

SRI LANKA'S WEEK OF SHAME
THE JULY 1983 MASSACRE OF TAMILS – LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES

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Despite all that has been published, I doubt if the international community really knows what occurred in Colombo and the Sinhalese South in July 1983, which shocked the world (alas transiently), and brought such disgrace to Sri Lanka. In addition to being an appalling humanitarian outrage, it was a watershed in the relations between the Tamil minority and the Sinhalese-dominated Government and signalled the end of an undivided Sri Lanka.

To appreciate the gravity of what happened and the responsibility of the then President and Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL), it is necessary to have some understanding of the background.

The background.

The stage was set for this, and the violence that has engulfed Sri Lanka, by a series of highly discriminatory measures taken against the Tamil minority (18% of the population), by a succession of Sinhalese-dominated Governments to whom the British handed over the country in 1948.

The first was the disenfranchisement and decitizenisation of a million Plantation "Indian" Tamils in 1949 in one of the worst acts of political vandalism in the civilized world. Tamils lost half their representation in Parliament.

Populist politics, at the cost of nation building, was to follow. This took the form of discrimination against the indigenous (Sri Lankan) Tamils, to get the electoral support of the Sinhalese majority (74%).

In 1956, S.W.R.D.Bandaranaike, in an act of blatant political opportunism, changed the Official Language from English to Sinhala (the mother tongue of the Sinhalese) clearly disadvantaging the Tamils who had to learn a different language to obtain or retain their jobs in Government service.

A series of non-violent protests by the Tamils were met by Government-sponsored Sinhalese hoodlum violence. Pacts made between the Tamil leaders and the Government were unilaterally abrogated by the latter, under pressure from extremist elements of the Buddhist clergy who perceived Sri Lanka as a Sinhalese-Buddhist nation, and political opportunists who saw such ethno-religious chauvinism as an assured way to power.

Two years later Bandaranaike was assassinated by a Buddhist monk since he was showing signs of trying to undo some of the damage he had done.

In stepped Sirima Bandaranaike (1958), to succeed her assassinated husband. In 1961, faced with continuing non-violent protests by the Tamils in Jaffna (in the Tamil North),

she moved in the Army (99% Sinhalese) into Jaffna. It is the sort of stupidity that has created chaos in Sri Lanka.

More discrimination was to follow. In 1972, Mrs. Bandaranaike, in an act that was even worse than that of her husband, introduced educational discrimination. Tamil students from the North had to obtain higher marks than Sinhalese to enter the University. She could not see the seriousness of excluding students from tertiary education for the wrong reason.

In addition to discrimination in language and in education, the Tamils faced obvious discrimination in employment, especially in government service, the forte of the Tamils.

With the failure of the elected representatives of the Tamil people to get the Sinhalese leadership to address the problems faced by the Tamils, in the 1970s Tamil youths decided to take up arms to force the Government to address the problems. It was, and still is, a liberation struggle to free the Tamil people from discrimination by a succession of Sinhalese-dominated governments. The resort to arms is the result of the failure of the democratic process to address the problem.

The 1977 General Election saw Sirima Bandaranaike (Sri Lanka Freedom Party - SLFP) replaced by J.R. Jayawardene from the other side of the Sinhalese political divide (United National Party - UNP). At this election, the Tamils in the North and East gave their politicians in the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) an overwhelming mandate to establish a separate Tamil State, Eelam,

This election was followed by some of the worst violence unleashed on Tamil civilians by government-sponsored Sinhalese hoodlums, which the newly elected Prime Minister, Jayawardene, a long-standing anti-Tamil racist, did nothing to control. Instead, he offered 'war' to the Tamils! Here is what he said,

"If you want a fight, let there be a fight; if it is peace, let there be peace.....It is not what I am saying. The people of Sri Lanka say this".

In reality, the Sinhalese people did not say "this". Jayawardene did. It was not the first or the last time that his blatant racist attributed to the Sinhalese people things they did not say or want.

Jayawardene's government had some virulently anti-Tamil Ministers, in particular, Cyril Matthew, Minister of Industries and leader of the so-called Trade Union wing of the UNP, in reality a bunch of hoodlums used by Jayawardene as a mode of governance. Matthew and several of his ministerial colleagues had their own private armies, goon-squads, who set themselves above the law.

