CHAPTER - V

THE OFFENCE – OFFICIAL AND ORGANISED

[1977 - 1983]

J.R. Jayawardene's Period:

In July 1977 General Elections in Sri Lanka was won by the United National Party, by a majority of five-sixths with 40 out of 168 seats. J.R. Jayawardene, the leader of the UNP, became the Prime Minister, and formed the Cabinet on July 23. The darkest period of Sri Lankan Tamils commenced. J.R. Jayawardene was a seasoned politician and used all his skill to try to make Sri Lankan Tamils accept the Sinhala rule in Sri Lanka. Within a month of UNP's victory at the 1977 General Election, fierce racial riots were let loose on Sri Lankan Tamils. By an irony of fate, the young generation of Sri Lankan Tamils decided to meet force with force. Throughout the period of J.R. Jayawardene's rule, rivers of blood drenched Sri Lanka soil.

Srimavo Bandaranaike's rule from 1970 to 1977 brought

1 KEESING'S CONTEMPORARY ARCHIVES, 7 October 1977, p.28589.

Ibid.
Sri Lanka to economic disaster. N.M. Perera, the Finance Minister in Sirimavo Bandaranaike's Government was forced to cut the rice ration and increase the price of rice. The Sinhala masses were on the verge of revolt. N.M. Perera was a Marxist. This was not liked by the United States of America and other Western capitalist countries.

J.R. Jayawardene had shrewdly sized up the situation and established close connection with the U.S.A. It was common knowledge that the U.S.A. was backing J.R. Jayawardene to the most. So a shift from the left to right was a crucial election issue.

Sirimavo Bandaranaike had ruled for five years under emergency conditions and personal freedom was severely curbed. To please the Sinhala masses Jayawardene called his rule the 'Dharmista' Government.

To win the Tamils, J.R. Jayawardene conceded in the U.N.P. Election Manifesto of 1977, that:

"There are numerous problems confronting the Tamil speaking people. The lack of a solution to their problems has made the Tamil speaking people support even a movement for the creation of a separate State. In the interest of national

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integration and unity so necessary for the economic development of the whole country, the party feels such problems should be solved without loss of time. The party, when it comes to power, will take all possible steps to remedy the grievances in such fields as (1) Education, (2) Colonization, (3) Use of Tamil Language, and (4) Employment in Public and Semi-Public Corporations. We will summon an All-Party Conference as stated earlier and implement its decision.\(^5\)

The Sri Lankan Tamils were pleased and voted in large numbers for the U.N.P. Within a month of his victory, J.R. Jayawardene attempted the genocide of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. The successive Governments began to use the principle of majoritarianism to negate the fundamental rights of the minority.\(^6\)

The Election Manifesto of the Tamil United Liberation Front said:

"What is the alternative now left to the nation


that has lost its rights to its language, right to its citizenship, rights to its religions and continues day by day, to lose its traditional homeland to Sinhalese Colonization? What is the alternative now left to a nation that has lost its opportunities to higher education through "standardization" and its equality in opportunities in the sphere of employment? What is the alternative to a nation that lies helpless as it is being assaulted, looted, and killed by hooligans instigated by the ruling race and by the security forces of the State? Where else is an alternative to the Tamil nation that gropes in the dark for its identity and finds itself driven to the brink of devastation?

There is only one alternative and that is to proclaim with the stamp of finality and fortitude that we alone shall rule over our land our forefathers ruled. Sinhalese imperialism shall quit our homeland. The Tamil United Liberation Front regards the General Election of 1977 as a means of proclaiming to the Sinhalese Government this resolve of the Tamil nation..... Hence the T.U.L.F. seeks in the General Election the mandate of the Tamil nation to
establish an independent, sovereign, secular, socialist State of Tamil Eelam that includes all the geographically contiguous areas that have been the traditional homeland of the Tamil-speaking people in the country."\(^7\)

The T.U.L.F. Election Manifesto went on to state:

"The Tamil nation must take the decision to establish its sovereignty in its homeland on the basis of its right to self-determination. The only way to announce this decision to the Sinhalese Government and to the world is to vote for the T.U.L.F. The Tamil-speaking representatives who get elected through these votes, while being members of the National State Assembly of Ceylon, will also form themselves into the National Assembly of Tamil Eelam which will draft a Constitution for the State of Tamil Eelam and establish the independence of Tamil Eelam by bringing that Constitution into operation either by peaceful means or by direct action or struggle."\(^8\)

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8 Ibid.
The 1977 Election Manifesto of the U.N.P. and the U.L.F. are landmark documents that had promised heaven to the Sri Lankan Tamils but instead brought them hell on earth within a month of the U.N.P. victory. J.R. Jayawardene's government was born with violence, and he mounted an island-wide genocide of Tamils, in Sri Lanka. The T.U.L.F., who added Liberation (T.U.L.F.) to Unity (T.U.F.) in its 1976 Conference in order to keep up with 'the boys' and good for separate State of Eelam won eighteen seats. It emphasized the idea of Tamil Eelam. The main motive of the T.U.L.F.'s massive electoral triumph was the northern youth. The T.U.L.F. accepted the role of opposition to Sri Lanka Parliament, and put in cold storage all the soul-irriving promises of Constitution, and the National Assembly Tamil Eelam.

At the 1977 General Elections in Sri Lanka the U.N.P. got 140 seats and acquired an unrestricted power to effect change it deemed necessary in the economic, political Constitutional field. The S.L.F.P. got 8 seats, the


T.U.L.F. got 18 seats, the C.W.C. got 1 seat and Independent 1 seat. The Left Parties were wiped out.

