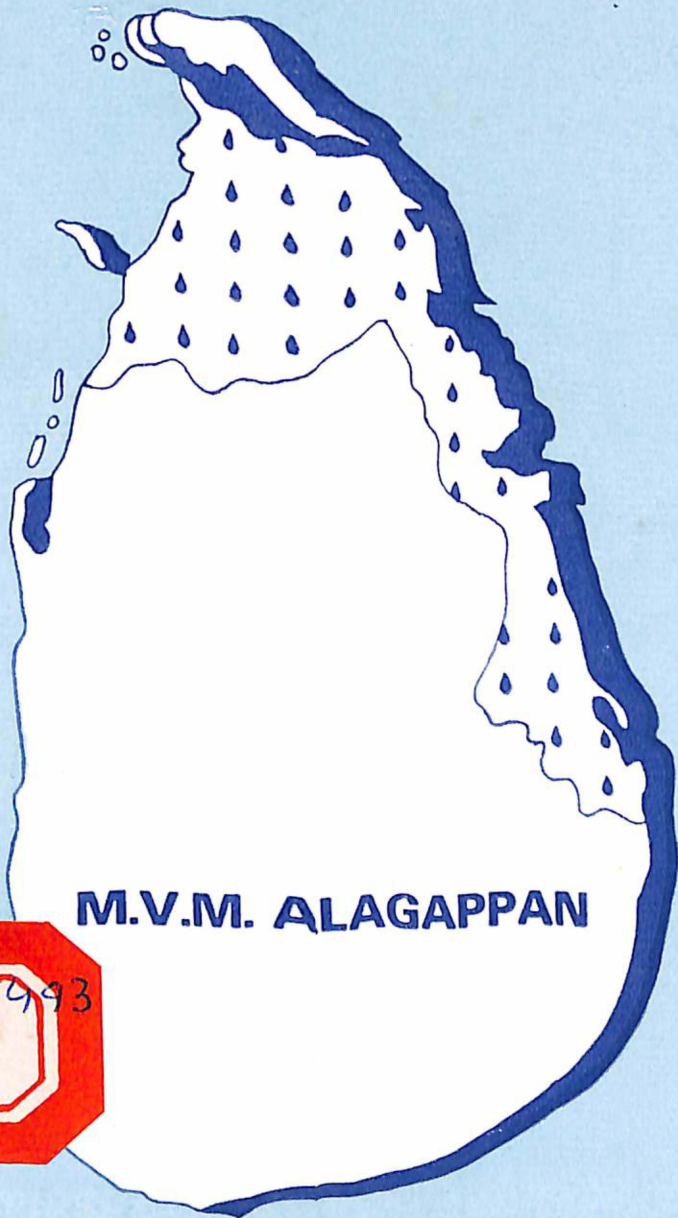


TEARS IN TEARDROP ISLAND



M.V.M. ALAGAPPAN

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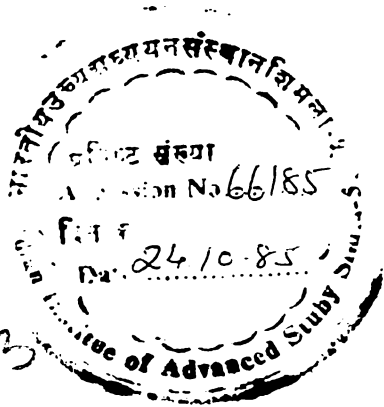
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*This humble effort is dedicated to the beloved memory of
Dr Rajah Sir M.A. Muthiah Chettiar
whose knowledge on Ceylon affairs was unique and
he was the one who had visualized
these eruptions long back.*

Foreword

Dr Alagappan has chosen to focus the world's attention on the critical condition of human rights of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. It is common knowledge that since 1948, when Sri Lanka became free, the leaders of the Sinhalese majority have been menacing and manacled the Tamil minority on the Island even though every fourth or fifth man in that small country is a Tamil. The culture of a people and the democratic content of a polity are measured by the fair treatment and human equality extended to the minorities in the land; for, real democracy means 'one man, one value', regardless of class, caste, colour, race and what not. Judged by this canon the Sri Lankan Government is undemocratic and anti-human rights, having for decades perpetrated gross injustice on the Tamil citizens. They have been denied fair opportunities in employment and education, in State public services, especially in the police and defence forces. They have been discriminated against in a cruel fashion. On top of all this comes the present crisis of genocidal operations, organised directly and indirectly by the State itself. The Tamils are now desperate for their very survival, although they have contributed to the building up of the nation's economy.

The years 1983 and 1984 have witnessed state violence on a scale difficult to imagine and inflicted in a manner which reminds us of Hitler. The tragedy in Sri Lanka and the State's bloody role in exterminating the minority have been attested by international bodies like Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists, The Law Asia Human Rights Standing Committee and so on. To aggravate the crime, the Sri Lankan Government has hired the Mossad from Israel and mercenaries from Britain to perfect the murderous methodology of liquidating the Tamils using the alibi that terrorists in the North must be flushed out. These violent

extremists are admittedly few and can never justify destruction of property selectively inflicted on thousands of Tamils. The truth is that the State apparatus has turned fascist. These escalating State crimes are too horrendous for words. It is a crime against Lord Buddha himself. Sri Lanka gives in its Constitution a pre-eminent position to Lord Buddha. And yet, blood-thirsty Sinhalese gangs, backed by the State power, deny the three quintessentials of the Buddha's teaching, viz., Pragna (understanding with fellow-feeling), Samata (equality among people), Karuna (compassion towards fellow beings). Killing helpless prisoners within a state of the Buddha was the macabre episode which occurred in July 1983. Lord Buddha stands shocked and shamed by this act of the Buddhist Government of Sri Lanka.

There are good Sinhalese people who will protest against these inhumanities. The world over, there will be protests against these heinous acts. India has deep concern about these eruptions in its neighbourhood. Sri Lanka is part of the world community and must bend before world opinion. But the people of the earth have to be informed about the torture and massacre of Sri Lanka's Tamils. Dr Alagappan is giving facts in this book which will rouse righteous world indignation. It is tragically timely. We must protest against injustice to Tamils for this world is indivisible. Don't wait for the turn to come to us. Let me conclude with a poem by a German poet, Paster Niemoeller, written during the Nazi regime:

First they came for the Jews
and I did not speak out—
because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for the communists
and I did not speak out—
because I was not a communist.
Then they came for the trade unionists
and I did not speak out—
because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for me
and there was none left
to speak out for me.

I hope an enlightened world community will pressurise the State of Sri Lanka to treat its minorities with less inhumanity.

V.R. Krishna Iyer

Introduction

When most of the countries in South East Asia and Africa were under the British colonial rule, Tamils in South India were encouraged to migrate to Burma, Malaysia, Ceylon and South Africa with the sole aim of exploiting nature to enrich the coffers of the Britishers. Once the British flag was brought down in these countries, next to the Britishers, Tamils were considered as aliens brought into these countries to exploit the economy. It resulted in a ruthless eviction, first in Burma and now in Sri Lanka.

Today the Burmese economy is in doldrums because of the eviction of hard working Tamils from that country. But the situation in Sri Lanka is different. It was during the days of Raja Chola, 998 A.D., when Eealam was the name with which Sri Lanka was identified. The rule of the Tamils spread extensively extending to the entire Eealam. By virtue of the spirit of tolerance naturally endowed to Hindu kings, Buddhism was allowed to come in. Now the story is exactly like that of the camel's entry into the tent. "Eealam" gave place to Ilangai, now known as Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka has declared Buddhism as the State religion with a vindictive attitude against Hinduism. The Sri Lanka brand of Buddhism evolves around abeyance of ideals like Ahimsa (Non-violence) and abhorrence of desires. For the past one year, the Sinhala soldiers have been trying to break the economic backbone of the Tamils in Northern Sri Lanka. This book is the culmination of our efforts to focus the attention of the world on the brutal behaviour of the Sri Lankan Government in giving a free hand to the soldiers to loot the houses of the Tamils, rape the girls and exterminate the young boys between 15 and 25.

We record our sincere appreciation of the ready response of all editors of newspapers and magazines in

according permission to include their press matter in this book.

I am indebted to Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer for having given an excellent foreword to my humble efforts. My admiration for his impressive eloquence in defending the down-trodden, particularly over the flight of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka, had inspired me to edit a book like this. My sincere thanks are due to Prof. (Miss) Radha, for having spared her time to correct the manuscript and assist me in this effort. I am quite optimistic that this compilation would enlighten everyone concerned about human rights and values and influence world opinion to stop the genocide in Sri Lanka.

M.V.M. Alagappan

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1

State Terrorism

M.V.M. ALAGAPPAN

Those of us who have been following the events in Sri Lanka, since its independence, had the shock of our lives when the Government sponsored genocide started as a repercussion to the ambush. In one of the worst ethnic eruptions in the island's modern history, Buddhism of Sri Lanka brand holding the banner of militants openly encouraged street killings of the Tamils, burning of countless Tamil owned shops, throwing thousands of Tamil families into what are supposed to be refugee camps run by Sinhalese, to be butchered and raped. It is all the more shocking, when we hear that even Churches and Bishops were not spared by the Sinhalese, once they heard about the shelter being given by Christians to the Tamils.

This ethnic eruption has its origin in 1931, when Buddhism was given a higher pedestal in the socio-religious life of Ceylon through an Act protecting Buddhist movements. In 1936, the Britishers tried to accommodate nationalist sentiments as they had been forced to do in the Indian sub-continent. The result was the formation of a Sinhalese Ministry under Mr B. Jayathilake, whose main efforts revolved around declaring that Ceylon belongs to the Sinhalese only, thus trying to reduce Tamils to the status of secondary citizens.

Historically, the Tamils were found to be very liberal and accommodating and Buddhism spread in this atmosphere and gradually enveloped the entire area utilising the royal patronage. As in India, we see that upto 1833 Ceylon too was in

fragments ruled mostly by various Tamil Kings and the Britishers brought these together under their administration. When the Britishers left in 1948 the Sinhalese, under the banner of majority rule, started butchering the minorities.

The first onslaught was on the Indian Tamils, taken there by the Britishers during 1827 to reclaim the dense forests and to give a big boost to the Tea Industry. Thus the Tamils from India were found to be mainly responsible for the prosperity of Ceylon. But the Sinhalese, once established on the throne in 1948, stripped the Indian Tamils of their basic citizenship through an Act and thus reduced more than 15 lakh Tamils to the status of stateless.

From 1949 onwards the Sinhalese were induced to settle in various places under resettlement schemes, particularly in areas like Ambarai, Kalloya, Trincomalee, Seruvavila, Vavunia, Mattakalappu, and the lands once cultivated by the Tamils now gradually changed hands and went to the Sinhalese. Likewise, fishermen rehabilitation schemes concentrated on the settling of the Sinhalese in areas like Mullai Theevu, Mattakalappu and Trincomalee with the sole aim of depriving the Tamils of their traditional occupations.

In 1956, the Bandaranayake Government introduced Sinhala Language Bill, declaring Sinhalese as the national and official language. This short-sighted policy has been mainly responsible for the deterioration of the economic and social life of the Tamils, who lost employment opportunities in Government. Even civilian officers were compelled to take Sinhala language examinations to get their promotions. In 1958, Sinhala fanaticism pervaded normal social life, by way of compelling car owners to use Sinhala SRI on their number plates. This resulted in a riot, wherein again, the Sinhalese mercilessly killed many Tamils.

In 1964, the Sirimavo-Sastri Pact directed India to take back five and a half lakh Tamils, provided Sri Lanka extended citizenship to three lakh Tamils. This spirit of tolerance shown by the Government of India was fully utilised by the Sinhalese Government to reduce Tamil families who had been living for generations on the plantations, to the status of refugees by

depriving them of all their savings. Their morale was totally destroyed.

In 1972 and 1975, tea gardens were nationalised and the Sinhalese were given good slices of areas taken from the Tamil cultivators. During this process, many Tamils were killed and every Tamilian in Sri Lanka would particularly remember the killings of Sivan and Lakshman (father and son).

In 1978, this history of butchering was repeated and resulted in the wiping out of an entire village called Neelapalai, near Moothoor, where many Tamil families had been resettled after the 1977 riots.

After Jayewardene assumed power, the Sinhalese efforts to squeeze the Tamils were extended to cover more areas. The Tamils were known for their excellent cultivation in onion, chillies, potato and tobacco. The Sinhalese Government took the initiative in annihilating this area of production by allowing large-scale import of these by Sinhalese.

To sum up, the reasons why the Tamils were driven to demand a separate State for themselves:

1. The Tamils were thrown out of their lands.
2. The Sinhalese-only Act.
3. The Tamils were deprived of employment opportunities.
4. Tamil cultivators were compelled to forego their economic return by way of allowing Sinhalese to import the same items.
5. Army, navy and police gave no room for Tamils to join in these forces.
6. Government sponsored genocide right inside the protected jail.
7. Rape of Tamil girls by the army personnel who enjoyed all the protection from the Government irrespective of their atrocities over Tamil families.

Thus, Tamilians, whether Tamilian or Mattakalappu Tamilian or Plantation Tamilian, now found no way to survive peacefully in Sri Lanka.

Latest information from Sri Lanka reveals a tragic atmosphere, wherein the army and the police brand any young Tamil in the age of 20/30 as a 'Tiger' and thereafter his fate is known only to God.

2

Historical Perspective

P.A. PADMANAABHAN*

The Tamil problem in Sri Lanka leaves one wondering about the need for and justification of the demand of the ethnic Tamils for equality and independence in their traditional territory. The Sinhalese have no right to claim the island as their's alone. Their *Mahavamsa* admits that their history in the island commences only after the arrival of Prince Vijaya (500 BC) from an upper kingdom in the overhanging sub-continent via the Indian Ocean. As a matter of fact, the Ceylon government in 1956 issued a commemorative postal stamp which depicted the scene of "arrival of Vijaya." The island had been originally inhabited by the ancient Tamil natives. Vijaya wooed and married a Tamil Princess, Kuveni by name, usurped the Tamil kingdom, brought in more people of his race from his homeland and thereby subjugated the Tamils and established Sinhala rule. Thus, the subjugation of the native Tamil tribe of the island took place after the much-celebrated arrival of Vijaya and his kinsmen. The Tamils reasserted later with the help of the Tamil kings (Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas) in the adjoining Tamil country just across the straits. The history of Tamil Nadu is replete with incidents of meddling in the politics of Tamil kings by the Sinhala rulers from the island. President Jayewardene was therefore not telling the truth when he announced over the national radio and TV in the island in the wake of the July genocide of the Tamils that "it was really the

*Secretary, Tamil Eelam Friendship Association, Somanur.

Sinhalese who were the true historical victims of Tamil arrogance and treachery.”

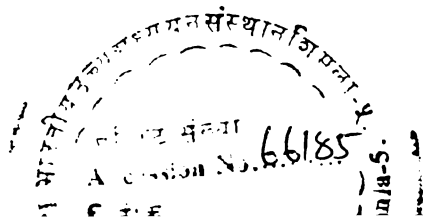
The subjugation of the island's ethnic Tamils in modern times took place in 1619 AD when the Portuguese captain Philip De Olivera took the Tamil king Sangili as a prisoner of war, brought him to Goa and hanged him. The Jaffna Tamil kingdom then passed under the Portuguese colonial rule. The Dutch and the British followed the Portuguese. Among the three colonial powers which ruled the people of the island, the British alone were able to conquer, colonise and control the entire island which till then had been shared by the Tamils and the Sinhalese with their clearly demarcated sovereign territories ruled by their respective kings.

Having established themselves as the sole master of the island, the British sought to streamline the separate administrative and judicial systems for the Tamils and Sinhalese and to strengthen their hold over the island by integrating its politically divided territories. In 1829 the British Crown appointed the Colebrook Commission to “examine the ways to implement in Ceylon the political philosophy and administrative system” of the British. The commission in its report submitted to the Crown in 1832 said that there was no need for continuing the separate administrative systems in different parts of the country and that differences among the people inhabiting the island should be minimised and the British administrative methods adopted. It had further submitted that the island should be integrated, separate administrations abolished, common laws for both the Tamils and Sinhalese enacted and a British type unitary government be established for the whole island. On 18 February 1833, the British king issued a charter to render justice in the island of Ceylon by which the recommendations of the commission had been made laws. Thus Ceylon—a single political State—came into being. This was how the Sinhalese got “their” country! The British continued to rule the island upto 1948. During the British rule the Tamils were not discriminated or treated as a minority people.

But after the exit of the British in 1948, the Sinhalese became obsessed with their numerical superiority and set in motion a cruel process of racial discrimination interspersed with

periodical violence against the Tamils. Political rivalry between the Sinhalese leaders in which success depended on the extent to which one was able to carry the majority of the Sinhalese people, made them blind to the need to keep the Tamil population content by giving them equal rights with respect to their language, religion, education and other vital matters. Neither the UNP nor the SLFP cared to implement the 1944 resolution which stated that after the removal of English, Tamil and Sinhala languages would be used as the official languages. The assurance of the then Prime Minister, Sir John Kottalavil, to the Tamils in this regard was never honoured. The successive agreements which the Tamil leaders had hopefully signed with their Sinhalese counterparts were also not implemented.

It was to ensure their survival and progress that the Tamils in 1976 decided to demand a separate and sovereign State. A separate Tamil State for the Tamil people means revival of the pre-1833 territorial boundaries of the traditional Tamil areas and integrating these areas into one State. There is nothing wrong in this demand for a separate State since the July genocide has amply demonstrated the vulnerability of the Tamils to the frenzy and fury of the Sinhalese. If the Tamils are not acceptable as equals to the Sinhalese, it is only fair that the Tamils should be granted a separate and sovereign State. It is worth noting that in Singapore the Tamils have been granted equal ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural rights even though they are a mere seven per cent of the population. In Finland the Swedish people who form three per cent of the population have also been enjoying equal rights.



Not the Cause but the Culmination*

The Hindu: By all accounts, the Tamils in Sri Lanka are facing the grimmest crisis they have faced in the island in modern times. What is your analysis of the overall situation? How does this differ from the earlier riots in which also the Tamils were the target ?

Mr Amirthalingam: I think, there is one fundamental difference in that the latest riots have been more systematically organised and the armed forces have played a decisive role in the attacks on Tamils and their property. That gives the impression that it has been planned by somebody in authority who could have combined the action of the armed forces along with that of groups of civilians who were acting in a very organised way. I get the impression that this was a deliberately planned campaign to beat the Tamils down into total submission and drive them out of the Sinhala areas, destroy their economic base by destroying their industries and also cow down the Tamil majority areas. This was a three-pronged attack.