Jayawardene went on to create the position of Executive President with sweeping (dictatorial) powers and then promoted himself to the post. What he offered the Tamils by way of a devolution of power was far less than that offered by any other Sri Lankan 'leader'. While the TULF still struggled "to explore a peaceful solution" – a strategy that had demonstrably failed, the Tamil youths reacted by stepping up armed resistance.

Jayawardene responded by banning the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) "and other similar organisations". The ban was allowed to lapse after a year, but replaced

(1978) by the most draconian legislation ever enacted in Sri Lanka, the *Prevention of Terrorism Act*. This abrogated all legal and constitutional safeguards with regard to arrest and detention. Suspected “terrorists” could be held without charge or trial for up to 18 months, and confessions obtained by whatever means were admissible in Court.

Jayawardene went on to increase the ‘security forces’ in Jaffna, which now behaved like an Army of Occupation. The result was unmitigated repression and brutality of the Tamil civilians, Jayawardene’s policy being to terrorise the civilians into submission.

Tamil militant youths in general, the LTTE in particular, were the only people prepared to stand up to this repressive Army. Army convoys and patrols were regularly ambushed. Unable to track down the militants, the Armed Forces retaliated against Tamil civilians.

For example, on 18 May 1983, the ambush of an army convoy resulted in the Army going on the rampage in key residential and commercial areas in Jaffna. On June 1st, a similar ambush resulted in the Navy setting fire to Vavuniya.

In Colombo, there were rumours that the Government was about to “teach the Tamils a lesson”. There were even rumours of a ‘final solution’ to the “Tamil problem”¹. How and when this was intended to be achieved, and by whom, was unclear.

However, it was probably very clear to President Jayawardene. In an interview to Ian Ward of the *London Telegraph* (11 July 1983), this is what he said,

“I am not worried about the opinion of the Jaffna people now. Now we cannot think about them, not about their lives, or of their opinion about us”.

Soon after the events that started two weeks later, it became very clear that the ‘final solution’ had been meticulously planned by the likes of Minister Cyril Matthew, and the extremist Buddhist monk Alle Gunawansa, a close associate of President Jayawardene, and others of their ilk. The plans included obtaining electoral lists of Tamils and where they lived, organising Sinhalese ‘goon squads’ for the intended ‘action’, and arranging for the release of Government vehicles for their transport. The result of this invisible planning was soon to be seen in the streets of Colombo.

What happened

On the night of 23 July 1983, the LTTE ambushed an Army patrol in Tirunelvely, Jaffna. In the explosion and shoot out that followed, 13 soldiers (Sinhalese) were killed, as were some LTTE cadres. In the hours that followed, the Armed Forces went berserk in Jaffna, killing some 51 innocent Tamil civilians, including 7 passengers in a van in Manipay. Some hours later, the Navy ran riot in distant Trincomalee, killing Tamil civilians at random and burning down Tamil property.

The authorities in Colombo decided to publish, broadcast and televise news about the soldiers being killed by the Tamil Tigers but blacked out the reprisals by the armed forces on Tamil civilians. In an even more inflammatory move, it was decided to have a

¹ This is an oft-misquoted term. What is going on in Sri Lanka is not a ‘*Tamil problem*’ but a *Sinhalese* problem – the problem being an attempt to make multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious Sri Lanka, into a Sinhala-Buddhist nation.

mass public funeral for the soldiers in Kanatte, the main cemetery in Colombo on Sunday 24 July.

Thousands of people arrived at the cemetery but the bodies failed to appear. Having been kept waiting for several hours, the restive crowd were told that the funeral had been cancelled. Large sections of the crowd dispersed towards busy Borella town near the cemetery. Within minutes, Tamil establishments in Borella went up in flames. There is some evidence that those responsible for the attacks on Tamils were not those who were at the cemetery. It raises some worrying possibilities which President Jayawardene had no intention of investigating: he probably knew the answer.

Jayawardene's home is only a stone's throw away, and there is not the slightest possibility that he could not have seen Borella on fire. However there were no orders from him to the police or the armed forces to stop the arson and murder, nor was there a declaration of a State of Emergency. With the number of police and armed forces on the streets, there is no question that they could have controlled the situation if they had wanted to, or were ordered to.

