

From Inside The Refugee Camp - The Horror Story

Diary of events recorded by an inmate

Wednesday 27th July 1983

5.00
p.m.

(Sri Lanka time) I decided to maintain a diary at the refugee camp in the Ratmalana Airport premises. I made this decision after seeing thousands of Thamils in a state of despair and shock after being rendered homeless due to the unexpected violence which was unleashed upon them since the dawn of Monday 25th. Many had lost their dear ones - murdered by Sinhalese savages. Young girls had lost their virginity through brutal Sinhala rapists.

I am going to start this diary in the fervent hope that some day I or somebody else would be able to get it across to the outside world - the civilised world - so that they would know the atrocities committed by people who call themselves Sinhala Buddhists.

I have been at the refugee camp since Monday night and am going to reflect back on events which had occurred in this camp since then and also on my personal experience before taking refuge at the Ratmalana Airport. I also intend interviewing other refugees of this camp and narrating their experiences here so that the world will know the real story.

Monday 25th July 1983

6.30
a.m.

I left for my work place from my house in Maharagama. When I reached the bus halting place on the main road, I saw scores of people gathered in the middle of the road. Wayside shops were burning. Two people were being assaulted by a group of men at a distance of thirty yards from me. Little did I guess that these were the early incidents of a communal holocaust. I called aside a man who was not involved in the activity and asked him what was happening. The answer was like a Jack in the box and jolted me. "They have killed thirteen of our people in Jaffna. We must avenge their deaths. We must kill all the Thamils. That is what we are doing." Realising the consequences if this man knew I was a Tamil, I quickly hurried away.

The man's words stirred my memory. On Sunday evening I had heard that a group of thirteen soldiers were ambushed and killed by a Tamil guerrilla group in the suburbs of Jaffna in the retaliation for the raping of three Tamil girls by the armed forces in the North.

Still I did not think that this was the beginning of a major riot and decided to continue on my journey to work. With great difficulty I managed to get into the bus. The bus travelled very slowly because the road was crowded with people. On both sides of the road I could see shops burning. People were screaming. When we reached the Nugegoda Junction the bus did not seem to move at all. Thugs were stopping vehicles and demanding Thamils who were travelling in them. They were armed with knives, axes -(they seemed to have an unlimited range of weapons). I peeped out of the window and I saw one thug raising an axe to fell a helpless boy. I shuddered and looked the other way. I prayed to god that nothing should happen to him. On the other side two cars were being smashed. There was what looked like a Toyota Hi-all just catching fire. Suddenly I heard blood-curdling screams. I realised to my horror that there were people in the van. Unable to look at the gruesome sight I helplessly turned my head away. A little while later a group of thugs came towards our bus. One of them asked the conductor whether there were any Thamils on the bus. The conductor gleefully pointed out a Tamil lady who was seated in front of me. Seeing the men come

towards her. she panicked and hurriedly erased the Kumkum on her forehead. (Kumkum is a sort of red powder sacredly anointed to the upper forehead of married Tamil females). One heavily bearded thug stabbed her in the stomach with a broken bottle. She started screaming and there was chaos on the bus. All of the people started getting off the bus. I hurriedly glanced back before getting down. They were pushing the lady out of the bus through the small window. I got down and mingled with the wayside Sinhalese crowd who were enjoying the fun. The lady was covered all over with blood. One of the men poured petrol on her and set her to fire. The other men were clapping and dancing. I could not believe my eyes. I was shivering all over. In all my life I had only seen funeral pyres-not humans being burnt alive. There was a procession of Buddhist monks walking towards the junction from the other end. They were waving and shouting. One of them called out to the thugs to kill all the Tamils and not to let a single one escape. I was terrified. I thought for a while and decided that the best course of action would be to get home as soon as possible. I decided to walk as it would be very dangerous to travel by bus.

9.30
a.m.

I started to walk towards my home which was about four miles from the Nugegoda junction. People were looting from the wayside Tamil shops. After the shops were completely ransacked they were set on fire. I sighted an army jeep at a distance. With a sigh of relief I hurried my steps. But a shock awaited me. There were about six soldiers on the jeep and they were directing the mob to loot and plunder. I stared in dismay. Surely they were there to maintain law and order!