Q: Many, other than leaders of TULF, have pinpointed the army's active participation. This is a very significant new factor in the attack. Would you say that, or was this foreshadowed by earlier happenings?

A: There were earlier incidents where some individual members of the armed forces had shot down, killed or gone on a rampage, but I think, here all the three sections of the armed forces, the army, the navy, and the air force, played a

* Based on the interview given by Tamil United Liberation Front leader Appapillai Amirthalingam to *The Hindu*.

part in the latest violence. And, this has happened in all parts of the country.

In Jaffna the army personnel shot and killed at least 51 civilians on July 24 and 25. It was a killing of the most brutal type because in certain places students were lined up and shot and killed. In certain places, they were just pumping bullets at passing vehicles crowded with people and people in those vehicles died. In certain places they shot and killed people in their beds—a university lecturer by name Kalaparameswaran and his aged father-in-law were killed while they were sleeping in their house, and even women were shot and killed this way. That happened in Jaffna.

In Trincomalee, the navy personnel had gone on a planned rampage and within six hours, from 9.30 in the night to 3.30 in the early hours of the morning, 150 navy personnel destroyed every Tamil-owned business establishment in Trincomalee town.

In places, where thugs had gone and tried to loot and were repulsed by people, the army intervened and shot and killed everybody who resisted the thugs. This happened in Badulla where in front of a business place called Yogam Stores, 14 people who resisted—one Sundaram and his four sons and others, people of Indian origin, who had done well in business—were shot and killed and tyres were piled on their bodies and they were all burnt beyond recognition by the army. In Colombo also, they did the same thing in a place called Sea Street; where there was resistance to the thugs the army had gone to the scene and shot and killed the people. So one gets the impression that they were acting on definite instructions, putting the thugs in the forefront; if they failed or if they were repulsed, the army was to go on the scene and kill.

Q: One gets the impression that Trincomalee, if not the focus of attack, was one of the major focal points of attack. Why single out Trincomalee?

A: I think the attack on the Tamils in Trincomalee started long before the violence in the rest of the country broke out. It started shortly after the urban council elections there and continued unabated for nearly two months. Actually, the local elections took place on May 18 and the attacks started

on June 3. It was started by the army and the police, and the hoodlums were drawn in whenever it was necessary.

And in certain instances, the navy personnel acted directly; in certain places they had gone for some sort of investigation, ahead of the thugs, and made sure that there was no likelihood of any resistance, arrested any young fellow who could offer resistance. Then immediately, hard on their heels, thugs followed and set fire to houses.

I think this is definitely connected with the attempt to hand over some interests in Trincomalee to the Americans. Mr Cyril Mathew is the Minister in-charge of the petroleum corporation and he is the one who is interested in this matter. We have definite evidence that one of his Assistant Secretaries was present and had discussions with the army and police personnel at the height of the troubles in Trincomalee.

There was also an attempt to destroy Hindu temples in Trincomalee because Mr Cyril Mathew has been trying to make Trincomalee a Sinhala area, using Buddhism as an instrument. Under the pretext that they had discovered Buddhist ruins in various places, using the funds of Government industrial corporations, they put up Buddhist centres in various places of Trincomalee district. So this is a multipronged attack using religion, armed forces and racist elements to dislodge Tamil elements and make it a predominantly Sinhalese area so that there may be no resistance to the move to enable the Americans to get a foothold there.

Q: There is a version put out by Mr Jayewardene to the effect that the riots were really related to the revolutionary conspiracy to destabilise the UNP Government and its experiment and to install a leftist regime, perhaps, a militarist solution. What kind of credibility would you give that ?

A: I don't think there could be any truth in this story. I think the forces that organised this violence and carried it out were very close to the Government, and it was more right-wing than left-wing. I think the attempt to ban the Communist Party and the hint at certain dark forces being in the background are only an attempt to please the western countries and win their sympathy at a time when a great deal of public feeling has been created against the atrocities,

particularly incidents like killing of prisoners. So they wanted to show that certain left forces were in the background.

But I will not discount the possibility of some contact between these forces of the UNP and certain sections of the JVP (Janata Vimukthi Peramuna) in this matter. But the other left wing parties could not have had any hand in it.

Q: There has been an attempt, initially, to depict Mr Jayewardene as the "best bet" of the minority Tamils and those who wanted a negotiated settlement. You have already dealt with the points of difference, if any, between the UNP and the SLFP. Would you like to add anything on this particular point, how he could raise himself as one who had a soft corner for you?

A: Mr Jayewardene's record in the past was not that of a man who would do justice to the minorities. In 1957, when Bandaranaike entered into a pact with my late leader, Chelvanayagam, Mr Jayewardene was the man who led the march to Kandy and created the feeling which ultimately resulted in the abrogation of the pact and also the subsequent riots against the Tamils in 1958.

In 1977, when he came to power with such a large majority and in an unassailable position, with the SLFP almost totally destroyed and in a shambles, we thought that Mr Jayewardene would be able to work out a solution to the Tamil problem and it was in that belief that we started negotiations with him even after the riots of 1977. On paper he conceded many of our rights, certain rights of the Tamil language were included in the 1978 Constitution; he promised granting citizenship rights to the plantation Tamils, the stateless persons; then, he introduced the District Development Councils.

Actually, in the implementation of all these things, one has to say that the record is very, very unsatisfactory. Not one syllable of the Tamil language rights embodied in the Constitution was implemented though five years had passed and no attempt was made to register as citizens the stateless persons. And, though the DDCs were introduced, nothing was done to make them function effectively. That is why we came to the conclusion that apart from certain paper rights and paper safeguards, there was, in fact, no improvement. On the

contrary, there was a deterioration in the position of the Tamil people under his Government. Particularly in matters of employment, his record is worse than that of the governments of the past.

After 1977, in the public and semi-public sector, there has been a decrease in the number of Tamils employed. We have challenged the Government to show that anything more than five per cent of the posts have been given to Tamils whereas the Tamil population is over 20 per cent. So, his record leaves quite a lot to be desired in the matter of action. And, with regard to colonisation, one of the matters which the ULP itself accepted as a deep-seated grievance of the Tamil people, he propounded the principle that the ethnic ratio in any district, particularly in the northern and eastern provinces, should not be altered by colonisation. In fact, by employing Sinhalese from outside the area in various industrial projects, there has been a definite attempt to increase the Sinhala content of the population in Tamil districts like Trincomalee. So in none of the matters affecting us has he been helpful.

In 1981, we made certain representations and he gave us an undertaking that in the police and the armed forces a larger percentage of Tamils would be given a place. Even the International Commission of Jurists in their report on the riots had indicated that one of the reasons why the police and the armed forces in the Tamil areas acted in this way was that they were predominantly Sinhala. In fact, the police are 95 per cent Sinhala and the armed forces are 99 per cent Sinhala. Mr Jayewardene agreed that the Tamils should be given representation in the police and the armed forces in proportion to their numbers in the population. But he did nothing about it for the last two years.

Q: Mr Jayewardene has said that the police chief is a Tamil and the next chief secretary is going to be a Tamil and a number of Deputy Inspectors-General are Tamils . . .

A: That is true. In fact, the first Inspector-General of police was Mr Ana Seneviratne, his relative. Then, when he wanted to make his nephew the army commander, Mr Seneviratne was asked to retire because they could not possibly have both, one in charge of the police and the other in charge of

army. And the next man in the list according to seniority, Mr Rudra Rajasingam, was made the IGP. But the presence of a few Tamils in the higher ranks of the police is actually an accident of history; they were people recruited in the good old days and they have by efflux of time come to this position. But when these people retire, which is due very soon, there will be hardly any Tamil to take their place.

Actually, some of the DIGs themselves were attacked during the recent riots. A DIG by the name of Mr Vamadevan had his house razed to the ground in Colombo; he had to run away to save himself. He has now retired from service and gone away. This is the sort of thing that is happening. So, they are ineffective even if they are there because all the people lower down are Sinhalese and they never carry out the orders of the Tamil officers.

Q: Could you trace for us the origin and growth of the Eelam movement in a political sense? What were the efforts made by the TULF, or the Tamils as a community before the TULF was formed (in 1976) to have your social, political and economic grievances redressed? And what was the response to these efforts from various governments?

A: The Sinhala leaders have tried to create an impression that the Tamils have never been cooperative, that they obstructed even the independence struggle. But it is a historical fact that the Ceylon National Congress itself was formed by a Tamil and the first President was Ponnambalam Arunachalam who was a Tamil and the Tamils were in the forefront of the freedom movement. But once independence was granted, the Sinhalese who got power in their hands on the basis that they were the majority, used that power to almost eliminate the Tamil elements altogether.

The first target was the weaker section of the Tamils, the plantation Tamils. They introduced citizenship laws which made the plantation Tamils stateless persons, deprived them of their franchise and deprived the Tamils of nearly half of the representation that they had in Parliament at the time of independence.

Then, they also started another attack by a systematic planned colonisation of the traditional Tamil areas, similar to

what Israel is seeking to do in occupied Palestine, in such a way as to make the Tamils a minority in their own homelands. In times of crisis, in times of communal violence, the Tamils become the target of attack in their own traditional homelands, and they have been chased out of some of those parts in the eastern provinces.

Then, having weakened the Tamils position politically and having made Sinhala representation in Parliament predominant even beyond the numbers that their population warranted, the Sinhalese who at that time formed 65 per cent of the population got 85 per cent of the representation in Parliament after the Citizenship Act.

So using this majority, they passed the Sinhala-only Act, whereas before independence, in 1944, they had accepted the position that Sinhala and Tamil shall be the official languages of Ceylon. It was also calculated to drive Tamils out of the public services in which they said they held a predominant position during the British rule.

So we started a non-violent agitation against this Sinhala-only Act and the deprivation of Tamils of their legitimate place. In response to our agitation, Prime Minister Bandaranaike entered into a pact with the late Chelvanayagam guaranteeing the use of Tamil as a language for correspondence with Government in all parts of the country, to make Tamil the language of administration in the northern and eastern provinces, to establish regional councils and grant a fair measure of autonomy for the Tamils to look after their own affairs in their territory and to ensure that there was no planned colonisation of Tamil areas by Sinhalese.

But the moment Bandaranaike did this, Mr Jayewardene led the march to Kandy and spearheaded the movement to get the pact abrogated. The Buddhist priests also joined in it and Bandaranaike ultimately succumbed to the pressure and abrogated the pact. In the wake of the abrogation, unprecedented communal violence was let loose on Tamils all over the country which resulted in thousands being dislodged from their homes, taken to refugee camps and by ships to places in the northern and eastern parts and settled there.

Incidentally, I may mention, an attempt is being made

today to say that the violence now is because we are demanding Tamil Eelam, we are demanding a separate State, but in 1956, 1958 and even in 1961, we were subjected to violence when it was not even dreamt of by anybody that we should ask for a separate State. So this demand for a separate State cannot possibly be said to be the cause of the violence.

Then, again, after the 1960 March elections, when neither of the Sinhala parties had an absolute majority, they wanted our support. We said we would support any one of the parties which would grant us the same rights that were granted under the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam pact. The SLFP agreed to do that and we supported them. The UNP Government was defeated; in three months we had another election, the SLFP came to power, but they did not honour the promise they gave us, went back on it. Actually they went a step further and introduced the law to make Sinhala the language of administration even in predominantly Tamil areas like Jaffna, Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Mannar. So we had a non-violent struggle, we had a Satyagraha campaign and for two months we paralysed the administration. They let loose the army, ill-treated the people and arrested all the leaders and locked them up.

In 1965, the UNP needed our support to form the Government. Dudley Senanayake and Mr Jayewardene entered into a pact with Chelvanayagam, again undertaking to establish district councils as a measure of autonomy, to stop Sinhala colonisation of our areas and to grant the use of the Tamil language in those areas and certain rights all over the country. They introduced certain regulations to provide for the use of the Tamil language but to date, those regulations have remained a dead letter. But when the UNP tried to do something the SLFP opposed it and when the SLFP tried to do something the UNP opposed it and all our efforts to come to terms with successive Sinhalese governments failed. Then, in 1970, Mrs Bandaranaike came to power and set up a constituent assembly to draft a new republican constitution.

Q: You have had various rounds of talks with the President and there have been experiments like the Development Councils which have been portrayed as a partial response to your demands . . .

A: Though we got a mandate for an independent State, right from the start we indicated that we cannot go back on the mandate we got, but if a responsible alternative for redressing the grievances which gave rise to this demand for a separate State could be worked out, we are willing to place that alternative before our people and then try and work it. In fact, in the 1977 election, the UNP itself accepted that it was the grievances that the Tamil people had about their language rights, colonisation, employment, education and economic development of the Tamil areas, that had driven them to demand a separate State. They gave an undertaking that if they came to power they would have an all-party conference and work out a solution, but the UNP failed to do that. We tried to press them many a time; whenever the Government called us for talks we went and talked to them and tried our best to work out a solution. We were never intransigent and we did not say that we will not compromise. Though we had our problems we tried our best to peacefully work out a solution.

The Government accepted some of these suggestions and started the District Development Councils but it failed to make them effective and I should say, there was so much of resistance on the part of the Government, at the political and bureaucratic levels, to the working of the DDCs, that they have proved to be the most ineffective instrument of decentralisation. We have got just the empty shell of an organisation and not the substance of decentralisation. It is in this situation coupled with repeated violence against Tamils after this Government came to power—we were attacked in 1977, 1979, 1981 and the biggest and the most destructive attack came in 1983—that we decided at our convention at Mannar not to have any further talks with Mr Jayewardene, that we will resign our seats in Parliament because we were elected for six years, and will launch a non-violent struggle to get the Prevention of Terrorism Act repealed, to get the army withdrawn from our areas and to get the Government's promises relating to decentralisation of power implemented.

Q: Apart from the TULF there are other groups, the most prominent among them being "the Tigers". The Sri Lanka Government invariably refers to their activity as terrorism. In

some other quarters they are regarded as politically immature, others regard them as patriots. How do you see the rise of such groups in the historical sense?

A: As I said earlier, it started as a result of frustration among the Tamil student population arising from the standardisation in admission to universities. It was given an impetus by the police violence at the World Tamil Research Conference and the first targets of youth attack were the policemen who were responsible for the killings at the conference. Then, some of the young men who were responsible for it were arrested and tortured by the police. Then the policemen who tortured became the target of attack, and in this way it started working in a vicious circle and it escalated. Thereafter, these groups got better organised in the face of continued police and army violence against Tamil people and Tamil youth.

I will not regard them as terrorists, I do not agree with their methods. I do not approve of the method of violence and in fact we think that in certain instances they are counter-productive and are not in the best interest of our people. But I will not deny the fact that we appreciate the spirit of these young men who laid down their lives, and their courage. We have tried to wean them from the path they have chosen and they have themselves reacted against us in certain instances when we tried to work out peaceful solutions with the Government. But in spite of everything, I will not agree with any branding of them as anti-social or terrorist elements. They may be misguided but they are genuinely, in their own misguided way, working towards what they believe is in the best interest of the Tamil people.

Q: There is an impression that the section of Tamils of which you are the political leader has been somewhat distant from the problems of the other stream, namely, Indian Tamils, and their longstanding attempts to get their grievances settled. Is this a valid, or even a partly valid, impression?

A: The Tamils in Sri Lanka, as Tamils in other parts of the world, have their own differences of caste and region. In the past, politicians used those differences and even among the indigenous Tamils. The Jaffna Tamils and the Baticaloa Tamils also had their differences in the past. I think since our

movement led by Chelvanayagam came to the forefront, we have tried our best to get over these differences and unify the Tamil people in Sri Lanka as one nation. At the time the Tamils of Indian origin were politically attacked by the citizenship laws, Chelvanayagam broke away from the Tamil Congress which at that time had joined the Government and opposed that bill and formed the Federal Party. I was a student at that time and that was the beginning of my entry into politics. I was founder-member with Chelvanayagam of the Federal Party in 1949 and from that time, even in fighting those citizenship laws in courts right up to the Privy Council and giving full support to the Ceylon Indian Congress which later became the Ceylon Workers Congress, the Federal Party and the leaders of the party fully made common cause with the Tamils of Indian origin.

The core of the TULF was the Federal Party and the main leader was Chelvanayagam. When we formed the Tamil United Front, the main organisation of the plantation Tamils, the CWC was with us, and in 1977, when we fought the elections, our President was Mr Thondaman of the CWC. It is, therefore, absolutely wrong to say that the TULF had left the plantation Tamils out of the reckoning. Even today, though Mr Thondaman is with the Government and the CWC is cooperating with the Government, in matters of common interest affecting the Tamil people we have always worked with an understanding.

It is only a few businessmen and people of that class even from the Ceylon Tamils community who feel that our political activities caused problems for them. So, self-interest makes them think that if the TULF or the militants keep quiet they will have peace and they can carry on with their business and make money, and that is all they are interested in. But apart from them I do not think the TULF has ever ceased to voice the grievances and fight to redress the grievances of the plantation Tamils.

In fact, after every spate of violence, when Tamils of Indian origin in the plantation areas were dislodged and had to move to the northern and eastern provinces, the TULF and the organisations working [in conjunction with the TULF

provided for their accommodation, looked after them and rehabilitated them. After the 1977 and the 1981 riots we provided for over 50,000 people from the plantation districts who migrated to our areas and no one can say that they have not been looked after.

Q: What is your current assessment of the approach of the Ceylon Workers Congress, in particular, its leader Mr Thondaman who is in the Government—a rather tricky situation? How has he reacted to this crisis in which both the sections of the people (Tamils) have been attacked?

A: Mr Thondaman is in a very unhappy position, he is a member of the Government. But he had to look on when the very people he represents were being attacked by the armed forces of the Government. This happened in 1981 as well as in 1983. But he and his organisation seem to think that because he is in the Government at least certain safeguards could be obtained for these people which he will not be able to get if he threw up the portfolio and got out of the Government. This seems to be their thinking. I may not agree with him but I understand and sympathise with their point of view. Their position is slightly different from that of the TULF because we represent people from the northern and eastern provinces where we are in a majority. Though we are also being attacked by armed forces there are no Sinhalese thugs to attack us, except in Trincomalee, with the connivance of the armed forces. And so, if the armed forces are withdrawn we are masters in our territory. But this is not the situation in the plantation districts. So Mr Thondaman is anxious to work out certain safeguards for the people living there.