The mayhem rapidly spread across Colombo. By Monday 25 July, much of Colombo was on fire with looting, arson and destruction of Tamil homes, Tamil property and systematic killing of Tamil civilians, spreading in all directions from Colombo. The violence went on for three full days and nights, peaking on Wednesday 25th July. It ebbed the next day when the Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, sent her Foreign Minister Narasimha Rao, as her Special Emissary to Colombo.

While all this was going the streets, Tamil political detainees in the Welikada prison in Colombo were massacred by fellow (Sinhalese) prisoners (25th July). It was repeated two days later. In all, some 53 Tamils were killed. Appeals for help to the police by the Acting Superintendent of the prison, C.T Jansz, a man of integrity (I know this since he was a former classmate of mine), were ignored by the police.

Despite extensive damage being done to Tamils and their property by Sinhalese hoodlums directed by Jayawardene's Ministers and some of the Buddhist clergy, there was no sign of the President. He was, in fact spending much of the time in Army headquarters, in fact in the Army Commander's room, but issued no orders to stop the mayhem.

Finally, on Thursday, 28th July, he broadcast to the nation. It was one of the most irresponsible statements ever made. Trying to shift the responsibility to the Sinhalese people, he said that,

"Because of the violence by terrorists, the Sinhala people have reacted..."

Jayawardene's Minister of National Security, Lalith Athulathmudali, nearly wept at the sight of Sinhalese having to queue up for bread. Not a word of sympathy or concern for the devastated Tamil people being slaughtered and burnt alive from either the President or his Minister(s).

The direct result of this irresponsibility was that on the following morning, Friday 29th July, "Black Friday", a completely fabricated story was deliberately spread in Colombo that the Tamil Tigers had invaded Colombo. That afternoon, Sinhalese hoodlums,

encouraged by their President's speech the previous night, unleashed a spate of murder arson and destruction which dwarfed anything that had occurred before.

Some months later, in a booklet published by me, *The July 1983 Massacre. Unanswered Questions*, I summarized what had occurred.

"It would be revolting and unprofitable to recount details of the acts of barbarism committed by Sinhalese mobs. All that the author, a full-blooded Sinhalese², can say is that for the first time he has felt ashamed to be a Sinhalese. It is not that one identifies oneself with the hooligan mobs, but there is a collective sense of responsibility for the behaviour of one's countrymen – hooligan, barbaric or civilized. He who watches while a fellow human being has his limbs cut, belly slit open, petrol poured on and burnt to death, is only marginally less guilty than he who does it. In the General Hospital, Colombo, desperately ill Tamil patients had their intravenous drips disconnected and were thrown out of the wards because they were Tamils. Tamil doctors had to take refuge in toilets to avoid assault".

The final count was some 3,000 Tamil civilians killed, thousands of Tamil homes, businesses and industries destroyed (note, Minister Matthew was the Minister of Industries), and hundreds of thousands, including professionals, leading industrialists and others of high standing, in refuge camps. If Sri Lanka expected these people to remain in the country, the country is not in the realm of realism.

As I have said, in a disgraceful attempt to implicate the Sinhalese people in this outrage, their President in his broadcast claimed that the violence was the "natural reaction" of the Sinhalese people to the killing of the 13 soldiers. The facts were that the majority of Sinhalese people were horrified at the carnage and many risked life and limb to shelter and save the terrified Tamils. Had they not done so, the death toll would have been far higher. President Jayawardene should have been lynched by the Sinhalese for trying to implicate them in what was the work of his Ministers and their hoodlums.

As I have said, there is well-documented evidence that the anti-Tamil violence was not spontaneous but carefully planned. Paul Sieghart in his Report of the Mission of the International Commission of Jurists and its British Section *Justice*, March 1984 concluded,

"Clearly this was not a spontaneous upsurge of communal hatred among the Sinhala people. It was a series of deliberate acts, executed in accordance with a concerted plan, conceived and organised well in advance."