10.45
a.m.

I arrived at my home in Maharagama. Nothing has happened here yet. I went into my house and started praying. After a while I took a spade and went to the back garden and dug three trenches. I then took most of the valuables in the house covered them with cloth and polythene and buried them.

11.30
a.m.

I heard a big commotion outside. I went to the window and looked out. Several government jeeps and busses belonging to the Sri Lanka Central Transport board came speeding and halted suddenly with their brakes screeching. People started alighting from the vehicles with knives and swords in their hands. There were about 200 men. They systematically started to run towards the Tamil houses. About ten people who appeared to be the leaders were holding sheets of paper in their hands. (I later came to know that they were election register lists). They were directing the mob to the Tamil houses. Two of the men were very familiar. I had seen them speak at an election meeting of the ruling government party (United national party) recently. There were three Tamil houses opposite mine. The men smashed the windows and threw petrol bombs inside. With a blaze the houses caught on fire and the flames rose to the sky. People were screaming. The fire was so intense that it compelled the mob to move further away.

11.45
a.m.

I closed the window and went inside. I lit a candle to St. Anthony to protect all the Tamils.

12.45
p.m.

I switched on the radio and tuned into the news bulletin from the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation. The defence ministry announced that a curfew would be in force from 2.00 p.m. I switched off the radio and continued to pray. I could not pray with concentration as I could hear screams in the distance.

1.30
p.m.

I was praying when I heard noises outside. I opened the window slightly and looked out. Some men were dragging two girls by their long hair. I recognised them as two sisters who lived further away. The elder Tamil girl was eighteen years old and the younger one eleven years. They were brought just near my house. The mob gathered around them and started discussing. Apparently they were discussing what to do with the girls. Then one man pulled the younger girl by the hand and started chopping her with a knife. I stared in horror. The elder girl was speechless and looked like

she had been turned into a statue. Then suddenly she fell on her knees and begged them not to harm her little sister, amidst the insane derisive laughter from the men. Then, one of the men took an axe and chopped the head off the younger girl. The elder girl looked dumbfounded. The mixed feelings of incalculable fear and horror, which she had just experienced when her little sister was killed brutally were replaced with a vague sense of helpless impassivity. She did not protest when the men stripped her of her clothes violently. She was impervious not only to the pain that was inflicted on her, but also, in her innocent ignorance, she felt no shame irreparable humiliation forced on her. It was only after about twenty men had raped her that one of the men cautioned the others and shook her up roughly. She began to scream and struggle and looked around her and realised for the first time that she was bleeding. I made an effort and continued to be a helpless onlooker. She suddenly clenched her fists and then with a sudden look of helpless surrender on her face she looked up at the sky and began to mutter under her breath. I could almost imagine her saying "Oh Lord, forgive them for they do not know what they do". She let out a sigh and swooned into unconsciousness. The men then poured petrol over her and burnt her! . This was the second time in a day that I had seen a person being burnt alive. I wondered whether we had gone into the middle ages. But I am sure the pre-historic men, the savages were much more civilised than the modern day Sinhala Buddhists.

3.15 p.m. Curfew was supposed to be in force since 2.00 p.m., but the entire area was like a carnival ground. People were carrying away looted goods. The looted goods ranged from clothing to furniture. An army truck came by and the looters made no attempt to run. Apparently they were well informed that the security forces would make no attempt to stop them.

4.30 p.m. The same activity was going on. The looters were taking their own time. Surprisingly they had not attacked my house yet. Probably because I had not registered myself in the Maharagama electoral voting list, somebody was sure to warn them that I was Tamil. Luckily, I was alone in the house since my family were already in Jaffna to attend a relative's wedding.

6.15 p.m. The crowd was lessening but still the looting was going on. I got a shock when I saw two girls carrying a pedestal fan. Another group of girls (I consider them to be in the age group 14 - 18) were carrying away bundles which I supposed contained clothes.

7.00 p.m. It was dark. Suddenly I heard knocking at my front door. I was terribly frightened. I had a feeling that death was knocking at my door. Summoning all my courage I opened the front door slightly. To my relief it was my Catholic Sinhala neighbour. He cautioned me not to make any noise and came inside. He informed me that the situation outside was dangerous and advised me to go to a refuge camp for safety. I agreed and told my neighbour to make the necessary arrangements. He told me to get ready immediately and went away.

