

**TAMIL INFORMATION CENTRE**

INCIDENTS FROM 21ST JULY, 1983.

1.0 SYNOPSIS OF PAST REPORTS

1.1 We have been to date reporting on the following :-

The pogroms against the Tamil people in Sri Lanka by "Sinhalese people" and the Security Forces of the Sri Lanka Government.

The invasion by the "Sinhalese people into Batticaloa and Trincomalee Districts.

The harassment caused to the Tamils and the Tamil Refugees by the Government and the Agents of the Government and the distress and difficulties they are undergoing.

EVENTS SINCE LAST BULLETIN

2.0 COLONISATION

2.1 At a Press Conference on Tuesday the 18th of October 1983 the Minister for Home Affairs and Member of Parliament for Kalkudah Mr.K.W.Devanayagam said:

...since the first week of September there have been a large scale encroachments of Sinhalese people in Vadamunai...." "...about 1800 Tamils who have been legally settled by the Government under the Vadamunai Scheme since 1972 are apprehensive and nervous because of the recent massive and illegal encroachments...." The Minister also alleged that Mahaweli Officials were involved in the illegal encroachments according to the Press Reports.

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- 2.2 According to G.K.Reddy, the New Delhi Special Correspondent for the Hindu, an Indian Daily, the President and the Secretary of the Tamil United Liberation Front complained to the Prime Minister Shri Indira Gandhi about the surreptitious move of the Government to settle Sinhalese in predominantly Tamil areas to tilt the ethnic balance, so that in these districts the Tamils are reduced to a minority, as has happened in the Batticaloa District where 50,000 Sinhalese have been settled after the recent violence.
- 2.3 It is reported that the Government is to introduce stringent laws in Parliament to stop the refugees of the Plantation Tamils settling in the traditional homelands. It is feared that this new law would stop the rehabilitation of the refugees.
- 3.0 EMERGENCY
- 3.1 Sri Lanka Parliament on Thursday the 20th of October 1983 approved the further extension of the emergency.
- 3.2 At the third extension of the emergency debate in the Parliament in August, 1983 the Member of Parliament for Kalawana made the following remarks : "... in this country and in this House we have watched many proclamations of states of emergency, .... but there has never been such an impotent and ineffectual emergency as the one we are debating now, because

with all the powers that you have under the emergency, with all the laws that one is armed with under the emergency, with all the regulations that one can bring into force effectively and very quickly under the emergency, we have seen while that emergency was on and while all the powers were with the Government the worst disturbances that have ever occurred in the history of this country. I also charge

this Government that not only have they made the emergency impotent and ineffective but they have now started misusing and abusing this emergency." (Hansard 25th August, 1983.)

4.0

MANNAR

4.1

On or about the 30th of October 1983 the Student Hostel attached to St. Xavier's College run by Christian Brothers was thoroughly ransacked by the army. The details are not known yet.

5.0

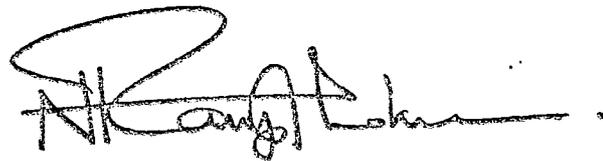
GENERAL

5.1

It is reported that the Press Censorship has been suddenly introduced to be effective from the 2nd of November, 1983.

5.2

It is also reported that a credit squeeze has been imposed on all banks as from 31st of October, 1983 by the Minister of Finance.



INFORMATION OFFICER.

# Restoring harmony — major role for education

Over two months have passed since the most senseless destruction ever experienced in independent Sri Lanka, and we are still saddened and ashamed at man's inhumanity to man in this predominantly Buddhist country.

Some people are even beginning to forget the horror and tragedy of those few dark days in July, but what about the victims who were first shuttled into refugee camps, then to relatives in Jaffna and Batticaloa, then back into refugee camps there when they felt relatives were hard-pressed to food and cloth them, and back to Colombo as ultimatums were issued to those who had been working in Colombo and who, ever since their return, have been desperately trying to find accommodation for themselves in Colombo and other places.

People who have gone to REPIA have been advised by the authorities to have their properties devalued and attend to repairs themselves, as their first priority is for the damaged industries.

But how many Sinhala landlords are willing to rent their homes now to Tamils? They know that the mobs did not spare these houses either they may not have been set on fire, but windows, doors, roof tiles were, in some cases, severely damaged.

I personally know of one young Tamil who went back to work at a business establishment in Colombo where minor employees threatened to set fire to his motor bike. He never went back.