Sunday, 24 July 1983, the day the mayhem broke, was the Esala Full moon, an important day in the Buddhist calendar when many devout Buddhists observe "sil" – setting aside the day for prayer, devotion and 'holy living'. I do not know whether the Buddhist monk, Venerable Alle Gunawansa did so. However, I do know that on the following day he was seen in the front of a truck, yellow robes tucked up, a list in his hand, pointing out Tamil homes for destruction by the hoodlums armed with petrol in the

² My marxist uncle, Edmund Samarakkody, was to later point out that there is no such creature as a 'full-blooded Sinhalese. The Sinhalese are a polyglot people from several neighbouring countries. They are in search of an identity. The recent identity is to adopt an anti-Tamil stance. That currently defines a 'patriotic' Sinhalese, indeed a Sinhalese.

back of the truck. It was 'sil' on Sunday, kill on Monday'. I do not know whether he and his like-minded monks will attain *Nirvana*, the final aim of Buddhists. What I would like to know is why he is not in prison for the mass murder of hundreds of Tamils (or hanged, like his predecessor, Ven.Somarama who assassinated one man, Prime Minister Bandaranaike).

Let alone face the wrath of Buddhists in this so-called 'Buddhist country' supposedly dedicated by no less a person than Buddha himself for nurturing and propagating his teachings, the 'Alle Gunawansa' version of Sri Lankan Buddhism has rapidly gained ground. It is now commonplace to see literally thousands of these Venerable gentlemen in yellow robes roaming the streets in Colombo demanding a return to war to crush the Tamils.

This prostitution of Buddhism has not been challenged by Buddhists like my mother, half-Buddhists such as myself or thousands of others who respect the teachings of one of the greatest teachers of peace the world has ever known. The time for a revival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka is long overdue. Velupillai Pribakaran, the LTTE leader remarked that if Jayawardene was a true Buddhist, he would not be carrying a gun³.

President Jayawardene went on to effectively ban the elected representatives of the Tamil people (who had been given an overwhelming mandate to work for a separate State). He tried to involve the Sinhalese people in this totally undemocratic move,

"...the time has now come to accede to the clamour and natural request of the Sinhala people to prevent the country from being divided".

The 6th Amendment to the Constitution was passed on August 4th, 1983, by Jayawardene's completely dominated MPs (he had undated letters of resignation from all his government MPs!). This basically required any person holding elected office to take an oath affirming/swearing that he/she would not directly or indirectly, in or outside Sri Lanka, support, espouse, promote, finance, encourage or advocate the establishment of a separate state within the territory of Sri Lanka. The elected representatives of the Tamil people in the North and East ceased to be in Parliament.

President Jayawardene's blatant lies about the Sinhalese people is just one example of the deluge of lies that flow from Sri Lankan politicians and those who support them. It is important to appraise the international community at every opportunity, when these outrageous lies are uttered. This is not merely to show what downright liars they are but to make the international community sceptical of government propaganda which passes as 'news', and 'facts' (according to the Government). With the media under Government control (or self-censored from fear of closure or assassination of media people), the international community form their opinion based on what freely flows from these inveterate liars. A good example is the interview given by President Kumaratunga to South African TV cited in footnote 4 where she says that the Tamils (who in fact have

³ Someone should whisper in Pirabakaran's ear that neither Jayawardene nor Bandaranaike were true Buddhists. They were baptized Christians who became 'Donoughmore Buddhists' after the political changes made by the Earl of Donoughmore made it politically suicidal to remain a Christian. In fact, Jayawardene was a choir boy in St Michaels, Polwatta and Bandaranaike had a pew reserved for him in our family Church in Veyangoda – even after he became a 'Buddhist'. These are the hypocrites that do no good to any religion.

been in Sri Lanka for 2500 years, probably much longer), are not one of the original people of the country.

The Tamil Tigers have been blamed for the July 1983 violence in that they triggered it off by killing the 13 soldiers. However, as I have said and many others have confirmed, the violence was pre-planned well in advance and if this did not trigger it off, something else (or nothing) would have done so. It must also be remembered that what existed in Jaffna was a 'war situation' – a "low-intensity war" whatever that may be. If Armed Forces set out on a patrol to seek and destroy, if they get killed in the process, it is a risk they must accept. If they are outwitted and killed in an ambush, it is just too bad.

Some myths

I have already dealt with some of the myths e.g. that this was a spontaneous reaction of the Sinhala people.

