

A Tamil Information Centre publication

**SRI LANKA:  
JULY 1983  
VIOLENCE  
AGAINST  
"INDIAN  
TAMILS"**

**A brief case study of anti-Tamil  
violence at Badulla,  
Nuwara Eliya and  
other plantation areas**

**SRI LANKA: JULY 1983**  
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**“ INDIAN TAMILS “**

**Edited**  
**with a Background Note, by**  
**S. SIVANAYAGAM**  
**from the study prepared by**  
**‘B. A. AJANTHA’**  
**and translated from Tamil to English by**  
**S. A. DAVID**

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## BACKGROUND NOTE

By "Indian Tamils" are meant Tamils of recent Indian origin whose forefathers were for the most part brought as cheap, immigrant labour to Ceylon during British colonial rule, to work in the Coffee, Tea and Rubber plantations. They are otherwise referred to as Estate Tamils, Hill Country Tamils, up-country Tamils, Plantation Tamils or Tamils of Indian origin. Constituting only 5.6 per cent of the population according to the Census of 1981, they represent the most underprivileged section of the Sri Lanka Community.

Although a small minority in overall terms (from 11.7% in 1946 they have been reduced to 5.56% in 1981 — see Table) they are concentrated heavily in the central, high-elevation Tea and Rubber producing areas, and in one of the 24 districts, Nuwara Eliya, they even enjoy numerical majority (Sinhalese : 35.9%; Indian Tamils :47.3%; Sri Lanka Tamils : 13.5% — 1981 Census) Their next heaviest concentrations are in Badulla and Kandy districts.

In spite of the fact that the sweated labour of this five per cent produces a greater part of the country's wealth derived from Tea and Rubber exports, the Plantation Tamils are the least fortunately placed not only in economic terms, but in respect of education, social acceptability, cultural opportunities etc., 43.58% of the state sector is illiterate, as compared with 22.47% in the rural sector and 18.57% in the urban sector. (Report on Consumer Finance and Socio-Economic Survey 1978/79.)

Freedom from colonialism which should logically bring more fulfilment to the people, only made the position of the plantation Tamils infinitely worse. Ceylon became independent in 1948, and in that same year a Citizenship Act was enacted which in fact converted those Tamils into a stateless minority, although they enjoyed similar rights as other Ceylonese prior to independence. In 1949 the Indian and Pakistani Residents (Citizenship) Act was enacted for the purpose of registering resident Tamils of Indian origin and Pakistanis as citizens. The administration of the Act deprived over 95% of the Tamils of Indian origin their citizenship rights. In that same year the Ceylon (Parliamentary) Election Amendment Act deprived those Tamils who had hitherto

## ETHNIC COMPOSITION 1901-1981

(The main ethnic groups)

|      | Sinhalese | Sri Lankan Tamils | Indian Tamils | Moors |
|------|-----------|-------------------|---------------|-------|
| 1901 | 65.4%     | 26.7%             | —*            | 6.4%  |
| 1946 | 69.2%     | 11.0%             | 11.7%         | 5.6%  |
| 1953 | 69.3%     | 10.9%             | 12.0%         | 5.7%  |
| 1963 | 71.2%     | 11.1%             | 10.6%         | 6.3%  |
| 1971 | 71.9%     | 11.1%             | 9.4%          | 6.5%  |
| 1981 | 73.98%    | 12.6% **          | 5.56% **      | 7.12% |

\* Separate categorisation of "Indian Tamils" did not occur until later.

\*\* An explanatory note on the Census of 1981 Says :- In general the Ethnic Groups are fairly clearly differentiated except for some misunderstanding with regard to the distinction between Sri Lanka Tamils and Indian Tamils. The distinction is related to the country of origin and not to citizenship. However some Tamils of Indian origin who have obtained Sri Lanka Citizenship may have reported themselves as Sri Lanka Tamils.

enjoyed voting rights and had returned seven members to Parliament and influenced decisions in nearly 20 other electorates, of the right to vote. While indigenous Tamils found themselves diminished to second class status by the Official Language Act (Sinhala only) of 1956, the plantation Tamils were meanwhile relegated to third-rate position, with the very advent of independence.

As a sympathetic commentator of estate Tamil life said :- "The age of Statelessness had begun". He wrote :- "So long as Nehru lived, India had held firmly to the position that the 19th century immigrants were the responsibility of Sri Lanka. However, only a few months after his death in 1964, the two Prime Ministers of Sri Lanka and India signed the first of the Repatriation Agreements. The second followed in 1974. Estimating that in 1964 there were at least 975,000 stateless persons in Sri Lanka, the prime Ministers agreed that India would give citizenship to, and take away, 600,000 while Sri Lanka would give citizenship to, and keep, 375,000 in either case, with the natural increase. The Great Uprooting was the consequence of a game of numbers played in high places.

"For most of the workers, it was not to be repatriation, but expatriation and in some cases deportation. Even in a world where there has been so much else to hit the headlines, it is surprising that the Agreements, which heralded the largest organized worker migration of the 20th century, have gone so largely unnoticed". (The Plantation areas People and Problems by Paul Caspersz, *Saturday Review* January 30, 1982.)

In one respect, however, these Tamils were more fortunate. While mob violence against Tamils began in 1956 and blew up into a major riot in 1958, and while the indigenous Tamils were progressively brought under Police and Army occupation in their traditional homelands in the north and east in the sixties, the Tamils in the estate areas remained insulated from tensions and physical attacks. That position however did not last long. The nationalization of estates during the period of the Srimavo Bandaranaike government (1970 — 77) exposed the estate Tamils to physical danger for the first time.

To quote Paul Caspersz again :- "..... There have been three ugly episodes of anti-Tamil communalism on the estates in the post-nationalization period of only nine years. The first took

place in 1972 soon after the first Land Reform Law. The Tamil workers, on many estates close to the Sinhalese villages, were driven-out of the places where some of them had lived for generations — defenceless, friendless, their hearts in the dust, like a teabush uprooted — to roam the streets of the cities and live off garbage bins. The British, if they ruthlessly exploited the workers, at least protected them from outside attack !

"The second was in August 1977 in the climate of unredressed Sri Lanka Tamil grievances and the consequent ultimate demand of the Sri Lanka Tamils for a separate State of Eelam. In August 1977 an estimated 10,000 estate families were attacked — just because they were Tamils and despite the fact that they had nothing to do with the politics of the Sri Lanka Tamils and were not connected with the demand for Eelam. Many of them lost everything or nearly everything they had — clothes, pots and pans, precious savings converted into jewellery — during the senseless violence.

"The third was as recent as August 1981 and seems to have been the backlash of racial clashes in the far away Eastern Province. This time the target seems to have been the estates in the Sabaragamuwa province where the estate often abuts the Sinhalese village. The hard core of the attackers seems to have been formed of goon squads organized by politically powerful anti-Tamil racialists, hoping to be shielded by state power. Round the racist goons gathered the looters.

"1972, 1977, 1981.... When will there be the next orgy of arson, loot, assault, some times murder and rape ?... "

Paul Caspersz who happens to be the President of the Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE) did not have to wait long for an answer to that question. The answer came in 1983.