THE ELECTION RESULTS OF THE T.U.L.F.\textsuperscript{12}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Number of Seats</th>
<th>Registered Voters</th>
<th>Total Votes Pollled</th>
<th>Votes Polled by</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>UNP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Province:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>JAFFNA</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>407,961</td>
<td>322,886</td>
<td>8,636</td>
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<tr>
<td>MANNAR</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31,767</td>
<td>29,346</td>
<td>12,929</td>
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<tr>
<td>VAVUNIA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28,540</td>
<td>23,946</td>
<td>9,444</td>
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<tr>
<td>MULLAITIVU</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24,698</td>
<td>19,672</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern Province:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>BATTICALOA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>195,982*</td>
<td>171,500</td>
<td>43,674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRINCOMALEE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>97,417</td>
<td>83,393</td>
<td>39,279</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Since Batticaloa, was a two member Constituency; Each voter has two votes

UNP - United National Party
SLFP - Sri Lanka Freedom Party
TULF - Tamil United Liberation Front
LSSP - Lanka Sama Samaja Party

\textsuperscript{12} CEYLON OBSERVER - 24 July 1977.
A. Amirthalingam, the leader of the T.U.L.F. became leader of the opposition in Sri Lanka Parliament. The Sinhalese and the Tamils were opposed to each other in Parliament. It was the first incident that the Tamils voted in majority from the North and Eastern Provinces. And because of this, A. Amirthalingam was able to become an opposition leader. Still he wanted to meet the mandate, the people gave the T.U.L.F. was one and the only solution to their problem. 13

A. Amirthalingam was greatly pleased with his new position. 14 J.R. Jayawardene had roped him into closer contact with the Government by providing house, car, security guards and several other perks. The U.N.P. had five-sixths majority and the opposition was only an ornament. J.R. Jayawardene made K.W. Devanayagam a Tamil U.N.P. Member of Parliament from Eastern Province, Minister of Justice. 15 K.W. Devanayagam never lost an opportunity to betray the Jaffna Tamils and J.R. Jayawardene used him with consumate skill. J.R. Jayawardene made S. Thondaman, Member of Parliament, leader of Ceylon Workers Congress, also a

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Minister\textsuperscript{16} and made strong his position with Tamils. He used his Tamil Ministers to bring division and discord among the Tamils of Sri Lanka.

Within a month of the U.N.P. Government taking office in Sri Lanka, the anti-Tamil riots of July and August 1977 engulfed the country. This 1977 racial riots were a veritable genocide of Tamils. The riots originated in the Tamil city of Jaffna, between the Tamils and the police in a College Carnivel, on August 14.\textsuperscript{17} It spread southward until large part of the country was affected.

In 1975, Walter Schwarz a perceptive observer wrote:

"Sri Lanka appears very likely to be on the brink of a fresh deterioration in its community relations. What form it will take is an open question."\textsuperscript{18}

Rev.Fr.Balasuriya, a Sinhalese and a social activist described the racial riots of 1977 thus:

"During the last two weeks of August 1977, many

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17} ASIAN RECORDER, Vol. 23, No. 38, September 1977, p.13943.

in Sri Lanka lived agonizing days and nights of looting, arson and lawlessness. Gangs have beaten, inflicted, horrifying injuries and even resoughted to manslaughter. All this is apparently due to racial animosities ....

According to official sources over 100 have lost their lives. About 50,000 have left their homes and moved mainly to the north. Houses, shops and residential lines have first been looted, then set ablaze. The lines of division have once again gone into the hearts of the people ..... innocent children have lost a mother or father ..... Bewildered children will for all time remember the refugee camps ..... the only place of solace for their mothers and fathers for days and nights. Tens of thousands of innocent plantation workers were worst affected by the communal disturbances in August 1977."

It must be noted, that the attackers were all Sinhalese supported by the police and the Army.

The August 1977 communal violence badly affected the

19 TISSA BALASURIYA, Sri Lanka's Crisis of National Unity, Quoted in SATCHI PONNAMPALAM, op.cit., p.149.
Many of Indian origin, who worked in the plantations have received Ceylon citizenship. Some of them want it revoked to return to India; while others want to be resettled in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, the traditional Tamil areas where they feel safe.  

Many of them were settled in Vavunia, Trincomalee and Batticaloa by humanitarian groups. Thus Sri Lankan Government feared that these colonists would protect the separatist guerrillas or help to establish an independent "homeland" through settlement in the Northern and Eastern Provinces.  

David Selbourne a British observer wrote thus of army and police attacks on the settlers of Vavunia:

"The police and the army - as many as a thousand at a time have invaded, some landing in helicopters, others driving their armoured cars ("it was like ploughing") across the new corps ..... harass the settlements, searching for Tigers' and beating up suspects ..... The former


plantation coolie ..... was tied, struck in the face with fists and hung upside down from roof beams, face bleeding for hours. He crosses his thin arms on his chest to show how they tied him ..... the harassment has made the settlers even more determined: "We will stay here, and die here" they say."22

While this holocaust was in full swing J.R. Jayawardene told the world through Law Centre Conference:

"My Government is dedicated to the elimination of all forms of discrimination. In this task, the redress of the grievances of all ethnic, religious and cast groups will receive my Government's urgent attention. To this end an All Party Conference will shortly be summoned to consider the problems of non-Sinhala speaking people and its decisions will be incorporated in the proposed Constitution."23

J.R. Jayawardene is seen in his true colours in the above words. He will tell the worst of lies in International

22 DAVID SELBOURNE, 'Sinhalese Lion and Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka' in The Illustrated Weekly of India, (Bombay, 17 October), p.28.

23 RACE RELATIONS IN SRI LANKA, Vol. 16, Nos. 2,3 & 4, April 1978, p.47; Quoted by SATCII PONNAMPALAM, op.cit., p.197.
gathering and thus hide the reality of the ethnic conflagration ragging in Ceylon. Sirimavo Bandaranaike had sent the Sinhala hoodlums to attack the Tamils but J.R. Jayawardene used the police and army to exterminate the Tamils in Sri Lanka. And the pogroms of 1977 and the detentions and torture that followed had served only to increase the militancy of the Tamil youth, and their uncompromising commitment to fight the Sinhala State. 24

Once the embers of the racial riots of 1977 died down, J.R. Jayawardene turned his attention to Constitution making. The U.N.P. secured a five-sixth majority (83.7%) in the Sri Lankan Parliament. 25 The earlier Constitution of 1972 stipulated only two-thirds majority to change the laws. J.R. Jayawardene with five-sixth majority could lay ducks and drakes with the Sri Lankan Constitution. He grasped the full significance of his power and proceeded to acquire dictatorial power for himself. A. Amirthalingam, leader of the T.U.L.F. said in the Assembly on October 3, that the amendment to this Constitution did not take note of the Tamil minority's grievances


and the word "democracy" had no meaning for the Tamils when their lives and property were not safe.\textsuperscript{26} He proposed a Presidential form of Government with an Executive President and a powerless Parliament which will be at his beck and call. The Prime Minister J.R. Jayawardene was sworn in as President at a ceremony in Colombo on 4th February 1978.\textsuperscript{27} The T.U.L.F. and the S.L.F.P. both boycotted the ceremony. All J.R. Jayawardene's wild dreams were incorporated into the 1978 Constitution of Sri Lanka.\textsuperscript{28}

The judiciary was brought effectively under control of the President by requiring the Judges on threat of expulsion to take an oath to uphold and defend the Constitution.