7.10 p.m. I began to pack a small bag with a few clothes and some tinned foodstuffs. I also packed a bottle of water and put in some sheets of paper and two pens. I prayed and waited till my neighbour arrived.

7.30 p.m. My neighbour arrived and told me that a police jeep was waiting outside to take me to a refuge camp at the Ratmalana airport. I locked the front door and gave the key to my neighbour and begged him to look after my house. He said he would do so, but feared that the other Sinhalese neighbours will point out my house to the mob. I was then escorted to the police jeep that was parked a few feet away.

7.50 p.m. I was travelling in the jeep with six other Tamils. They were all living in the area where I lived. I could see houses burning. After a few minutes we saw a massive building on fire. It was the Hirdaramani garment factory belonging to an Indian. Regularly I heard screaming and yelling, but

this was a common occurrence now. The others in the jeep were silent with stark fear on their faces. I could well imagine how the Jews would have felt when Hitler of Nazi Germany sent them to the gas chamber. I could remember seeing a war film in which Jews were suffocated by gas in vehicles which were supposed to take them to the safety of refugee camps.

8.30 p.m. I arrived at the refugee camp at the Ratmalana airport. I got down from the jeep and strolled around. There were about five thousand people crowded in a hanger. This was a good measure of the intensity of the riots since the refugee camps were opened only today.

9.15 p.m. I began to feel wary after the tension I had undergone. I drank some water and went to sleep.

Tuesday 26th July, 1983

6.00 a.m. I awoke from a nights sleep at the refugee camp. Most of the people were wide awake. Children were crying with hunger. I got up and went towards a group of children who were crying and gave them the foodstuffs which I had packed in my bag.

7.15 a.m. I went around the camp. There were only three toilets and one tap for all the refugees. Most of the refugees were housed in a hanger. The rest were on the tarred area outside the hanger. There are two hangers at the Ratmalana airport. The larger one was 100 X 60 square yards (approximately) in area the smaller one approximately 75 X 40 square yards in area. The refugees were housed in the small hanger while the larger one housed the three air taxis (small aeroplanes) belonging to a private organisation. The tarred area outside the small hanger was about 100 X 60 square yards in area. The smaller hanger was open at one end to the west while the larger one open at both ends to the north and south. The two hangers were interconnected by a passage of about 10 yards in length and 5 feet in width.

8.30 a.m. I walked around the camp and observed that about 15 soldiers and 4 policemen were guarding the camp. Refugees were pouring into the camp at the rate of about 250 people per hour. There were men without wives, children without their parents, wives looking for their husbands and mothers for their children. They were all waiting in stark mute fear. There were young women yet in their nakedness, after they had been stripped on the streets. They had escaped death but not degradation. They did not feel any sense of shame, after their minds had been paralysed by what they had experienced and witnessed. They stood or wandered around the camp like so many automatons, not feeling the gaze of strangers, or the rude remarks of perverted strangers who were enjoying a grandstand view of what some of their sadistic minds had conjectured but never in reality beheld until that day.

10.00 a.m. There was no sign of food being provided for the refugees. There was no medicine available and no doctors to attend to the refugees who had been partly burnt and stabbed. One refugee had succumbed to his injuries a little while ago. The dead body was still there with no one to take it away.

12.00 p.m. People were beginning to feel the heat. There was still no food provided and refugees were queuing in their hundreds to fill their stomachs with water from the solitary tap provided.

2.30 p.m. There was still no food provided and refugees were pouring into the camp. There were about eight thousand refugees in the camp now.

