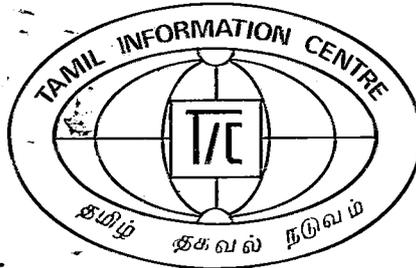
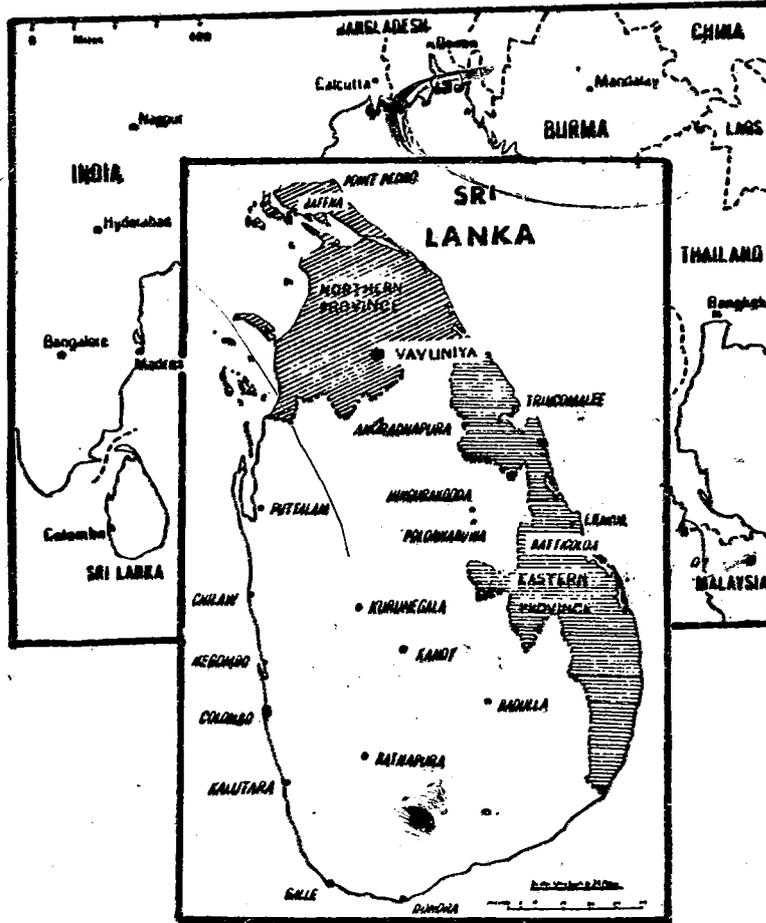


INSECURITY OF TAMILS IN SRI LANKA



TAMIL INFORMATION CENTRE
P-3

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Insecurity of Tamils in Sri Lanka

THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLES

Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) is an Island in the Indian Ocean lying 25 miles off the South Eastern tip of India. It is 25,352 square miles in extent. It has been inhabited by Sinhalese and the Tamils for over 20 centuries. The Sinhalese speak Sinhala Language and about 93% of them are Buddhist. About 7% of the Sinhalese are Christians. The Tamils speak the Tamil Language and 90% of the Tamils are Hindus and the balance 10% are Christians. 7% of the population of the Island are Muslims and they speak the Tamil Language. The population now is about 15 million people composed of 10.98 million Sinhalese 2.75 million Tamils and 1 million Muslims.

In ancient times the Sinhalese occupied the South and the Tamils the North and the East of the Island. When the Portuguese occupied the Island in the 16th Century they found there were two peoples living in three separate parts. Tamils in North and East and two Sinhalese groups one in low country and the other in the Central Island referred to as Kandyan territories. The Tamil Homelands were treated and ruled as a separate territory. The Dutch who succeeded the Portuguese too administered the Tamil Homelands as a separate Land. It was done so by the British from 1796 when the territories were conceded to the British by the Dutch.