The freedom of citizens were severely curtailed. Special Presidential Commission was set up to investigate Sirimavo Bandaranaike's misuses of power, judicial and social campaigns launched against her. She was tried expelled from Parliament and debarred from politics for seven years.\textsuperscript{29} This action is a key to the revengeful capabilities of J.R. Jayawardene. It was like a maniac let loose in society with unlimited powers.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{26} KEEISING'S CONTEMPORARY ARCHIEVES, 19 May 1978, p.28981.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} CONSTITUTION OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA, (Colombo, 1978).
\textsuperscript{29} S.D. MUNI, ARUNADHA MUNI, Regional Co-operation in South Asia, (New Delhi, 1984), p.22.
\end{footnotesize}
The mandate for drafting the 1978 Constitution was taken from the victory of U.N.P. at the 1977 elections. 49.08 percentage had voted against the U.N.P. and still 50.92 percentage of people imposed their will on the 49.08 percentage of the people. This indeed is making mockery of democracy. In strict legal terms the 1972 and 1978 Constitution of Sri Lanka are illegal. The Presidential form of Government was imposed on the people of Sri Lanka simply by legal jugglery to pander to the visions of a man who was in search of power. The Tamils of Sri Lanka paid dearly for this type of administration.

J.R. Jayawardene even in his wildest dreams never expected physical resistance from the Sri Lankan Tamils. All his life he had tried every trick at his disposal, but died a defeated man. He was unable to contain the Tamil youth. On the path he tried rope in T.U.L.F. to his side. Amirthalingam sensing the mood of the Tamils stayed clear of J.R. Jayawardene's trap. The Sinhala chauvinists were led by demented racialist Cyril Mathews, Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs in J.R. Jayawardene's Cabinet.

When A. Amirthalingam stuck to his position Cyril Mathew launched into a spate of obscene diatribe against

30 CEYLON DAILY NEWS - 5 April 1980.
A. Amirthalingam. The very dignity of Parliament was dragged down to low level. This action of Cyril Mathew left a scar on the psyche of the Tamils. The leaders of the U.N.P. decided 'to teach the Tamils a lesson'.

J.R. Jayawardene proscribed the 'Tigers' of Tamil Eelam. This too met with scant respect. Driven to madness J.R. Jayawardene proclaimed the notorious Prevention of Terrorism Act No.48 on 19 July 1979 based on the iniquitous South African Model. The die was cast and the long uphill tortuous path to violence commenced.

The Act permitted suspects to be held incommunicado for a period of eighteen months without trial, thus it had created classic conditions for torture. Atrocities were committed by security and military forces under the protection of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. They have been recorded by human rights groups.

The Eelam Tamil supporters young and old were arrested,

31 SUN (Sri Lanka) - 16 January 1981.
32 See Appendix-III.
34 The abuse of human rights was brought to light by Amnesty International, Report of a Mission to Sri Lanka - 1975. A report published by Amnesty International in 1982 indicates that the Government used torture and political killings against the Tamils even though it has the responsibility under the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights not to do so even in a national emergency.
detained and tortured under the provisions of this infamous Act. A Memorandum of Amnesty International to President J.R. Jayawardene states:

"Various methods of torture have been used by both the police and the army in the period immediately after the emergency declaration, including suspending people upside down by the toes while placing their head in a bag with suffocating fumes of burning chillies prolonged and severe beatings, insertion of pins in the finger tips and the application of broken chillies and biting ants of sensitive parts of the body and threats of execution. After these and other methods of torture had been applied, statements were extracted and recorded." 35

This piece of damning evidence is proof enough of the criminal nature of J.R. Jayawardene and his Government.

The report of the International Commission of Jurists on Ethnic conflict and violence in Sri Lanka under the heading of Effectiveness of Terrorism Act states:

"The provisions of the Sri Lankan Terrorism Act are not only objectionable from the human
rights point of view but it is doubtful that the Act is effective in controlling terrorism. The limitations on human rights, therefore, do not seem acceptable as a necessary means of maintaining public security. Since 1979, when the Act was adopted, terrorism had not declined but rather increased in the Northern Tamil areas. Increased police and army surveillance of the population have not curtailed violence, but seemingly stimulated it. This experience is similar to that of some other countries which have attempted to control terrorism by armed force rather than dealing with the fundamental factors contributing to the recourse to violence."

As soon as the Prevention of Terrorism Act was enacted, J.R. Jayawardene declared a state of emergency in the Tamil areas from 11 July 1979. He sent Brigadier Weeratunga his nephew "to wipeout the terrorism", spearheading demand for separate State. J.R. Jayawardene wanted results by 31.12.1979.

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36 ETHNIC CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE IN SRI LANKA, INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS - JENEVA.


38 Ibid.
The first thing the Brigadier did was to murder Inbam and Selvam and throw their bodies under Mandativu Causeway. Four other Tamil youths namely S. Parameswaran, S. Rajeswaran, Rajakili and R. Balendran 'disappeared'. The reign of terror was well and truly on the move.

Armed with the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 1979, the Sinhala army and police went on the rampage in Jaffna. In the name of combating Tamil terrorism, barbaric atrocities are being permitted against innocent Tamil men, women and even children. Number of detailed letters have been written by A. Amirthalingam to the President, stating the torture and inhuman treatment by the army and the police in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. But many letters went unheard by the President and poor responses from the concerned army and police officers.