We have been working with an understanding of the differences in the problems of each other and the different handling that the two problems needed. But on common matters we have always stood together. When the vote of no-confidence against me was brought in Parliament, Mr Thondaman refused to vote and he made a fairly strong speech. Even on the occasion of the Sixth Amendment, though the censored versions that were published here gave a different picture, Mr Thondaman did not mince words and told the Government that the TULF was always prepared to work out a solution

with the Government and that it was the Government which failed to carry out its promise, failed to control its armed forces and failed to safeguard the lives and the property of the Tamils. Though I do not agree with his being a member of the Government, I think I understand the reasons and we are able to work together in the common interest of the total Tamil population without creating any bitterness or animosity between the two groups and organisations. I think Mr Thondaman is also reconsidering his position within the Government. He has put forward certain demands arising from the recent situation, and of course, as usual Mr Jayewardene has said that he can do those things. If a problem is given to Mr Jayewardene, his answer is : "I don't see any difficulty, we can do that." But it is never done. So Mr Thondaman also has put certain matters before Mr Jayewardene. It may be that if those things are not carried out he may reconsider his decision. Whatever it may be, I feel, in the larger interest of the Tamil people, we have to work with an understanding.

Q: Regarding the question of what is to be done on an immediate basis in the context of the current tragedy and the intense feeling that has been generated, do you see any way of normalising relations between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamils in the period ahead?

A: I think, immediately it may be difficult. Feelings are very hard on both sides and particularly among the Tamil people there is a very strong feeling that they have had the worst treatment possible in their history. So if anything is to be done immediately I think, measures for rehabilitation have to be undertaken in a big way and security of life and property has to be ensured and along with it measures for a long term solution have to be undertaken. These three matters have to be undertaken in the order that I mentioned.

I say rehabilitation because quite a large number of people who lived in Colombo and other places have no place to stay. People who lived comfortably in houses of their own have been completely dehousing and those houses cannot be repaired for them to get back to live. This is the situation in which we are placed so that it is not easy to make them forget this scar and I do not get the feeling that the Government is setting

about in the correct way in rehabilitating the Tamil people who have been affected.

The Government seems to be giving priority to rehabilitation of the Sinhalese workers who lost their employment as a result of the factories of the Tamils and Indians having been damaged. They have had a conference and the Labour Minister has called upon the Tamil proprietors who have lost everything to pay the wages of the Sinhalese employees. You can just imagine the heartless way they are setting about it and the Government, I think, is seeking to take over these factories and rebuild them with the Government having a hand even in the management in order to ensure that all employees and all those Sinhalese people regain their positions. In fact in a number of factories, the employees themselves were the people who attacked Tamil businessmen and proprietors involved have told me that some of their own personal employees attacked. A trader—he used to distribute biscuits and other things all over—had them loaded into his vehicle and when he got a report that these were being attacked he locked them up and took away the key. The driver of the vehicle went there, broke open the vehicle and took it away, while looking for the proprietor to kill him so that his ownership may become absolute. This sort of thing happened in several places.

So, the Government is seeking to ensure that these same elements get back into these factories and business places. The Government should rethink its whole policy; otherwise this rehabilitation will become only expropriation of the property of Tamils and handing it over to the Sinhalese elements who were responsible for all the violence.

Q: In this connection how do you see the law which enables the Government to take over the damaged property?

A. I am not aware of the exact details of the law. But from what I can gather from the interviews given by the competent authority in Colombo over the radio, it seems to be calculated to achieve two or three purposes which are not in the interest of the Tamil people and of the proprietors. In Sri Lanka, insurance is fully a State monopoly. These business houses and factories are insured with the State insurance corporation. So all that the Government is trying to do is to

get the insurance money and rebuild them, thereby the proprietors will not get even the insurance money in their hands. Some of them may not want to rebuild them there, they may want to take the insurance money and invest it in some other ventures because they may not have any faith in their ability to carry on. The Government is seeking effectively to block them from doing this, which I think is not fair.

Some of the proprietors have told me that they do not want to restart the industries in the same place, but in places where there would be security for them, if possible, in the Tamil areas. The Government wants to prevent them from doing it by vesting the property in the Government and the Government itself taking a hand in the restoration. These are moves which are actually antagonistic and hostile to the interest of the Tamil people and the Tamil proprietors.

Q: What is your estimate of the number of people who are displaced, the number of people who have moved away from their places of work?

A: I think it is over 1,00,000; already about 40,000 people have gone to the north. Smaller numbers have gone to Trincomalee, Baticaloa and other places. A certain number of displaced persons have been sent to the plantation areas which were not affected, where the concentration of Tamil population is such that Sinhalese hoodlums would not venture to attack. A certain number had no place to go and they are yet in the refugee camps in Colombo. At one stage the Sri Lanka government said that about 1,35,000 people were in the refugee camps. Apart from this, there were a number of people who did not go to the refugee camps; they went to the houses of their Sinhalese friends, Muslim friends, because of the conditions in the refugee camps. Each camp had about 10,000 people. These camps were mostly school buildings, so the toilet and other facilities meant for 1,000 students had to be used by 10,000 people. And men, women and children were crowded like that—people who were used to comforts. Some of them went to luxury hotels. At one stage some of the hotels did not take in Tamils; they said their own employees may give them trouble, so they did not want to take them. People with means went to stay in places like that but

even they have no place to go back to because their houses have been destroyed. If you take all these people into consideration it will be in the region of about 1,50,000 people who were dislodged from their residences and their work-places.

Q: Apart from this task of rehabilitation there is a question of immediate relief. There have been reports here that the relief being made available to Sri Lanka from India and elsewhere is not being properly channeled to the victims. At least in certain specific instances there have been complaints. Have you had any authoritative information on this?

A: I have not been able to check on the way the large sums of money, items of food, drugs, clothes and various other articles received from all over the world have been used. Some part of it may have been used for feeding the refugees in the camps in Colombo, but once they were shipped to Jaffna and other places the relief did not ever reach those people. In fact I told the Government of India that whatever relief India sent its disbursement should be supervised by the High Commissioner for India. It should earmark the financial assistance it is giving for specific purposes. First priority, I said, should be given to immediate relief to families where the breadwinners have been killed. There are a large number of such Tamil families. Maybe, whole families have been destroyed but there are a number of families where the breadwinners, the husbands, had been killed and the wives and children are left in the lurch. In a large number of middle class families where the husband was employed somewhere, he was killed and the family has no means of livelihood. People like that should be given immediate relief. In the past, my experience was the Government gave a few rupees as dole—sometimes Rs 20 or Rs 30. These days a family can never live with that money. Some substantial relief must be given to such families.

Then there are a number of people whose homes have been destroyed. They may today go and live in Jaffna, Trincomalee and Batticaloa with relatives or friends. How long can they live with them? In an emergency a relative may be able to house them but if they continue to live there they become unwanted guests and are subjected to humiliation. Something

has to be done to build their homes for them where they could live in security and without being dependent on somebody else. These are matters in which I do not think the Government of Sri Lanka is setting about properly. It seems to be concentrating on the restoration of the factories, re-employment of the Sinhalese who lost their jobs and then only they may be giving a few items of food to the others.

Q: In relation to security you mentioned that if the armed forces are withdrawn from Jaffna you are capable of taking care of your own security because you are the masters of your own areas there. But overall, taking into account also the other streams of Indian Tamils, what is the specific problem?

A: I think the Government has to follow certain courses of action. One, as far as the Tamil areas, the northern and, eastern provinces are concerned, the armed forces must be withdrawn and, two, a sufficient number of Tamil policemen should be posted in these areas to maintain law and order, and three, if the number of policemen is not sufficient to maintain law and order, a system of home guards, as we suggested in 1981 and as the Government agreed, should be started immediately and the home guards should not be unarmed. The helpless young men who may be chased out by the thugs and who will not be able to stand against them should be given training in the use of arms to safeguard the lives and property of people.

I think, Mr Thondaman has made a suggestion that some sort of training to the youth on each of the estates should be given so that they may act as guards of the estates. I understand that information has reached Colombo that a number of estate lines have been totally destroyed. Somebody who came from Colombo—a man in a very knowledgeable position—told me that even Mr Thondaman did not get a full report. It is only two days ago that he got the report that in most of the estate areas, the lines have been destroyed. *The Hindu* has also reported that in the conference on assessment of the damage done...they are now saying that extensive damage has been caused in the tea areas also. Till I came to India, I thought most of the tea areas had not suffered much ravage.

In these areas effective organisation and training to the Tamil youth should be given so that they may ensure the security of the life and property of the Tamil people in the plantation districts. In these two ways I think the security of our people can be ensured in both the northern and eastern provinces and in the plantation districts. There is no necessity for the army to go even in the plantation areas. They should see that the armed forces are kept out of the areas.

Q: What about the Tamils in Colombo?

A: There, they should make the police and the people in charge of law and order. In Colombo it had never happened in the past; they were able to safeguard life and property to a large extent. But this time because of the active role played by the armed forces in the attack and the organised manner in which bands of thugs were let loose with the support of the armed forces, Colombo has suffered. So, they should radically alter the composition of the police and the armed forces. This is one of the things that has to be done.

Q: What in your opinion is India's *locus standi* in the present crisis faced by Tamils and other people of Indian origin? We ask this particularly in view of the fact that earlier there have been suggestions of "India's interference" in Sri Lanka's internal affairs. Before the current attack started there was a statement by Mr Hameed (Foreign Minister) and others to that effect. How do you see that in the new situation?

A: I feel that India being the closest neighbour to Sri Lanka with very close ties—cultural, religious, linguistic, racial, and in every other way—will have to play a significant part in the present situation, in the restoration of normality in Sri Lanka. Dislocation of conditions in Sri Lanka will endanger peace in the zone and will definitely endanger the security of India itself. There is also another factor that has to be taken into consideration. In the recent happenings, a good section of the affected people are either of Indian origin who have not yet acquired Sri Lankan citizenship or some of them are even citizens of India, and Indian capital has been destroyed so that India has every right to intervene.

Apart from that, on grounds of preservation of human rights and to stop genocide, India has to intervene. I do not

agree with the argument that India is interfering in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka. I think, Rajaji said at one stage, "When my neighbour and his wife are living happily my interference in their family will be obnoxious and will not be tolerated, but if my neighbour is trying to throttle his wife and kill her I have a duty to intervene and stop the murder." India is in the same position as far as conditions in Sri Lanka are concerned. No one who values the right of every individual and every ethnic group to the human rights which are guaranteed by the U.N. Charter will blame India for trying to play a hand in stopping this violence. Particularly in the situation when the armed forces and the police which have to maintain law and order become parties to the attack, interference of a third party becomes inevitable. It can take the form of a United Nations peace keeping force or a peace keeping force of a friendly country. In 1971 when Mrs Bandaranaike was in a similar situation, she made an appeal and got India to send forces to safeguard certain strategic points like the airport, the harbour and various other places.

Actually, when this trouble started and we knew that the armed forces were playing a part in the whole attack, all of us sent telegrams to President Jayewardene that he should either get a U.N. force or get assistance from a friendly country—the friendly country we had in mind was the closest neighbour which is just 29 km across the sea. If Mr Jayewardene had made that request on July 25 or 26 when we asked for it, things in Sri Lanka would not have gone this far and normality could have been restored much earlier. So, merely because the Government of Jayewardene was reluctant to do that India cannot shirk its responsibility.

Q: How do you assess the role of the Government of India in relation to this responsibility which you just highlighted?

A: I think, the Government of India and the Prime Minister have set about it in the least obtrusive way possible. Mrs Gandhi has merely offered her good offices to bring about a solution to these problems and quite correctly she has pinpointed two aspects where action has to be taken. One is the security of life and property of the Tamil people and the other a long-term solution. Even in the third matter that

I mentioned, rehabilitation, the Government of India and the Prime Minister have offered substantial help and they have launched a fund. On all these three matters requiring attention, the Indian Government has responded positively.

It is now, I think, the duty of the Sri Lanka Government to make use of the good offices of India in bringing about a satisfactory state of affairs in respect of these aspects of the problem. It is in this context that I welcomed the statement of Mrs Bandaranaike, the counterpart of President Jayewardene in the opposition, welcoming India's interest and her advice to Mr Jayewardene to accept its good offices. Mr Jayewardene cannot find an excuse and say that the Opposition Sinhala party will rouse the Sinhalese against him if he accepts the good offices of India. Therefore, it is incumbent and obligatory on President Jayewardene to make use of the good offices in all these three matters and see that justice is done to Tamils and normality is restored in the country.

Q: In this connection, as for the people's response, Mr Jayewardene has openly said in an interview that it is mainly a Tamil Nadu problem, that there is a lot of pressure from Tamil Nadu on the Government of India, and perhaps the rest of the nation. How do you react to this?

A: I do not agree with that at all because I have had the advantage of meeting parliamentarians, members of organisations and men in public life throughout India. I should say right from Kashmir to Cape Comorin, India has been deeply moved by the atrocities perpetrated against the Tamil people and the Indian people in Sri Lanka. So it is wrong for Mr Jayewardene to try to divide the Tamil Nadu Government and the Tamil Nadu people from the rest of India.

I met the leaders of every political party ranging from right to left. They are all of one view that India has to play a part. This, in my view, is the unanimous opinion of all sections of India. Tamil Nadu is naturally more concerned because of the closer ties they had with the people affected. In fact, a number of people killed are people from Tamil Nadu and a number of those affected are from Tamil Nadu or at least have relatives in Tamil Nadu. To that extent their agitation is much greater, which is natural.

When Pakistan was trying to ride roughshod over the aspirations of East Bengal, West Bengal was in the forefront of the agitation. That did not mean that the whole of India did not take an interest in the matter. I think the situation is quite similar in Sri Lanka. Mr Jayewardene is trying to drive a wedge between Tamil Nadu and the rest of the country and he can never succeed.

Q: We have noted that parallel with the anti-Tamil action, there has been an anti-Indian campaign. How have your people reacted to that even before the current trouble started? How do the Tamils of both streams see the response from the Sri Lanka Government to India's role?

A: Whatever the reaction on the part of the Sri Lankan Government may be, the Tamil people look upon India's taking an interest as the only ray of hope in this otherwise bleak situation and I am confident that all sections of Tamil opinion will respond positively to the Indian initiative and the outcome of that initiative.

Q: If enlightened Indian and international pressure prevails with Mr Jayewardene on the need to negotiate seriously and urgently with the Tamils and their political leaders, do you foresee any problem he might face within his Government, within his party or from other political parties or from the armed forces which might block the process?

A: My experience so far has been that if Mr Jayewardene wanted to do something and if he was definitely committed to this something, he could and he would do it. The chauvinistic forces in his own party which have surfaced today have deliberately been built up by him and his colleagues for political purposes. If there is a definite change of heart and a desire to work out a solution and particularly in the context of Mrs Bandaranaike's reported statement, I do not think that he will have any serious problem.

Q: You have expressed the view that India's role has brought about a "qualitative change" in the situation. What exactly do you mean when you refer to a qualitative change?

A: As I have said, our bitter experience has been, not with this Government alone but even with earlier governments starting from Bandaranaike. Whenever we agitate and feelings

run high they give promises and enter into agreements and then tear them up and forget about them. Mr Jayewardene, during the last six years, has been acting in the same way, never implementing any promises given so that we have got tired of the talks and negotiations. In fact, our continuing the negotiations has created a rift in our own ranks with the younger sections losing faith in the leadership and adopting extreme actions which they might not have otherwise done if the whole movement had been kept intact. So we decided at our last convention at Mannar that we will have no further negotiations with President Jayewardene and his Government. We will carry on a non-violent agitation, struggle for our rights which we hope would first of all unite our people and also bring sufficient pressure on the Government to pay heed to our demands.

It was in that situation that this holocaust occurred and India took an interest. We felt that the good offices offered by India meant not merely bringing us to the negotiating table but playing a mediatory role throughout and also ensuring the implementation of whatever solution was worked out at the negotiating table. And, we further felt that India has to have a continuing interest in this problem and if the negotiations, at its initiative, failed due to the reluctance or intransigence of the Sri Lankan Government, India had a further duty to safeguard the lives and legitimate rights of the Tamil and Indian people in Sri Lanka. This is the only way of ensuring justice and fair play in Sri Lanka.

From his experience in Trincomalee, apart from the matters that I have mentioned about Tamil policemen in this area and withdrawal of the armed forces and arming of our own homeguards in our areas, Mr Sampanthan, M.P. from Trincomalee, thinks that in areas like Trincomalee a peace keeping force, either international or Indian, will have to be maintained if the security of life and property of our people is to be ensured. This is his point of view, and I think it was born out of the bitter experience in Trincomalee and I agree with that.

Q: In relation to the recent economic experiment or course Mr Jayewardene has taken, the IMF and the World Bank have expressed concern over the situation in Sri Lanka. How do

you assess the course Mr Jayewardene has been pursuing?

A: We have been very critical of the economic policy of the Jayewardene Government, though some of the Tamil people made full use of it. I think our assessment of the impact of it on the total population, whether it be Sinhalese or Tamil, is that it has not been too beneficial. The economy of the country, in spite of the tall talk of the Government, is in a very perilous State. As I mentioned in the Sri Lanka Parliament, at one time, one Indian rupee was equivalent to 89 Sri Lankan cents; today one Indian rupee is equivalent to 224 Sri Lankan cents.

I am not one who is very much enamoured of the role of the IMF or the World Bank in these matters. But I should say that some of the Ministers of the Government who are directly concerned with this policy have also had a hand in the recent communal violence because they got perturbed at the Tamil and Indian entrepreneurs who had made use of the opportunity offered.

I have reports that one of the key Ministers at a conference with the Sinhala Merchants Chamber, two weeks ago before the holocaust, found fault with them for allowing a major part in the import and export trade in the hands of Tamils and Indians. Even these elements, the Sinhalese industrialists and businessmen, out of rivalry with the Tamil industrialists and businessmen, have had a hand in the attacks and the Government is to blame. So, I think the World Bank has become alive to this trend.

Q: There is a feeling among the Sinhalese that economically they are at a disadvantageous position compared with the Tamils and the ordinary Sinhalese think that they had a bad deal. How would you react to this?