In 1833 for administrative convenience the British brought the Sinhalese Territory and the Tamil Homelands into one unit. The map of Arrowsmith in 1803 show the Tamil Homelands as something more than the Northern and Eastern Provinces of the country. (See Chart 1 of the Appendix). Even after 1833 Northern and Eastern Provinces continued to be Tamil Provinces. Until the British occupation there were practically no Tamil population in the South. The Tamils who had the opportunity of English Education by the Christian Missionaries moved to the Capital for employment in the private sector created by the British and in the Government Services. It is now estimated that nearly 400,000 to 500,000 Tamils live in the South while 2 million live in the North and the East. Most of the Tamils in the south are in and near Colombo, the Capital of the Island.

From 1837 the British planters brought indentured labour from South India. The labour force was from Tamil Nadu. These Tamils who are now referred to as Plantation Tamils (or Hill Country or Up Country Tamils) live in and near the Tea and Rubber Plantations in the centre of the Island which is the Hill Country of the Island. The Plantation Tamils at the time of Independence in 1948 were about 1 million. Nearly 300,000 have now been repatriated under a pact between the Indian and Sri Lankan Governments. There are now about 1 million Plantation Tamils.

The Muslims in the Country identify them by religion and consider themselves as a different group. Their language is Tamil. They are spread all over the Island. A large group occupy the Southern part of the Eastern Province and are mainly farmers. In the rest of the Island the Muslims are generally traders living in and near the towns.

FREEDOM TO SRI LANKA (CEYLON)

Freedom movement in the Island in the early 20th Century was a joint effort by both the Sinhalese and Tamil leaders. There were some outstanding leaders who were Tamils. The question of any conflict between the Sinhalese and the Tamils did not emerge until in the late twenties. However both the Sinhalese and the Tamils continued to join hands in the struggle for freedom. In the early forties when there was a commission to inquire into the political position of the country there were serious doubts among the Tamil leaders of their position under a changed rule. Representations were made to secure their rights.

The freedom was granted with a constitution in which there were safeguards against discrimination of minorities and such safeguards could be changed only by two thirds majority in the Parliament.

BETRAYAL OF PLANTATION TAMILS

At an election held in 1947, prior to independence in 1948, the Plantation Tamils elected 7 representatives out of 92 to the Parliament and influenced the election in few other electorates. To the ruling party after independence (United National Party) which is now in power since July 1977 it was not acceptable. By defining citizenship in a Citizenship Act and by making only citizen as eligible for voting the then Government decitizenised almost the entirety of the Plantation Tamils and made them voteless. It was indeed an effective measure because there was no elected representation for Plantation Tamils thereafter until 1977.

In 1964 Sri Lankan Government and Indian Government entered into a pact to repatriate some to India while some would be given Sri Lankan citizenship. The ratio was 7:4. Nearly 300,000 have been repatriated and it is expected that about 400,000 would in all the repatriated and approximately 250,000 would be given citizenship. However there will be about 600,000 who would remain stateless. The pact which was made without any reference to the Plantation Tamils has come to an end in October 1981. Most of the repatriates who had gone back to their land of the forefathers are living not only as strangers but also as destitutes.

Oppression of the Tamils

COLONISATION

From 1950, the Sri Lankan Government embarked on developing the river basins in the Traditional Homelands of Tamils and colonising with Sinhalese. At the time of independence in 1948 there were hardly 20,000 Sinhalese in the Eastern Province but now there are over 200,000 Sinhalese living in the Eastern Province. The Government has succeeded in creating two parliamentary constituencies of Amparai and Seruwilla which has engulfed 1,500 square miles of Tamil Territory which is 2/5th of the Eastern Province (See Chart II of the Appendix). The colonists were rejects from the South and they turned to crime and were responsible for all of the race riots in and around the colonies.