A group of highly organised Tamil youths, defiant in spirit calling themselves 'Tigers' retaliated with the murder of policemen, suspected politicians supporting Government, attack on police station and Bank robberies. This disciplined,


41 V.P. VAIDIK, Ethnic Crisis in Sri Lanka India's Options, (New Delhi, 1986), p.52.
dedicated group of freedom fighters called the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, originally with the name of Tamil New Tigers, was born to face Jayawardene's State terrorism.

The realisation dawned on J.R. Jayawardene that the Tamil Militants were taking the initiative on the military front. He who will not give an inch to the Tamils began to woo the T.U.L.F. with the offer of District Development Councils (D.D.C.). But all these schemes, seems too late in the context of the escalation of Tamil demand. The T.U.L.F. fell head over heels and came close to Jayawardene. A. Amirthalingam did not stop at this, and he went on to attack the Tamil freedom fighters. He said:

"There are two types of people resorting to violence in Jaffna. One is the politically motivated group and the other hard core criminals, who cash in on the situation present in the north. The political group believed in achieving their objectives by violence, they have no connection with the T.U.L.F; The T.U.L.F. believes in achieving its end by peaceful means." 43


43 SUN (Sri Lanka) - 2 March 1982.
Amirthalingam had told *India Today* in September 1981, in his native village Moolai, near Jaffna:

"For 25 years we put forward a federal solution, but there was no response from the other side. Actually it was police and army violence against our people at the World Tamil Research Conference in Jaffna in 1974 that was the turning point which altered the thinking of the Tamil people that they cannot live with the Sinhalese any longer. And the idea grew in 1975. Ultimately in 1976 at a party convention, we took the decision that the Eelam was the only way we could survive as a separate entity. Apart from our rights, our very survival is at stake. The systematically planned colonization of our areas with the Sinhalese people has been carried out over the last 30 years to such an extent that we run the risk of being minority in our own areas, and if we become a minority we know what fate awaits us. If we are a minority here in Jaffna, we will have no other place. This is our fate."
the Tamil freedom fighters which in time led to the end of A. Amirthalingam. Cyril Mathews, Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs commented:

"The T.U.L.F. criticism of terrorist activities is encouraging." 45

The T.U.L.F. expected large funds for development areas, but nothing of the sought turned up. Jayawardene was successful in dividing the T.U.L.F. and the Tamil youth with the bait of D.D.C. Jayawardene was determined to show the Tamils that not everyone wanted Eelam. 46

The Tamil youth started to drift away from the T.U.L.F. and to chart a new course for themselves.

The 1981, D.D.C. elections brought head on collision between the T.U.L.F. and the Tamil militants. A section of the younger and more radical members of the party maintained that, it would weaken the struggle for a separate Tamil State. 47 They insisted that the D.D.Cs were a poor alternative for the concept of Eelam and that Tamils should continue to fight for a separate State. They claimed that

46 A. SIVANANDAN, op.cit., p.32.
"extra-parliamentary action could weary the Sinhalese into yielding to Tamil Eelam."\(^4^8\) In the eye of the D.D.C. elections campaign in Jaffna on May 24, A. Thiagarajah, former Member of Parliament of Tamil Congress who had joined the S.L.F.P. in 1971 was appointed as Jaffna District Political Authority and was now a prominent U.N.P. men, was shot dead.

The Government was aware that "extremists within the separatist movement ..... were ardently opposed to any activity within the existing political framework and viewed participation in the elections as compromising the objective of a separate State"\(^4^9\) and imposed strict security measures.

Therefore in preparation for the D.D.C. elections in Jaffna, 300 hand picked Sinhala policemen were sent to Jaffna. A dusk to draw curfew was imposed on Jaffna Peninsula on May 31. Few Sinhala Election Officers were also sent to Jaffna. Cyril Mathews the Tamil baiter and an equally Tamil hater, Minister Gamini Dissanayake were sent to supervise the D.D.C. elections in Jaffna.\(^5^0\) On 31.5.1981 election meeting, an unidentified gunmen fired into the crowd. At this the

Sinhala police and the army let loose an island wide orgy of murder, rape, looting and arson. 51

The situation was chaotic in Jaffna. The 'Tamil Times International' in London reported:

"More than hundred shops have been broken, burnt, looted, market squares in Jaffna and Chunnakam look as if they have been bombed in war time; several houses have been looted and badly damaged; the House of M.P. for Jaffna has been reduced to ruins (the M.P. himself was lucky to escape being murdered); several deaths have occurred at the hands of State armed personnel; the Headquarters of the T.U.L.F. in the heart of Jaffna has been destroyed; the public library in Jaffna - the second largest library in the island with over 90,000 volumes - has been reduced to ashes. Even more reprehensible are the facts that these outrages should have taken place when Cabinet ministers and several leaders of security services were personally present in Jaffna directing affairs, and that a section of the security service which had been sent there to maintain law and order

51 Ibid.
had been directly involved." 52

Commenting on the rampage in Jaffna on the floor of parliament, Gamini Dissanayake, Minister of Land, Land Development and Mahavali Development Board, said:

"We do not wish to minimise in any way the gravity of what has been done, the untold damage that has been done ..... I saw it and I was shocked ..... these police officers have run berserk ..... I am sorry for the violence that was perpetrated in the Jaffna peninsula. I think we are all responsible." 53

The burning of the library in Jaffna with precious collection of 95,000 volumes of rare books of historical and cultural significance of Tamils and palm leaf manuscripts is a deliberate permeditated act of vandalism that has left an indelible scar on the psyche of Tamils and will for ever plague inter communal relations. 54

Despite the violence the Jaffna D.D.C. elections were held on 4th June, 1981. 55 T.U.L.F. won with 263,369 votes, the U.N.P. polled 23,302. T.U.L.F. won all the six D.D.C.