There are others that are more dangerous. One is that the genocide, murder and destruction of Tamil lives, property and homes were a 'one-off' event in July 1983. Far from it. It was only the start. It has gone on with far greater intensity, not in the Sinhala South but in the Tamil North (and elsewhere). It is crucial for the international community to appreciate this and not be conned by the likes of so-called "informed people", Tamils at that, such as Dr Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, who assert (Social Justice 1998 No 135, p17) that there has been no repetition of the carnage. There has been no 'repetition', the carnage has *continued*, albeit in the Tamil North and East.

Other 'informed' Sinhalese, such as Dr Jehan Perera, talk equally arrant nonsense. He tries to portray the problem as a conflict between two armed groups, the Sri Lankan Armed Forces and the LTTE. He says, "as in the case of the riots, the civilian population is more or less disengaged from the direct fighting, but remain in the sidelines giving each other necessary logistical support" (Social Justice, 1998, 135, p 27). The half million refugees in the North and East, and the relatives of tens of thousands of Tamil civilians who have been killed in these area will not agree with the learned doctor. I doubt whether they will agree that they were "on the sidelines giving.....logistical support". I am not sure whether this is frank ignorance or a mischievous attempt to decrease the gravity of the genocidal killing of Tamils by the Sri Lankan government. Whatever it is, it is dangerous nonsense.

The same killings in jail, such as occurred in the Welikada prison in 1983, and detention centres, have gone on. The slaughter of some 900 Tamils in Army custody in Chemmani in Jaffna in 1995 and the outrageous massacre of Tamil youths in a so-called 'rehabilitation centre' in the Sinhalese area, the 'Bindunuwewa massacre' are just two of many examples.

The same destruction of Tamil homes and property has gone at an even greater intensity under Jayawardene's successor, Chandrika Kumaratunga, from the other side of the Sinhalese political divide. To point the finger just at President Jayawardene or his UNP is neither fair nor accurate. The finger has to be pointed at the *entire* Sinhalese political spectrum which, as I have pointed out in several articles, is 'anti-Tamil'. Differences, if any, are only in the degree of 'anti-Tamilness'. The *only* protection the Tamils will ever have is if there is a separate Tamil State. It is imperative that the international community appreciates this. When George Bush's representative in

Colombo arrives as the US Ambassador and announces that a Separate Tamil State is “unacceptable to the US”, he does not know what he is talking about. For a start, the Tamils did not ask him for his opinion. He does not have to live under a brutal racist regime in Colombo. These visiting pundits should mind their own business and not, by their irresponsible statements, support the hard-line anti-Tamil chauvinists in Colombo. Interestingly and belatedly (after the damage has been done), the US seems to have seen the light of day (at least for the moment). A visiting VIP from the US has recently suggested a “loose federal arrangement” for Sri Lanka.

The same hard-line Sinhala chauvinistic stance has gone on, if anything even more so. When Saravanamuttu claims (in the reference quoted) that “the political agenda has moved far to accommodate devolution”, he is either talking nonsense or trying to fly the flag for the People’s Alliance government of Kumaratunga that followed Jayawardene’s UNP.

The fall-out and long-term consequences

The fall-out from the 1983 holocaust has been serious:-

1. Humanitarian
2. Economic
3. Politico-ethnic

1. Humanitarian

The mass murder of Tamils in the Sinhala South in 1983 is the clearest evidence that what is going on in Sri Lanka is genocide. It is a myth to believe that this outrage constituted a single act of revenge (as Jayawardene claimed it was), mob-hysteria or the likes. It was, as I have stated, a carefully planned and conducted killing of Tamils which has gone on at least since the 1970s, was ‘spectacular’ (if that is the word) in July 1983, and has continued with much greater loss of lives and property since then. To believe otherwise is not to accept stark reality.

Genocide has nothing to do with the numbers killed but has much to do with **intent**. The *UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (to which Sri Lanka is a signatory), defines Genocide as an act committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national ethnic, racial or religious group. There is not the slightest doubt that the anti-Tamil pogrom planned and executed by the Sri Lankan government in July 1983 (and since) has been genocidal.

The International Commission of Jurists Report (December 1983) which I have cited earlier says,

“The evidence points clearly to the conclusion that the violence of the Sinhala rioters on the Tamils (in July/August 1983) amounted to acts of genocide.”