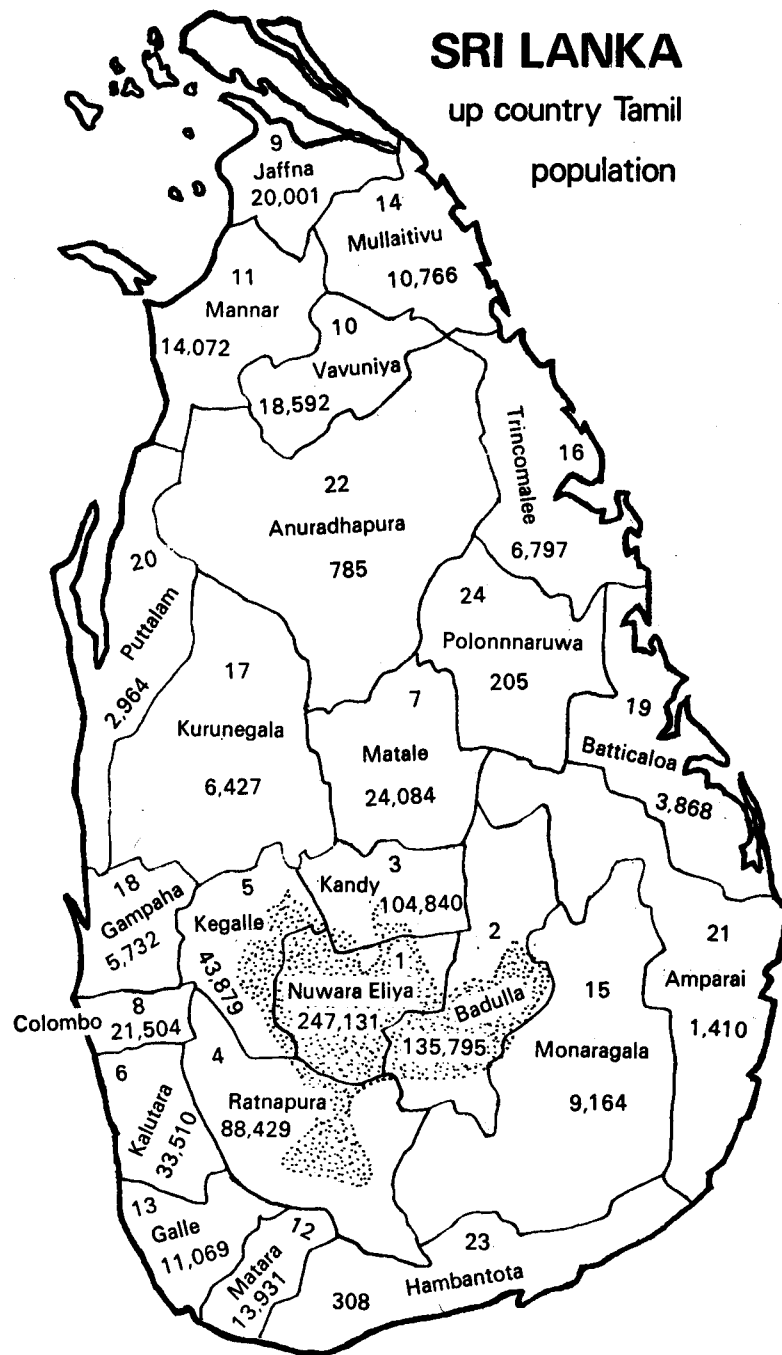
Significantly, the gap between the attacks was itself narrowing — 5 years, 4 years, and now 2 years ! Of more significance was the identity of the attackers. In 1972 and 1977 they were believed to be pro-Sri Lanka Freedom Party supporters and in 1981 and 1983 the attackers turned out to be elements supporting the very United National Party government in power. If the plantation Tamils were attacked by the pro-SLFP elements in 1977 for supporting the UNP, by what process of logic were they attacked by pro-UNP elements in 1983 for voting en bloc for their party and President at the Referendum and Presidential elections in 1982 ?

President Jayawardene himself found this inexplicable in 1981. In an interview given to INDIA TODAY (S. Venkat Narayan, Sept. 1-15, 1981), he said: "Those who need our special protection are those in the plantations ... citizens, non-citizens or the stateless. They are the most harmless people. They are members of unions which are supporting our government. That's why I cannot understand why anybody supporting the government should try to harm people who are themselves supporting the government. I think there is some anti-government movement behind this".

It is perhaps the paradoxical misfortune of these people that (unlike the Tamils in the North and East), the more support they gave the government in power the more severe were the punishings they got from government supporters ! The grant of Sri Lanka citizenship under the implementation of the Sirima-Shastri Pact of 1964 had brought the voting strength of the plantation Tamils to nearly 200,000, and there was no doubt that the bulk of these votes controlled by Ceylon Workers Congress leader S. Thondaman were cast in favour of the government party. "The association of the Ceylon Workers Congress — the largest trade union among the Indian workers in the plantation areas — with the UNP became a significant factor at the Presidential election of October, 1982... The results of Nuwara Eliya, Badulla and Kandy districts where the UNP polled 63.10 per cent, 58.61 per cent and 59.80 per cent of the valid votes respectively, demonstrated the influential role which the Indian voter played at the Presidential election" (W.A. Wiswa Warnapala and L. Dias Hewagama in RECENT POLITICS IN SRI LANKA — The Presidential Election and the Referendum of 1982 — Navrang, New Delhi).

How the Indian voter who played this "influential role" in October 1982, (enabling President Jayawardene to gain 52.91 per cent of the valid vote) came to be at the receiving end of mob frenzy and State terror within nine months of it, is the shocking story of the following case study. It covers the plantation areas in general, but with special focus on Badulla where the ferocity of the blow was greatest.

The facts that went to make this case study were painstakingly collected by one individual who went about the task with a missionary fervour within 10-15 days after the violence had ceased. Being familiar with the terrain, he visited the scenes of violence, spoke to dozens of people, many of whom were not

**Caption for Map****Up-Country Tamil Population — Districtwise**

- I. Map Shows the 24 districts, the pattern of distribution of up-country Tamils in the various districts, the actual populations, and the numerical order of population strength on the 1981 Census. It also shows how artificially the demarcation of boundaries had been made in respect of up-country Tamils, so as to make them minorities in the various districts. The concentration was so heavy in the high-elevation areas that the Tamil majority in the Nuwara Eliya district remained undisturbed.
- II. 75.139% of the up-country Tamils live in the following four districts : Nuwara Eliya, Badulla, Kandy and Ratnapura. Shaded portion shows the area where they form over 75 per cent of the population.

*Map prepared by B.A. Ajantha*

only eye-witnesses to incidents, but had personal knowledge of some of the villains of the drama. The result is a stunning report. If some parts of the report sound defamatory. Truth is the defence offered. The field researcher who hides his identity for reasons of personal safety under the nom-de-plume B.A. AJANTHA, wishes it to be recorded that should there be any independent non-governmental inquiry into the July massacres, he would gladly produce the evidence to support data given in this report.

As told by "B. A. Ajantha":-

## BADULLA

Badulla has been a fortress of Sinhala chauvinism from the fifties. It was a stronghold of the old Jathika Vimukthi Peramuna headed by one of the pioneers in racist politics- K.M.P. Rajaratne. Badulla was one of the targets of anti-Tamil violence in the riots of 1958. Today, the Sinhala Buddha Peramuna under the leadership of a senior Cabinet Minister, Cyril Mathew, enjoys considerable support there.

But although anti-Tamil violence beginning with the riots of 1977 had become a continuous feature elsewhere in the country, Badulla was spared the horrors until July 1983. The secret was police vigilance in 1977 and thereafter. Although the police in Badulla at that time had earned a notoriety for accepting bribes from Tamil businessmen, there was widespread sense of apathy and security among Tamils born out of the confidence they had in police vigilance.

The names of two police officers (both Sinhalese) are remembered with gratitude - Headquarters Inspector de Silva who served in Badulla during the island-wide riots of 1977 and HQI Dharmapala who protected the town in 1981. Inspector Dharmapala is a grandson of Anagarika Dharmapala, well-known for his role in the Buddhist renaissance. So that, when the July conflagration began in Colombo on the night of the 24th and exploded into widespread violence on the 25th, Badulla received the news with equanimity.

Badulla was in fact, in a festive mood on the night of the 24th, because Hindus and Buddhists were taking out two religious processions in the town, an annual event that had helped to

build a bridge of cultural camaraderie between the two communities. It had been the precedent that the Buddhist Perahera ends by midnight and the Hindu Vel Festival continues till around 2 o'clock in the early hours. This year, the police ordered the Vel Festival to be closed at the same time as the perahera at 12 midnight.

### Major tragedy averted

The police had a suspicion that Buddhist thugs will attack the Tamils after the Perahera crowd returned home that night. (I have no doubt that Sinhala thugs had a plan for a vicious attack on the Tamils. If this plot had not been foiled by police that night, thousands of Tamil devotees might have lost their lives.)

This sequence of events indicates that the police were aware of a plot to attack the Tamils. If the government had taken sufficient precautions a holocaust will not have been let loose on Badulla.

In any event the Tamils lived in hope that the police were on their side.

**July 25: 9.05 p.m.:** There is no curfew in force. A crowd pours petrol and sets fire to a Tamil shop called "Sri Lanka Stores" in South Lane. The inmates of the shop and neighbours act quickly and put out the fire. There is no damage. Immediately Lamlat Perera, Head Quarters Inspector arrives on the scene with a police party. No arrests are made.

**July 26 :** The town is alive with rumours that Tamils were getting massacred elsewhere in the country. The Sinhala thugs consider : "What is our contribution?". Passions are inflamed and fear grips the Tamil community.

There is panic all over. Government announces all-island curfew from 6 p.m. In Badulla police start enforcing curfew from 4.30 p.m.

There has been no incident in Badulla Town that day. Only a solitary instance of arson was reported outside the town, when a house owned by the Tamil proprietor of "Ambika Stores", was set on fire.

On the one hand Sinhalese thugs were making preparations and on the other, police were showing signs of alert. The Badulla Tamils were depending wholly on the police and taking no protective measures themselves.



