

WORLD NEWSLINE

SRI LANKA

RIOT TROOPS OUT TO SHOOT

COLOMBO — Troops authorised to shoot rioters patrolled many towns in Sri Lanka, and a weekend curfew was in force over the whole island yesterday, as a police spokesman claimed the situation was 'under control'.

Clashes which began a week ago had brought at least 14 deaths by the weekend, according to official figures. The Tamil minority have been subjected to virtual pogroms, with shops and homes attacked and looted, and many people injured.

The incident which began the current wave of violence was the killing of four people by police in the northern port of Jaffna last Monday.

The four were among a crowd on which the police opened fire, during a college carnival in the mainly-Tamil city. The police said members of the crowd had attacked plain-clothes police who they recognised among them.

Appapillai Amirathalangam, leader of the Tamil United Liberation

Front (UFL), which is now the main opposition party in Sri Lanka's parliament, said the police had started the trouble in Jaffna by provocative harassment of innocent citizens.

Rumours that Tamils had killed a policeman were spread through mixed areas last week by elements deliberately stirring up inter-communal tension.

The pogrom-stirrers also spread false rumours that Buddhist temples in Jaffna had been damaged and the Sinhalese residents had been injured or killed, in order to incite violence



Jayewardene leader of the United National Party

against Tamils living elsewhere in the island.

Under the previous Bandaranaike government, official policy deliberately played Sinhalese and Tamil people against each other, and discriminated against the latter. In particular, land policies adopted by the government earlier this year led to Tamil estate workers being displaced to make way for Sinhalese

that the communalist Tamil United Liberation Front gained support, sweeping the Tamil areas of the north during the elections last month. The official 'left' parties — the Lanka Sama Samaja and the Communist party — both discredited by long participation in the Bandaranaike government, and support for discrimination, did not even bother to stand candidates in the Tamil areas, knowing they would be wasting their time.

In the event, these parties were virtually erased from the political map in both parts of the island.

The right-wing United National Party triumphed from the bankruptcy of the Bandaranaike government, while the UFL emerged from the Tamil areas as the parliamentary opposition, pledged to making division of the island permanent through a policy of partition.

peasants, thus diverting the discontent of the Sinhalese peasantry and deliberately provoking conflicts.

Tamils who resisted were shot by police, and hired thugs employed by the then governing Sri Lanka Freedom Party, and its successor, the United National Party, were used to stage racist pogroms against the Tamils in rural areas.

It was in this situation

The current unrest reflects the bitterness and frustration of the masses, both Tamil and Sinhalese, hit by plunging living standards and unemployment, as well as the deliberate diversion of this anger by petty-bourgeois politicians stirring race-hate divisions.

Army volunteer units had been called out to back the police in patrols of the tea-growing area around Kandy by the weekend, and the town of Kegalla in a rubber-production district 50 miles north-east of Kandy.

Elected on a phoney promise of restoring freedoms taken away by the Bandaranaike regime, the pro-imperialist UNP government and its military backers needed a pretext for their real aim of stifling military-police repression against the working class. They will have welcomed the current wave of violence, which the police provoked.