LANGUAGE AND EMPLOYMENT

In 1956 the Government made Sinhala, the language of the Sinhalese, as the only official language. This is a measure which was originally proposed by the President Mr. Jayawardane in 1944. However, it was opposed by the then State Assembly and it was amended to Sinhala and Tamil, the two indigenous languages. This policy is supported by the two major Sinhalese parties. It was even endorsed in 1972 by Sinhalese dominated Marxist Parties. With negligible exceptions the Sinhalese people accepted the discrimination and humiliation imposed on the Tamil People.

On the 5th June 1956 the Bill was presented in the Parliament and the Tamil leaders staged a satyagraha (peaceful demonstration) on the green near the Parliament. Sinhalese people attacked the Satyagrahies and it was really sad indeed because the disturbance had the blessings or approval of the then Government and in fact evoked more laughter than sympathy when the Tamil people were beaten up. The history of violence against the Tamil people thus started in the Island.

The introduction of Sinhala as the only official language had also promoted Sinhala chauvinism. The Tamils began to be discriminated and humiliated because of their race in every field thereafter. The discrimination in the field of employment had the greatest impact.

During the British rule the Tamils sought employment in the Government services and to a lesser extent in the private sector. Tamils were predominant in certain fields, such as the professions or clerical services. Though in number they did not occupy a large proportion, it was made out that the number of Tamils should be reduced in the services. Merit ceased to be the criteria in practice. A knowledge of Sinhala language was imposed as a condition of employment. The process of discrimination of Tamils in employment continue to be practical so much so the Tamils have ceased to look to Government or Government sponsored Corporations for employment any longer.

The discrimination in employment has also been the cause of emigration of large number of professionals among the Tamils. Recently the Government states that there is no discrimination of Tamils in employment and gives as example the high positions occupied by some Tamils. These are people who were in service prior to 1956 era. All the examples cited are persons near retirement age. Similar situation will never be repeated.

It is significant that the intake of Tamils in the security forces were so reduced that Army, Navy and Air Force do not have even 2% Tamils. The number in the Police force is reduced to about 5%. This fact has contributed to the use of the Security forces for committing violence against the Tamil people.

HIGHER EDUCATION

In 1970 the Sri Lankan Government introduced a higher standard as requirement for Tamils to enter the University. eg: In Engineering faculty a Tamil had to obtain 250 marks out of a maximum of 400 while a Sinhalese could enter with 228 marks. Due to protests the Government introduced what is called as languagewise standardisation which is unknown to the rest of the world and achieved the same result of reduction. The intake of Tamils now in the Science faculties have been reduced to nearly 80%. Since large percentage of Tamils depended on education for employment, the discrimination in higher education affected them severely and it has been the cause of the youth participation in the freedom struggle of the Tamil people.

ARMY OCCUPATION

Since 1956, and more so with increasing severity since 1970, the state has unleashed an army of occupation in the Tamil areas of the north and the east. The civil population has been harassed. Many innocent persons have been detained, tortured and deprived of their personal belongings by police and military personnel who pay no heed to the elementary principles of civilized conduct or the rule of law. Even Tamil members of Parliament are victims of Police and military action. The atrocities perpetrated against the civil population have not in any way been the subject of investigation by state authorities. (See Chart III of the Appendix).

Demands for Justice

FEDERALISM

When the Plantation Tamils were decitizenised a section of the Tamil Leaders protested and saw the danger to the entire Tamil community. They founded a Federal Party under the leadership of the late S.J.V. Chelvanayagam Q.C. to demand for Federal Government so that the Tamils have their Federal unit in the North and East of Sri Lanka. However, such demand was not acceptable to the Major Sinhala parties i.e. Sri Lanka Freedom Party then led by the late S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake and the United National Party, which is now the ruling party led by Mr. J.R. Jayawardene.

1961 - SATYAGRAHA

In 1961 Police and Army personnel unleashed violence on Satyagrahis protesting on the imposition of Sinhala language as the official language in the Tamil areas. Almost 100% of the Tamils in the North or East cannot understand the Sinhala language. The violence by the Police and Army could appear to be on the orders of the Government.