### **A thug the first victim**

**July 27 : 6 a.m.** Boutiques open as usual. Superintendent of police Mr. Randenigalla orders the closure of shops. Tamils know him well. In 1981 when he was in Batticaloa violence was let loose on Tamils.

Mr. Randenigalla returns at 7 a.m. and requests the shops to open. This gave the impression that police were aware of events to come.

**10 a.m. :** A van (Hiace No: 38 Sri 1831) arrives near a shop adjoining the clock tower. Around 15 persons alight from the van. They enter and take tea. They are talking furtively. 'Sama' a prominent U.N. Per and a municipal council member is in the crowd giving instructions.

A few minutes later they approach Tamil-owned "Gowrie Stores" with petrol bombs and torches. The owner of the shop sits motionless through incomprehension. While trading was in progress petrol is thrown inside. As one thug was setting fire a colleague of his throws some petrol on him accidentally from behind and he is enveloped in flames. He is admitted to hospital with serious burns and dies after 5 days.

The nephew of the Manager of Gowrie Stores, a customer, a Muslim, a 12 year boy named Santha Kumar, sustain serious burns.

The police hurry to the scene. Superintendent of police fires into the air, the thugs disperse. The police are afraid to arrest them as they know influential politicians are behind the thugs.

### **Government politicians show their Hand :**

As the burning of Gowrie Stores was in progress at one end of Badulla town, at Kings Street, at the other end of the town near the Buddhist Vihare, government-owned Transport Board employees in two C.T.B. Buses shouting "We will kill Tamils" approach the centre of the town. They commence their operations after worship! They set fire and destroy the biggest Hindu Temple in Badulla, the 'Kali Kovil'. They then proceed to set fire to every Tamil vehicle on the road.

The police bring the situation under control. A shot fired by H.Q.I. to disperse the crowd hits one man. He dies on the spot.

The police action was a challenge to the thugs who were swearing "to bathe in Tamil blood". They retreat and take shelter in their head quarters, the Buddhist Vihare.

The organisers take stock of the situation. There was no incident for an hour.

The political organisers who were operating behind the scenes are besides themselves with pent-up fury. They jumped into the fray openly.

**11.30 a.m.:** Newton Dias, a brother of the father of U.N.P. Member of parliament, a U.N.P. organiser and a member of the local Municipal council, emerges. In front of the tourist Hotel a few yards away from the Buddhist Vihare he addresses the crowd in Public:-"I will look after the police, you go ahead without fear" and gives encouragement to the thugs.

With some hesitation the thugs set fire to "Rayans" and "Cheapside Stores".

Immediately S.P., A.S.P., H.Q.I. all three police top brass hurry to the spot. On seeing Newton Dias they retreat. The police make no attempt to hold the thugs; they become spectators. Their inaction gives courage to the thugs. They mount a full scale attack.

The attack did not start at one end and proceed to the other end. It was scattered. Each area was allotted to a group of thugs. Each group was given a separate list. They were functioning according to a well prepared plan based on data collected earlier. The thugs disperse in groups and start the attack at the centre and at nooks and corners.

All shops and houses belonging to Tamils are set on fire. In Tamil shops where the premises were Sinhala-owned, goods are taken out, heaped on the road and set on fire and the buildings saved from destruction.

The frenzy which commenced at 11.30 a.m. comes to an end at 2.30 p.m. In these three hours all Tamil shops and houses were attacked except a few houses in Gregory's Road and those within the Badullapitiya housing colony. At Gregory's Road, Tamil Houses about ten in number, escaped the mob fury when influential Muslims in the area managed to stave off the attackers. As for the Badullapitiya colony it was a housing scheme where a mixed-up communal life had evolved, without distinctions of race or creed. Popularly nicknamed 'Korea' the colony had its own "tough characters" with their own sense of solidarity, where even the Tamils will take to violence at the drop of a hat, or take advantage of a riot situation!

With these two exceptions, no Tamil house or shop in Badulla, even those in nooks and corners, not normally identifiable, were spared! This only proved that the 3-hour attack had been done to a methodically pre-determined plan.

During the three hour long operation of the thugs no looting or robbery took place. Any one attempting robbery was warned by thugs.

*All food, drinks, implements and petrol for thugs was provided by the Chief incumbent of Muthiangana Buddhist Vihare.*

Looting commences after 3 p.m. All people irrespective of age occupation or status took part in the robbery. There were jailors, policemen, teachers, students, public servants. In Pattapundura the robbery was carried out by jailors.

Eighty percent of the participants in the looting were between the ages of 10 and 25. Many of these were students. In the vast multitude of humanity that engaged in this pitiless act there was not one with grey hair.

The army was called in "for show", after all was quiet. The holocaust could have been stopped, if the police stationed at strategic points in the town had taken stern action. The situation could have been handled by 25 police men. In fact the police top brass did act with determination, but the interference of politicians frustrated their efforts.

### **POLICE BEHAVIOUR DURING CURFEW**

There was curfew all over the island. There was no movement of people on the road. The rank and file of the Badulla police in collusion with thugs were emptying Tamil jewellery shops. Smoke was still coming out of shops.

*Policemen themselves, were breaking open safes and collecting jewellery in bags. The booty was divided among all policemen. Lekum Arachie, Sergeant Buddha Dasa, Sergeant Madawala and Constable Bandara were leading the looters.*

Just one single jewellery shop in all Badulla town was saved. This was S. Pachiyapillai Jewellery Palace, Army Commander Jayaratne arrived on the scene as the safe in this shop was being broken. Unable to tackle the police who were the culprits, he informs the Government Agent, and the Government Agent takes over the jewellery into his custody.

### **Those three hours!**

But Dharma and law now lay prostrate before political brigandage. Unbridled thuggery reigned supreme. The cry of pain of the Tamils echoed everywhere. It is hard to put in words the painful experiences and sense of tragedy that gripped them during those three hours.

Every one in Badulla knows the proprietor of Yogam Stores, a trader in camphor goods. His name is M. Ramanathan, a man of courage and forethought. He had taken many precautions to protect himself. The back of his beautiful home was protected by a high wall. In front, his vehicles in a row were kept safe behind protective walls.

As the town of Badulla was in flames nearly two hundred thugs armed with guns, petrol bombs and dangerous weapons gather in front of his house shouting 'Kill the Tamils' 'Hunt the Tigers'. Many of them are employees of the Ceylon Transport Board. They appear either drunk or drugged and bereft of human feelings. Three brothers of the U.N.P. member of Parliament lead the group.

Ramanathan a licenced gun in hand was preventing the thugs entering his house. As the thugs enter the gate he fires a shot into the air. The thugs retreat in fear. The leaders shout at the thugs : 'Is there no Sinhalese blood in your veins?', and urge them to action. The thugs surge ahead with hesitation. Again shots ring from Ramanathan's gun. The thugs go back. The brothers of the M.P. were determined to take revenge on Ramanathan. They keep goading the thugs.

Piyasena, a bus conductor could contain his anger no longer. He goes forward recklessly and calls : 'Cowards follow me'. A shot from Ramanathan hits him. Piyasena falls to the ground. He is removed in a hurry to a dispensary. There is no doctor who can take the pellets from his body. The only man proficient in this field is Dr. Maruthappu, a Tamil, who was by that time a refugee in the camp. There was none to save Piyasena the thug. He dies at the dispensary.

News of this incident incite the Sinhala thugs 'Tigers are hiding in Ramanathan's house. They are armed with modern automatic weapons', these are the rumours spread around the town.

On the orders of the brothers of the M.P. police hurry to the scene. They crouch in front of Ramanathan's house and fire

into the house. Within a short time two jeeps full of army men are also called to Ramanathan's house. The thug attack on Ramanathan is now reinforced with police and army action.

The neighbours, all Tamils, seek refuge in a sugarcane plantation nearby. The thugs set fire to the sugarcane plantation to prevent their escape. The sugarcane plantation is aflame. In front, army men and policemen keep firing. But for the horrible fact that it was actually happening, it looked like a scene reminiscent of some war film.

A Sinhalese friend of Ramanathan watching all this from a house in front, fearful and anxious for Ramanathan's life becomes alarmed at the deteriorating situation and with all good intentions advises Ramanathan loudly "Surrender, there is no other way". Police follow up this call for surrender.

There is no escape. Ramanathan thinks the thugs will not harm him if he surrenders to the police. Fearful yet resourcefully he takes a 2 1/2 years old girl in hand expecting the crowd will not attack a small girl and walks out unarmed with his hands raised in surrender.

The 2 1/2 year old Viji who had been clutching him tight cries out 'Aiyo.....'. That's all. The thugs drag Ramanathan and attack him with iron rods and wooden clubs like a mad dog and torture him to death. They burn his face with lighted torches.