- 3.00 p.m. Dr. Ariyaratne, the Sarvodaya leader visited the camp and provided some milk for the babies. He also brought two volunteers two help.
- 4.00 p.m. I heard that there was a massacre at the Walikada prison. The other refugees were saying that thirty five prisoners were killed in prison. The government says that the Sinhala prisoners had killed the Tamil prisoners. Most of the Tamil prisoners who were killed were taken into custody or were advocating a separate state for the Tamils. One refugee entered into the conservation with me and asked how it would be possible for t he Tamil prisoners to be killed without government assistance. Surely, he said " if the Sinhalese prisoners had enough power to break open their cells and find weapons, why the hell hadn't they escaped earlier instead of killing fellow Tamil prisoners an d extending their sentences. I am terribly sure solders opened the cell doors and provided them with weapons." Though I didn't say so, I heartily with him and wondered what would happen to us if the solders went berserk and! massacred us. The government w ould give some excuse to the world and hush the thing down.
- 6.15 p.m. The sun was beginning to go down but yet there was no sign of food being provided. Only milk was being provided and that too only for the children, as there was not enough sup plies. Sarvodaya volunteers distributed the milk.
- 7.45 p.m. I heard from somebody who had listened to the radio that the curfew which was in force all day today would be lifted for a few hours tomorrow. I wondered what use the curfew w as since refugees were continuing to pour into the camp. The curfew was a warning for all the Tamils to be inside their houses and the Sinhalese to loot and plunder.
- 9.00 p.m. Most of the people were preparing to go to sleep. None of them had eaten a morsel of food for the last two days. Thank God-at least the children got some milk.
- 9.30 p.m. I was so tired and hungry that like the rest I lay down and fell asleep.
- 1.00 a.m. I suddenly awoke, disturbed by some sound. Some other people too had got up. Someone had yelled or screamed in their dreams. I looked all around. The Airport control tower searchlight was sweeping the entire area systematically. I could see the beam being flashed far away. I could faintly see the outline of the soldiers who were guarding the perimeter of the airport.
- 1.15 a.m. I lay down and fell asleep.
- 6.00 a.m. I woke up and was feeling terribly hungry. I had not eaten anything since Monday morning. Most of the refugees were wide awake now. They were beginning to feel the pangs of hunger. Children were crying.
- 6.30 a.m. I met two friends while wandering around the camp. We decided to form a volunteer group to see to the welfare of the refugees.
- 7.15 a.m. We had managed to find thirty volunteers-mostly young boys and girls in the age group 18-25. We called ourselves the refugee actin committee. The girls began to prepare a lis t of the things the refugees needed most urgently. Five of the volunteers went to speak to the authorities in charge of the camp. We asked the them to provide the refugees with food or otherwise they would die of starvation.
- 8.00 We began a rough count of the refugees.

| | |
|------------|--|
| a.m. | |
| 8.30 a.m. | There were twelve thousand refugees in the camp. The volunteers were told that Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali, Minister of Trade and MP for Ratmalana will see that food parcels are provided in the afternoon. The food parcels were to be prepared by the Sri Lanka ports Authority. |
| 9.15 a.m. | We requested the authorities to clear the larger hanger and provide it to the refugees. After much persuasion the authorities conceded to our request. |
| 9.30 a.m. | Both hangers were full of refugees. Refugees were continuously coming into the camp. |
| 11.00 a.m. | Somebody who had heard the radio told us that most of the Tamil owned industries were completely distorted. Seventeen major manufacturing concerns had also been gutted-among them the industrial giants-the Maharjah organisation and the St. Anthony's group. The only major firm that escaped was the MASCONS ltd. It was very surprising because the factories situated in the same vicinity had been destroyed. Someone remarked that it was not surprising since Industries Minister Mr. Cyril Matthew-An ardent Sinhala Buddhist leader had shares in it. |
| 12.30 p.m. | Dr. Ariyaratne, head of the Sarvodaya movement came with some volunteers. As requested by the refugee action committee (RAC-I will refer to ourselves as RAC in future), Dr. Ariyaratne's brought feminine towels. They were distributed by the girls. They also distributed milk for the children-although there was not enough to go round. |
| 2.00 p.m. | Still no sign of the promised lunch parcels. Some people had fainted. There was a temporary red cross post with one volunteer. We managed to find final year medical students among the refugees and they volunteered to see to the patients. Some medicine was provided by the Sri Lanka red cross. |
| 3.00 p.m. | CARE biscuits were provided by some foreigners and they were distributed by the volunteers. They were packed in boxes on which it was written-A gift from the people of America . The biscuits were grabbed gratefully and gobbled up. On behalf of the refugees we would like to thank the people of America. |
| 4.30 p.m. | A foreigner was manhandled by soldiers and taken out of the camp. He was a journalist and had slipped in somehow. |
| 4.45 p.m. | The lunch parcels arrived. The volunteers made the refugees queue up and the parcels were distributed. There were only three thousand parcels. They were distributed to the women children and old men. |
| 5.30 p.m. | The volunteers dug pits since the three toilets were insufficient. I was writing my diary while the pits were being dug. |
| 8.00 p.m. | Soldiers began to search the refugees. The refugees were scared. They found two cameras and smashed them. Clearly the government didn't want the outside world to know what was happening inside the camp. |
| 11.00 p.m. | Dinner parcels arrived. There were not enough parcels. The parcels contained a hand full of rice, dhal curry coconut sambol. I shared a parcel with two other volunteers. We drank water and managed to fill our stomachs. All the refugees were doing the same. |