53 CEYLON DAILY NEWS - 10 June 1981.
In reply J.R. Jayawardene never defined the powers of D.C.Cs. It was all a show.

T.U.L.F. took the fight into the Parliament and moved a vote of no confidence on the Government. The Government retaliated by a motion of no confidence on the opposition leader Amirthalingam on 24 July 1981, for instigating the Sinhalese to riot with racist statements. The debate brought out all the vulgarity and sadism of the Sinhalese into the open.

A. Amirthalingam was called a villain and that he should be removed. Amirthalingam was refused the right of personal explanation. The S.L.F.P. and the C.P. walked out in protest. In the Parliament, only U.N.P. remained. They used despicable language against Amirthalingam and asked that he should be tied to two palm trees, and split into two according to the traditional Sinhala practices. Democracy in Sri Lanka has reached rock bottom.

Following the violence in Jaffna it spread to all other parts of the island in 1981. Prominent politicians and supporters of the U.N.P. organised and supervised the racial riots.

56 Ibid.
58 NEELA VANNAN, Meendum Yazalppanam Erikirathu (Tamil) (Jaffna is Burning Again), (Jaffna, 1981) Gives a Vivid Picture what had happened in Jaffna by the Sri Lankan Government Forces.
After the outburst of this, July, August 1981, violence, a report was prepared by the staff of the International Commission of Jurist. It stated that, the violence is escalating, and the Government has taken measures with regard to terrorism which are in violation of International human rights norms.

The communal violence of August 1981, had International repercussions since Indian Tamil passport holders were killed, their residences burned and many were forced to seek refuge. She recommended some actions to the Government of Sri Lanka to remedy the malady. 59

British journalist Brian Eads who was in Sri Lanka reported as follows in the 'London Observer':

"It is clear the subsequent violence in July and August, which was directed against Sri Lankan Tamils in the East and South of the country, and Indian Tamil tea estate workers in the Central region, was not random. It was stimulated, and in some cases organized by members of the ruling U.N.P., among them intimates of the President.

59 INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS: ETHNIC CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE IN SRI LANKA. REPORT OF A MISSION TO SRI LANKA IN JULY-AUGUST 1981 ON BEHALF OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS - Represented by Prof.Virginia A. Leary, Faculty of Law and Jurisprudence, State University of New York, at Buffalo U.S.A. She criticizes the Sri Lankan Government for not pursuing a vigorous policy of investigation and prosecution of police and army personnel who were responsible for setting fire to homes, public buildings, and businesses in May-June 1981. It further reported that the police officers convicted of acting illegally have been promoted by decisions made at the Cabinet level by ministers.
In all 25 people died, scores of women were raped, and thousands were made homeless, losing all their meagre belongings. But the summer madness which served the dual purpose of quietening Tamil calls for Eelam, that is separate State, and taking the minds of the Sinhalese electorate off a deepening economic crisis is only one of the blemishes on the face of the island. Since Jayawardene came to power four years ago a system of what his critics call 'State Terrorism' has brought an Ulster like situation in the Tamil majority, areas of the north and the east ..... Hundreds have been detained without charge or trial. This year at least 156 Tamil youths have been detained and tortured and then released. Thirty-five are still held at Colombo's Panagoda Army Camp. Human right workers, Sinhalese as well as Tamil told me that the most favoured tortures are hanging prisoners upside down on heaps of burning chillies and inserting needles under their finger nails."

S. Thondaman, minister met the President and told him:

"We reiterated our position that the mob rule seems
to be the order of the day, in many parts of the country should be brought to an end ....

Inspite of the assurance given by the Government, the law and order situation had deteriorated as mob rule seems to persist and the people are in a state of perpetual terror .... The very fact that even plantation workers, innocent of any political crimes, have been singled out for murder and mayhem, has created a feeling among the people, that the thousands of hooligans covertly enjoy the patronage of powerful personalities." 61

A Tamil Hindu pilgrim and a D.M.K. politician from Tamilnadu was stabbed and killed by a Sinhala mob. The Indian Government protested. The Tamilnadu Government observed 'hartal' to condemn the State terrorism of the Sri Lankan Government. 62 On hearing this Jayawardene is reported to have cried out 'What sort of animals are these'?

Still Cyril Mathews the king pin of all activities was carrying on as nothing had happened. He wrote a book 'Sinhala People - Awake, Arise and Safeguard Buddhism'. He pointed out that Buddhism had existed in Jaffna and Sinhalese must


62 INDIAN EXPRESS (Madras) - 3 June 1981.
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be settled there. He called for a Holy war to save Buddhism.

When the British Queen was to visit Sri Lanka in October 1981, to celebrate 50 years of universal franchise, J.R. Jayawardene wanted to give a good picture to her. He invited the T.U.L.F. for talks. The T.U.L.F. put up six demands (1) the appointment of an International Commission of Inquiry into the May, June Police Army Rampage in Jaffna, (2) Setting up of home-guards to prevent disturbances, (3) 75 percent of the police in the north and east to be Tamils, (4) Power to D.D.C. as decentralised administration, (5) Review standardization to University, and (6) Prosecute police responsible for Jaffna rampage.

J.R. Jayawardene accepted all but the first demand, T.U.L.F. agreed to call off protests. Amirthalingam and his colleagues thought the Sinhala Tamil rift can be sorted out in Parliament in Colombo. This drove the Tamil Freedom fighters to move away from the T.U.L.F.

The Queen was taken round to all places which were not affected by racial riots. The T.U.L.F. put on a bright front to the Queen and Jayawardene was pleased as 'Punch'. On the occasion of the celebrations of the grant of universal franchise in Sri Lanka, she was kept away from Stateless Indian Tamil labourers!
Emboldened by the visit of the Queen and its success J.R. Jayawardene hired a British firm of public relations at the cost of 94,000 to spread lies around the world. It is good to note that this particular firm had been employed earlier by Shah of Iran and South Africa. J.R. Jayawardene, spared no efforts to suppress the Tamils in Sri Lanka. When J.R. Jayawardene rejected the first demand and accepted the rest, the T.U.L.F. enthusiastically co-operated in talks with Jayawardene. He drew the T.U.L.F. into the D.D.C. cue-de-sac. He did not give anything substantial but succeeded in marginalising the T.U.L.F. Amirthalingam himself expressed his disappointment thus:

"Although seven months had elapsed after the inauguration of the D.D.C. sufficient funds and authority were not yet granted to these Councils." 63

On the Tamil Youth Front vast activity were in progress. Few members from the T.U.L.F. led by Dharmalingam who broke away in May 1982 and formed the Tamil Eelam Liberation Front, T.E.L.F. Chandrakasan, Eelaventhan and Kovai Mahesan were in T.E.L.F. They supported the armed struggle.