It is not just the killing but other acts of the GOSL that indicates genocide. I refer to the PA government of Sirima Bandaranaike and her daughter Chandrika Kumaratunga, creating famine conditions by severely curtailing the supply of food, agricultural implements and fertilizer, fuel and even essential medicines to the Tamil areas. The deprivation of food and medicines to civilians qualifies as genocide under the 1948 Genocide Convention which I have cited.

The continued killing of unarmed Tamil civilians in the North and East by the current Rajapakse government, its Armed Forces and paramilitaries (despite a supposed Ceasefire) is a continuation of genocide. It cannot be anything else. Since President Rajapakse's election in November 2005, some 500 Tamil civilians have been killed. This is about the same number that were killed *in Colombo* in July 1983.

If genocide is what is going on in Sri Lanka, and of that there can be no doubt, the Sri Lankan authorities, past and present, which have been responsible, must be charged. Supporting Britain in the Falklands war or the US in the invasion of Iraq, and similar 'favours', should not be sufficient to let Sri Lanka off the hook.

Murder of Tamils in custody

The Welikada jail massacre of Tamil political detainees has continued and increased *markedly*. Under Jayawardene's successor, Chandrika Kumaratunga from the other side of the Sinhalese political divide, in just one instance, some 900 Tamil civilians in custody and held without charge or trial by Brigadier General Janaka Perera, 'disappeared', their bodies later found in mass graves in Chemmani, Jaffna (1995). Perera was promoted and later sent to represent his country in Australia. I faxed Kumaratunga, a person I know, asking what message she was sending the Tamils in Australia. Was it that to make Tamils 'disappear' merits a diplomatic posting. He is now a senior Defence advisor to President Rajapakse!

The outrageous murder of Tamil youths in a so-called "Rehabilitation Centre" in the Sinhalese area, is another. There are simply too many of these scandalous events for me to even list them out, leave alone describe them.

No Sinhalese leader from any political party and, even more disturbingly, a single voice from any foreign government have demanded that these be investigated. Instead, they supply even more weapons and funds for the Sri Lankan government to murder its own people. They only highlight killings by the LTTE, attributing to them some that are not even committed by them. It is this highly partisan stance of foreign governments which is so disturbing and which puts their own credibility on the line.

Displacement and disruption of families

One of the most serious casualties of the 1983 holocaust has been the disruption of Tamil families. Tamils have lost one of their greatest treasures, their close-knit families and extended families, a feature of life in the North. With parents in one country, a son in another, a daughter in yet another, scattered all over the world, is one of the most serious things that has happened to Tamil families. To relocate elderly people in an entirely different environment centred on the TV set, has resulted in untold misery and has disastrous medical (psychiatric) consequences and major adjustment problems. The damage that has been done, and continues to be done, is immeasurable. A succession of Sinhala governments have a lot to answer for. Other governments have been branded as international *pariahs* for doing far less than what Sri Lankan governments have done to Tamil families, leaving aside what they have done to the Tamil people.

2. Economic damage

The immediate economic price of the 1983 holocaust was borne by the Tamils in the Sinhalese South. Many have lost everything they had, simply because they were Tamils who had a right to be where they were. Lifetime earnings and savings have been lost by thousands because of Government-directed Sinhalese hoodlum violence. The very least the GOSL could have done is to recompense them financially for damage that was very deliberate, planned and executed systematically. Let alone compensation, a young Minister in Jayawardene's government who was later to rise to a very high position, actually tried to justify the destruction of the Tamil economic base in Colombo by saying that the Tamils got what they deserve. "What they deserved" for being too successful in business. Indeed, this could have been one of the underlying motives for the (initial) destruction of Tamil property.

What has not been widely appreciated is that the greatest damage that the 1983 violence did was to Sri Lanka itself. The country lost its greatest asset, the wealth of its trained manpower and of able people which few, if any, developing countries have been fortunate enough to have.

When Sinhalese political 'leaders', political opportunists and Sinhalese extremists among the Buddhist clergy decided to make life impossible for the Tamils, forcing a million to quit the country taking their training, expertise and wealth out of the country, they do not seem to have realised (perhaps they did but did not care) the immeasurable damage they were 'patriotically' doing to their country.