2.30 a.m. Most of the refugees were sleeping. The volunteers were awake. Suddenly we heard yelling and in the distance we could see fire brands. We wondered what was happening. We went some way down the runway. There were hordes of men carrying weapons and fire brands. We couldn't believe it. The camp was being attacked. We ran back and woke the refugees. The army soldiers shot back. A few of the mob were hit. But the soldiers initially shot in the air. After some time the soldiers managed to chase the mob off.

3.00 a.m. Nobody slept. All were terrified by the attack. It could happen again. All were talking of the refugees camp massacre in Lebanon. It had come close home.

Thursday, 28th July

6.30 a.m. Most of the refugees had not slept the previous night. They were scared to death. There was a long queue at the tap to wash their faces. The queue was about one mile long.

7.30 a.m. I met a young girl of 13 years who was crying very loudly. She had come to the camp the previous day. On Monday morning, people had come in government 504 Peugeot cars and busses to their home in Dehiwela. She was inside with her father and eldest brother. Her Mother was in Germany and the second eldest brother had gone to school. The mob had come to the gate and forcibly opened it. Since they came suddenly they had no chance to escape. The father and brother had got on the roof and began throwing tiles at the mob. The father fell down and the mob caught him and poured petrol on him. He managed to escape into the house and brought out his shotgun. He began to shoot at the legs, but the men overpowered him and set fire to him. They also caught her brother and set fire to him. Then they had cheered and made victory signs while they were screaming in pain. She was watching through the bathroom window. The mob then invited the neighbours to loot and the neighbours had come and taken all their things. She had managed to escape to the Dehiwela Police Station. She knew the inspector since he was a family friend. The Inspector said that he couldn't take any action without government orders. She had then gone to a friend's place and from there was brought to the camp on Wednesday. I put her in the hands of a volunteer's family to console her and see to her needs.

9.00 a.m. I met a lady who was dazed with shock. With great difficulty I managed to make her talk. On Monday morning, her small twin daughters aged 8 years had gone to school as usual. Her husband was in Nigeria. At about 9.00 a.m. she had heard that there was trouble and that the schools were closing early. She had hurried with great difficulty to bring her daughters from a convent school in Bambalapitiya. They couldn't get a bus, so, with her daughters she had walked home. At Kiralapone, they were stopped by a mob and asked to recite a Buddhist prayer. Since they were unable to do so as they were Tamil Catholics, they held the lady firmly and made her watch while they tied the two small girls together and threw a fire brand on them. She was made to look on at this gruesome sight. After they were completely burnt, she was set loose and chased away. I couldn't control myself when I heard her story. The Sinhala Buddhists were worse than animals.

9.45 a.m. Dr. Ariyaratne arrived. He brought milk for the refugee children and Triposha. He is such a wonderful man-a complete contrast to all the other Sinhala people.

10.00 a.m. I met a couple who were living in Borella. On Monday morning hordes of schoolboys in white uniform from ANADA COLLEGE-a leading Sinhala Buddhist school-had surrounded the Tamil houses in Borella and smashed them with stones and sticks. Then they pulled all of the Tamils out

and had assaulted them. Then some Buddhist monks from the temple in Maradana had come carrying fire brands and set fire to all the houses. I wondered what the country was coming to. The Sinhala people did not seem to have a conscience or a fear of God although they participated a philosophy taught by a god fearing leader-Gautama the Buddha.

10.30
a.m.