1972-1976 - DETENTION AND TORTURE

From 1972 youths were arrested, detained and tortured by the Police. Youths were protesting at the imposition of discriminatory higher standards for the entry into the University for Tamils. Over 40 youths were held without trial sometimes over a period of 4 years. These detentions were reported by the Amnesty International in their Mission Report in 1975.

1974 - INTERNATIONAL TAMIL CONFERENCE

Even large cultural celebrations were not free from the interference by the Government/Police action. In January 1974 Police disturbed the final sessions of the Fourth International conference on Tamil Research and 8 persons died. The brutality with which the conference was disturbed by the police is one of the scars of violence against the Tamil people which is not forgotten. Government even declined to appoint a commission to inquire into the incident.

1977 - POGROM

In August 1977 the Tamils faced one of the largest violences so far. This would appear to have been unleashed because of the overwhelming support by the Tamil people for the formation of separate state. The hands of many government supporters were seen in many instances of violence. The explosion of violence took place on the 19th August soon after the speech of Mr. Jayawardane, then Prime Minister, in the Parliament on 18th August 1977 offering 'war' to the Tamil people, was repeated every half-an-hour on the Government controlled radio. This was similar to what Mr. Bandaranayake did in 1958.

In 1977 even the Plantation workers were not spared. Their line rooms were burnt, their little possessions were looted, their women were 'gang raped'. Evidence of some most brutal 'gang rapes' have been recorded before the commission that inquired into the events of 1977. Again hundreds were killed and over 200,000 fled for safety to Traditional Homelands of Tamils. Over 40,000 of the Plantation workers became destitutes and refugees. Nearly 100 Hindu Temples were destroyed. Tamils have lost several hundreds of millions of rupees worth of property.

The most significant fact in 1977 pogrom was the participation of security forces. In the South, Sinhalese people carried out the attack which the security forces encouraged or failed to stop. In the North and East the security forces were the attackers. The radio net work of the Police was used to incite violence all over the Island. Thus Tamils were no longer safe even in their own Traditional Homelands.

1979 - TORTURE CAMP

No solution to the problem by peaceful means gave rise to several youth groups embarking on alternative solutions. Violence as a means of solution was not overruled by them. Youth violence brought forth more violence by the Police/Army. Police force has been the main target for the Tamil Youths. On 11th July 1979 Mr. Jayawardane gave a 'Hitler like' order to his commander to eradicate terrorism within six months. Police made a start by killing 3 youths and placing 3 other on 'disappeared' list. Police/Army set up a torture camp in the same residence as the commander (who is now Commander of the Army). Hundreds of youths were rounded up and many were tortured. The commander would appear to have reported successful completion of task.

1981 - BURNING OF PUBLIC LIBRARY

On 31st May 1981 after an incident in which some unidentified persons opened fire at Police personnel at an election meeting, the Police went on the rampage and burnt a part of Jaffna town, the house of the member of parliament and the office of the TULF. The Police desecrated a Hindu Temple and set fire to it. Police assaulted any man on the road. The fury seemed to have cooled.

On the 1st June, Inspector General of Police, Secretary to the cabinet and Secretary to the Ministry of Internal Security were presumably sent by the President to study and help to bring the situation under control and report. However, on the night of 1st June, Police personnel have set fire to the Public Library. They have carefully selected the section which stored books thus destroying the best library in the Tamil areas and irreplaceable documents relating to Tamil Culture and History were destroyed. The public library which is just opposite the Jaffna Police Station has not attracted the Police when they were on rampages before. They normally reached for the liquor shop in the bazaar to encourage them in their missions.

Who ordered or prompted the destruction of the Public Library? Only the Police can answer? May be few others who were in Jaffna too can answer. We can only hazard a guess. If there is one event which has the greatest impression or scar in the hearts of the Tamils it is this destruction of the Public Library. While someone attempted a "Cultural Genocide" or the obliteration of the History of the Tamil people they have made their resolve to be free irreversible.

The thinking men on the night of 1st June did not fail to destroy the only Tamil Daily Printed in the Tamil areas, not in fury but in cold blood.