A: Apart from a few Tamil capitalists making use of this Government's policy and making good due to their own enterprise and their own business acumen and, maybe, their international and foreign contacts, the bulk of the Tamil people are actually worse off than the Sinhalese. Unemployment among the Tamil people is much greater than among the Sinhalese because their employment in the public and semi-public sectors, that is, in the Government service and in the State corporations,

has been reduced to a minimum, to almost five per cent of the total. Of course, that has made a large number of our youth migrate to all over the world. I think that has been the characteristic of the Tamils from the distant past. So the Sinhalese may be jealous about it. But as far as the Government's action and policies are concerned, the vast majority of the Tamil people have suffered and not benefited and even from the point of the benefits given to workers, the Tamil plantation workers have been the hardest hit of the working class. Even in respect of the allowances and salary increases given to other sections of the workers, only a niggardly fraction has been given to the plantation workers.

Q: What is your experience with the freedom of expression in Sri Lanka periodically, the role of the press in relation to the free dissemination of information and how do you see the trends, maybe, a point of comparison with India?

A: I think India has almost complete freedom of the press and there are such a large number of newspapers, competing with one another and supporting various points of view that India should be considered a model in this respect. As far as Sri Lanka is concerned, the majority of the newspapers are State-owned. The Lake House group and the Times group, that is, the *Daily Mirror* and the *Lanka Deepa*, are both owned by the State. The Gunasena group is fully on the side of the Government. As far as the Tamil problem is concerned, their attitude is worse than that of the Government newspapers; they are more rabid and they cater to the more chauvinistic tastes among the Sinhalese. In fact they had been the hardest against India in the comments they made.

There is a fourth group that has recently come up—the island group; it is too early to say whether it will survive, and how long it will survive the death of its proprietor. The only independent Tamil newspaper is *Veerakesari* and when a holocaust like this occurred even the *Veerakesari* had to close down. They were attacked, their employees were attacked, they even went to the extent of robbing money and they damaged their equipment. Even if they had printed, they would have been unable to distribute them outside Colombo. So, we really have

no means of even running a proper newspaper of our own.

Q. What has been your experience with the censor from time to time, and in the recent attacks? How do the people respond to it?

A. Censorship only gives rise to wild rumours and rumours become authentic stories; they never believe the newspapers. That is the situation they have created. The rest of the mass media, the radio and the television, is State-owned. They project only one point of view. Whatever we say is twisted and distorted. In fact, censorship has even been used to escalate communal violence. I get the impression that the Government wanted this violence because they published the story about the shooting of the 13 soldiers in Jaffna. On the very next day when over 50 people were shot and killed in Jaffna by the soldiers, no story was ever published in the newspapers or put out over radio or television so that the Sinhalese were goaded on to further action to avenge the death of these soldiers because they were kept in the dark about this.

Q. Would you like to elaborate on the long-term political solution you have in mind?

A. As I have said, we have got a mandate and we have put that forward and, as I explained earlier, we arrived at that objective through a long process of broken promises, humiliation and attacks and being treated as a subject race. It is not open to us to go back on that mandate and unilaterally give it up and ask for something else. President Jayewardene's statement that if we want to get another mandate he will hold by-elections is absolute nonsense because we have placed a definite policy and the people have supported it. If we are to give that up and go before the people we should be able to place something before them.

If at the negotiating table, through India's good offices, we arrive at a solution which is acceptable to us and which we can recommend to our people as capable of removing the grievances under which they have been suffering, we will certainly go back to our people. As an honest political party we will not go back on the mandate they gave but ask the people to accept it and thereby get their democratic ratification

of the action we have taken. This is what I have been saying. I think reasonable people can see that we cannot do anything else short of political chicanery.

If an alternative that is acceptable to us and which is acceptable to our people and, as I said, which is capable of removing the grievances which gave rise to all these and which is capable of meeting the aspirations of our people is worked out, they will certainly accept it. I think the Tamil people are reasonable, and particularly with the Indian interest coming in, they will be assured that there will be a continuing certainty of that being carried out; therefore, we can persuade them to accept it.

The Tamil Tragedy*

CHAITANYA KALBAG

The 35-km ride from Katunayake International Airport into Colombo in a slow Mitsubishi coach driven by a nervous Sinhala is enveloped in silence. Almost every Indian visitor is heading for the Lanka Oberoi, or the Galle Face, or the Ceylon Intercontinental—hotels that have escaped the attention of mobs in search of hiding Tamils. Suddenly the colour of a visitor's skin is crucial—if it is dark, and he looks nervous, he is liable to be mistaken for a Tamil, and Tamils venturing out of doors in Colombo are asking to be lynched.

Sri Lanka's capital city for almost a fortnight looked like it had been taken by a conquering army. Street after street lay empty to the gaze, although the dawn-to-dusk curfew had been lifted, and small, watchful groups of Sinhalas dotted the side-walks, providing flesh-and-blood counterpoints to the hundreds of burnt-out shops and factories and homes that lined the once bustling markets and roads. The arson was professional—charred shells fallen in on themselves, with blackened signboards announcing Tamil ownership hanging askew, here and there a liquor shop with hundreds of broken bottles littering the floor, or a jewellery mart with the show-cases battered in and the gold and gems carefully removed before the torching. Fifty yards from the Indian High Commission, right next door to the police headquarters, a stone's throw from the presidential palace, stood a huge block,

*Courtesy : *India Today*

blackened and devastated. "The shops in this block had heavy grill doors," recalled an eyewitness, "so an army truck was used as a battering ram to break through them, and then the soldiers sprang in with Sinhala battle cries to claim the lion's share of the loot."

That burnt out hulk was only one of the scores of landmarks of violence—shells of destroyed buildings, wrecks of cars and, above all, the scars in the minds of people—that remained from Sri Lanka's week-long orgy of violence that erupted with lightning speed and left in its wake not only a nation embittered and embattled, divided perhaps irretrievably along ethnic lines, but a relatively prosperous economy in ruin, Indo-Sri Lankan ties strained close to breaking point and a country at war with itself.

One-fourth of Colombo's population is Tamil, and by the first week of August, three-fifths of the Tamils, 90,000 in all, had crowded in terrified disarray into 15 refugee camps, euphemistically called 'care and welfare centres', fleeing from the marauding Sinhalas. Almost every refugee had escaped with just the clothes on his or her back, and for days on end the women sat surrounded by their squealing infants, eyes glazed unable to comprehend the catastrophe that had sliced their lives in half.

The Sri Lankan press was censored, and so was the foreign press corps, and foreign correspondents were granted curfew passes that restricted their movement between their hotels and the office in the Fort area of the Director of Information where Don John Francis Douglas Liyanage, a brisk, balding bureaucrat and secretary to Information Minister, Ananda Tissa de Alwis, presided over daily press briefings. Liyanage's daily message of increasingly rosy pictures of a "normalising" situation contrasted too sharply with the reality of Colombo, a city like a pressure cooker with the lid on; of streets pocked with gutted buildings and sprinkled with long lines of people queuing up during non-curfew hours to buy a few eggs, or some rice or even cigarettes.

In the short space of a few vicious hours of bloodletting it had become a city thickening with anger and fear, the Tamils expecting a knife in the back at every step, or the

Sinhala freely giving way to a bubbling rage. The most dangerous of all misconceptions abroad that frenzied week was that every Indian is a Tamil, and that every Tamil is a terrorist.

Tamils in Colombo had benefited vastly from President Junius R. Jayewardene's open economy. They opened thousands of retail food outlets, or small groceries called 'boutiques', or jewellery shops, import-export firms, and there were even a few millionaire tycoons controlling coconut processing, textiles, or construction material.

But that prosperity is now in jeopardy, perhaps forever. The tragedy was that most of the Tamils in Colombo did not want a separate nation, Eelam, which is the cry of the Tamils in the northern districts centred in Jaffna. Indeed, the majority of the victims of the latest violence were the so-called Indian Tamils; those who migrated to Sri Lanka in the last century to work on the estates, and they have traditionally been uncomfortable with the ethnic Jaffna Tamils who have been there for centuries.

According to the 1981 Sri Lanka census, there were 8.25 lakh Indian Tamils (5.5 per cent of the population), and 1.8 million Ceylonese (Jaffna) Tamils (12.6 per cent of the population). The Indian Tamils live mostly in the districts of Colombo, Kalutara, Kandy, Matale, Nuwara Eliya, Badulla, Ratnapura and Kegalle—traditional tea-garden and Sinhala areas. The Jaffna Tamils are concentrated in Jaffna, Mannar, Vavuniya, Batticaloa, and Mullaitivu, along the island's northern and eastern coast.

Successive Sri Lankan governments have discriminated against the Indian Tamils. In 1948 they were disenfranchised, and two agreements signed between the Sri Lankan and Indian governments in 1964 and 1974 provided for the repatriation of six lakh Indian Tamils to India, with Sri Lanka granting citizenship to the remaining 3.75 lakh. Until February this year, only 4.05 lakh of the Indian Tamils had been granted Indian citizenship, and over a lakh of these still await repatriation. Sri Lanka has also been tardy with its side of the arrangement and owes citizenship to 1.96 lakh Tamils.

The Jaffna Tamils, however, have historically been a

distinct entity, and even under the Portuguese and the Dutch the Tamil kingdoms in the north were separate and independent. The British brought the two communities together for the first time in order to facilitate administration, but since independence in 1948, there have been outbreaks of Sinhala rage against the Tamils in 1956, 1958, and then four times so far in Jayewardene's regime. In recent years, the Tamil desire for a separate nation has crystallised into armed revolt from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, a guerrilla band consisting of not more than 200 armed youths. The Jaffna Tamils feel they are second-class citizens in Sri Lanka, and echo their late leader S.J.V. Chelvanayagam who said in 1975: "Our basic mistake was not to ask for independence when the British left."

When elected by a landslide margin in 1977, Mr. Jayewardene held out a few sops to the Tamils. These included a provision in the new Constitution, which came into effect in September 1978, whereby Tamil joined Sinhala as a national language; the setting up of District Development Councils (DDC) which the President promised would lead to devolution of power; and a new admissions policy for universities, which has led to a rise in Tamil admissions, in contrast with the discriminatory policy followed by Mrs. Bandaranaike's government.

But such measures did not evoke satisfaction among the Tamils. The DDCs were given few powers; and most district ministers, even in the Tamil stronghold of Jaffna, were Sinhala. The use of Sinhala as the official language posed tremendous problems for the Tamils, whose schools rarely taught the Sinhala language. And since university admissions were based in large part on the basis of districts—only six of the country's 24 districts having a Tamil majority—Sinhala students once again enjoyed an advantage over their Tamil counterparts.

The Jayewardene Government's Tamil slate is far from clean in other respects. An Amnesty International report released on July 6 details the reign of repression and terror let loose by the security forces in the north and east of the island. Amnesty International points out that the Sri Lankan

Prevention of Terrorism Act (1979) is far more draconian than similar acts in South Africa and Britain, allowing for 18 months' detention without trial, arbitrary arrests, and practically unchecked powers of torture and interrogation of suspects.

After last fortnight's violence, the wealthier Tamils either fled into the sanctuary of luxury hotels or took the first flight out of the country. During the first week of the violence at least 20 Indian High Commission staff with their families had to be placed in expensive hotels—because they had been staying in the lower-middle-class suburb of Wellawatta, where the rents are low, but where the houses, densely bunched together, made easy targets for the mobs.

The eradication of the Tamils led to another piquant situation—there were no outlets for essential food supplies during non-curfew hours, and while looted video recorders were selling for 500 Sri Lankan rupees on the pavements, the Government desperately asked for help in distributing food.

Most of the makeshift refugee camps were in school buildings or Hindu temple courtyards. Inside the camps, the cowering Tamils talk in whispers. "The CID is all around us, in plain-clothes," says Dr Ganapathy Raja, at the Vinayakar Kovil camp in the Bambalapitiya, "and we have to struggle ourselves in and out of the camp. We can't even reach outside for help." The sanitation is atrocious in the camps, and by week's end dozens of refugees have come down with acute dysentery—some say even cholera—and an entire wing of the Colombo General Hospital has been cordoned off to house sick refugees.

The violence spread, the inferno engulfed other towns—Gampaha, Kalutara, Kandy, Matale, Nuwara Eliya and Trincomalee—the Government chose to explain it as a "spontaneous Sinhala reaction to atrocities committed by Tamil terrorists". But there was a cold blooded method to the madness. The mobs were armed with voters' lists, and detailed addresses of every Tamil-owned shop, house, or factory, and attacks were very precise. There was little honour among the marauders—on the second day the Tamils were

set upon by Colombo's Moors, or Muslims, but on the third day the Sinhala mobs turned upon the Muslims too, at Nugegoda in Colombo's South.

At fortnight's end, most government offices in Colombo had lost their substantial Tamil staff. Senior Tamil officials, like the food commissioner of Sri Lanka, the director of Sri Lanka Telecommunication, and officials of the Indo-Sri Lanka Microwave Network had been missing from their homes for weeks.

Also badly hit were three of the island's industrialists—K. Gunaratnam, whose empire included textiles, film distribution, and transportation, A.Y.S. Gnanam, who started life as a street peddler and rose to control a major manufacturing firm, St. Anthony's Hardwares, and the Syntex and Asian Cotton Mills, and was formerly a member of the Board of Governors of the Free Trade Zone, and Rajamahendran Maharaja, whose group was one of the largest in Sri Lanka, manufacturing cosmetics, trading and distributing imported products, and contracting large chunks of the Mahaweli project programmes. Along with the Hirdaramanis and the Jafferjees, Sindhi and Bohra businessmen who have established strong footholds over the last 50 years, the total loss suffered by these industries was estimated at 2,000 million Sri Lankan rupees (Rs. 800 crore)—and their destruction led to the loss of 1.5 lakh jobs.

Most astonishing of all was the manner in which President Jayewardene reacted to the violence. For a leader who does not want his country to break into two, the President was singularly chary of identifying—and condemning—the very forces that were pushing the Tamils into a corner and the country into disintegration. Almost as though he were a Nero fiddling while his Rome burnt, Jayewardene went on the air only four days after the carnage exploded with a speech unique in its rationalisation of lumpen frenzy.

With not a word of sympathy for the terrorised Tamils, who had never before been set upon with such ferocity in the Sinhala heartland, the President said that "the time has come to accede to the clamour and the national respect of the Sinhala people" by outlawing the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), the Tamils' only legitimate political party in

Parliament and the largest Opposition group with 16 MPs in a house of 168 where the ruling UNP has 139 seats.

In fact, only after the violence had abated by August 8 did Jayewardene admit to western correspondents that the news of army atrocities in Jaffna two weeks before the ambush and killing of 13 soldiers on July 23 had been "deliberately" withheld from him. "Discipline is a problem in the army," admitted Jayewardene blandly.

At one stroke, instead of firmly taking things in hand, Jayewardene had chosen the path of appeasing Sinhala sentiment. "I cannot see, and my government cannot see," he said, "any other way by which we can appease the natural desire and request of the Sinhala people."

After appeasement came the search for a "hidden hand". On July 30 the Government banned three left parties—the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)—which had, under Rohan Wijeweera's leadership, led an insurrection against prime minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike's government in 1971—the Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP), and the Communist Party (Moscow). Twenty of their leaders were arrested over the following days, but Wijeweera and NSSP leader Vasudeva Nanayakkara went into hiding.

Simultaneously, government ministers, and the press, raised the spectre of a communist-inspired plot to destroy Jayewardene's open economy and to divide the country. Despite censorship, the *Sun*, a virulent Sinhala paper, demanded the closure of the Soviet and East German embassies. By fortnight's end, however, allegations that the Soviet Union was fomenting trouble, and that a number of Soviet diplomats were about to be expelled, had died down.

Ironically, the JVP's Wijeweera had been released from imprisonment by Jayewardene in October 1977, and JVP cadres, the vanguard of the 'new' left, had even been cosying up to the UNP Government. All three banned parties in any case had been roundly rejected by the electorate in the 1977 elections, and the Communist Party's sole MP, Sarath, Muttettuwagama, was unseated by the Supreme Court on July 22 after an election petition filed against him was upheld.

None of these manoeuvres, which later events have proved

to be red herrings, deflected from the unpalatable fact that the President was facing a strong threat from hardliners within his government, and that the violence had been encouraged by these elements as a means of scaring the Tamils. What Jayewardene did not bargain for was a combination of jumpy and rebellious troops and a shadowy group of Sinhala Buddhist fanatics, led by militant bhikkus (monks) of the Eksath Bhikku Peramuna, which first came into prominence in 1956.

Currently, Jayewardene, who is 76, is facing sustained opposition from different power groups in the Government, all jockeying for the first position in the race to take the President's place. The groups:

The security group, with close links with the armed forces and staunchly anti-Tamil, led by Cabinet Secretary G.V.P. Samarasinghe, Presidential Secretary W.M.P. Medikdiwela, and Defence Secretaries Colonel C.A. Dharmapala and General S. Attygalle;

The party caucus, led by Industries Minister Cyril Mathew, a militant Buddhist zealot, UNP Chairman N.G.P. Panditharatne, minister Ranil Wickremasinghe, who controls a large youth cadre, and UNP Secretary Harsha Abeywardene;

The prime minister's cabal, led by Prime Minister Ranasinghe Premadasa. Although Premadasa belongs to the lowly Hinna caste, his acumen and manoeuvrability have made him a frontrunner in the succession sweep stakes;

The Gamini Dissanayake faction, led by the young minister for lands, land development and the Mahaweli project. Dissanayake has emerged as Jayewardene's protege after the death of heir-apparent and tycoon Upali Wijewardene in an air crash earlier this year;

The Ananda Tissa de Alwis faction, led by the unprepossessing information minister, De Alwis, may be a stopgap arrangement if a leadership vacuum arises after Jayewardene.

Sources say that Industries Minister Mathew, who also controls the powerful labour union Jathika Sevaka Sanghamaya, was directly responsible for pinpointing Tamil-owned shops and factories to be destroyed. In Parliament on August 4, during the debate on the Sixth Amendment to the Sri Lankan

Constitution, which has effectively banned the TULF on the grounds that it advocates separatism, Mathew defended the violence by saying: "The Sinhala were frustrated for years, they were discriminated (against). If the Sinhala is the majority race, why can't they be the majority?" Mathew is also the leader of the island's backward Vahumpura community, which comprises over a third of the population and has been at a disadvantage traditionally *vis-a-vis* the Tamils in jobs and business.