*They drag the 2 1/2 year old Viji holding on to Ramanathan's hand and dash her to death on a tree. This devilish deed was executed by Nimal, a man from Devundara. He has worked as a peon in the People's Bank there and been dismissed for robbery. He is a local leader in Cyril Mathew's Sinhala racist Organisation.*

### **Fifteen murders in a row**

"Surrender, or we will set you on fire", shouted the police and the thugs to the rest of the occupants of Ramanathan's house. With no means of escape, they trickled out and meekly surrendered. The sons of Ramanathan - Yoganathan, Vimalanathan, Sathianathan all met the same fate as their father. All of them were beaten brutally to death. Even norms of warfare declare that those who surrender should be spared. But there was no room here for any kind of "Dharma", war or peace.

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

In the moment of the temporary slackening of tension, Mrs Ramanathan, her 15-year old daughter and Kausik escaped death. Stricken with terror, Mrs. Ramanathan had hidden inside the bathroom. Later, left with no alternative, she had come out out and surrendered just after Packianathan had fallen to the bullet and Kausik lay injured. "Are there any more Tigers inside?", the mob demanded from her. Speechless and dazed, she was then handed a lighted torch with which she was asked to set fire to the vehicles belonging to Ramanathan parked in the premises.

That left five members of the Ramanathan family dead within fifteen minutes. The three who escaped were taken to the refugee camp. The police who thought that those who escaped may give evidence against them went round all refugee camps trying to locate them. The inmates of the refugee camp separated them and hid them. Subsequently, they were smuggled away to Batticaloa without the knowledge of the police.

### **No escape for even Sinhala visitor**

Those who were trapped in the sugar cane garden and who had no option but to surrender met the same fate as others. Among those who were done to death were four members of a family - that of a local prominent Journalist, S. Ganeshan. His elderly father K. Sundaram, Ganeshan's brother S. Rajeswaran, and a nephew were killed along with a Sinhala visitor to the house from Talawakelle.

The father, brother and uncle of the little girl Viji who was dashed to a tree were also killed. So was Ramanathan's lorry cleaner.

A total of fifteen dead bodies now lay on Ramanathan's premises. Six of them were killed by gunshot, and nine of them were tortured to death. All bodies were dragged and made

into a heap in front of Ramanathan's house, rubber tyres were brought, petrol poured and a mass cremation was done.

The Ramanathan house itself was not touched until then, and until even later in the afternoon of the 27th. A systematic looting was done, and thereafter the house itself was burnt down:

When I visited the spot I saw the charred human bones. Two lorries — 26 Sri 6750 and 24 Sri 2468, one car, 8 Sri 132, two vans, 34 Sri 121 and D.D. 14/2, two motor cycles, one a Suzuki and the other unidentifiable except the number — 85 Sri 6422, two bicycles, one Chopper, all belonging to the Ramanathan family, were in a burnt state

Why so much hatred against Ramanathan, the Yogams mudalali? It has been mentioned already how Badulla escaped the anti-Tamil rioting in 1977 and in 1981. The Police did a good job on both occasions (which really meant that one effective officer, imbued with impartiality and determination can make a big difference to police attitudes) and the suppressed racism was simmering below the surface. The planned attacks on Tamils of Indian origin in nearby areas in the Sabaragamuwa province in 1981 in which they were unable to participate, left the Badulla racists with a feeling of failure to rise to the occasion! It was a challenge to their self-respect. Ramanathan was a Tamil of Indian origin who had made good in life, prospered, and wielded some influence with the police as well. Moreover, his house stood in splendid isolation, a good target and a worthwhile target.

Let us now do a quick flashback to 1981. Aware of the attacks on Tamils in Ratnapura, Kahawatte and estate areas, Ramanathan was on constant alert. It was around midnight one day, and he spotted a figure, carrying what looked like a can of petrol, throwing the petrol on one of his lorries, and attempting to set it on fire. He ran and tried to catch him red-handed. The man took to his heels, leaving the petrol can. Ramanathan chased him with his gun, but on closing upon him made a startling discovery. The running figure was no less a person than the MP's brother, whom he knew very well indeed. He hesitated for a moment but kept the chase nevertheless. The house of the MP's father was close by and as the figure darted into the house, there was no mistaking the identity.

Ramanathan did not want to let the matter rest. He lodged a complaint with the police the very next morning. Headquarters Inspector Dharmapala, duty-conscious officer as he was, was in a quandary. At any rate, involving as it did, the brother of a governing party MP who was then participating in an event at the Buddhist vihare, it was decided that the MP should, for his own sake hush the matter. He knew Ramanathan well. He apologised on his brother's behalf, undertook to see that there was no repetitions of such incidents and appealed to him to withdraw the complaint. Ramanathan relented. He could not afford to offend the MP in the face of a direct request like that. But this of course left the MP's brother hardly in a happy frame of mind. He was determined to have his revenge some day. He kept circulating the rumour that Ramanathan and his sons were Tamil "Tigers", and like all deliberately circulated rumours, it gained credence among the gullible Sinhala population.

Came July 1983, came the country-wide tension and the golden opportunity that the MP's brother was waiting for. His wish came to be fulfilled beyond his wildest expectation!

### More Killings

Ramachandran is another well-known man in Badulla. He was rich too, which made him another suitable target for a blood-thirsty mob. Here again, one gun kept the mob at bay, but the police stepped in. A police gun left him injured and while he lay unconscious, the mob pounced on him and tortured him to death.

A visitor at Ramachandran's house, an Indian national by the name of Nainar, was also murdered by the thugs.

Ramachandran's son Vengadesan was meanwhile set upon by a mob near the railway station and he too was killed.

P. Ravindran was the son of the proprietor of Pushpa Hardware Stores. His father's household goods had miraculously escaped damage. Ravindran was lurking around waiting for a suitable opportunity when the mob was not around, to rescue those things. But a policeman spotted him. The curfew was not in force at that time. The policeman stuck a rifle on his chest and demanded "what's your name?". Trembling, he replied: "I am Ravi". "what Ravi?" demanded the policeman further (Ravi is a name common to the Sinhalese as well). When the reply came "Ravindran", a shot felled him. He fell

face down and the policeman thinking he was dead, hurried away. But Ravindran managed to stagger back to the road and run. Thugs who noticed this, caught him, beat him up and while alive put him inside a car belonging to Alagasundaram parked near the Liberty cinema and set fire to the car.

Aravandipillai was a prominent trader in the town. His son got caught to thugs who attacked him with iron rods and wooden clubs. He ran bleeding into his Sinhalese friend's shop. His friend saved him and sent him in a lorry to the hospital. The lorry, for protection, was taking the road past the Buddhist temple. But opposite the temple, thugs stopped the lorry. They dragged the wounded man out, bundled him into a gunny bag, brought more sacks from a nearby shop, and set fire to him alive. They beat up another Tamil boy and dumped him into the same fire. This macabre incident took place beside the bell tower of the temple of the Buddha — the Buddha who preached Ahimsa to the world.

Another burning in the vicinity was that of Neelameham who was rushing to his home in a van. He was stopped, pulled out, beaten to death with a crowbar and other implements and burnt along with his van.

The tragic end of two little boys employed at a shop called Kandy Stores, one from Glen Alphin Estate and the other from Third mile post, will rend anyone's heart.

When the roof of their shop caught fire they ran out. A policeman took aim at them with a gun. Frightened, they rushed back into the shop again and jumped into the water tank. Unfortunately the tank exploded and nothing was seen of them later. Their bodies were discovered two weeks later after the parents had made a search for them. The bodies were found burnt and locked in an embracing position.

### **The small trader who took his own life**

He was a small-time trader, occupying a small room in the town. Over the years, he had managed to set by some monies, and saved up Rs.3,000/-. When the attack on the Tamils began, he thought it was unsafe to carry the money with him. So he took all that worldly wealth and hid it hurriedly under a heap of firewood. Having done that, he fled to the refugee camp. At the camp he kept on asking everyone whether his room was attacked. Most did not know, but some said his room was safe. That gave him hope. When the situation eased,

he rushed back to his room. Yes, the room was intact, but having entered it, he stood thunder-struck. Not a stick of firewood was left. All was lost. He was at a loss where to begin, how to go on. There was no one to borrow from. All had been affected. He borrowed Rs.10 from a friend, bought a bottle of insecticide, and killed himself.

### **The Doctor who served for 42 Years**

Dr. Sivagnanam had earned a name as a good doctor. There was no one in the locality who did not know him. In fact, it could be said that there was no one in Badulla who had not taken treatment in his private dispensary during the 42 Years he served there. He was married to a Sinhalese.