No inquiry what so ever was held to find out the culprits of the events of 31st May to 4th June 1981. But Mr. Gamini Dissanayake, Minister of Mahaweli Development conceded in the Parliament that Police burnt the Public Library

1981 - LOCAL ELECTION

On the 2nd of June 1981, Government Ministers Cyril Mathew and Gamini Dissanayake were in Jaffna to assist in the elections. On the 3rd night and 4th morning 4 persons were shot and killed by Army/Police. There would appear to be orders to arrest the leaders of the Tamil

UP-COUNTRY

The Plantation areas too were subjected to attack. Kandy, Badulla, Nawalapitiya, Nuwara Eliya, Matale, Gampola and Monaragala were some of the towns subjected to heavy attack. Most of the Tamil establishments and houses near towns were destroyed. Even a Catholic Institution functioning in Badulla was destroyed. The death toll is estimated at 50.

MASSACRE IN PRISON

There were over 70 political prisoners in Weilikada Jail in Colombo. On the 25th July, 37 of them were massacred by government Agencies including the Army. The deaths included Kuttimani who was nominated as Member of Parliament by the Tamil United Liberation Front.

On 27th July a second Massacre was carried out in which 18 people were killed including Dr. S. Rajasundaram, the Secretary of Gandhian Society, an Organisation which was working among the refugees of 1977 and 1981 pogroms.

It is quite apparant that the youth leaders were selected for this massacre and the massacre is not by fellow Sinhalese prisoners as claimed by the Government.

WHO DID THIS?

We have reports that several active members of the ruling party were the organisers. In some areas it is alleged that even Members of Parliament have been the organisers. It is believed that a Cabinet Minister, a close friend of the President, has masterminded these atrocities.

REFUGEES

Over 100,000 people were in Camps in Colombo alone and they are moving to North or East which they believe is more secure than Colombo; at least they are returning to their homelands though it is occupied by the Army. Nearly 50,000 people are displaced in the up-country and most of them are in several refugee camps, most of them would have no place to go to.

It is expected that over 100,000 person will move from the South to the Traditional Homelands. The total number of people displaced is estimated at 250,000.

After pogroms in 1958, 1977 and 1981 most of the Tamils who were displaced returned for want of opportunities of earning a living in the North or East which continue to be neglected areas under successive Sinhalese Governments. The attack in July 1983 would make it difficult even though the option could be starvation.

Sinhalese people have made their message loud and clear; they do not want the Tamils in their midst. Probably they do not want them in Sri Lanka at all. It is noteworthy that at no time from 1958, the Prime Minister or President or the people in power had even expressed any regret at the violence even though the victims were always innocent Tamil people.

TRANSFER OF POPULATION

On the 26th/27th the Army/Police have taken away truck loads of Tamils who were in refugee Camps after the June Massacre in Trincomalee. Where they have been taken has not yet been found out. It is believed that they have been taken to some part in the plantation districts.

On 3rd/4th August again in a village at Pankulam the houses of the Tamils have been burnt by the Army/Sinhalese people and residents were loaded in trucks and taken away. Again their whereabouts are not yet known.

The steps taken in Trincomalee leaves no doubt that the intention of the government is to evict all Tamils from the area forcibly.

Note: There was considerable difficulty in getting information from Sri Lanka, due to restricted communication and strict censorship. We have had no direct contact with the North or East since 26th July 1983. The report in this section is based on the information received in London.

Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA)

PREVENTION OF TERRORISM ACT (PTA)

In June 1979 the Government introduced a South African style Prevention of Terrorism Act. Under which Act a person could be detained without trial for a period of 3 months at a time totaling to 18 months. Offences not known to ordinary laws of the country were also introduced. For example if a person knows the whereabouts of terrorists (terrorist not defined in the Act.) and if such person fails to inform the Police he commits an offence punishable with a minimum of 5 years jail term. If the "terrorist" stays with any person for a night such person is guilty of harbouring, punishable with a maximum of twenty years jail term.