Most disturbing of all, however, was the carefully floated rumour that India's armed forces were about to invade Sri Lanka, possibly to bring off a Cyprus-like division of the island. In what was obviously an orchestrated chorus in the censored press, the Sinhalas were swamped by news of the angry and emotional reaction to the carnage in Tamil Nadu, where the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the ruling All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) vied with each other—even resorting to an all-state bandh on August 2—to protest against the genocide let loose against Sri Lankan Tamils.

Most Sinhala Sri Lankans, and even many Tamils, believe that India is a safe haven for Tiger guerrillas on the run from the security forces, for the Tamil Nadu coast is only 40 km by sea from Thalaimannar. The Madras High Court did not help matters by ordering the release on July 28, on conditional bail, of three Tiger leaders held in prison in Madras: Uma Maheswaran, Jotheeswaran and Sivanesan. The Tamil Nadu Government added fuel to the fire by not opposing the Tigers' bail application.

The anti-Tamil sentiment in Sri Lanka, therefore, metamorphosed into distinctly anti-Indian feeling as the troubled fortnight drew to an end. On July 31 a pseudonymous columnist, Migara, wrote in Colombo's *Sun* that Jayewardene feared imminent attack by India, and that Sri Lanka would seek external assistance if the attack came.

When the UPI Correspondent, Stewart Slavin, was expelled from the country on August 2 for reporting that Sri Lanka had asked for military assistance from the United States, Britain, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the Government merely cited his

violation of censorship rules, but only four days later officially denied his report, after the Lok Sabha had been agitated by the report. External Affairs Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao said the Government of India felt there was substance in it, and the External Affairs Ministry politely warned foreign missions in New Delhi that any armed interference in Sri Lanka would be considered as a move hostile towards India.

When similar Sinhala violence against the Tamils was unleashed in August 1981—and in Jayewardene's regime it has exploded with clockwork precision every two years since 1977—an Indian tourist was killed and the President telephonically apologised to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. This time, at least 2,500 Indian citizens, most of them shoestring budget tourists from Tamil Nadu journeying to Kataragama, a temple in Sri Lanka's deep south, were trapped in the violence.

Narasimha Rao was refused permission to visit any camp when he flew to Colombo on July 28. "Rao ostensibly came to express India's concern," says an official of Jayewardene's secretariat, "but he held out a veiled threat to the President that India might be forced to take 'drastic action' if the killings continued. Jayewardene told him to go ahead and carry out the threat."

Nevertheless, on August 7, two days before he sent his brother H.W. Jayewardene to New Delhi to discuss the crisis with Indian leaders, President Jayewardene directly accused India of harbouring and helping Tamil terrorists. "If India decides to invade us," he had told the *Sun*, "we will fight and maybe lose, but with dignity." The message wasn't new, and indicated a deep-rooted anxiety, for last May Jayewardene had told *The Hindu* in a lengthy interview: "Supposing she (India) invades, our principles are not in any way tarnished by India's invasion. Take Sri Lanka and rule it. (You) can't rule 15 million people if they are opposed to it. If I am alive I will carry on the movement against that invasion."

The Government of India's response to this phobia was measured, and yet firm. On July 31 Mrs Gandhi told Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran, who led an all-party delegation to Delhi, that New Delhi viewed the Sri

Lankan crisis as a national problem, and not as one confined to Tamil Nadu. On August 5, Mrs. Gandhi spoke to Jayewardene on the telephone, the second time in ten days, and said that India would not interfere in Sri Lanka's affairs in any way.

"At the same time," the prime minister later told the Lok Sabha, "I pointed out to the President that developments in Sri Lanka affect us also. Sri Lanka and India are the two countries which are directly concerned. Any extraneous intervention will complicate matters for both our countries."

That was the basis of India's strategic perspectives but it failed to take into account the traditional Sri Lankan insecurity with its northern neighbour which compels Colombo to bristle at times of such crisis. "From here," says a Colombo journalist, "our perception of India is obscured by her bulk. To our north-west looms Tamil Nadu, and to us the Tamils of India or of Sri Lanka are indistinguishable.

Indeed, Sri Lanka Tamil politics have frequently spilled over into Tamil Nadu, and the Tigers, the Tamil Eelam Liberation Front (TELF) and the TULF all have offices in Madras. Mrs. Gandhi is obviously reluctant to lose all support in Tamil Nadu, where Chief Minister Ramachandran has played an off-again on-again game with the Centre in his relations. "There are 55 million Tamils in Tamil Nadu," says a senior official in the Home Ministry, "and if they are agitated about Sri Lanka we cannot ignore their sentiments."

The repercussions in India of the violence were not long in coming. The majority of the victims of violence were Indian Tamils, and at fortnight's end only a third of the refugees, numbering roughly 30,000, had chosen to wait in line to go to Jaffna by ship, air or train. Substantial numbers of Indian Tamils were trying to flee to India. Said a Tamil businessman, who lost everything he owned: "No place is safe for us. The Indian Tamils feel they will be second-class citizens even in Eelam ruled by the Jaffna Tamils. We will feel safe only in India."

In Jaffna, the Tigers were reported to be planning large-scale reprisals against the security forces, only holding themselves in abeyance until all the refugees left the camps in the

affected cities. The army had been confined to barracks in the north after it had killed at least 100 Tamils in retaliation for had the ambush.

The Sri Lankan army has never been seen in action, and it totals only 14,000, with another 6,000 volunteers. Earlier this year 97 soldiers of the Raja Rata Rifles, a regiment created by Jayewardene, revolted in Jaffna and were sacked. Jayewardene himself has admitted that sections of the army are restive and rebellious.

On August 7, the day after Parliament passed the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution, outlawing parties that advocated separatism, the 16-member TULF parliamentary group met in Vavuniya to decide its future strategy. The TULF has been riven by internal strife in the recent past, with a vocal section demanding achievement of a Tamil Eelam by resort to arms. The TULF MPs decided not to take an oath for swearing separatism.

The MPs will automatically lose their seats if they do not attend Parliament for three months. On August 9 the TULF said that it would take to armed resistance to defend itself against a "savage form of state terrorism". At fortnight's end, the TULF issued an appeal to the United Nations to send a peace-keeping force into Sri Lanka.

"The TULF was formed with non-violent objectives," said A. Amirthalingam, the party's secretary and leader of the Opposition in Parliament, "but the people in the north are very disturbed and can no longer live with the Sinhala people. As every refugee ship arrives in Jaffna, the tales of horror grow. India should insist that the Sri Lanka Government restores law and order."

"The TULF could also amend its objective to one of self-determination instead of separation," says another TULF MP, "or we can operate underground. The right of self-determination includes the right to secede, but also to freely determine our political status, which could be like Quebec's in Canada. Our party cannot operate in the present form." "The latest round of violence," says TULF MP Neelan Tiruchelvam, "has put the finishing touch to the eradication

of the Tamils. This time the Tamil professional and entrepreneurial class has been destroyed.”

The Indian Tamils had voted overwhelmingly for Jayewardene in the 1977 elections, and the promises he held out had brought the Ceylon Workers' Congress, led by S. Thondaman, the largest trade union of Indian Tamil plantation workers, into the Government. But today Thondaman and his two Tamil colleagues in the Cabinet are reported to be reconsidering their support if the Tamils continue to be subjected to a campaign of attrition.

The radicalisation of the TULF, and the antagonisation of Jayewardene's Tamil vote banks, are only some of the products of the latest violence. As more and more affected Tamils crowd into the north, there are indications that support for a protracted and armed struggle for separation will snowball, bringing the Tigers the kind of mass support they had so far been lacking. In a matter of days, the Sinhala-Tamil equation has changed permanently, and neither community now believes it can exist alongside the other.

The economic effects of the violence promise to be even worse. Already, Sri Lanka is reeling under an inflation rate of nearly 35 per cent. This year's budget deficit will amount to 23.4 billion Sri Lankan rupees (Rs. 936 crore), and the country has been seeking increasing infusions of foreign aid. Other economic indicators are equally grim—a trade deficit of 21 billion rupees (Rs. 840 crore), unemployment currently at a record high of 5 lakh, and a rupee that has been devalued, during the Jayewardene regime's six years, from 7.89 rupees to the dollar in 1977 to 24.20 after the latest devaluation on July 4.

Last fortnight's violence threw another estimated 50,000 people out of work, the majority of them Sinhala, and resulted in a loss of 3 billion Sri Lankan rupees (Rs. 120 crore). Worse, foreign investors will now be wary of stepping into so volatile a situation. Refugee rehabilitation and reconstruction of the destroyed houses and factories will swallow huge chunks of money, and last fortnight Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel issued a desperate appeal to western nations for help.

The Tamils who have already fled Colombo, and those

who will leave as soon as they can, will leave a yawning gap in key sectors of bureaucracy and the trading communities of the cities. The Tamils dominated Sri Lanka's telecommunication service, the railways and the postal administration and these crucial services have already suffered grave setbacks because of staff losses.

Most seriously affected is Sri Lanka's image in the international community. Overnight, it has changed from a well administered paradise into a grotesque parody of Third World capriciousness. Condemnation of the killings and arson has been uniform worldwide, but Jayewardene faces his toughest problem in relations with neighbouring India, where attitudes have hardened and lasting distrust sown. What Sri Lanka required most urgently last fortnight was conciliation and statesmanship, but Jayewardene seemed incapable of providing either. Due in no small measure to the vacillation of its leader, the island republic had stepped to the brink of the precipice.

Midway through the violence and terror, Sri Lanka Foreign Minister A.C.S. Hameed took off for Geneva to attend a world conference on racism. That irony symbolised a government that had lost touch with one-fifth of its population, a ruling class that had brutally and callously pushed a minority into a corner from where it could only fight back with every shred of anger and ferocity at its command. Above all, the Government's indifference towards the long-term implications of the forces it had unleashed illustrated the cynical double standards that have taken firm root in Theravada Buddhism's "last citadel."

Queen in South in Rags*

SUSHILA RAVINDRANATH

The ethnic riots which rocked Sri Lanka recently could not have come at a worse time. Sri Lanka, which has been making a serious bid for economic development since 1977, has been facing quite a few problems in spite of some impressive strides. Growing balance of payments deficits and high inflation rates have been posing a threat to the country's ambitious economic plans. And the economy has now ground to a halt following the unprecedented communal violence that was unleashed on the island's minority community—the Tamils.

When President Junius Richard Jayewardene's United National Party (UNP) won a landslide electoral victory in 1977, they inherited a near stagnant economy, characterised by low growth rates. Previous governments had laid emphasis on extensive social welfare programmes. Production and distribution were under tight state control. The manufacturing sector had become increasingly inefficient as there were severe government restrictions on import of raw materials, equipment and spares. As a result there were inadequate resources for investment in industries which were capable of absorbing the increasing labour force. This became a very critical issue in this island state which has a high literacy level of 82 per cent.

The UNP responded to the situation by introducing a ten-year economic restructuring programme. The programme has adopted policies designed to reduce state control, encourage private investment and enterprise and generally allow

* Courtesy: *Business India*

the economy to be market-oriented. The initial round of reforms were far-reaching and included exchange rate unification, price decontrol for most items, import liberalisation, interest rate reforms and budgetary reform.

These policy changes did bring some benefits in their wake. According to a World Bank report, the most notable change has been the country's success in breaking out of the low investment and growth patterns of the 1970-77 period. The report goes on to say, "Growth accelerated almost immediately following the introduction of the 1978 budget and the economic liberalisation that accompanied it, and has been sustained at relatively high levels since. During 1970-77 real GDP had grown at only 2.9 per cent per annum. During 1978-81 growth averaged 6.5 per cent."

However, it has not been a bed of roses all the way. Sri Lanka is still basically an agricultural economy. The performance of this sector, which includes the plantations on which a lot of industries and services are based, determines the island's economic performance. Growth in agricultural production has improved considerably in recent years, averaging 4.2 per cent annually from 1978 to 1980—nearly double the rate of 2.2 per cent recorded from 1975 to 1977. Paddy production has shown a dramatic increase with an average growth rate of 7.4 per cent since 1979 leading to the belief that Sri Lanka was, for the first time, on the verge of self-sufficiency in rice.

However, the tree crop agriculture (tea, rubber and coconut) has not emulated the success story of paddy. The combined volume of tea, rubber and coconut production has grown at an average rate of only 1.5 per cent since 1977 (see table 1). This is attributed to past neglect during the lengthy nationalisation process. Also, the drought of last two to three years has not helped. Which is a pity because Sri Lanka's major foreign exchange earners are the tree crops (see table 2).

The growth rate in the manufacturing industry, which was one of the hardest hit sectors during 1970-77, jumped to 10.8 per cent in 1978 and averaged 6.3 per cent for the period between 1978 and 1981. However, it was thought that industry would grow much faster than it has done. The most notable growth has been in the petroleum supplying and garment

industries. Unfortunately, the domestic value added in these sectors is very low. In fact in most cases it consists of only labour.

Says an Indian manager who had to leave Sri Lanka because of the riots, "The garment factories have sprung up to exploit the Commonwealth and EEC garment export quotas. You often find manufacturers winding up operations as soon as the quotas are exhausted, and the labour is left high and dry. Also when they say petroleum re-exports it really amounts to the fuel supplied to the planes and ships passing through Sri Lanka. This is likely to decline because refined petroleum will be taken up by the urea factory and increased thermal power generation."

Investment has also been relatively low in the manufacturing sector. This has been due to the attraction of other sectors where returns are quicker, most notably the tourism trade and real estate. The fact of the matter is that the easy availability of imported manufactures since 1977 has diverted demand away from domestic products and has made investment in trade a highly profitable proposition.

Attracting investors

The government has also been over-zealous in providing incentives to both foreign and domestic investors. To quote the World Bank report, "In general too much attention has been focused on attracting high profile foreign investment through export processing zones and for the construction of luxury hotels and high-rise office buildings rather than in developing a broad consistent set of policies designed to create a stable and attractive investment climate over the long run. While the results of the drive to attract foreign investors would seem impressive, the net gain to Sri Lanka is likely to be small."

The government's main objective in introducing economic reforms was to accelerate export growth—the economy is in dire need of foreign exchange as Sri Lanka has to import all its energy resources including coal. And oil prices have escalated. However the export performance has been quite disappointing. This was due to a world-wide drop in

commodity prices and the tree crops not doing as well as expected. The export growth was four per cent during 1977-81, but during the same period imports grew by 11 per cent and there was a decline in the terms of trade.

Sri Lanka was not expected to register impressive economic growth this year. According to a report, "Economic prospects have been affected by the droughts which have reduced expected agricultural production. The trade deficit is expected to increase by almost 30 per cent. Imports volume is projected to increase by 13 per cent. Exports are expected to decline marginally in volume, mainly because of the drought induced decline in tree crop exports."

The balance of payments deficit stood at Rs 1,619 crores at the end of 1981 and at Rs 2,100 crores at the end of 1982. Foreign debt swelled to Rs 500 crores in 1977. And the most serious manifestation of Sri Lanka's financial difficulties is the raging inflation which is supposed to be in the region of 35 per cent.

This was the state of affairs when the violent riots broke out in Sri Lanka. That these riots are going to set the economy back is self-evident. But how much is the question. The finance minister of Sri Lanka, Ronnie de Mel, has said that the riots have set the economy back by three years and a special reconstruction fund would be established. This is at a time when the aid giving bodies (World Bank, IMF) have been urging the Sri Lanka government to curb public expenditure.

The immediate repercussion is likely to be a shortage of rice and all food commodities. According to reports, there is total disruption of the food distribution system. A vast number of food retail shops are Tamil-owned. The island's food market—rice, chillies and onions—is entirely controlled by Tamil businessmen. Says a Tamil businessman who has fled from Sri Lanka and who is based in Madras for the time being, "The island will starve without the Tamils, and the economy will crumble. It is unfortunate that the Sinhalese have chosen to blind their eyes with their own hands."

To this adds a TULF (Tamil United Liberation Front) spokesman, "The Tamils not only own the rice shops but also

the rice mills and flour mills. And these are also destroyed and this is going to add to the problems.”

Dislocation of labour

There is also growing concern about the future of tea production. It is estimated that some 6,000 workers have been rendered homeless by communal violence in tea-growing areas around Matara, about 160 km. below Colombo. Reports from London say that there is mounting evidence that Tamil workers are being attacked and hundreds of them are heading either towards refugee camps or safer northern areas. As mentioned earlier, the tea industry already is in a bad way. S. Thondaman, a veteran Tamil leader, who is Sri Lanka's rural industries minister and president of the Ceylon Workers Congress, which represents the plantation workers, has threatened to pull the workers out of the plantations if their safety is not guaranteed. Without Tamil labour there is no future for Sri Lanka's tea industry.

TABLE 1
Output of main agricultural crops
(in million kg.)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Rice</i>	<i>Tea</i>	<i>Rubber</i>	<i>Coconut</i>
1971	1,396	218	142	2,610
1972	1,312	214	140	2,963
1973	1,312	211	155	1,963
1974	1,602	204	132	2,031
1975	1,154	214	149	2,398
1976	1,253	196	152	2,330
1977	1,677	209	146	1,821
1978	1,891	199	156	2,207
1979	1,917	206	153	2,393
1980	2,133	191	133	2,026
1981	2,211	210	124	2,258

Source : Central Bank of Ceylon

Of course it is inevitable that tourism would dry up for the time being. Tourism had become one of Sri Lanka's top exchange earners and had also created employment. But even here warning signals had already appeared earlier. Says the World Bank report quoted before, "The recent trend in tourist industry prices in Sri Lanka indicating high rates, increased particularly for accommodation in graded hotels, is a little disconcerting."

This may be an understatement, according to a hotel executive based in Colombo. Owing to inflation and higher hotel rates, tourists from western Europe have been reducing the duration of their stay and also resorting to lower quality accommodation.

The Indian government had also dealt a severe blow to Sri Lanka tourism. The Sri Lanka Tourism Board had come to depend heavily on tourists arriving from India to exploit the duty free facilities. Indians travelling from Sri Lanka used to be allowed duty free imports up to Rs 1,250. The foreign exchange of US \$250 allowed under the Neighbour Travel Scheme and \$500 under the Foreign Travel Scheme along with the baggage allowance of Rs 1,250 provided a tremendous incentive to travel to Colombo. Electronic items, mainly colour TVs and videos available in Colombo's duty free shops, were the main attraction. However, the Government of India put an end to this to protect the local electronics industry, by scaling down duty free imports by visitors to Sri Lanka to Rs 300. And the number of Indian tourists visiting Colombo has dropped dramatically.