Some years ago, the then President Chandrika Kumaratunga wrote me a letter in which she said that her greatest problem as Head of State was not having the people who could be entrusted to do a job of work. I was inclined to write back that this pathetic situation was entirely due to the handiwork of her family and that of Jayawardene and his cronies and thugs. To this we can now add another family to whom the country has been handed over, President Rajapakse and his numerous brothers who have surfaced from all over, supported by the thugs in the JVP and yellow-robed, not-so-clean-shaven men in yellow robes who are defiling the name of Buddha.

I have been called a Sinhalese traitor for saying what has to be said and for supporting the right of the Tamil people to live with equality, dignity and safety in the country of their birth. If that makes me a traitor, so be it. I would claim that the real traitors are those who by their blatant ethnic intolerance, have drained the country of its most valuable asset, its trained manpower and expertise who are now enriching many developed countries, while Sri Lanka heads towards a 'failed State', if it has not reached it already.

As talented Tamils, Sinhalese, and Muslims leave a country in which they see no hope, Sri Lanka is left with the likes of Rajapakse (who before his election was found to have 'acquired' some Rs 83 million from Tsunami aid – which he reimbursed the GOSL when prosecution seemed certain), the JVP which did so much damage to the people and infrastructure of Sri Lanka in 1988-89 for which they should have been charged, and Buddhist monks who are on the streets making a negotiated settlement to the highly destructive ethnic conflict impossible and defaming the name of Buddha.

From my own perspective, medicine, almost all of the Tamil doctors I have trained in the seven years I spent in the University in Kandy, have left the country. This is not entirely surprising when some had to take refuge in toilets during the 1983 Tamil massacre. These well-trained people (the keenest and best I have ever trained in any country) are

now in the UK, US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. They have been replaced by poorly trained products from obscure medical schools in Bangladesh, the Philippines and worse, who know little medicine and even less of the language of the people.

The economic damage done to Sri Lanka has been partly obscured by foreign aid which is bolstering up a failing State. As the country gets deeper and deeper into debt, mortgaging many generations of Sri Lankans to the World Bank and IMF, the end will come. As these bodies, known for their callousness to those at the bottom of the economic pile tightens the screws, the Sinhalese South will be looking at a revolt of the 'haves' versus the 'have-nots'.

At a recent international meeting, Victor Ivan, an outstanding Sinhalese journalist and political commentator was asked to comment on the Sinhalese South. With a half-smile he said something like this: "It is finished. With a corruption from the very top downwards, a corrupt judiciary, a corrupt police (reputed to be one of the most corrupt in the world), an incompetent government, the intimidation and assassination of newspaper editors (attempts have been made on his life), government manipulation of the media, and hoodlums running around doing what they please, there is no hope. Amen.

The key to saving Sri Lanka, or what is left of it, is economic development of *all* the areas, the Tamil North and East, and the Sinhalese South – areas that have been devastated by neglect, a direct consequence of the centralisation of power in Colombo, in turn a consequence of the British Colebrooke-Cameron 'Reforms of 1833, introduced for ease of colonial administration. Until these completely inappropriate colonial constructs that have been proven failures are dismantled as they were in Malaya, India and several other former colonial countries, the future of Sri Lanka will be dismal.

It is economic development, not a genocidal anti-Tamil war that will rescue Sri Lanka. Such development will not occur until the power to develop is removed from the central (Sinhalese) government in Colombo and handed over to the people in the area that have developmentally been seriously neglected. If this means a division of the country, so be it. It would seem a better option to divide and develop than attempt to hold together a failed British construct, and destroy the country.

3. Politico-ethnic

The 1983, and subsequent anti-Tamil, violence sends a very clear message that the Sri Lankan Police and 'Security Forces' are not there to 'secure' the Tamils. If the Tamils want security, they will have to provide it themselves. For this to be done, the administration and security of the Tamil people and the area they live in will have to be taken out of the hands of the Sinhalese government.

The same holds for development. The wanton destruction of the Tamil economic base in Colombo (1983) and the extensive destruction of the economic base and Tamil property in the North (1983-date), makes it abundantly clear that the Tamil areas will never develop until the ability to interfere/destroy this is removed from Sinhalese hands. It is as simple as that.