Several Tamils particularly the youths were detained under this Act since 1979. In particular after April 1981 there were several arrested, detained and tortured to extract confessions. An accused can be convicted on his/her confession. In fact in two cases accused persons have been convicted and in one case two persons were sentenced to death (who were later massacred in the jail).

In November last year several Catholic priests were arrested under PTA and two were detained and tortured to extract confessions. A methodist Minister, a Doctor, a University Lecturer and his wife too were subject to torture and harassment to obtain confessions. The trials of the Priests and others are pending. They are charged for "failure" to give information about a terrorist or for "harbouring"

Mr. David an Architect by profession, President, and Dr. Rajasundaram, Secretary, of Gandhian Society too were detained under the PTA and tortured in Army Camps for confessions. Charges have been framed against them. Dr. Rajasundaram was murdered in prison by government agencies on 27th July 1983.

particular they are helping to develop the Mahaweli basin, the completion of which scheme will inevitably lead to the destruction of the TAMIL NATION.

Sri Lanka Government is building Army Camps in the entire North and East for the purpose of oppression of the Tamil people. It was reported that a new large camp was started in the North. Only a few months back an Army camp was started in Batticaloa District in the Eastern Province. While countries in the world are giving aid for "development" Sri Lanka Government is spending money for the oppression of the Tamil People, and the destruction of their National Identity.

Will it be unreasonable to expect the countries who help Sri Lanka to refrain from aiding directly or indirectly the destruction of the National Identity of the Tamil people?

WILL THE TAMILS SURVIVE?

The Tamils are refugees in their own land facing constant threats by the Security Forces. Any Tamil from 16 to 60 may be termed a 'terrorist' and be visited with the wrath of the Sinhalese people and the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The security of the Tamils in Sri Lanka is in great danger. Will the Tamil Nation survive this onslaught? Will Sri Lankan Government recognise the right of self-determination of the Tamils? Will the Sri Lankan Government honour its obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the

International Covenant on Civic and Political Rights which reads as follows:

"All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economics, social and cultural development"

These Covenants were ratified by the Sri Lankan Government in 1980. Will other countries who are signatories to the said Covenants take the matter up with the Sri Lankan Government?

STATISTICS

Total extent of Sri Lanka	25,352 square miles
Total extent of Tamil Homelands as at present	7,068 square miles
Total population of Sri Lanka	14.88 million
Population of Tamil Speaking people	3.75 million
Population figures are according to 1981 Census.	