Mr Lalith Athulathmudali, Minister of Trade and MP for Ratmalana arrived. Hundreds of refugees flocked around him. Although they knew that there would be no assistance from the government since most of the cabinet ministers and MP's were anti-Tamil, most of the Tamils had great faith in the dapper Oxford graduate. He was considered a sympathetic moderate by most of the Tamils and therefore it was not surprising to see him surrounded by the refugees. The volunteers told him the problems the refugees had and he replied that he would personally look into them. He also informed that he would provide ships for refugees who wished to travel to Jaffna.

12.30
p.m.

Breakfast arrived. Plain bread and tea without milk or sugar.

2.30
p.m.

A foreigner drove a white jeep into the camp. He came in and began to set up two speakers and a microphone. On one side of the jeep there was label-Save The Children (UK). I was overjoyed. At last we are in safe hands. There were three soldiers looking on. They were clueless as to what was happening. Then suddenly a Colonel came (I recognised the stripes) and held him. They had a heated argument and the jeep was searched while hundreds of refugees looked on. I later came to know that he was Mr Wakely-Director-Save the Children (UK). I and other volunteers heard every word that passed between the Colonel and Mr Wakely, and am going to put it down here. Colonel :

What the hell are you doing here?

Mr Wakely : I am from Save the Children (UK).

Colonel : How did you get in here?

Mr Wakely :I have got a permit.

Colonel : Have you got any photographic equipment?

Mr Wakely : No. You can search me if you like. I have no such equipment. I have come here to organise the refugee camp. I hear they have no food and water and other basic necessities.

Colonel : All right, we'll search you, but we have got orders not to allow anyone into the camp, particularly foreigners with photographic equipment.

Mr Wakely : I am not a journalist. I am a social service volunteer. Please allow me to do my job. He was then searched.

3.00
p.m.

Mr Wakely addressed us through the microphone. One of our volunteers translated into Tamil. I will put down his speech exactly as I heard him. "I have come from Save The Children (UK)-a volunteer organisation to help to organise this refugee camp and to provide you with all what you need. I have a few volunteers from my own organisation, but I need about a 100 volunteers to help me. We must dig more pits and water wells. We must distribute stuff- foodstuffs and clothing to all the refugees. I have plenty-it is from the people of Great Britain." There was thunderous applause from the refugees. Everyone was overjoyed. Thank God for Great Britain for having such wonderful people.

3.30
p.m.

Things began to get moving. More volunteers were recruited. Drilling rigs were brought and wells were dug. volunteers started to sweep the place.

3.45
p.m.

True to his work, Mr Wakely brought lunch parcels. There were more than enough and the refugees were very happy. There was hope in their face again. Desire to live rose again. At last we had some people among us who were genuinely interested in our welfare.

- 5.30 p.m. Some bathing wells were dug and completed. There was a big rush for baths. People were having the opportunity to wash themselves after four days.
- 6.30 p.m. Care biscuits were distributed and tea was provided. Mr Wakely supervised the distribution and everything went smoothly. There was enough to go around.
- 9.00 p.m. Someone had a radio and we gathered around to hear the Presidential address to the nation. We were shocked at his speech. All the refugees who heard the speech were distinctly shocked at his speech. He seemed to endorse the actions of the majority Sinhala Buddhists. He said that he would never go against their wishes. Clearly this was a most disturbing speech. Nobody expected this from him of all people. One refugee said "After all, we Tamils voted him to represent the Colombo South electorate which was predominantly Tamil. His actions were no different to those of Hitler's. In Hitler's time, he never called himself the dictator of Germany. He called himself "The Fuhrer". Similarly, Junius Richard Jayawardene, the Racial Dictator, is calling himself the President of democratic Sri Lanka.
- 10.00 p.m. Dinner had not arrived yet and Mr Wakely was not to be seen.
- 10.30 p.m. Dinner parcels arrived. There were only 3000 parcels. Mr Wakely did not come. We were told that he was unable to come since he hadn't a curfew pass. The government had refused him a curfew pass. The news came as a big blow to us. Surely the government was not so inhuman.
- 11.00 p.m. I did not have dinner. I drank some water and fell asleep.