He had complete faith that whatever happened to others, that he will not be touched. There were other Tamils like him, doctors and others, who had lived long among the Sinhala people, had the same kind of faith not only during the July 1983 violence but also during earlier anti-Tamil riots, and who had met with disillusionment. Dr. Sivagnanam was no exception.

When at last it dawned on him that he was about to be attacked, he got into his car with his wife to seek refuge in a Sinhala friend's house. On the way the car stalled. A second group of thugs nearly caught him. Abandoning the car, he ran with his wife to another Sinhala friend's house in the vicinity. The thugs surrounded the house, but his friend had the courage and presence of mind to smuggle them into a neighbour's over a back wall, before opening the door to the goondas. Interestingly, the man who saved this Tamil doctor was closely associated with the JVP, one of the two organisations that the government chose to blame for the violence !

It was told to me later that Dr. Sivagnanam and wife left the country to live with their son in the U.S.

### **The big men behind the violence**

Everyone in Badulla knew that some of the bigwigs from the governing UNP party were behind the violence and killings. The key role performed by the M.P. D. Vincent Dias' own brother has already been noted. Let us now examine the contributions of others.

**1. Francis Rajapakse.** He is an active UNP man and member of the District Development Council. He was to be seen all over Badulla during the 3 - hour orgy of violence.

Several spots where violence occurred. He was seen on a motor bicycle every time, giving encouragement to thugs, posting them with information of "successful jobs" done elsewhere.

**2. Dissanayake.** A member of the Municipal Council representing Kanupellala, also of the UNP, who moved with the thugs and participated in many of the atrocities.

**3. Chief Incumbent of the Buddhist Vihare.** The role played by this "religious" man in yellow robes at Mudhiyagana was indeed deplorable. His vihare supplied all the drinks, food, and tools of destruction to the thugs. The kind of hate-filled racist "sermons" he preached to the Sinhala Buddhist people and to the rabble defies description. Even after a few days after the violence, he began shouting over a loudspeaker one day : The "Tigers" are coming ! Buddhists unite! All Buddhist come into the Vihare ! and so on.

The situation was brought under control, thanks to the Army officer in charge by the name of Jayaratne who cautioned the monk, pacified the crowd, and got them to disperse. This officer was commended by many people whom I spoke to, not only for the tactful way he managed the situation but for the humane manner in which he dealt with Tamil refugees.

**4. Herath.** He is the Principal of Badulla Maha Vidyalaya. He is also an officer in the Volunteer Army Corps. He is a right hand man of the MP for Badulla and a prominent member of Cyril Mathew's Sinhala Buddhist racist caucus. Among the Sinhala Public he carried the image of a man who had some strong links with the respected Indian Philosopher J. Krishnamurti. Whatever that was, he played a leading role in the attacks on Tamils and Tamil Property with the help of his own school pupils. The destruction of houses at Bandaranayake Mawatha was carried out at his instigation.

**5. Hettihewa.** The proprietor of Central Hotel and Bakery. To him goes the "distinction" of looting the statue of the deity, in the Hindu temple in Badulla, the Kali Kovil. He stole gold jewellery that adorned the statue. The public became aware of this incident. One day, a Muslim man of the area who had got drunk stood in front of Hettihewa's bakery and kept shouting in Sinhala: You are a great guy. You stole from the deity ! It became such a public scandal that the police had no option but to arrest Hettihewa and the gold was recovered from him. But being a rich "Mudalali" in the area and

moreover a UNP supporter, he had friends in high places. There was a desperate bid to force the police to release him, and among those who actively moved in the matter was Weerawanni Samaraweera, Deputy Minister of Education.

**6. Sugathadasa.** Another wealthy man of the area and ardent supporter of the UNP. He is owner of Manel Rice Mill and Rex Cinema. He was responsible for setting fire to a rival Tamil-owned cinema - the Liberty.

### **Badulla - Points to remember .**

This researcher tried hard to trace some member or active supporter of some party other than the UNP who might have had some hand in the spread of violence in Badulla, but failed. All those on whom accusing fingers were pointed turned out to be UNP supporters, without exception.

It must also be recorded that while the perpetrators of violence happened to be mostly Sinhala Buddhists, there were hundreds of Sinhalese, both Buddhists and Christians, who did offer help and protection to Tamils at those desperate hours of need. But Tamils remember with particular gratitude the help given by Muslims. Generally, Muslims do not admit people of other faiths into their mosques. But during the July violence, nearly 200 Tamils were given refuge inside mosques. This brought an angry reaction from the Sinhalese a few weeks after the violence. Posters in Sinhala were put up on the mosque walls warning the Muslims in disparaging language : Watch out, your turn is next.

The 3-hour violence was so organised and so thorough that it left not a single Tamil-owned shop intact, in a town that had a very visible Tamil presence. It also left four Hindu temples looted and burnt and three Tamil schools destroyed. While the refugees in the refugee camps totalled 6952 according to official figures, it is believed that almost double that number had found shelter in private homes, until they were evacuated to Batticaloa.

## **NUWARA ELIYA**

The Nuwara Eliya — Maskeliya electorate has a distinguished Trinity that represents it in Sri Lanka's Parliament : The first MP is none other than the young ambitious Minister for Mahaweli Development, **Gamini Dissanayake**, who presents a handsome, debonair appearance in public, but who apparently has a hidden furtive aspect that compels suspicion

but disarms at the same time. The second MP is Sri Lanka's most eligible bachelor **Anura Bandaranaike**, the son of two Prime Ministers and today's Leader of the opposition. The third MP is **Saumiyamoorthy Thondaman** Minister of Rural Development in president Jayawardene's Cabinet, President of the Ceylon Workers' Congress (CWC), the acknowledged leader of the up-country Tamils and master of the tight rope walk in today's Sri Lankan politics torn by the ethnic divide. As to how this powerful Trinity permitted that outburst of violence in the country's showpiece Beauty town, where Tamils enjoyed superiority in numbers, where anti-Tamil violence was unknown before, becomes easier to understand when we follow the sequence of events.

**Wednesday July 27 :** The government had declared an all-island night curfew on the 25th and followed it up with a day and night curfew on the 26th. On the morning of 27th, curfew was lifted at 5 a.m. to enable people to buy their provisions in the shops. Until then, no incidents had taken place in Nuwara Eliya, but on this morning, something did happen. A Tamil driver named Rajendra was stabbed to death at Magastota, a Village adjoining the Nuwara Eliya lake. His house was burgled and set on fire. The Tamils in the town were trying to make arrangements to take his body in procession through the town. Police intervened and stopped it. A prominent UNPer of the area, Balasuriya, who was also a member of the Municipal Council was behind the scenes in the attack on Rajendra and his house, and it was done with the active connivance of army personnel. (There is a permanent army camp in Nuwara Eliya). The Police showed a genuine desire to prevent any escalations and on their complaint, the army men were ordered to be confined to barracks.

**July 28 :** Despite unrest and a feeling of tension, the day passed off without any incidents, mainly due to Police vigilance. Police in fact did a wise thing — they rounded up all the well-known Sinhala thugs in the area and detained them as a security measure. One of the thugs taken into custody was "Market Rajah", a well-known bully and henchman of Minister Gamini Dissanayake.

#### **Minister comes by helicopter**

**July 29 :** Minister Gamini Dissanayake arrives by helicopter, and it was to prove to be an eventful visit. There is activity among UNP supporters. A secret meeting is held. (It was

talked about later that all instructions for an attack were given at this meeting) on the Minister's orders, all thugs taken in by the police are released, including "Market Rajah". Amidst shouts of "Jayawewa", the Minister is given a rousing send-off and he leaves for Colombo by the same helicopter. That was around noon. Within one to one and half hours, action begins.

Around 1.30 p.m. a boy barely fifteen years old ignites the fuse, literally. He goes and throws petrol and sets fire to a Tamil-owned shop, Ganeshan Stores. Hundreds of thugs converge on the town led by those who were taken in and released. They go on a rampage. Most of the Tamil shops go up in flames. Vehicles on the road are stopped and secretary to Minister Gamini Dissanayake, a man named Paliyawattene, collects the petrol required by the thugs.

Meanwhile those who attended the funeral of driver Rajendra did not expect what was in store for them. One of those who went for the funeral was Nadaraja, a partner of Royal Gift Mart Stores. He was cut to pieces and thrown into a ditch. Many others were injured. There was pandemonium everywhere. Army men in uniform looked on and enjoyed the show.

The proprietor of Radika Stores who was inside his shop was dragged out. A noose was thrown on his neck tied to a tractor and he was dragged along the street, a form of brutal torture that was obviously improvised on the spot. When the rope gave way, he was run over by the tractor and killed.