CHART II

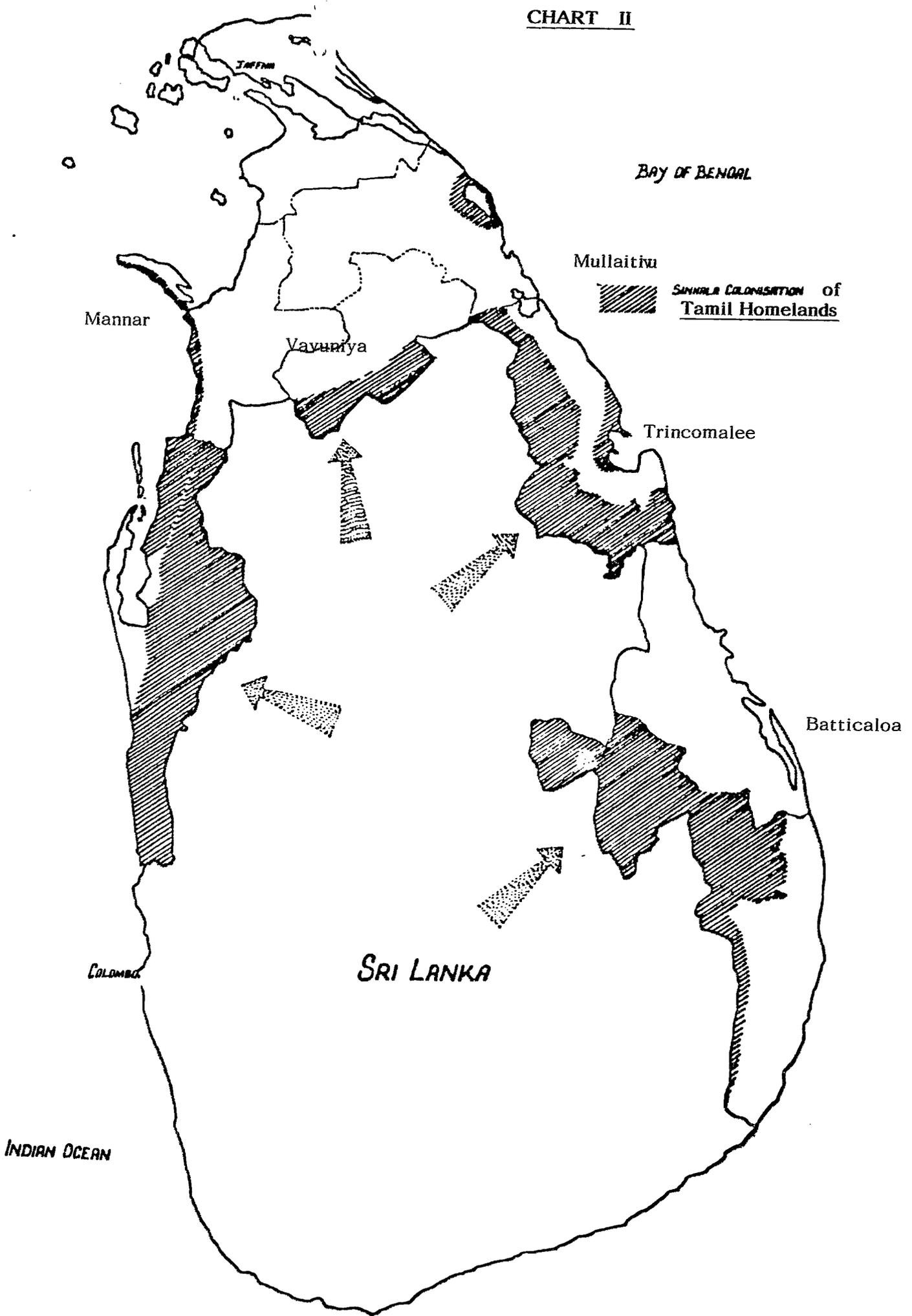
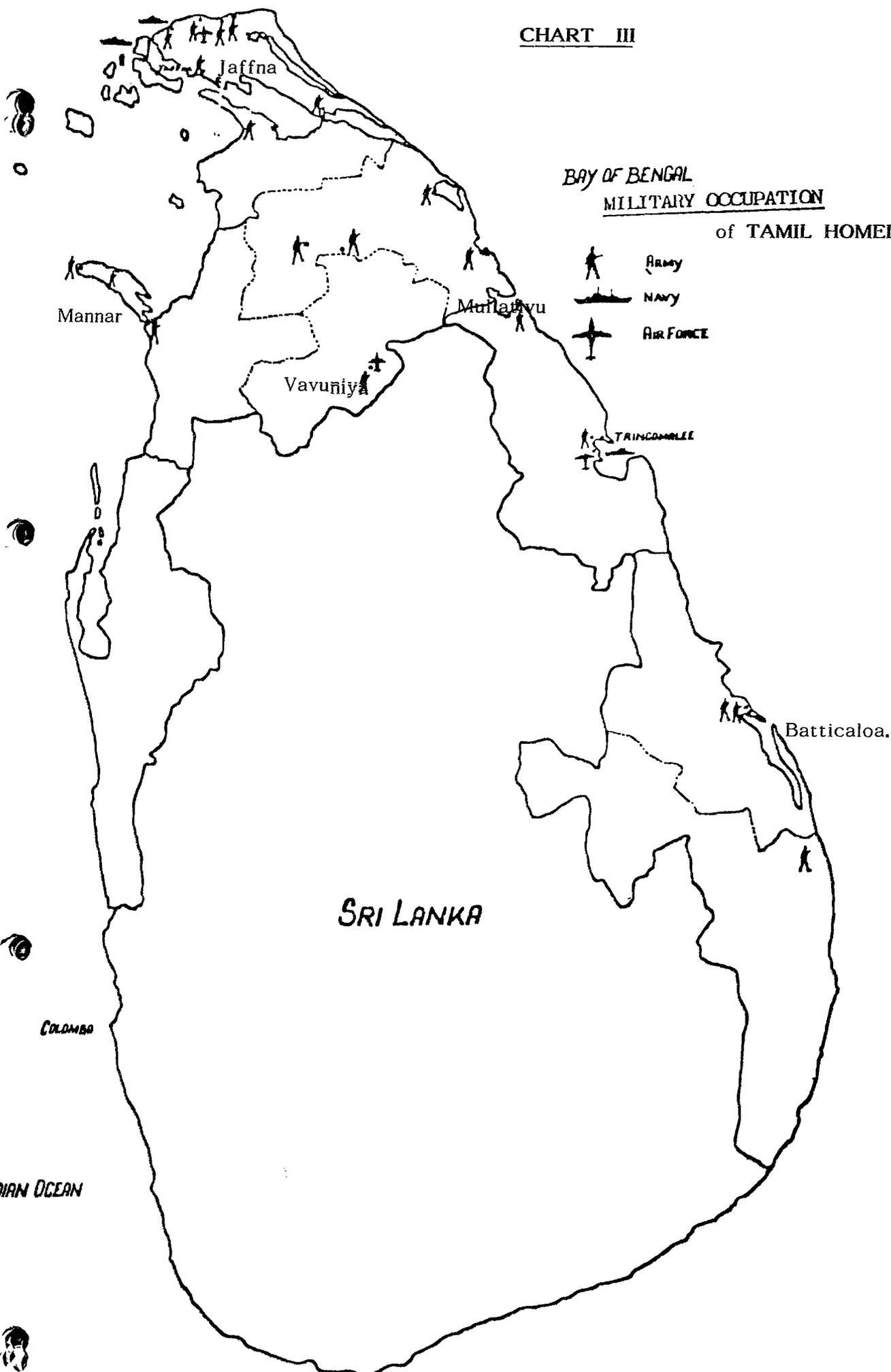