The Liberation Movement had not assumed the Militant form till 1970. But there were strong Tamil leaders who

propagated the idea of a Separate State for Tamils far back as 1956 itself. The aspiration for a separate State and the desire to avenge the Sinhalese resulted in the formation of Militant Movement of the youth.

The formation of the Militant groups ran into trouble because of ideological and submerged caste differences. Tamil youth who were frustrated by the standardization had started Manavar Peravai (Student Federation) in 1970. Politically motivated youth with T.U.L.F. started the Ilaigner Peravai (Youth Federation) in 1973. Valvettiturai (V.V.T) smuggling groups also joined the band wagon. In 1973, several youth groups were operating. By 1975 Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students (E.R.O.S.) was started in London by a Tamil expatriate Left ideologue Ratnasabapathy. In the year 1972 Tamil New Tigers (T.N.T.) was formed. At the same time leading members of V.V.T. youth group started Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (T.E.L.O.). From these basic groups were formed various other groups.

64 C. SUNTHARALINGAM strongly propagated the idea of a Separate Tamil State for Tamils; SRI LANKA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVE (CEYLON-HANSARD) PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES, 14 June 1956, Cols.1880-85.

65 T. JAYARAMAN, The Demand for Tamil Eelam; An Inquiry in Historical Perspective; Dissertation submitted to the Bharathidasan University in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy in History, 1983-‘85, p.123.


The L.T.T.E. was formed in 1976. This was formed by those who were members of T.N.T. The present leader and Military Commander Velupillai Prabakaran was very particular in taking the name 'Tigers', and his organization renamed itself as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam on 5th May 1976. He took up the leadership of the organization.

L.T.T.E. was a strong Nationalist and Military group disciplined with iron will to fight for the cause of National freedom. In time Prabakaran built it up as the leading Tamil Militant group. From its inception the Tiger Movement took into its ranks the most resolute, the most dedicated, the most zealous young revolutionaries.

As Uma Maheswaran alieas Muhundan could not cope up with Prabakaran he broke away from the L.T.T.E. and started People Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (P.L.O.T.) in 1980. Muhundan stood for head of confrontation with Sinhala army as opposed to 'guerrilla' warfare of Prabakaran. Uma Maheswaran had explained the reasons for the formation of their organization in their manifesto. They say:

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"We are neither born revolutionaries, nor are we born politicians. It is our people who created this role for us."

P.L.O.T. points out the origin of the Liberation Organization and said:

"The inception of Tamil Manavar Peravai in 1970 opened up a new leaf in the history of the Tamil nation. The persistent struggle of the masses ...... has now culminated in the creation of the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam."72

The ideology of the organization was explained. Communism appears to be the basis for the principles of P.L.O.T., while some other organizations blame P.L.O.T. stating that they are not completely communistic in their ideology. But P.L.O.T’s manifesto says:

"Only the workers and peasants will go on until the end; only their organised force will achieve victory."73

Achievements and Activities of the Groups:

In time Mukundan became a lone adventurist and P.L.O.T.

72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
broke up in 1985 and Eelam Nationalist Democratic Liberation Front (E.N.D.L.F.) was formed by Rajan. E.N.D.L.F. took the side of India. P.L.O.T. was led by Sitharthan and works with the Sri Lankan Government.

E.R.O.S. is led by Ratnasabapathy and it was a Marxist group. They worked closely with Indian Tamil Plantation workers and mainland Tamils specially in Batticaloa. In time Padmanaba, Varadan and Devanada broke away from E.R.O.S. and started Eelam People Revolutionary Liberation Front in 1980. This group was led by Varadan. In 1985, Devananda broke away from E.P.R.L.F. and started Eelam People's Democratic Party (E.P.O.P.). Devananda is working closely with Government of Sri Lanka.

T.E.L.O. was formed in 1975 by Kuttimani, Jegan and Thangathurai. It was not a rigidly organised group. Kuttimani, Jegan and Thangathurai were murdered in Welikade jail massacre on 25.7.1983. Sri Sabaratnam took up the leadership. India adopted T.E.L.O. and built it up to support India. It had close contact with the D.M.K. in Tamilnadu. In April 1986, L.T.T.E. crushed T.E.L.O. and Sri Sabaratnam was killed. T.E.L.O. broke up into two faction. The Madras based group led by Sri Sabaratnam's brother Sri Kantha and Colombo based T.E.L.O. led by A.K. Selvam. Colombo based T.E.L.O. works

74 Personal Interview with SHANKAR RAJI, the Current President of the Group in Madras, on 28 August 1996.

It is indeed a tragedy that a Tamil Eelam Liberation Movement to which thousands of Tamil youth gave allegiance was broken into so many splinter groups and ultimately reduced to impotence. The L.T.T.E. kept up the struggle and has faced Sri Lankan and Indian opposition. The future of the Eelam Tamils is inextricably bound up with the fortunes of L.T.T.E. T.U.L.F. and splinter groups siding India and Sri Lanka are waiting in the wings, waiting for chances to capitalise on. Strenuous efforts were made by well-wishers to unite all the groups around in 1985 but all efforts were frustrated by vested interests in Tamilnadu politics and especially by the intrigues of Indian intelligence agencies. This aspect will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

In October 1982, J.R. Jayawardene went for election a second time as President and won. The T.U.L.F. asked the Tamils to boycott the elections and thus indirectly helped Jayawardene. T.E.I.E. too took this misguided path, which helped Jayawardene. Once firmly in the saddle Jayawardene began to put pressure on police and army to track down Tamil militants and supporters.