#### **14 corpses under one roof**

Hava Eliya is a hamlet one mile from Nuwara Eliya. The family of M.K. Suppiah Devar lived there. Suppiah Devar had a licensed gun and was known to have some relatives in the police force too. A mob led by a student of Gamini Vidyalaya - Tilak - set out to attack Suppiah Devar's house. Devar fires his gun in self-defence. Tilak is hit and he dies. Others take to their heels. But soon this creates new tension. Neighbours too gather at Suppiah Devar's house, when Army men rush to the spot. With the arrival of the army, a bigger mob surrounds the house and under army cover the mob begins attack. While army men shot at everyone who tried to escape, the thugs attacked the inmates of the house as well as the Tamil neighbours gathered there. Suppiah Devar was cut to pieces in front of his wife. The dead and near dead were heaped inside the house and set on fire. Thus, fourteen people were

done to death under the same roof, eight of them being family members themselves.

The family that was wiped out, consisted of : Suppiah Devar, his wife, his son Pannir Selvam, Mrs. Pannir Selvam, Jayaratnam, S. Prasadam, S. Selvarajah and Miss Suppiah.

### **Killings in the hospital**

When news of the killing of the mob leader and student Tilak spread, an incensed mob invaded the nearby government hospital. This is the largest hospital in the area. Patients were attacked on their beds and in the wards and so were the visitors. The reactions of the Sinhalese employees of the hospital were mixed. Some hid patients in toilets, blocked the accesses and protected them, while others joined the attackers and began assaulting the patients, yet others watched and laughed. The hospital, was soon turned into a morgue. At least fifty six were killed in the hospital, going by hospital records of patients at that time and from evidence gathered from some employees themselves. But there was no way of getting an exact tally, because the corpses were set on fire and reduced to ashes and the hospital itself did not record the dead or missing people.

There is no record of the number of people who had run into the thick forest close by and whether any of them did return. It was believed by eye-witnesses who had seen them run that they might have even died of cold.

### **Nuwara Eliya - Points to remember**

The Nuwara Eliya police, had they been given a free hand, could have not only saved most of the deaths, but controlled the situation and maintained peace. In fact, very early itself they set about their business sensibly, but the helicopter visit of Minister Gamini Dissanayake altered the picture completely. Confronted with the army hostility against the Tamils on one hand, and the political (what appeared to be governmental) backing of the thugs on the other, they were reduced to helplessness. The Tamil residents could have by themselves looked after their own protection, if the army had not intervened on the side of the thugs !

## **KANDY**

Kandy, cradled by the hills, is a popular tourist centre, as well as the city that houses, according to Buddhist belief, the

sacred Tooth Relic of the Buddha. Into this city of Buddhist worship came two government bus loads of thugs from other areas at 3.15 p.m. on the 26th July. The two government buses belonged to the Nitambuwa depot, and joined the thugs belonged to several villages - Ampitiya, Asgiriya, and Diyanawela. Is it possible for thugs from different areas to congregate and act in concert without prior planning? The remote hand of Cabinet Minister Cyril Mathew was very much in evidence.

A cigar shop adjoining Laksala was the first target of attack. Immediately, Deputy Minister of Justice *Shelton Ranarajah* MP for Sengadagala (incidentally Mr. Ranarajah is the only Sinhala politician on the government side who has courageously and consistently stood against racism) together with the Government Agent rushed to the spot. He took quick action and requested all senior officers to bring the situation under control. But the Army and police ignored these orders. Nevertheless, if only half the number of Tamil shops in Kandy were destroyed, the saving of the other half was possibly because of the inhibition created by Mr. Ranarajah's intervention.

There was a pattern about the attacks on Tamil shops. While shops owned and occupied by Tamils were completely destroyed those owned by Sinhalese and rented out by Tamils were spared and only the goods were damaged. Care was even taken to save Sinhalese-owned premises sandwiched between Tamil shops by disconnecting the roofs before setting fire to the latter ! Where this was not possible, the goods were thrown out of Tamil shops and set on fire on the highway.

### **The role of the Kandy Fire Brigade**

The Fire Brigade did a remarkable feat when called out to action. They concentrated mainly in seeing to it that no fire from a Tamil shop spread to Sinhalese shops in the vicinity ! All this occurred while the curfew was in operation and the Army and police were on duty. (There is a permanent Army Camp in Kandy too).

An elderly Tamil retired teacher owned a small cigar boutique on King's street adjacent to the Dalada Maligawa that houses the sacred Tooth Relic of the Buddha. He was stoned to death and his body set on fire inside his shop.



Among the Tamils running helter-skelter to save their lives along the road surrounding the beautiful lake besides the Dalada Maligawa, was a Tamil youth. He fell into the hands of the thugs. They caught him, poured petrol on him and tried to make a burning torch of him. The youth jumped into the lake but the thugs stoned him to death. Another corpse found in the lake on the 28th was not identified at that time.

### **The names of the gang leaders**

The people of the area are aware of the identity of the men who directed the violence. One of them is Themiyapala, a UNPer and a henchman of Minister Cyril Mathew. There are two others — Sunil Samarasinghe and Nelson, both hirelings of the present Speaker of Parliament, E.L. Senanayake. All three of them were arrested and later released on the intervention of the government. They were subsequently seen openly distributing racist literature.

### **Gang attacks — the common features**

In common with most other places in the island where the Tamils were subjected to attack, there were five noteworthy features that were discernible in Kandy:

1. Prepared lists of Tamil shops and houses with addresses and directions were available to the attackers.
2. In many cases the residences of owners of shops were themselves identified and attacked at the same time.
3. The number of thugs engaged in planned arson were relatively few. They did not take part in looting.
4. Looting took place after the arsonists left, and they tended to be a larger and miscellaneous lot. Although the majority of looters were Sinhalese, it cannot be denied that members of other communities also took part.
5. Members belonging to an identifiable organisation that led the violence were operating at the same time in different places.

## **BANDARAWELA**

**27th July** Around 1.30 p.m. a government bus load of thugs arrived from outside. They were received by villagers of Haloya, Bindunuwera, Maniatenna, Kurukunda, Warakatenna and Katuwa areas.

A plan prepared in advance is being put into operation quickly. Within 15 minutes all vehicles belonging to Sinhalese are sent out of town.

At 2.00 p.m. thugs in groups launch the attack simultaneously in different parts of the town. All vehicles belonging to Tamils parked on the road and all Tamil shops are set on fire. A lorry belonging to Jayasekera is giving all the help required by the thugs.

Police are mere spectators watching everything with amusement. Peela Gedara Sumana led the attack, Bindu Jayaratna, Ari were front rankers.

### **A Buddhist Priest Kills**

Dr. Nathaniel and his wife are both Tamils from Malaysia. Thugs who surrounded his house about 8.00 p.m. were pelting stones at the house and shouting "Kill the Tamils". Dr. Nathaniel was preventing them entering the house with his gun. After few hours of struggle and after he had shot to death a Sinhalese, the police tried to remove him from his house. It is not clear if they were arresting him or taking him to safety. But no baton charge or tear gas was used to disperse the crowd. The jeep was stopped near the house while the police were trying to remove the doctor and his wife.

At this point the Buddhist priest of Obadella who was leading the crowd and the people lay down in front of the jeep and obstructed it. A few others dragged the doctor and his wife out of the jeep and attacked them with clubs and iron rods and made them unconscious. Then the Buddhist priest jumped on them and stabbed them to death. Then the crowd went on procession through the town shouting "Tamils are finished. Today is our festival".

This Buddhist priest was arrested after several weeks. The majority of people who participated in this horror are from Kebilawala and Opadala Villages.

Marimuthu a Colombo business man returning after pilgrimage to Kataragama sought refuge in one of the important Hindu temples in Bandarawela. He was killed inside the temple. Another person killed by the thugs inside the temple is Swaris. He is a Malayalee. He too sought refuge in the temple.

This temple was completely gutted by the thugs.

### **Some Notes:**

Diyatalawa Army camp is close to Bandarawela. But army was called into action only after all damage was complete. Cyril Mathew's racist gang has been active for a long time in this town.

Sumana, a prominent thug and the one who led the attack in Bandarawela was not arrested. He was moving around in freedom.

## MATALE

One of the biggest Hindu Temples in the Hill country, Muthumariamman Temple, is in this town. Till 1983 there was no riots in Matale. But this time not a Tamil shop or house was spared.

Some special features of the violence in Matale are as follows: First: no outsiders came into Matale. Second: When the Army in civils started the attack on the Tamils, thugs and looters joined them. Third : Looting preceded arson. Fourth : although Matale is one of the most heavily attacked towns in the hill country no loss of life occurred here. The reason is that the Muslims bravely came to the aid of Tamils.