CHART III

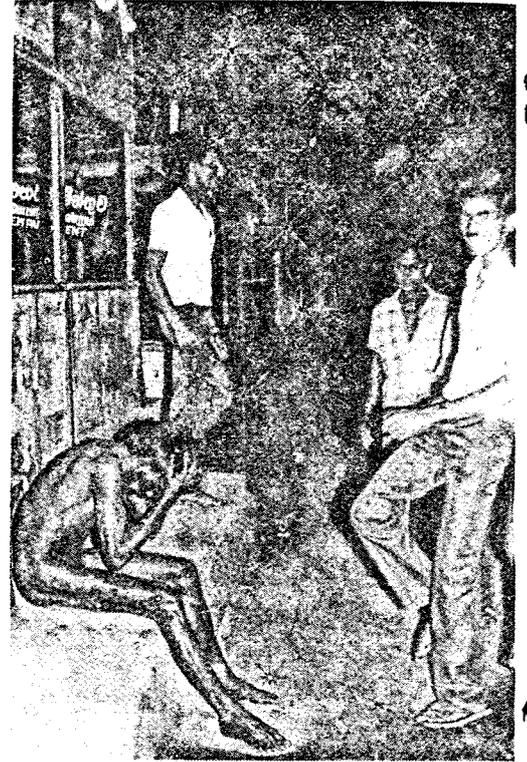
BAY OF BENGAL
MILITARY OCCUPATION
of TAMIL HOMELANDS

-  Army
-  Navy
-  AIR FORCE





Burning of Tamil Property by Singhalese Hoodums on 24th July, 1983



A Tamil was stripped naked before burning alive at Borella Junction.



Tamil Children - Victims in 1977 Pogrom



School Boys shot by Army at Manipay on 24th July, 1983.

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PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ORGANIZATION
OF THAMILEELAM (FRANCE BRANCH)