The hotel industry had also suffered another major setback recently. The Hilton group and Swiss Hotels (which is owned 50 per cent by Nestle and 50 per cent by Swiss air) have pulled out of Sri Lanka. These hotels were asked to go public to enable them to get the benefit of tax holidays. As their share clashed with a few other big public issues, these two hotel companies could not manage to get sufficient public subscriptions and consequently their promoters decided to pull out.

The greatest setback following the riots would be the loss of employment. According to a government estimate, the communal riots have cost as many as 100,000 jobs as 17 factories

TABLE 2
Composition of exports

Category	Value (<i>Sri Lankan rupees in millions</i>)			Percentage share of total exports		
	1981	1980	1979	1981	1980	1979
Agriculture	12,078	10,834	10,737	58.1	61.6	70.3
Tea	6,444	6,170	5,722	31.3	35.1	37.5
Rubber	2,895	2,590	2,491	14.1	14.7	16.3
Coconut products	1,438	1,234	1,699	7.0	7.0	11.1
Kernel products	1,011	754	1,298	4.9	4.3	8.5
Others	427	480	401	2.1	2.7	2.6
Minor Agri. crops	1,301	840	825	6.3	4.8	5.4
Industrial exports	7,059	5,485	3,604	34.3	31.1	23.6
Textile and garments	3,000	1,814	1,108	14.6	10.3	7.3
Petroleum products	3,375	3,122	1,928	16.4	17.7	12.6
Others	684	549	568	3.3	3.1	3.7
Mineral exports	768	798	629	3.7	4.6	4.1
Gems	634	664	494	3.1	3.8	3.2
Others	134	134	135	0.6	0.8	0.9
Other exports	680	478	309	3.3	2.7	2.0
Total	20,585	17,595	15,279	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source : Customs, Sri Lanka

around the Colombo region have ground to a halt. These were all textile factories, providing employment to thousands of Sinhalese women. Several newspapers in Colombo carry notices from managements of gutted textile factories informing their employees not to turn up for work as jobs no longer exist.

Three of the biggest industrialists in Sri Lanka, K. Gunaratnam, A.Y.S. Gnanam and R. Maharaja, are Tamils. They have control over various manufacturing units, shops and so on. Gnanam's synthetic fibre factory, which was the pride of Sri Lanka and which was set up with IFC assistance, has been totally destroyed. The point is that the workforce in most of these enterprises was 90 per cent Sinhalese and their jobs have all been lost.

Pioneers' plight

Says a leading Sri Lankan businessman of Indian origin who is now in Madras, "Most of us have been pioneers in what we have built up. For instance, Gunaratnam introduced plastics to Sri Lanka while Gnanam pioneered synthetic fibre manufacture. We are all near retirement age, and very tired. We don't know whether we really want to go back and start all over again." With this kind of atmosphere of suspicion, doubt and uncertainty, rebuilding the economy is going to take a long time. And unemployment is likely to continue to be a serious problem.

Sri Lanka government's statement that factories and properties which have been destroyed will be taken over by the state till it is decided what to do with them under the rehabilitation programme has not helped matters. Although Jayewardene has subsequently announced that they will be returned to the owners, he has also hinted that there will be changes in ownership. This is taken to mean government partnership.

Says the businessman quoted earlier, "Those may be really measures to divert industry and trade to government and Sinhalese hands. Already foodstuffs distribution has been taken over by the government. Whether they will be returned to the Tamil traders is anybody's guess."

While it is too early to say what long term effect the riots are going to have on foreign investment, it will not be incorrect to say that at least for the time being it will definitely slow down. Says the Indian manager quoted earlier, "In its publicity spiel to attract foreign investment, Sri Lanka always projected itself as a picture of stability with a strong government. Now of course the country's image has been shattered in the eyes of the world." What is even more worrying is the Sri Lankan insurance companies' ability to honour their liability. The damage is massive and these companies do not have the resources to meet their obligations. Some foreign investors, it is said, have told the authorities that they are not interested in investing fresh capital unless a decision is taken on insurance settlements.

Needless to say, the violence has also had a traumatic impact on Indians staying in Sri Lanka. A lot of Indian experts were working in the critical areas of the country's economy on some deputation or the other. Indian technical personnel working in the prestigious Mahaveli hydel project, experts under Indian technical and economic programmes, and deputationists of Rail India Technical and Economic Services (RITES) have all returned. A lot of them have been intimidated, attacked or threatened and very few of them have the desire to go back. Some feel a sense of duty and say that they might have to go back to finish what they were sent for. However when interviewed, none of these people were willing to be quoted. Having seen violence at very close quarters, they do not want to make any statement which can be held against them later.

Pulling out

At the moment most of the 46 Indian companies operating in the island nation on specific projects and contracts have withdrawn their Indian personnel. The Bombay based Tarapore and Company have sent 200 men home, barely three months before the joint venture Taj Samudra Hotel project was scheduled for completion. A number of the 100 Indians working for the Kamani Engineering Corporation's transmission project were

TABLE 3
Expenditure on imports

<i>Category</i>	Value (<i>Sri Lankan rupees</i> <i>in millions</i>)			Percentage share of total imports		
	<i>1981</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1979</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1979</i>
Consumer goods	9,219	10,158	7,814	26.2	29.9	38.7
Intermediate goods	17,944	15,522	9,134	50.9	45.7	40.5
Investment goods	7,956	8,144	5,459	22.6	24.0	24.2
Unclassified	132	118	134	0.3	0.4	0.6
Total	35,251	33,942	22,541	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source : Customs, Sri Lanka

intimidated and have since come back. Among others AFCONS of Bombay, which was engaged in piling work, is withdrawing 75 per cent of its demoralised work force while KCP Limited, Madras, which had undertaken one of the largest sugar projects in Sri Lanka, has pulled out all its Tamil workers and has ceased operations in the Sinhala dominated southern province. It is said that when normalcy returns instead of sending back the demoralised Tamil workforce, some of the Indian firms will hire labour from Korea or Taiwan.

India has been relatively late in venturing into Sri Lanka. The investment opportunities afforded by Sri Lanka had started attracting Indian industrialists only recently. The Indo-Sri Lanka Chamber of Commerce itself was set up only last year. Says P.S. Subramaniam, Secretary of the Chamber, "Sri Lanka is not really ready for very high technology. What they require is intermediate technology and that is where India could have played a major role. The Sri Lanka government

also had realised that the time had come to encourage joint ventures outside the investment promotion zones, which would result in transfer of technology. Indian entrepreneurs were getting quite keen on investing in Sri Lanka. But now all the work that the Chamber has done in the last nine months to build better commercial and industrial relations with Sri Lanka has fallen down like a pack of cards. We have to start from scratch.”

What has come as a rude shock to the Indian business community is the fact that the attacks were directed against Indian business houses also. The feeling has always been that there were tensions only between Sinhalese and Sri Lankan Tamils—that there was no resentment against Indian nationals. Says the businessman quoted earlier, “For that matter we Tamils of Indian origin (as against Sri Lankan Tamils) considered even ourselves quite safe.” The net result is that the cautious conservative Indian business community is going to be more wary than ever to invest in Sri Lanka.

As things stand the estimates of losses suffered vary. According to a TULF spokesman the Tamils have lost 100 factories, 1,000 shops and 18,000 houses in Colombo. Official sources estimate the losses to be about Rs. 4 billion (200 crores of Indian rupees). The real figures could be more than double this amount. The Sri Lankan finance minister, Ronnie de Mel, has frantically appealed to western nations for aid.

The gains of the last five years have been considerably wiped out by mindless violence. The government faces the difficult task of restoring the confidence of its minority but it has so far appeared unwilling to do so. It also has to give an assurance to the investing community that the state will compensate the losses suffered by them. Is the Jayewardene government capable of the painstaking task of putting the economy back on its wheels?

6

Multiple Oppression with Genocidal Intent

M.V.M. ALAGAPPAN

The island, formally called Ceylon, is the traditional homeland of two nations—Tamil Eelam and Sri Lanka, two distinct social formations with distinct cultures and languages having their own unique historical past. The history of the Tamils in the island dates back to pre-historic times. When the ancestors of the Sinhala people arrived in the island with their legendary Prince Vijaya from Northern India in the 6th century B.C., Dravidians (Tamils) were living in the island. Though the question of original settlement is obscured by legends and mythologies, modern scholars hold that Tamils were indisputably the earliest settlers. The Sinhalese historical chronicles, 'Mahawamsa' and 'Culawamsa', record the turbulent historical past of the island from the 6th century B.C., the history of great wars between Tamil and Sinhalese kings, of invasions from South Indian Tamil empires, of struggles for supremacy between Tamil and Sinhalese kingdoms. The island was ruled by the Tamil kings at times and then by the Sinhalese kings and the intermittent wars forced the Sinhalese kings to move their capital southwards. From the 13th century onwards until the advent of foreign colonialism the Tamils lived as a stable national entity in their own kingdom ruled by their own kings, within a specified, territory of their traditional homelands embracing the Northern and Eastern provinces.

Marco Polo once described Sri Lanka as the island paradise

of the earth. The British rule used to call it the 'pearl of the Indian ocean'. Separated from the Southern coast of India by a twenty-two mile stretch of water, the island has an area of 25.332 square miles. For centuries before the colonial penetration, the island had a traditional self-sustaining economy with a reputation of being the granary of the East. The mode of production in the pre-colonial epoch is feudal in character with dying elements of the Asiatic mode. Structured within the feudal mode, the economic organisation of the Tamil nation had a unique set of relations of production characterised by caste stratification with its hierarchy of functions. The extensive hydraulic system, with its network of tanks and canals for which the mediaeval Ceylon was famous, had fallen out of use and was decaying and disappearing under the thick jungles in the north as well as in the north-central provinces. The Sinhalese feudal aristocracy, this time, had moved to the high lands and established Kandy as the capital.

When the Portuguese first landed on the island in the beginning of the 16th century, they found two ancient kingdoms, Tamils in the north and eastern provinces and the Sinhalese in the south, two distinct social systems with different cultures, constituting themselves as separate nations of people ruled by their own kings with independent state structures. The Portuguese entered into treaties, and then fought battles and finally, in the battle of 1619 they conquered the Tamil kingdom and hanged the Tamil king, Sankili Kumaran. Yet the Portuguese, and the Dutch who came after them, governed the Tamil nation as a separate kingdom without violating the territorial integrity until the British, in 1833, brought about a unified state structure amalgamating the two nations irrespective of ethnic differences laying the foundation for the present national conflict.

Plantation economy and the Tamil workers

The effects of Portuguese and Dutch colonial rule on the island's pre-capitalist economic formation is minimal when compared to the profound effects of British imperialist domination. The most significant historical event of the British

imperial rule was the imposition of an exploitative plantation economy.

It was in 1815 with the conquest of the Kandyian kingdom by the British that the painful history of the Tamil plantation workers begins. During this time British imperialism decided to introduce the colonial plantation economy in this island. Coffee plantations were set up in the early 1820's, a crop which flourished in high altitudes. Speculators and entrepreneurs from England rushed to the newly conquered mountain areas and expropriated vast tracts of land, by deceit, from the Kandyian peasantry. The Kandyian peasants refused to abandon their traditional subsistent holdings to become wage-earners on these new capitalist estates. The pressure exerted by the colonial state to draw the labour power from the indigenous Sinhalese peasantry did not work. The British imperialist masters were thus compelled to draw on their limitless reserve army of labour from India. A massive army of cheap labourers were conscripted from southern India, who, partly by their own poverty and partly by coercion moved into this promised land to be condemned to an appalling form of slave labour. A notorious system of labour contract was established which allowed hundreds of thousands of Tamil labourers to migrate to the plantation estates. In the 1840's and 1850's a million people were imported. The original workers were recruited from Tamil Nadu districts of Tinnevely, Madurai and Tanjore and were from the poor and oppressed castes. This army of recruited workers were forced to walk hundreds of miles from their villages to Rameswaram and again from Mannar to the central hill-lands of Ceylon through impenetrable jungles. Thousands of these masses perished on their long hazardous journey, a journey chartered with disease, death and despair. Those who survived the journey were weak and exhausted and thousands of them died in the nightmarish unhealthy conditions of the early plantations.

The coffee plantation economy collapsed in the 1870's when a leaf disease ravaged the plantations. But the economic system survived intact by the introduction of a successor crop—tea. Tea was introduced in the 1880's on a wider scale.

The tea plantation economy expanded with British entrepreneurial investments, export markets and consolidated companies transforming the structure of production and effectively changing the economic foundation of the old feudal mode of creating a basis for the development of the capitalist mode of production. Though the plantation economy effectively changed the process of production, the Tamil labourers—men, women and children—were permanently condemned to slave under the white masters and the indigenous capitalists. The British planters who brought the Indian Tamil labourers into Sri Lanka deliberately segregated them inside the plantations in what are known as the ‘line rooms’. Such a notorious policy of segregation condemned the Tamils permanently into these miserable ghettos, isolated them from the rest of the population and prevented them from buying their own lands, build their own houses, and to lead a free social existence. Thus, British imperialism built up the Tamil plantation proletariat within the heartland of the Kandyian Sinhalese, and manipulated the Tamil/Sinhala antagonism to divide and rule and to defeat the class struggle. Reduced to a condition of slavery by colonialism, the Tamil plantation workers toiled in utter misery; their sweat and blood sustained the worst form of exploitative economy that fed the imperialist vampires with the surplus value and enriched the Sinhalese land-owning classes.

British colonialism and the indigenous Tamils

The impact of the British imperial domination on the indigenous Tamil-speaking people of the northern and eastern provinces had far reaching effects. On the political level, British imperialism imposed a unified administration with centralised institutions, establishing a singular state structure which ended the separate existence of the Tamil statchood. This forced annexation and amalgamation of two separate kingdoms, of two nations of people, disregarding their past historical existence, their socio-cultural distinctions, and their ethnic differences, was the root cause of the present Tamil-Sinhala antagonism.

The Tamil social formation was constituted by a unique

socio-economic organisation, in which feudal elements and caste system were tightly interwoven to form the foundation of this complex society. The notorious system of caste stratification bestows, by right of birth, power, privilege and status on the high caste Tamils, the minority of whom (landowners and business elites) owned the means of production and exploited the rest. The most exploited and oppressed sections are the so-called depressed castes who eke out a banal existence under this system of slavery. Privileged by caste, provided with better educational facilities created by foreign missionaries, a section of the high caste Tamils adopted the English educational system. A new class of English educated professionals and white collar workers emerged and became a part of the bureaucratic structure of the civil service. The English imperialist masters encouraged the Tamils and provided them with an adequate share in the state of administration under a notorious strategy of balance of power, of divide and rule, that later sparked the fires of Sinhala national chauvinism.

The Tamil dominance in the state administrative structure, as well as in the plantation economic sector, the privileges enjoyed by the English educated elites, the spread of Christianity, are factors that propelled the emergence of Sinhala nationalism. In the early stages, nationalist tendencies took the form of Buddhist revival which gradually assumed a powerful political dominance. Under the slogan of Buddhist religious renaissance a national chauvinistic ideology emerged with strong sediments of Tamil antagonism. The religious leadership attacked both the Tamils and European colonialists and spoke of the greatness of the Sinhalese Aryan race.

To quote a typical example:

Ethnologically, the Sinhalese are a unique race, inasmuch as they can boast that they have no slave blood in them, and were never conquered by either the pagan Tamils or European vandals who for three centuries devastated the land, destroyed ancient temples...and nearly annihilated the historic race. This bright, beautiful island was made into a paradise by

the Aryan Sinhalese before its destruction was brought about by the barbaric vandals... (Anagarika Dharmapala. *History of An Ancient Civilization*)

The Sinhala national chauvinism that emerged from the Buddhist religious resurgence viewed the Tamil dominance in the State apparatus and in the plantation economy as a threat to 'national development' and such national antagonism articulated on the ideological level began to take concrete forms of social, political and economic oppression soon after the national independence in 1948, when the State power was transferred to the Sinhala national bourgeoisie.

Multi-dimensional oppression

Having firmly entrenched the national bourgeoisie in a global neo-colonial structure, the British granted 'independence' to the people of Sri Lanka and Tamil Eelam with the British queen as their sovereign head. Motivated by their class interests, the national bourgeoisie collaborated with the British, accepted their constitution and assumed power. Soon after the so-called national independence the national bourgeoisie began to show its reactionary character. Conflicts arose between the Tamil and Sinhala bourgeoisie over the share to political power. The Sinhala nationalists dominated the scene and gained control over the state machinery.

Soon after the transfer of political power, Sinhala national chauvinism reigned supreme and unleashed a vicious and violent form of oppression against the Tamils. This oppression has a continuous history of thirty-five years since 'independence' and has been practised by successive Sri Lankan Governments. The oppression has a genocidal intent involving a calculated plan aiming at the gradual and systematic destruction of the essential foundations of the Tamil national community. This oppression therefore assumed a multi-dimensional thrust, attacking simultaneously on different levels of the conditions of existence of the Tamil-speaking nation; on language, on education, on culture, religious and political institutions, on traditional lands, and on the economy that jeopardised the

very existence of the Tamils and made unitary life intolerable and impossible. As a part of this genocidal programme formed the state organised racial holocausts, which constantly plague the island, resulting in mass extermination of Tamils and massive destruction of Tamil property.

A million Tamil workers disenfranchised

Soon after the transfer of political power, Sinhala national chauvinism reigned supreme and the first cruel victims of the Sinhala racist onslaught were the Tamil plantation workers. A million of this working mass who toiled for the prosperity of the island for more than a century were disenfranchised by the citizenship legislation which robbed these people of their basic human rights and reduced them to an appalling condition of statelessness. Having been deprived of the right of political participation the State Parliament was closed for this huge mass of working people. Before the introduction of these laws the plantation Tamils were represented by seven members of Parliament. In the general elections of 1952 as a direct consequence of these citizenship laws, not a single representative could be returned.

The Citizenship Act of 1948 and the Indian Pakistani Citizenship Act of 1949 laid down stringent conditions for the acquisition of citizenship by descent as well as by virtue of residence for a stipulated period. These Acts were implemented in such a manner that only about 1,30,000 out of more than a million people were able to acquire citizenship. The cumulative effects of these notorious acts of legislation were so disastrous that it made the conditions of life of these working people miserable and tragic. Having been reduced to a condition of statelessness nearly a million Tamils were denied the right to participate in local and national elections; were denied employment opportunities in the public and private sectors; were denied the right to purchase lands; were denied the right to enter business of any sort. Such a condition of statelessness condemned this entire mass of workers, the classical proletariat of the island into a dehumanised class devoid of any rights and dumped them perpetually, in their plantation ghettos to suffer degradation and despair.