**27th July** It is announced in the government radio that no violence had occurred in Matale town. Many surmise that this statement was made specially to instigate violence.

There are isolated incidents but the police are alert and bring them under control.

On the 29th, Army in civils arrive without orders. Hence the police take neutral position. First incident takes place at 2.00 p.m. They forcibly remove a Tamil-owned bus parked in the police station for protection take it to the front of Muthumariamman Temple, halt it near 100 foot high Temple cart and set fire to both. Looting and then arson commence.

**Muslims help :** Tamils rush into Zahira College for refuge. Thugs try to enter and murder the Tamils. Around 50 Muslim youths armed with knives, swords and clubs protect the Tamils. Till the government took over the refugees Muslims supplied food and all necessities and protected them day and night.

After all incidents were over the army was called back officially and the situation brought under control.

**Two German Women in Refugee Camp:** Two German women who were Hindu devotees were trapped in the refugee camp. Assistant Government Agent who came drunk into the camp attempted to take liberties with these ladies. Fortunately a German who arrived there (he is married to a lady related to Mrs. Srimavo Bandaranaiake) rescued them and took them away with him. On complaints made by them the Assistant Government Agent was interdicted from service.

**Mixed marriages and racial harmony :** Matale provides some incidents which demolished the theory that mixed marriages help racial harmony. Raja a petty trader on Nagolla Street was married to a Sinhalese. His shop and house was completely gutted by fire. The owner of Victoria Grinding Mills on Station Road is a Sinhalese woman. She operated the mill. For her fault in marrying a Tamil her mill was burnt to ashes. Mr. Pathmanathan Overseer took a Sinhalese as his second wife when his first wife died. He was in the refugee camp with his wife. Their house was burnt.

**Principal Actors :** Somapala J. P. ranks first among the people who raised the communal cry over a long period at Matale. He is a handy man of Minister Mathew. He planned and executed the incidents at Matale. A few others who were his helpers : Kalubanda, Gem merchant, Gunapala, Vila alias Newton Silva and W.M. Mudianse. None of them was arrested.

## UDAPUSSELLAWA

When the village thugs attempted to attack Nadesan's family he fired at them. As a result one Sinhalese died. In retaliation Police shot dead four of his family members.

## KANDAPOLA

A Tamil town 6 miles from Nuwara Eliya. All Tamil shops in this town were destroyed, by fire.

## LUNUGALA

A Sinhalese Christian nun was murdered here. There are two versions of the story. One, she was killed because she was mistaken for a Tamil. The other, the killers were angry that she was helping Tamils. It was not possible to ascertain the motive for the killing.

## HUNASGIRIYA

Tamil mothers who ran for safety into jungles stuffed cloth inside the mouths of their children so that their cries may not be heard. By morning two children were discovered dead of suffocation.

## DIGANA

A Tamil youth working in a butcher's shop stabbed one of the thugs who attempted to murder him. The Sinhalese Chandiya died on the way to the hospital. Incensed, the Sinhalese set fire to 131 (31 sets) lines in Rajawela Estate.

### Some Notes

These are my own findings conducted with the help of my friends. These reflect only part of the sufferings of the Tamils. All incidents are not recorded. These are not all towns affected in the hill country. All Tamil shops in the upcountry towns except a few in Nuwara Eliya District were destroyed. The towns which narrowly escaped are : Nanuoya, Talawakella (here six shops were completely burnt) Hatton (here one murder occurred) Bogawantalawa, Dickoya, Ragalla Udupusselawa and Pundaluoya.

The Tamils owe a debt of gratitude to hundreds of educated Sinhalese and volunteer organisations which rendered humanitarian service in rehabilitation. Hill country Tamils voted for the U.N.P. They were never armed. They never advocated separation. Their representative Mr. Thondaman is a Minister in the Government. Even then, the July riots affected them most. Even Thondaman's Ceylon Workers Congress Offices did not escape destruction in many places.

Because the above account referred to the towns in the hill country, an impression may be created that Estate people were not affected. Yet it is no exaggeration to state that every family in the hill country has been affected in one way or another. Either someone in the family got killed or injured or the family lost its property.

I attach below the statistics I collected. There are a number of Estates which are not included here but were very badly affected. The people were living with fear every minute in these areas. It is impossible to describe in words their suffering when the aged and new born were carried to hill tops and forests in rain and bitter cold and night-long vigils were kept to watch over them.

## STATISTICS OF A FEW AFFECTED ESTATES

### Badulla District

#### Name of Estate

- |                     |     |  |
|---------------------|-----|--|
| 1. Uva Ketawala     | ... | One set of lines in 14 units burnt down. |
| 2. Keenagala        | ... | One set of lines in 14 units burnt down. |
| 3. Sarnia           | ... | Four sets of lines looted.               |
| 4. Ledger Watte     | ... | Four sets of lines looted.               |
| 5. Neluwa           | ... | Four persons attacked.                   |
| 6. Glen Alpin Group | ... | Four sets of lines looted.               |

### Welimada

#### Name of Estate

- |                |     |                                |
|----------------|-----|--------------------------------|
| 1. Welimada    | ... | 5 sets of lines — set on fire. |
| 2. Down Side   | ... | 3 sets of lines — set on fire. |
| 3. Yugo land   | ... | 1 set of lines — set on fire.  |
| 4. Boragas     | ... | 2 sets of lines — set on fire. |
| 5. Warwick     | ... | 2 sets of lines — set on fire. |
| 6. Ambagasdowa | ... | 2 sets of lines — set on fire. |

### Passara

#### Name of Estate

- |                   |     |  |
|-------------------|-----|--|
| 1. Gamayawela     | ... | 17 units looted and burnt.             |
| 2. Vaikumbara     | ... | 3 sets of lines looted and burnt.      |
| 3. Karandaqama    | ... | 60 units looted and burnt.             |
| 4. Ury-Akaratenne | ... | 1 set of lines looted, 1 child killed. |

### Madulseema

#### Name of Estate

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| 1. A Tamil Clerk | stabbed to death while alighting from a bus. |
|------------------|--|

**Pallekettuwa**

|                            |     |   |
|----------------------------|-----|---|
| 1. Estate Staff Quarters 7 | ... | looted.   |
| 2. Temple Cart             | ... | burnt.  |
| 3. Singaravel (Labourer)   | ... | Shot to death by police for no reason.                        |
| 4. Chief Clerk and wife    | ... | seriously injured by police firing. Narrow escape from death. |

**Hali-Eela**

Name of Estate

|               |     |                                  |
|---------------|-----|----------------------------------|
| 1. Rockatenne | ... | 5 sets of lines burnt.           |
| 2. Yelverton  | ... | 1 set of lines looted and burnt. |

**Yattinuvara**

Name of Estate

|                |     |                         |
|----------------|-----|-------------------------|
| 1. Wewattalawa | ... | 2 sets of lines looted. |
|----------------|-----|-------------------------|

**Bandarawela**

Name of Estate

|                 |     |                                   |
|-----------------|-----|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Uva Dickwela | ... | 4 sets of lines looted and arson. |
|-----------------|-----|-----------------------------------|

**Kandapola**

Name of Estate

|                           |     |                        |
|---------------------------|-----|------------------------|
| 1. Heathanset             | ... | 1 set of lines arson.  |
| 2. Labourer Malaikolunthu | ... | Murder                 |
| 3. Courtlodge             | ... | 3 sets of lines arson. |

**DEATHS AND DESTRUCTION — URBAN AREAS**

The Tally

**BADULLA :**

|        |     |   |
|--------|-----|---|
| Houses | 127 | Arson   |
| Shops  | 252 | 27 demolished, rest burnt (Includes 5 Sinhalese-owned and 2 Muslim-owned shops) |

34

Hindu Temples 4

Arson  
(Kali kovil Kathiresan Temple, Narangala Temple & Malangama Temple)

Tamil Schools 3

Arson  
(Including 90-year old Springvelly Maha Vidyalayam)

Cinema Halls 2

Arson  
(Modern & Liberty)

Vehicles 79

Burnt

Killings 52

Official Police report gives the figure as 30.

Refugees 6952

Official figure.