The hardcore militants Prabakaran, Mukundan and Sabaratnam moved to Tamilnadu. The Tamil sympathisers like
Nithianandan, University Lecturer, Nirmala Nithianandan, Jayakularajah, his brother Rev. Jayathilakarajah, Rev. Fr. Singarayar, Rev. Fr. Sinnarasa, were arrested, detained and tortured.

The leader of T.E.L.F. Dharmalingam and the editor of 'Suthanthiran' Kovai Mahesan were arrested and detained at Welikade.

Jayawardene spread the net wider and arrested all and sundry till army camps and jails in Sri Lanka were packed with Tamils.

The situation in Sri Lanka was fest building up to the 1983 holocaust which symbolically confirmed the great divide between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. The 1983 holocaust will be taken up in Chapter VI.

Agitation in Tamilnadu:

In Tamilnadu Karunanidhi's D.M.K. Government was dismissed in 1976. At the General Elections in 1977 M.G. Ramachandran led All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (A.I.A.D.M.K.) to victory. Karunanidhi expressed his support to the Eelam Tamil cause. Eelam Tamils had given up, their demand for Federal set up and were demanding separate State in 1976. This complicated the situation in India. India was totally against the division in Sri Lanka. She was afraid a similar cry may start in Tamilnadu or would be revived.
D.M.K. in opposition supported the Eelam Tamil demand, when ferocious racial riots broke out in Sri Lanka in 1977, the D.M.K. organised bandh in Tamilnadu. The people gave total support. D.M.K. called for action by Indian Centre. 75 Two D.M.K. men wanted to go to Sri Lanka to support Eelam Tamils, but Sri Lankan Government refused visa and they were sent out of Sri Lanka. There was talk that D.M.K. and Eelam Tamils were meeting in Katchchativu for talks. 76

When Indian Prime Minister Morarji Desai visited Sri Lanka in 1978, he discouraged the T.U.L.F. and supported the Sri Lankan Government. The Indian Premier expressed his displeasure at the situation.

In Tamilnadu there was great sympathy and support for Eelam Tamils. Though M.G. Ramachandran refuted the reference to the Tamil problem in Sri Lanka, in the fifth Tamil Language Research Conference held in Madurai in January 1981, 77 the beastly racial riots of July/August 1981, made him to intervene in this issue. The 1981 racial riots were beastly. The Indian Tamils in Sri Lanka were attacked. Tamilnadu and India were agitated. On 19 May 1981 there was a shoot out in Pondi

76 INDIAN EXPRESS (New Delhi) - 17 May 1979.
Bazaar in Madras between L.T.T.E. and P.L.O.T. the opposing personalities. The Sri Lankan Government had called for extradition of those involved. But the Tamilnadu Government as well as other political parties gave pressure to the Indian Centre and stopped the extradition. Tamilnadu Government called on Sri Lankan Government to release Eelam Tamils held in Sri Lankan jails and army camps. A letter written to this effect was forwarded by Indian Centre to Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan Government accused Tamilnadu on 'harbouring criminals' and continued:

"Political parties in Tamilnadu ..... seized the opportunity to oppose extradition of the Sri Lankan terrorists to gain political advantage in their election campaign. Both the D.M.K. and A.I.A.D.M.K. came out strongly in support of the terrorists." 

In assuage the feelings of Sri Lankan Government India maintained firmly that Eelam militants were not being trained in Tamilnadu. As the violence on Tamils in Sri Lanka escalated

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80 GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA, 'Tamil Terrorist: A Record of Murder and Robbery', Colombo Ministry of State Overseas Information Series, p.4.
from 1977 to 1981 and then to 1983, Tamilnadu sympathies for Eelam Tamils increased. Indian Centre was forced to take notice and support Tamilnadu. The 'Tigers' quickly became a sensitive issue in the tangled politics of Tamilnadu.

Initially only opposition parties in Tamilnadu supported Eelam Tamils but as Sri Lankan Government's genocide of Tamils in Sri Lanka became a reality, Tamilnadu Government also supported the Eelam Tamils. The Tamilnadu Legislative Assembly unanimously passed a resolution on 21st August 1981, on the plight of Sri Lankan Tamils, and condemned the atrocities of the Sri Lanka State Government. The Government of Tamilnadu and other political parties, stood together and debated the brutal killings, atrocities and other human right violations of the Sri Lanka Government. They insisted that the Central Government of India should help Tamils on a reasonable basis. A one-day general strike of Tamilnadu on 12th September 1981, had been called by the Government to express sympathy with Tamils who had suffered in the communal disturbances in Sri Lanka. The Indian Centre too was forced to give support to Eelam Tamils. While the Tamilnadu Government wanted Indian Centre to intervene immediately and stop the


82 Ibid.

83 KEESEING'S CONTEMPORARY ARCHIEVEs, 6 August 1982, Col.31629.
carnage in Sri Lanka, the Tamils of Tamilnadu wanted the equal political rights of Eelam Tamils also to be granted.*

In 1982, the First Eelam Tamil Conference was held in New York. P. Nedumaran chaired the meetings. Many Tamilnadu politicians attended it. All deplored the genocide of Eelam Tamils and called on Indian Centre to intervene and save the Tamils.

The A.I.A.D.M.K. being the ruling party in Tamilnadu was more restrained when Amirthalingam raised the Eelam issue at the Eighth World Tamil Research Conference in Madurai in January 1981 M.G. Ramachandran asked politics to be kept out of Conference Proceedings. 84 Earlier M.G. Ramachandran had donated Rupees ten lakhs from the Government to help cyclone victims in Sri Lanka. 85 Thus M.G. Ramachandran was following a middle of the road policy in respect of Tamil Eelam affairs. 86 The Members of the different Militant movements had been using Tamilnadu as base for their operations since 1980, with the

P. NEDUMARAN, President of Tamilnadu Congress Party (K) had presented a brief report 'SRI LANKA TAMILS PROBLEM - A SHOCKING REVELATION' to the Hon.Chief Minister of Tamilnadu M.G. Ramachandran on 18.10.1983. His analysis was on the basis of facts obtained through personal investigation during his extensive tour from 27th September 1981 to 6th October 1981 in the trouble torn areas of Sri Lanka where Tamil community are predominant.