Aggressive annexation and colonisation of traditional lands

The most vicious form of oppression calculated to destroy the national identity of the Tamils was the State aided aggressive colonisation which began soon after the independence, and has now swallowed nearly three thousand square miles of Tamil Eelam. This planned occupation of Tamil lands by hundreds of thousands of Sinhala people aided and abetted by the Sinhala colonial regime in the areas, where the huge mass of landless Tamil peasantry is striving for a tiny plot to toil, was aimed to annihilate the geographical entity of the Tamil nation and to reduce the Tamils to a minority in their own historical lands. The worst affected areas are in the eastern province. The gigantic Gal Oya and Madura Oya development schemes have robbed huge bulks of land from the Tamil-speaking people of Islamic faith of Batticaloa district. The colonisation scheme in Allai and Kantalai and the Yan Oya project have engulfed the Trincomalee area and threatens to be swamped by Sinhala colonisation. The Mahaveli development scheme is planned to penetrate the North with massive Sinhala colonisation. This consistent policy of forceful annexation of Tamil traditional lands exposes the vicious nature of the racist policies of the Sinhala ruling classes.

The State aided colonisation has not only created two new Sinhala electorates (Amparai and Seruwilla) but also threatens to cut off geographically the eastern province from the North. In addition to this, the constant racial violence that erupts in some sensitive colonised areas has resulted in a heavy loss of Tamil life and property. In the June-July (1983) racial holocaust, the Sinhalese colonists with, the aid of the armed forces, launched calculated attacks on the Tamil people of Trincomalee to confiscate their property and to drive them away from their homelands. The statistics given below show the effects on the populational balances affected from this aggressive colonisation in the Trincomalee district. In 1948, there were only 10,000 Sinhalese in the eastern province which had swelled by 1977 to over 100,000 people. In Amparai district the percentage of the Sinhalese population was 4.5% in 1946 but increased to 37.7% recently.

Trincomalee

	<i>Sinhalese</i>	<i>Tamils</i>
1921	3.0%	93.3%
1946	20.6%	75.0%
1971	28.8%	70.2%
1981	33.6%	66.4%

The assault on language and the axe on employment

The national oppression of the Sinhala racist regimes soon penetrated into the sphere of language, education and employment. The chauvinistic ‘Sinhala Only’ movement spearheaded by Mrs. Bandaranaike brought her to political power in 1956. Her first Act in Parliament put an end to the official equal status enjoyed by the Tamil language and made Sinhala as the only official language of the country. The ‘Sinhala Only Act’ demanded the proficiency of Sinhala in the civil service. The Tamil public servants deprived of the rights of increments and promotions were forced to learn the language or leave employment. Employment opportunities in the public service were practically closed to Tamils. Racial discrimination against the Tamils in employment soon extended to other services and sectors. The racist discrimination against Tamils in employment by the present fascist regime can be studied from the statistics given below.

Those in service

<i>Department</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Sinhalese</i>	<i>Tamils</i>	<i>% of Tamils</i>
Police	17,000	16,050	940	5.0%
Army	10,000	9,780	220	2.2%
Navy	2,170	2,024	146	6.7%

The arrest on education

Education was the sphere the Sinhala chauvinism struck deeply to deprive a vast population of Tamil youth access to higher education and employment. A notorious discriminatory selective device called ‘Standardisation’ was introduced in 1970 which demanded higher merits of marks from the Tamil

students for university admissions whereas the Sinhalese students were admitted with lower grades. This discriminatory device dramatically reduced the number of admissions of Tamil students and seriously undermined their prospects of higher studies. The ratios of Aggregate 'A' level marks demanded for admission for the Tamils and Sinhalese students were as follows:

	<i>Tamil students</i>	<i>Sinhala students</i>
Medicine	250	229
Engineering	250	227
Physical sciences	204	183
Biological sciences	184	175

The present regime withdrew the scheme of standardisation temporarily in 1978 but has re-introduced a new discriminatory formula (admitting 30% on merit, 55% on district basis and 15% from backward areas). This new scheme turns out to be far more discriminatory than the earlier one denying thousands of deserving Tamil students the right of higher education. The following table shows the percentage of Tamil students affected by the practice of racist schemes of discriminatory education since the year 1970. Angered by the imposition of an alien language, frustrated without the possibility of higher education, plunged into the despair of unemployed existence, the Tamil youth grew militant with an iron determination to fight back the national oppression.

Economic strangulation of the Tamil nation

National oppression showed its intensity in the economic strangulation of the Tamil Eelam nation. Apart from a few state-owned factories built soon after 'independence', Tamil areas were totally isolated from all the national development projects for nearly thirty-five years. While the Sinhala nation flourished with massive development projects, the Tamil nation was alienated as an unwanted colony into the wilderness of economic deprivation. The most tragic fact is that while the Tamil nation gradually deteriorated, isolated into

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Medium of instruction</i>	1969	1970	1972	1973	1974	1977	1978	1979	1981
Medical	Sinhala language	50.0%	57.0%	58.6%	62.0%	72.7%	72.0%	57.5%	67.4%	80.7%
	Tamil language	50.0%	43.0%	41.4%	32.0%	27.3%	28.0%	42.5%	32.6%	19.3%
Engineering	Sinhala language	51.7%	56.0%	66.7%	75.4%	81.5%	81.0%	64.0%	61.8%	69.8%
	Tamil language	48.3%	44.0%	33.3%	26.6%	18.5%	19.0%	36.0%	33.2%	30.2%

economic backwardness wasting its potential labour, the Tamil capitalists, encouraged and aided by the Sinhala ruling class, invested in the South; a brutal fact which illustrates the class collaboration and class interests of the Tamil bourgeoisie.

Racial riots and mass killings of Tamils

The racial riots that constantly plague the island should not be viewed as spontaneous outbursts of inter-communal hatred between the two communities. All major conflagrations that erupted violently against the Tamil people were inspired and master-minded by the Sinhala ruling regimes as a part of a genocidal programme. Violent anti-Tamil racial riots exploded in the island in 1956, 1958, 1961, 1974, 1977, 1979, 1981 and most recently in July 1983. In these racial holocausts thousands were mercilessly massacred in the most gruesome manner, millions worth of Tamil property destroyed and hundreds of thousands made refugees. The State and the armed forces coluded with hooligans and vandals in their sadistic orgy of arson, rape and mass murders.

The cumulative effect of the multi-dimensional oppression threatened the very survival of the Tamils. It aggravated the national conflict and made co-existence between the two nations intolerable. It has shattered all hopes of a peaceful negotiated resolution of the Tamil national question. It has stiffened the Tamil militancy in their demand for secession.

Appointment of officers

<i>Post 1977-80</i>	<i>Total appoin:- ments</i>	<i>Sinhalese</i>	<i>Tamils</i>	<i>% of Tamils who constitute 25.2% of the population</i>	
1	2	3	4	5	
Teachers	25,081	22,399	2,632	10.7%	
Sri Lanka Administra- tive Service	144	144			
Translators	5	5			
Postmasters Signallers		46	44	2	4.5%

1	2	3	4	5
Government				
Service clerks	3,326	3,127	199	5.9%
Typists	414	376	38	9.2%
Stenographers	198	135	63	31.8%
Book-keepers	183	172	11	6.1%
Railway department officers	195	181	14	7.2%
Railway clerks	214	209	5	2.3%
Railway guards	83	82	1	1.2
Servants in the Govt.				
Secretariat at Tirumalai	20	16	4	15.0%
Pharmacists and radiographers	480	473	7	1.4%
Persons selected by the Government for employment opportunities abroad in 1977-80				
	2,643	2,417	226	8.5%
Employees of the Prima Flour Mill permitted by the Ministry of Planning and Implementation				
	451	379	72	19.2%

The Heart of the Problem*

SWAMI ARULTHASAN

One hears these days from even the more educated Sinhalese, a refrain which is quite misleading. They speak often of 'privileges acquired by the Tamils from their colonial rulers'. What is implied is that Tamils have privileges in Sri Lanka that the majority community does not have! One can see this type of thinking reflected even in the Negombo Priests' 'Message to the Tamil Brethren,' published in the *Tribune* of August 27, 1983, and the *Catholic Messenger* of August 28. What indeed are these privileges that the Tamil minority acquired, but which were denied to the majority? Making one's living honourably by hard work, learning to save, building one's house and educating one's children, these are not privileges acquired by the Tamils from colonial rulers. Rather, they are the traditional virtues fostered in the Tamil homes from time immemorial. In fact, it is the Sinhalese who acquired something from the colonialists: political power as a majority that can dictate to the minorities. Only the majority has discovered that more political power does not give access to what comes by hard work, discipline, capacity to save, and the like. The welfare state can deliver only when all its citizens make a contribution to the economy, and not when the majority tries to live by political appropriation of other people's economic resources which are quite limited. There is just so much you can appropriate politically by legislation or violently by looting. The rude awakening is not far away.

* Courtesy: *Tamil Times*

It is these easy political appropriations by legislation of land, resources, foreign aid, government jobs and educational opportunities, by the majority for the majority, that are at the root of the cry for Eelam and separation. The cry for Eelam will die a natural death when the causes of political injustice are eliminated.

If politicians think that by passing unjust laws under the flimsy legality of 'British democracy' (quite different from the democracy practised in England), they can contain the separatist cry, they are mistaken. We have to remember that democracy British-style has left similar problems in most of their former colonies where they brought together, through imperial power, for their own convenience, very disparate populations. Indeed, the real cause for the separatist cry is the abuse of political power of the majority to deny others their basic rights to language, culture, education, employment, homelands, and now even their home and business. These rights are not matters for negotiation in any type of all-party conference.

One is not talking here about the rhetoric of unity and harmony by the government and some religious bodies, but the reality of how life is experienced by the minorities in Sri Lanka. Next door India, with a vastly more complex problem, has worked out more bearable solutions.

There are religious bodies (pity, the Negombo Priests too got into the act) giving advice to the Tamils not to be violent, at a time when hundreds of thousands have been subjected to unprecedented violence which has no proportion to the terrorism of extremists in the North (mostly youth), who at least strike at select targets. The Tigers terrorise mostly the armed police and military, and the so-called collaborationists. Cowardly attacks on unarmed, defenceless, law-abiding citizens is another matter, specially when the Eelam cry and terrorist attacks in the North are used as a pretext to vent the majority community's general resentment about the Tamils' economic success—in spite of all the political and other drawbacks they have had to contend with. No one wants to condone what the Tigers are doing; but there is no proportion to the havoc wreaked by the Sinhalese mobs with the collaboration

of the security forces, and a certain cheering from the sidelines by racist politicians—a few of whom we are told are ministers in the present government. What is happening in the North and East of Sri Lanka is the helpless reaction of the Tamils to the escalating political violence since 'independence'. And during the last decade, this political violence by the ballot through racist manipulation of the parliamentary majority, has taken the shape of military and police violence by the bullet. And now it has further degenerated into senseless mob violence, aided and abetted by the security forces. Some features of the anti-terrorist legislation are unheard of even in such States as South Africa and Israel. The recent legislation aimed at thought control is probably the first in the history of modern nation-states. Minorities are not even free to disagree with the majority on the political front. And this is supposed to be in the name of unity, sovereignty and 'internal affairs' when such provisions fly right in the face of the law of the nations and basic human rights. How such things could happen in a predominantly Buddhist country with all the talk of *dharma* (virtue) and *ahimsa* (non-violence) is beyond anyone's comprehension.

Sri Lanka and its glorious millennial history is being negated by the recent happenings. It is a striking illustration of the anthropologists' claim that people can not only evolve, but also devolve and fall into lower states of consciousness. In traditional Oriental philosophy, it is the emergence of the *tamas* (inert elements) and *rajas* (passionate elements) over the *sattvas* (the good elements). What is happening is that *Bodhi-sattva* is being turned out of his own home. Those who loved and still love Sri Lanka weep at what has befallen this pearl of the Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka seems to have lost both its *Sri* (title of nobility) and the resplendence which the word Lanka implies. The Sri Lankan President himself has rightly described the situation as 'a crisis of culture'. In a time such as this, religious people should refrain from preaching unity and non-violence to those who have undergone unspeakable violence, in the name of a unitary state. Rather, they should preach hard work and fair play to their own, and make them see how much the Tamils have contributed to

building up the country as a whole, and specially to its economy. This is no time to make categorical statements about territorial integrity when human integrity itself is at stake.

A case in point is how little the Indian Tamil labourers get in return for keeping the Sri Lankan economy afloat by their hard work on the plantations. They do not even have the basic human right of being a citizen in the land of their birth and toil. This type of cowardly nationalism by a majority which feels threatened is unheard of. One has to seriously analyse the causes of such an attitude, instead of making everything appear as a Communist plot—specially to distract the benefactors of the so-called Free world, who normally should be horrified by the sorry version of democracy currently practised in Sri Lanka: government by the majority for the majority, using armed forces and mob violence if need be!

The London *Economist* in a couple of articles in the wake of the July 1983 pogrom, hit the nail on the head by tracing much of the trouble to *ergophobia* (distaste for work) of some in the majority community. They want to have everything for nothing. The London *Economist* calls on such people to fight their own *ergophobia* by imitation of the Tamil worker and businessman, rather than succumb to envy and wanton destruction. Destroying their Tamil brother and partner, they are destroying the future of their own country. It is like cutting one's nose to spite one's face. Destroying the Tamil factories, the Sinhala workers have been rendered jobless.

Finally—and this I found particularly galling in the Negombo Priests' Message, though it faithfully reflects the general feeling in the majority community—the priests speak of the protection some Sinhala families have extended to their Tamil friends in the context of the Sinhala mob violence, as a virtue they may not be able to practise in the future! Sad indeed. They find even this minimum too taxing, instead of being ashamed of the fact that their fellow Sinhalese reduce their Tamil friends to such an inhuman plight by their cowardly behaviour—an armed mob of fifty to a hundred against ordinary, unarmed families. On the contrary, in the North it is a handful of poorly armed guerrillas, on bicycles (which the government wants to outlaw!) against the combined might of

the army, navy, air force and the police. So, even the Negombo (some of whose grandparents spoke only Tamil) find the Tamils a burden as long as the latter do not renounce the so-called 'privileges acquired from colonial times'. I wish they hear what they are saying. They are just adding fuel to the Eelam fire, and turning Sri Lanka into ashes. Having listened to a few of the more educated Sinhalese, what I hear is not always remorse for what has happened; rather one hears the strange echo of 'serve them right', and a hidden satisfaction at the benefits that might accrue to them by such events. The bottom line seems to be: 'In spite of our having political power, the Tamils seem to be still better off economically, and in various other ways'. They forget that the Tamils who seem to be well off in the South are only a fraction of the Tamil population. And even these are in the South because all the opportunities seem to be centred there, by the Government's official neglect of the North and East.

The Sinhalese who had the opportunity of protecting a few Tamil friends from the Sinhala mob violence have done a good deed. But they should not now turn round and hold hostage all the Tamils in the North and East, under the pretext of protecting the few who are well off in the South. The siren song of those who want to have easy unity with the captive Tamils of the South could be in the long run more treacherous than the mob violence which drives the Tamils back to their traditional homelands. The situation of the Tamils in the South continues to be very precarious. It is more like the situation of the Jewish refugees in post-war Europe, and Palestinian refugees in present-day Israel and Lebanon. They need a homeland of their own. In our case, the homeland is already there. The majority community continues to speak of territorial integrity (as if that were more important than human integrity), sovereignty (an easy way to subjugate a minority), unity (what is meant is uniformity and assimilation), and 'internal affairs' (one way of keeping out external forces like the UN or India which could help in bringing more justice and real peace into the situation). For all practical purposes, the partition of Sri Lanka runs deep through the hearts and minds of Tamils and Sinhalese, and

right through the bodies and properties of the Tamils. Both groups cannot eat the cake and have it too. For more than three decades since independence, they have tried to live together. It has not worked, since the occasional eruptions are getting more frequent, and more vicious on both sides. If we really want a solution, we have to be ready to make sacrifices.

The Tamils have to renounce the comforts (and exploitation, if one refers to the Indian Tamils) of their Southern Captivity, and be ready to move back to the North and East (and abroad where possible), taking with them the only resource that the Sinhalese cannot deprive them of, their resourcefulness through hard work. The Sinhalese have to give up their dream of controlling the North and East. Self-control, as Mahatma Gandhi said, is a greater achievement than conquest by arms. I suppose the Tamils are still free to dream of their homeland, and work towards self-determination (even if, by law, they are not allowed to talk about separatism). May be it is good that we stop talking and sloganising and provoking. Rather, all have to start the difficult work of building up the economic viability of the future solution. We have to draw the good out of the evil of Sinhala dissatisfaction expressed in inhuman mob violence. The good is the final realisation by the Tamils in the South that it is time to go home (or anywhere where it would be safer), and build up the North and East. Those who go abroad can create the right type of public opinion and resources needed for such a venture.

While returning to their traditional homeland, the Tamils will part as friends treasuring the memory of the South which they can always visit as friends, tourists or temporary residents. The South is beautiful, and the people are usually friendly and generous. The Tamils did enjoy their stay in the South, in better times. There are civilised, more enlightened ways of saying 'Goodbye'. It calls for a certain renunciation; and the minimum renunciation is not to hold on to what does not belong to one.

When the Tamils gradually give up their southern inheritance acquired by hard work and thrift, the Sinhalese will have

to do the easier thing of letting go the colonial inheritance of the North and East that came to them in the wake of independence. Buddhism has more than enough resources to persuade the Sinhala Buddhist masses and their leaders to give up gracefully what is not their own—the Tamils' traditional homelands with their own language, culture and resources. It is said that the vaunted *dharmadwipa* has been polluted by the *adharmic* radiations of greed and injustice. The Tigers' terrorism and the Tamil politicians' separatism would not have appeared on the scene, if the political power of the majority had not been selfishly used to crush an already oppressed minority. What are we to think of a government that would cynically exploit the burning and looting by unruly elements, to introduce a blue-print for better city planning, even before the blood of the victims had dried on the pavements? How does one build up unity in the country, when unity is imposed by legislative diktat? The Tamils are not even free to disagree on the crucial issue of a separate state (which could initially be in the context of a federal government, if the Sinhala majority still feels that it cannot survive as well, without the continued exploitation of the Tamils' labour and know-how) under pain of losing what few rights they are left with. They will lose even what is left of their property. That is not how people enter into a dialogue on important issues.