Soon after the 1983 violence, I said that there could not be an undivided Sri Lanka unless the Sinhalese tendered an unqualified apology to the Tamils for what was done to them. Another Sinhalese, Bishop Lakshman Wickremesinghe, in his last Pastoral letter

in August 1983, just before his untimely death, said the same thing. He called for an apology from the Sinhalese people to the Tamils.

By an 'apology', I do not mean the bogus apology tendered by President Kumaratunga at a meeting to mark the 21st anniversary of the 1983 pogrom. She declared, "Every citizen in this country should collectively accept the blame and make an apology to the tens of thousands who suffered. I would like to assign to myself that task on behalf of the State of Sri Lanka, the government, and on behalf of all of us, all citizens of Sri Lanka to extend that apology."

That is not an apology, it is political clap-trap. "Every citizen" (that includes the Tamils – unless, of course, she considers Tamils to be non-citizens⁴) is not to blame for the 1983 pogrom. J.R.Jayawardene and his anti-Tamil Ministers were to blame.

"Every citizen" is not to blame for the wholesale massacre of Tamils that occurred in Jaffna in 1995. She, Chandrika Kumaratunga, President, Minister of Defence and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, is to blame. Had she the courage and integrity she would have apologised to the Tamil people in the North for what she did to them.

The blame for the massacres of Tamils does not rest on "every citizen" but on two elite families – of S.W.R.D Bandaranaike (his wife and daughter), and of J.R.Jayawardene and his cronies. To this can now be added another 'non-elite' family, the Rajapakse's and their supporters among the ranks of the so-called Marxist and the gentlemen in yellow robes.

I started by saying that an undivided Sri Lanka would not be possible until the Sinhalese apologised to the Tamils. I said this nearly two and a half decades ago. Now, in 2006, I am not sure that this will help. There has been too much destruction of Tamil lives and property, for an apology, however sincere, to be adequate. The only 'apology' that the Sinhalese people can make to the Tamils is to pressure the Sinhalese leaders that the Tamil-speaking people have a right to develop the area they live in and have the right to live as they want in the area they have lived in for centuries. This is the only 'apology' that will make practical sense.

One of the most serious aspects of the on-going problems in Sri Lanka is that the Sinhalese people are being deceived by their so-called 'leaders' (of *all* political parties) and the Buddhist clergy, that a division of the country will result in their destruction (or the destruction of the country). It is time that it is pointed out to the poorly-informed Sinhalese, 'fed' with Sinhalese racist propaganda, that a quasi-separate Tamil State already exists and has done so for a decade. From all reports, especially the recent one by Professor Kristian Stokke from the University of Oslo, this State is functioning very well, far better than the corrupt, incompetent and chaotic State that the Sinhalese have to accept as a 'Government'. More important than all, is to point out to the Sinhalese that this quasi-Tamil State, has not been and will not be, a threat to them.

⁴ This is the person who, in an interview on South African TV, September 1998, said "They are wanting a separate state – a minority community which is not the original people of the country". Unless Kumaratunga was talking some other language, to me it says that the Tamils do not belong to Sri Lanka).

It is time that it was pointed out to the Sinhalese that it is economic development, not trying to make Sri Lanka into a Sinhala-Buddhist nation that will save the country from chaos. Such development will be impossible if there is an unresolved conflict.

The time for a quasi-federal, pseudo-federal, genuine Federal , Confederal or any similar solution is gone. Today, the only option left is the separate development of two vibrant nations – the Sinhala nation and the Tamil nation. Once these two Nations are developed to their maximum potential, then, perhaps in 50 years, a Confederation may be possible. Indeed, the formation of a wider structure – the Confederated States of South Asia – to include India, Pakistan, the Sinhala State, the Tamil State, Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia, may be the way forward. If Europe, with its deep divisions which have gone on for centuries can do this, there is no reason why it cannot be done in the Far East which has not had to face two devastating wars that Europe has had.

The single factor which prevents such thinking where Sri Lanka is concerned, is a crisis in leadership in the Sinhalese South. Until this crisis is resolved and the Sinhalese people find leaders of ability and integrity, the present chaos will go on.

Brisbane, Australia.

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