86 Ibid.
support of some Tamilnadu politicians. In 1983, Karunanidhi and Anbazhagan resigned their Legislative Assembly seats in protest at the failure of Indian Centre to save Sri Lankan Tamils.

A.I.A.D.M.K. and its Government followed a very unclear policy with regard to Tamil Eelam. The Tamilnadu Government was extremely cautious in its demand to the Indian Centre for action on behalf of Eelam Tamils. But when ethnic violence in Sri Lanka reached genocidal proportions in 1983, Tamilnadu as a whole was in turmoil, and demanded immediate action from the Indian Centre.

**Action of Indian Centre:**

At the Indian Centre, Morarji Desai had become Prime Minister in March 1977. He and J.R. Jayawardene were in a spirit of mutual accommodation and called themselves Gandhians but in their actions they were far different from Gandhi. When Prime Minister Desai visited Sri Lanka in 1978 he told the Sri Lankan Tamils not to ask for separate State.

At the height of the 1977 ugly racial riots in Sri Lanka, Tamilnadu Government passed a resolution to express 'rude

87 CHELVADURAI MANOGARAN, *op.cit.*, p.70.

shock' at the events in Sri Lanka and called for immediate halt to attack on Eelam Tamils. Morarji Desai, in a personal message to Jayawardene had asked for normalcy in Sri Lanka. The Indian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka was asked to tour the affected areas to assess the situation and render help to Indian nationals. He informed M. Karunanidhi that Indian High Commissioner was taking action and there was no need to send a Cabinet Minister to Sri Lanka. It is worth noting that when the Indian Government wrote to the Government of Sri Lanka and mentioned the safety of 'Indian Nationals'. Indira Gandhi did not refer to the Sri Lankan Tamils.

After the victory of Congress in 1980, K.T. Kosalram, a senior Congress Member of Parliament was sent to Sri Lanka to discuss the Tamil problem. On his return he had reported to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi that, the Indian Tamils were badly treated in Sri Lanka. After K.T. Kosalram R. Venkataraman, Finance Minister was sent to Sri Lanka and spoke on behalf of the Stateless Indians. The report submitted by K.T. Kosalram on Indian Tamils in Sri Lanka was greatly valued by the Government of India.

Kumari Anandan referred to the resolutions passed in

89 TAMILNADU LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PASSED A RESOLUTION on 24 August 1977, p.86.

90 CEYLON DAILY NEWS (Ceylon) - 10 June 1978.
one of the States in U.S.A., in support of Sri Lankan Tamils, and urged the Indian Government to intervene. P. Nedumaran had repudiated the idea that the Sri Lankan Tamil affairs were internal matters and called for Indian intervention.

During the 1981 racial riots in Sri Lanka, Dhanapalan from Tamilnadu, an Indian National was hacked to death by the Sinhalese hoodlums. Tamilnadu had insisted, that Sri Lanka must pay compensation. Indira Gandhi supported the claim and Sri Lankan Government paid Rs.25,000 to the family of Dhanapalan.91

It is constructive to look back to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's attitude during the racial riots in Sri Lanka in 1958. Many Indian Tamils were attacked and killed. When the question of compensation was raised Nehru said:

"Government of India have nothing to do with this question, either assessing the damage on paying compensation. It is for the Government of Ceylon and it should not be presumed, that it is the Government of Ceylon liability to pay for the damage done by popular upheaval."92

The late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi took action in

91 INDIAN EXPRESS - 23 December 1981.
92 LOK SABHA DEBATES, Vol. 18, 14 September 1958, Col. 799.
1981, and she made Sri Lanka pay compensation. In contrast Pandit Nehru's stand appears different.

It is plainly evident that the Congress Government in Tamilnadu and the Central Government of India wanted to keep the goodwill of the Sinhala Government of Sri Lanka even at the cost of the lives of Sri Lanka Tamils. Indian Government gave priority to the own interest than to the inhuman suffering of the Sri Lankan Tamils. It tried to maintain the traditional good relations between the two countries. 93

But, when the D.M.K. and the A.I.A.D.M.K. came to power in Tamilnadu, they always raised their voice in support of the Sri Lankan Tamils. The Sri Lankan Government had a mortal fear of six crores of Tamils across the Palk Straits. The Sri Lankan Government let loose genocide on the Sri Lankan Tamils and when Tamilnadu cried out for help, the Indian Government at the Centre gave protection to Government of Sri Lanka. For close upon half a century since independence in 1948, the Sri Lankan Government has pushed the Sri Lankan Tamils to the wall, economically, politically, and culturally. India has remained a passive observer even after the brutal riots of 1956, 1958, 1977 and 1981. It was the holocaust of 1983, that made India take action. There appears to be some substance in the concept, that the Aryans of India and Sri

Lanka, are in league to keep down the Dravidians of Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka.

There is urgent need to take up the cause of suppressed ethnic minorities around the world including those in India, and Sri Lanka.

This period (1977-'83) begins with the violence immediately after the General Election and the U.N.P. comes to power. In this violence, much hill country Tamils as well as Sri Lankan Tamils were affected. The rise of competitive chauvinism in Sri Lanka's domestic politics, directed fiercely against the indigenous Tamil population as well as Indian Tamils, started to change radically in the 1980's. According to A.J. Wilson, the 'Tamil Subnationalism' started to grow. This ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka led to upsurge of protest in the Indian State of Tamilnadu which led to create lot of tension and friction in the Indo-Lanka relations. It openly supported the Sri Lankan Tamil cause. The ethnic question grew rapidly day by day. The assessment of cause ignores the fact that New Delhi which has time and again renewed its commitment in Sri Lankan unity and integrity has limited options. The demand for separate State for Tamils became strong. The Belam Movement spearheaded by the militants put the J.R. Jayawardene's Government on the defensive line. But the Tamil youths were attacked, detained
and tortured by the Government forces. The militant groups received full support from the Tamils of Tamilnadu, which increased the fighting capacity of the L.T.T.E. and other organizations. Sinhala Tamil Confrontation was escalating towards a serious crisis.