There is, in the Old Testament, the significant story of Achab the King of Israel who could not feel king enough, unless he had Nabot's vineyard too. He was glad to inherit it when Nabot was disposed of by stoning through a third party (see I Kings 21, 5-19). He used his political kingship for effortless economic betterment. And if political violence was inadequate, he was prepared to accept crude violence as long as someone else (in this case, Jezebel the wicked queen) did the killing and the looting. I am still hopeful that better counsels will prevail. May be, Chelanayagam's call to federalism (far more regional autonomy than envisaged in his plan) has to be tried sooner than later. The Tamils have been open for more than two decades to a federal system of government. Further, all forms of petty, retaliatory legislation have to go

from the statute book. With statesmanship, one can repeal the unjust and discriminatory laws. Mr J.R. Jayewardene has his grand opportunity to be a real statesman; we all hope he can rise to the occasion, before he passes away like all mortals.

In the meantime, leaders—specially religious leaders—should refrain from prostituting words like harmony, peace, forgiveness and reconciliation.

There is a price for all these realities: the redemptive blood which continues to flow everywhere, specially in Lebanon, Northern Ireland, South Africa and Central America. In Sri Lanka it happens to be mostly Tamil blood, not to mention the sweat and tears of the Indian Tamil labourers. Those who shed their blood for a just cause can at least take heart that in some way they are called to fulfil the words the Son of Man spoke in an Upper Room in Palestine two thousand years ago: TAKE, EAT, THIS IS MY BODY BROKEN FOR YOU; TAKE, DRINK, THIS IS MY BLOOD THAT IS Poured OUT FOR YOU. Indeed, there is 'no redemption without the shedding of blood' (Hebr. 9, 22). The suffering of innocent victims will not have been in vain. One may try to kill the body and burn the property of Tamil nation; but its soul will ever remain to bring renewed life to the wounded body and the pillaged home.

8

A Moral Crime*

BISHOP LAKSHMAN WICKREMASINGHE

I was not present in the island when the violence erupted at the end of July 1983. But I was present and witnessed similar violence in 1958 and 1977. I also experienced the other period of violence in April 1971 when there was an armed insurrection by Sinhala youth. But during July 1983 and afterwards, I was able to follow closely from abroad the events that took place. A friend had collected all the news and comments in the English press from July and August, and gave the documents for me to read. Since I returned, a local friend gave me a similar file of documents from the Sri Lankan press from early July to the end of August. I was able to visit the affected areas, talk with various people and also meet people in the Jaffna peninsula. Our own Tamil Church-Members within this Diocese had their stories to tell. In short, the comments I will make on the situation we face are based on much reflection. They also express twenty-five years of experience in seeking to find a solution to our ethnic conflict. I am among those who have tried hard and failed. But I know and trust in God, who is ever creative in bringing good out of evil.

I am against the arson, loot, murder and insurrection associated with armed groups of indigenous Tamils. I do not support the demand for a separate state. I do not condone the biased programme of certain expatriate Tamils in various parts of the world. I do not respect those Tamils who ask for

*Courtesy: *Tamil Times*

a negotiated settlement of their grievances and at the same time support these armed groups. But I do feel a deep sympathy for those indigenous Tamils who are faced with a real dilemma. They have a strong sense of resentment and also grievances which they want remedied. Likewise, I am against the arson, loot and murder of innocent people and torture by the security forces in Jaffna, Trincomalee, Vavuniya and elsewhere. These are unjustified acts of revenge for the activities of the armed groups whom they cannot eliminate. I do not support the demand for the domination of the Tamils by the Sinhalese majority. Nor do I condone the biased propaganda to be found in the national daily papers. I do not respect those Sinhalese who want a negotiated settlement of mutual grievances, and at the same time want domination of the Tamils by the Sinhalese majority. But I do feel much sympathy for those Sinhalese who are faced with a real dilemma. They genuinely want mutual grievances remedied by negotiation. But they are against the domination of Tamils by the Sinhala majority, and against the unjustified activities of the security forces, though they may appreciate the genuine problems raised by those from whom they differ. Since they fear the revenge of thugs with political patronage and know that they are not likely to receive protection from the police, they remain silent. It is too risky to speak out in public.

My deepest sympathy is for the Tamils whose ancestors arrived during the period of British rule. And it is especially so for the estate labour who have contributed so much to our income from exports. They have been innocent victims who faced arson, loot and death in 1977, 1981 and 1983, as a result of a conflict in which they have no part. Even in 1976, some of them within the region covered by our Diocese faced eviction, arson, loot and starvation owing to the activities of the thugs with political patronage. They have suffered and been humiliated because they have been defenceless. I feel deeply ashamed for the pain and loss they have undergone. It is a moral injustice that cries out to heaven. There is one last aspect to my basic perspective. It is my rejection of those who twist the facts of history to create myths. By myths I mean those theories which misinterpret facts, false notions. It

is such myths that harden prejudice and rouse violence, whether among armed mobs or armed guerrillas. Sinhalese and Tamils have to erase from their minds false notions about themselves and their island's history, by allowing facts to control theories. That is why I am against those who make and spread such false notions. False rumour has cost many lives. But it is false notions about each other that have made these false rumours effective.

There are theories and there are facts. Theories vary. Some say that the originators were left-wing groups aided by foreign powers. Others say that the originators were thugs and private hirelings of powerful politicians connected with the government. Still others say that both these groups were involved for different motives. This is not the place to discuss these rival theories. The facts, however, cannot be denied. Thousands of Tamils, old and young, and even little children, were assaulted, robbed, killed, bereaved and made refugees. They saw their homes, possessions, vehicles, shops and factories plundered, burnt or destroyed. These people were humiliated, made to live in fear and rendered helpless. Business premises run by Tamils or Indians were selected and burnt. The homes and possessions of Tamils in the professions and government services were also selected and destroyed. On two occasions, Tamils were selected and killed in Welikade prison. Such selectiveness indicated a prepared plan of action. It is not that poor Tamils were also not killed or made refugees. They were. It is simply that in their case, the mobs did not reveal a method in their madness. But there was more. A large number of people lost their employment as a result of destruction, and these included not only Tamils but Sinhalese and others. Even some Kovils, Churches and Vicarages were not spared. As a result of all this, economic development and foreign exchange suffered an immense loss. Public services were disrupted. Our image abroad was damaged. The people responsible for all this violence and destruction and suffering were mostly Sinhalese. The fact that Jaela, Wattala, Kotahena, Kelaniya and Galkissa-Wellawatte areas were places where mob rule was evident, points to some Christians being involved. Those Sinhalese may also have

been part of the dominant Sinhala mobs. Young people including students were also part of certain mobs on the rampage. And, according to available evidence, the police and armed forces were seen in different places to be either inactive spectators or active supporters of these mobs who attacked the lives and properties of Tamils.

There are those who say that this massive Sinhala retaliation of Tamils in the southern parts of Sri Lanka was justified. They say that the killing of at least 83 persons, including the 13 soldiers on 23rd July, the attacks on police stations, damage by bombs to an aircraft, a passenger train and government institutions, bank robberies, and acts of arson on public property in the north, were such crimes as to deserve the revenge executed by the Sinhalese. They add that Tamils in the south of Sri Lanka did not for the most part condemn these acts by armed groups. But those who say this forget three facts. First, the retaliation for these actions was being taken by the police and armed forces in Jaffna district, Trincomalee and Vavuniya through the killing of many more than 83 persons, damage to private property, arson, looting, assault on civilians, destroying of public property such as the Jaffna Public Library in 1981, and the torture of detainees in police stations and army camps. Secondly, indigenous Tamils who lived in the south of the island had already faced arson, looting and death and became refugees in 1977. Thirdly, the Tamils who faced such retaliation in 1978, 1981 and 1983 included Tamils of Indian origin, who had no part in the attacks made by armed groups in the north. In view of these facts, to say that the retaliation in July was justified is to advocate tribal vengeance. In fact, the verse in the Old Testament which says 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth', was a reminder that the Jews should not engage in tribal vengeance. A tribe should not destroy the whole of another tribe for the crimes of its members. Jesus in the New Testament pointed out that this ancient Jewish law was a moral standard that was no longer justified. This shows that those who say that the massive Sinhala retaliation on Tamils living in the south was justified have a lower standard of morality than the ancient Jews. Their conscience is distorted. We must rise above such tribal morality.

There are others who say that the personal suffering and murder which took place in July may not be justified. But they feel, deep down in their hearts, that the enforced departure of indigenous Tamils from the professions, government services, universities and schools and of Tamils of Indian origin from retail trade and other occupations in south Sri Lanka was justified. They have questions of conscience about the methods adopted, but not about the final result. Because they feel that the undue advantages which the indigenous Tamils had in relation to their percentage of the population, and which the Tamils of Indian origin had in the internal trade, especially within the Sinhala areas, were not justified, they are not willing to condemn the methods adopted to get rid of them. They had compassion and were helpful in many instances. But they did not feel a sense of moral outrage.

I would like these people to reflect on three questions. First, were these undue advantages solely due to what happened in the colonial period, and to mutual help among themselves at the expense of the Sinhalese? Did not the middle-class Tamil have to move southwards and abroad because Jaffna district did not provide enough avenues for prosperity through economic enterprise, as south Ceylon provided for the emerging Sinhala middle class? Did not the qualities of hard work, thrift and ability help the Tamils to prosper where they came to work and reside? Secondly, who enabled them to remain in the Sinhala areas? Did not successive Sinhala political leaders make use of the skills of the indigenous Tamils to implement their programmes? Did not the traders of Indian origin have easy credit facilities with people in India, which enabled them to provide certain goods speedily and efficiently? Did not Sinhala politicians and officials permit them to remain also because of the presents they took from these traders? Thirdly, can the final result of removing those with undue advantages through methods that are not condemned, be restricted to the Tamils? In Kandyan areas, people from the low country have undue advantages in the professions, government services, universities, leading schools and in trade. The Muslims have such undue advantages in the trading sector. Are these undue

advantages due solely to what happened in the colonial period and to mutual help at the expense of the Kandyan? Did not the qualities of enterprise, hard work and ability enable them to prosper in these areas? Do these undue advantages justify the final result of securing their enforced departure, if the Kandyan Sinhalese were to adopt the same methods as were adopted in July 1983 towards the Tamils? Another question follows. Certain families in our rural areas have such advantages as undue ownership of land, access to the best schools and to the best occupations, which the poorer people in these areas do not have. Are such advantages due solely to what happened in the colonial period and to mutual help at the expense of the poorer people? Did not the qualities of hard work, thrift and ability enable them to prosper as these areas were developed? Do these undue advantages justify the final result of securing their displacement, if the poorer people adopt the methods used towards the Tamils in July 1983? Did not the insurrection led by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna in 1971 have this result in view? So, let those who justify the final result of what happened in July 1983 to the Tamils in south Sri Lanka consider the further implications of their moral standards. To restrict what they justify when it happens to the Tamils, is to hold double standards. This is hypocrisy. To think in this way at all is really to hold the moral standard that the end justifies the means. None of the great religions we profess upholds this morality.

There are still others who justify the role of several of the police and armed forces, during this massive retaliation in July 1983. Some people say that these security forces did nothing to stop the violent mobs, or encouraged them because they were angry that their own personnel had been killed by armed groups in the north. Such solidarity with those killed or resentment against the killers in the north does not justify what they did or failed to do in the south. The security forces are trained and armed to eliminate armed groups. They are paid to protect the lives and properties of civilians, and to maintain law and order. Their inefficiency in being unable to eliminate armed gangs of Tamils in one part of the island

does not justify their ensuring that revenge is taken on innocent Tamils in the other part of the island. This is not the kind of behaviour that can be justified on moral grounds. Then, other people say that the security forces could not be expected to harm or kill their own Sinhalese people to save the Tamils. But, in fact, I saw some security forces do so in 1958. I witnessed the army doing so in 1977 though not the police. It is not to provide moral justification. Finally, there are still others who say that there were several instances where the police and armed forces simply could not disperse the mobs. This was because there were too few of them in some places, not properly concentrated in the right areas, and in some instances they were faced with young students placed in front of the advancing mobs. Or else, some had lost their morale owing to the success of armed groups in the north. We can sympathise with some of the police and armed forces who were faced with such situations. These reasons may be explanations for inefficiency, for which such persons may not be responsible. They do not justify failure to protect the lives and properties of defenceless people. This must not prevent us, however, from expressing our deep gratitude to those in the police and armed forces who did their duty, in spite of risk and division within their own ranks.

The arguments that have been stated so far point to one basic moral fact. It is that the massive retaliation, mainly by Sinhalese against defenceless Tamils in July 1983, cannot be justified on moral grounds. We must admit this and acknowledge our shame. And we must do so for the right reasons. It is not enough to be ashamed for the reason that inhuman passions enslaved a section of the Sinhalese for a short period. Nor must we be ashamed because our sense of moral outrage will improve our image abroad. We must be ashamed because what took place was a moral crime. We are ashamed as Sinhalese for the moral crime other Sinhalese committed. We must not only acknowledge our shame. We must also make our apology to those Tamils who were unjustified victims of this massive retaliation. An apology must be made for three reasons. First, as Sinhalese we share in the total life of our people. We share in all that is good and great in our

Sinhala heritage. These good and great aspects were due to the lives and achievements of only a section of the Sinhala people. But as members of the whole group we claim what one section did as belonging to us all. We share in the joy and the responsibility of their lives and labours. That is why in this Diocese we acknowledge and rejoice in all that is good and great not only in our Sinhala heritage, but also in Sinhala-Buddhism. We have absorbed all this into the life and mission of this Diocese, except that we have our basis in Jesus Christ. In the same way, when a section of the Sinhalese do what is morally wrong or bad, we share in it. As members of the whole group we claim that what one section did belongs to us all. We share in the evil they have done. Secondly, it is a mark of moral maturity to acknowledge a moral crime on behalf of those closely knit to us, who do not realise that they have done so. And an apology is made on their behalf. Parents do so on behalf of children. Others do so on behalf of relatives or friends. There is a solidarity of family, of kinship and of friendship, in things both right and wrong. Gandhi used to acknowledge the moral crimes of those who engaged in violence. He fasted in order that they would come to the point of acknowledging the evil they had done and change their ways. Thirdly, there is the example of Jesus in the midst of brutality and suffering. He shared in the guilt of all those who were involved in the moral crime of bringing about his unjust death, because he shared in our humanity, he apologised for all those who did not know the moral evil they were doing. His compassion acknowledged both shame and guilt. He apologised so that he might begin the process of setting right what was wrong in a broken relationship. It was between Jesus and those who had done wrong to him. It was also between God, whose will Jesus had done, and all those who thereby had done wrong against God. In setting right their wrong done to Jesus, they would also set right the wrong they had done to their heavenly Father. As he apologised, he also prayed that all would come to recognise the wrong they had done, duly apologise, and change their ways.

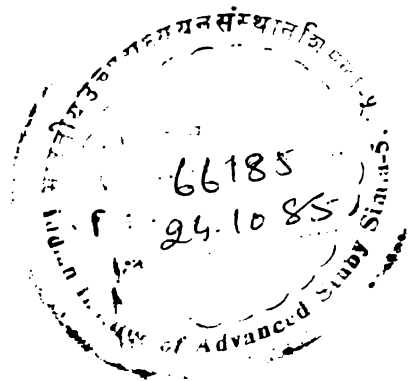
It is only by such a kind of apology that we shall also recover our proper moral and religious values. Then, we can

begin the process of setting right what went wrong in our relationship with the Tamils. A section of the Sinhalese must acknowledge the wrong done to those Tamils who were innocent victims. And they must do so with compassion for their fellow Sinhalese who did the wrong, and for those who do not want to admit that a wrong was done. Christians will know that in setting right a broken relationship with those Tamils who suffered unjustly, they would be setting right a broken relationship with God, who is the heavenly Father of us all. At the same time, they must pray that those who did them wrong and those who are unable as yet to admit the wrong done by others, will come to a new level of moral insight. The tragedy is that it is becoming harder in 1983 for Sinhala Christians to acknowledge that what has been done is a moral crime than in 1958. Our moral sense in this matter is getting dull. We must ask that the Holy Spirit may enlighten our conscience. It may be that this process of setting right the moral wrong that was done by a section of the Sinhalese may evoke a softening of attitudes among a section of the Tamils. To so admit the wrong, to make the apology, and to change past attitudes may awaken a new moral sense among a section of the Tamils. They come to acknowledge the moral wrong of condoning violence, especially the seeking of revenge, among their own people. The main point, however, is that the true basis of reconciliation is admission of the wrong done and an appeal for forgiveness. When forgiveness is given or a mutual apology is evoked, reconciliation begins to take effect, slowly but surely. Hardened attitudes begin to change.

We know that this is not a matter about which we can do much ourselves. But we also know that if there is no sustained dialogue and negotiations, the situation will get worse. The deadlock at present between the different Sinhala leaders, and between the Sinhala leadership and the Tamil leadership, is disheartening. A consensus among the Sinhala leaders is essential. This consensus must have the support of the leading monks in all the Nikayas. The urgent demands of our national crisis must overcome personal, party and petty interests. We must pray for and support those who are trying to build convergence in the midst of divergence. Renewed dialogue

between the Sinhala and Tamil leadership should not be delayed. The possibility of renewed violence remains in the background like a dark shadow. India's interests as the regional power in our midst cannot be disregarded. The All Party Conference which was promised in the Party Manifesto needs to be implemented now. The issues remain the same in regard to the indigenous Tamils and the Tamils of Indian origin. Various concessions have been made. Now a genuine sharing of power between the majority and the minorities has to emerge. Actual realities have to be faced by all those negotiating. The security of ordinary people, of minorities and of the whole island, has to be assured. What we have to pray and work for in every way we can, is this:

There must be a real determination to reach a settlement. Otherwise, there will be increasing disorder along with increasing dictatorship. An independent Commission of Inquiry similar to the one presided over by Mr Sansoni can be of real use. The inquiry will need to consider not merely how and why the recent violence took place. It will need to examine the role of the mass media and of the educational system, in relation to communal attitudes and conflicts. Its sittings should be adequately protected in both Sinhala and Tamil, with the use of English only when desired. The Commission should have the support of all the major political parties. We must pray and work for this as well.





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