**NUWARA ELIYA:**

Houses 30

Arson

Shops 56

Arson

Vehicles 23

Arson

Killings 74

Official Police report gives the figure as 22

**BANDARAWELA:**

House (approx.) 100

Demolished and burnt

Shops 82

56 burnt, others demolished

Hindu Temples 1

Arson

Vehicles (approx.) 20

Arson

Killings 5

(Includes a Malaysian Tamil doctor)

Refugees (approx.) 3,000

**WELIMADA :**

Houses 61

Arson

Shops 42

Arson

Vehicles 5

Arson

**PASSARA :**

Houses 65

Arson

Shops 26

Arson

Vehicles 16

Arson

Killings 2

35

**LUNUGALA :**

|          |    |                             |
|----------|----|-----------------------------|
| Houses   | 67 | Arson                       |
| Shops    | 37 | Arson                       |
| Vehicles | 2  | Arson                       |
| Killings | 2  | (Including a Christian nun) |

**HALI-ELA :**

|        |    |       |
|--------|----|-------|
| Houses | 3  | Arson |
| Shops  | 20 | Arson |

**HAPUTALE :**

|       |    |  |
|-------|----|--|
| Shops | 27 | Arson<br>(Including 4 Sinhalese and 3<br>Muslim-owned shops) |
|-------|----|--|

**BERAGALA JUNCTION :**

|       |   |       |
|-------|---|-------|
| Shops | 4 | Arson |
|-------|---|-------|

**HALDAMULLA :**

|       |   |       |
|-------|---|-------|
| Shops | 2 | Arson |
|-------|---|-------|

**MONERAGALA :**

|       |   |       |
|-------|---|-------|
| Shops | 4 | Arson |
|-------|---|-------|

**YATIYANTOTA :**

|        |    |       |
|--------|----|-------|
| Shops  | 53 | Arson |
| Houses | 9  | Arson |

**KANDAPOLA :**

|              |    |  |
|--------------|----|--|
| Houses       | 27 | Arson  |
| Shops        | 37 | Arson<br>(Including 2 Sinhalese and<br>Government-owned) |
| Tamil School | 1  | Demolished   |

**BULATHKOHUPITIYA :**

|        |   |       |
|--------|---|-------|
| Houses | 4 | Arson |
| Shops  | 8 | Arson |

**KUNDASALE**

|                   |     |                   |
|-------------------|-----|-------------------|
| Houses (affected) | 340 | Arson and Looting |
| Shops             | 24  | Arson             |

**KANDY :**

|                   |     |                   |
|-------------------|-----|-------------------|
| Houses (Affected) | 305 | Arson and Looting |
| Shops             | 115 | Arson and Looting |
| Factories         | 2   | Arson             |
| Killings          | 6   |                   |

**NAWALAPITIYA :**

|           |     |                   |
|-----------|-----|-------------------|
| Houses    | 103 | Arson and Looting |
| Shops     | 182 | Arson and Looting |
| Factories | 8   | Arson             |

**HANGURANGKETA-HEWAHETTA :**

|        |     |                          |
|--------|-----|--------------------------|
| Houses | 118 | Arson (77) rest attacked |
| Shops  | 7   | Arson                    |

**GAMPOLA :**

|          |        |                    |
|----------|--------|--------------------|
| Houses   | 102    | Arson and Looting  |
| Shops    | 71     | Arson and Looting  |
| Refugees | 19,730 | (Official figures) |

*Note :* While being fairly comprehensive, this is by no means an exhaustive list covering the entire plantation area.

**Appendix A**

*The Daily Telegraph, Saturday, August 6, 1983*

**MOBS WIPE OUT THE HEART OF 'LIPTON'S TEAGARDEN'**

*By IAN WARD in Nuwara Eliya, Sri Lanka*

This town ship nestling among the craggy slopes of Sri Lanka's central highlands was the heart of the world's finest tea-growing industry during Colonial times.

Nuwara Eliya was an almost mystical name which tea drinkers everywhere noted with pride on the sides of their Broken Orange Pekoe tea packets.

It meant they were enjoying the ultimate in tea brewing. They called the region "Lipton's Tea garden", and the pinkfaced young English adventures who came to plant the steep, terraced hill slopes created in the town" a little bit of home, "with stone cottages bracketed by fir trees and surrounded by hedges, together with sprawling Tudorstyle hotels and clubs.

Times have changed.

Nationalisation of the tea industry sounded the death knell for the expatriate planters in 1972.

Tea-growing standards have slipped steadily since. Still, Nuwara Eliya town remained, physically at least, much as the British left it. Until last week.

Then four hours of fearful mob violence wiped out the entire historic business district where nattily-attired pukka sahib planters and their crinoline-skirted mamsahibs used to shop for imported supplies to take back to their hill-top bungalows.

News of the extent of the violence directed at the centre of Nuwara Eliya by Sinhalese mobs was somehow contained by the town's remoteness.

But when I drove in yesterday I discovered that the rioters had delivered their most devastating concentration of destruction here. No point in Colombo or surrounding suburbs matches the mess.

Whole blocks have been reduced to charred rubble. Only a handful of provision shops belonging to Sinhalese traders, and a lone photographic studio, survived the numerous arson attacks which culminated in the incineration of the town's centre.

Remarkably, only 16 people died in the inferno, and the fearful scramble for safety that preceded it. Since then armed troops have patrolled the streets 24 hours a day watching for looters.

Anywhere else it would take months to clear the wreckage and start again. Here, in the hinterland of Sri Lanka, it will perhaps take years, if a new start is made at all.

For nostalgic former planters who still journey from their retirement cottages in the Cotswolds or Scottish Highlands on annual pilgrimages to Nuwara Eliya, the impact will be severe.

There is of course still proliferation of undulating hillside of neatly-cropped tea bushes through which they can wander.

But the town has gone. The bustle of the cattle bazaar is no more.

Last night many Indian estate labourers were on strike, too frightened to go back to work.

Appendix — B

*From the NEW STATESMAN, London, 12 August 1983*

### **BURNING PASSIONS**

*Peter Hartnell describes how Nuwara Eliya was razed to the ground.*

To escape the paralysing summer heat and ill health of the surrounding coastal areas of what was then called Ceylon the British built Nuwara Eliya as a charming replica of rural England. Two weeks ago this small, and in many ways rather beguiling, Sri Lanka town became the focal point for much of the communal violence that has engulfed the island.

As the town burnt to charcoal and the Tamil inhabitants ran for their lives, I watched Sri Lanka soldiers on the spot stand idly by. While the officers in charge may have been in two minds about allowing the mob violence to spread, their rank and file were not. The soldiers on the street seemed quite willing to stand and look on as the inhabitants burnt one another's property, where this conformed to their own prejudices.

Nuwara Eliya is at the heart of tea plantation country: the western tourists' image of smiling tea pickers clad in brightly coloured cotton saris could almost exist here. Its remote position, perfect for idling tea magnates and holidaying imperial army officers, ensured that the town escaped the great social and economic movements of modern times, and much of the racial turmoil of the last 30 years of Sri Lanka history until now.

The curfew on Friday 29 July was a farce, serving only to keep civilian cars off the road. Although the troops did not actively participate in the mayhem themselves, they certainly did nothing to discourage it. Crowds were allowed to roam the town at will. Many of the casualties of that day poured into the back of our hotel, seeking what treatment they could find. They maintained that much of the damage was done by imported thugs and 'communists' from Kandy and further west. How else could it be that a seemingly peaceful community imploded and itself destroyed what had taken years to build?

The answer is not so straightforward. The Tamil refugees who took to the hills that evening, were running from a violent

expression of racial and class hatred. Nuwara Eliya's demography makes it a leading candidate for conflict of this nature. Most of the working population is composed of Tamil plantation workers, who were originally imported by the British from South India. This majority coexists with a moneyed Tamil middle class which owns 80 per cent of Nuwara Eliya's shops and other business, as well as much of the town's sought-after real estate.

Sinhalese revenge for recent political killings could therefore turn neatly to an area of dense Tamil population which had the added attraction of a vulnerable and wealthy elite. The Sinhalese peasants who I saw smash and vandalise one particular provision store were expressing not just a generalised hatred of a vociferous minority who demanded their own state, but also frustration with a shopkeeper to whom they had owned money for years.

The mixture in the primitive Sinhalese molotov cocktails was a blend of economic and cultural bitterness.

We had already been in Sri Lanka for 10 days, on honeymoon, before the events of 29 July. We had started in Colombo; we then fled to Kandy to escape the violence; when it followed us there, we moved to Nuwara Eliya. Yet subsequent reports confirmed that the damage done to Nuwara Eliya was at least the equal of any thing experienced elsewhere. When we arrived it had a church, numerous Tudor style cottages, the finest golf course in Asia and the 'Hill Club'. From this former colonial gentlemen's club overlooking the town, much of the destruction was clearly visible. By dusk on Friday 29 July, not one building in the central street was left standing; fire had spread to the hills, too, engulfing shops, homes and buses in a orange glow.....

we departed, two days after the attacks, it was still smouldering.