Another young Tamil who was abused by minor employees at his office when he returned to work told me that although he had lost everything he possessed, he had not lost his dignity and self-respect, and he didn't have to take that kind of abuse from his Sinhala co-workers. He has now left for Singapore to try and find some kind of employment as he has "no future here".

I personally know of a 1 1/2-year-old baby from a refugee camp, suffering

MRS. MENIK THURAIRAJAH is a Sinhalese married to a Tamil. She says she has personally suffered the heartache and tragedy of the Tamil people, when her husband's families' homes were damaged, and in some cases, completely gutted and they were shoved from house to house and some evacuated to Batticaloa and Jaffna.

"What I am writing here," she adds, "is what I really feel in my heart, as a Sinhalese, of the senseless destruction which shattered the lives of many innocent people."

from very high fever accompanied by convulsions, who was rushed to the premier children's hospital in Colombo by Red Cross ambulance, where minor employees loitering at the entrance threatened to kill the baby if he was not taken out of the premises immediately.

The social worker who accompanied the child then rushed to two private nursing homes, which also turned the baby out saying they were "afraid to keep Tamil patients".

In desperation when the social worker returned to the refugee camp, a soldier who was on guard duty overheard this pathetic tale and with a spark of humanity and sympathy in his heart suggested that the baby be taken to the military hospital, where he felt sure the patient would not be turned out. The baby was treated, and returned to the camp, and is still alive.

This latter incident took place during the first two weeks of the disturbances. I can only hope that these poor people who have suffered untold misery and suffering can go into our hospitals now that the situation—we are told—has returned to normal, and expect the treatment that is everybody's right.

There are those who say that the Tamils should have realised that they would eventually have to suffer for the acts of the Tamil terrorist tigers who have been systematically killing people opposed to their clam, robbing banks, and terrorising people in the north, because they did not "come out openly and condemn these terrorist activities".

When the insurgency broke out in 1971, which was an entirely Sinhala terrorist organization, far more innocent people lost their lives than in the recent disturbances. But how many Sinhala people "came out openly and condemned the JVP"?

The politicians did like the majority of the politicians have condemned clam and the Tiger Movement — but how many ordinary people did, although we were all totally opposed to it?

But the Tamils did not burn our homes down then and loot our property because several Tamils lost their lives at the hands of the Sinhala insurgents. Why then should people have this attitude of "they asked for it" and try to find excuses for the reaction of some of the Sinhala people?

What is the government going to do to avoid excesses of this nature in the future? They have to start at the very beginning and by this I mean the children, are the future citizens of Sri Lanka.

Several letters have been written by readers about (a) bringing back the English medium in schools and (b) doing away with the Sinhala medium and Tamil medium classes, and have the children "mixed" and going into parallel classes.

They would naturally have to separate for some of the subjects like Sinhala and Tamil, and some of the religion classes, but they will study English together.

Christianity could be taught in English as both Sinhala and Tamil children follow that religion. Maths and science could be taught in English as reference books are easier to come by for

teachers and pupils alike in English than in their vernacular translations.

Of course other subjects like health, environmental studies, home science, etc., could continue in Sinhala and Tamil as they are now, where children will go into separate classes, but come back again into the same class for the next lesson.

This method could be incorporated into the present system of education without too much structural alterations being effected.

The Ministry of Education has a very important part to play in the future of this country if communal harmony is to be achieved in time to come.

Of course it cannot be achieved over-night, but a start has to be made somewhere, and why not in the new school year of 1984 when 5 and 6 year old Sinhala and Tamil children will be entering Grade I to start their school career?

I know of a government official who had talked to an 8-year old boy in a refugee camp in Batticaloa who had seen his mother and father hacked to death by mobs.

What is the future of this little child? Isn't he going to be a terrorist of the future, unless the government makes a start — without any further delay — to foster communal harmony between the two races?

When this child goes back to school — and there must be several like him — if they sit together with only Tamil children, pathetic tales will be related, and as these children grow older into young men and women, avenging the deaths of their relatives and loved ones will begin to surface in their minds.

But if they sit together with Sinhala children, maybe they will eye them with suspicion to begin with and quite possibly mix about with only fellow-Tamils.

But given time, and with teachers adopting the right attitude towards harmony between the different races in their schools, before they know it they will be sharing their pencils and books and playing cricket together during the interval, and we can start beginning to hope for a better future for this country, which we all love and which we do not want to leave but may eventually have to for the sake of ensuring a life free from fear for our own children.

I hope you decide to publish this article in your paper.