Friday, 29th July, 1983

- 7.00 a.m. I and some of my friends decided to trace some of our friends and relations who were in this camp. We decided to set out early and return before 2.00 p.m.-the curfew dead line . Since the situation outside was dangerous we decided to go out in groups of two.
- 7.30 a.m. We reached the main Galle Road. We managed to get into the bus. On the way we saw shops burning. At the Dehiwela my friend and I parted. He went further to trace his relatives. I went to a Brugher friend's house and had a bath and a meal and went to sleep.
- 1.00 p.m. I set out to Colpetty to trace my relatives. At Wellawatte I got caught in a traffic jam. Two cars were burning. I saw something burning on the road and realised that it was a body. People were running. Shop windows were being closed. I wondered what was happening. People were shouting. "The Tigers were coming. Tigers have come to destroy Colombo". They were referring to the Tamil guerrilla group operating in the North . Some people were being assaulted.
- 1.15 p.m. I decided to return to the refugee camp. I got into a speeding private bus. On the way back I saw several dead bodies along the Galle Road. There were cars burning.
- 1.35 p.m. I returned to the camp safely. Two boys had been burnt alive just outside the camp ten minutes ago. They too had gone out in search of their relatives and had met with a drastic end to their lives.
- 2.00 I heard the radio announcing to the public not to believe the rumours that Tigers were in Colombo.

p.m.

2.30
p.m.

My friends and I discussed the days events. One friend had gone to the refugee camp at the Bambalapitiya Temple. He told us that there were starving there and that we were better off than them. I wondered where all the foreign relief supplies were directed to. Surely, those kind foreigners did not sent them to be stacked in government officials' houses!

Another friend had been to the refugee camp at Thurstan College, Colombo 3. There at 12.30 p.m. when soldiers guarding the camp had heard the rumour that "Tigers were coming", they had selected 25 refugees and sent them to the middle and warned them that they would be held hostage and shot if the Tigers attacked the camp. We were shocked. We had all thought Hitler's firing squads were a thing of the past

4.00
p.m.

Five people were brought to the camp in an Ambulance. They were kept in a small room (earlier an airport office). I managed to get into the room. A foreign journalist was in interviewing them, He also had slipped in with them and was eyeing the door cautiously. The family consisted of father, mother, daughter and two sons. Their legs and spines were broken. The daughters hands to were broken. They were living in a house in Wellawatte just behind the Tamil cinema. On Monday morning, a mob had come and set fire to the house. They had run to the adjoining cinema and had run upstairs. The mob had come and set fire to the cinema too, the family were trapped upstairs with flames all around them. Then, the whole family had taken a suicidal leap from the second floor and landed with their spines, legs and hands broken. They were later admitted to the Kalubowila hospital just two miles away. On Friday afternoon (today) the hospital was attacked by a mob. There were many other Tamil patients there with burns and injuries. Attendants and nurses took off the saline drips, and other life giving apparatus were disconnected in sheer hatred. The mob had come to their ward and a Tamil Inspector who had come to visit them was chopped and killed when he had gone to defend this helpless family. He did not give his life in vain, because the family managed to come to this camp with the assistance of two Norwegian medical students. They had a miraculous escape for all the other patients in the hospital were killed.

6.00
p.m.

CARE biscuits were distributed.

6.30
p.m.

My friend and I went to bathe in the well.

8.30
p.m.

Mr Wakely brought dinner parcels and they were distributed.

9.00
p.m.

We turned on the radio. It was announcing that there was an unprecedented amount of deaths today due to rumours that the curfew will be imposed over the whole weekend.

9.30
p.m.

I ate my dinner and went to sleep.

Saturday, 30th July, 1983

7.00
a.m.

Dr. Ariyaratne and Mrs. Ariyaratne brought milk and Triposha as usual. Soon word got around that they had not come the previous day because they were attacked and were threatened if they helped

the Tamils. Mrs. Ariyaratne also hinted that they were being pressurised from all sides. It was quite obvious that they were helping without the government's blessing.

9.00 a.m. Mr Wakely brought hot bread for breakfast. There was tea with milk to go with it. Mr Wakely was not at all bothered by the scowling faces of the soldiers.

11.30 a.m. I met a girl who was working at a reception at Dasaparakash-an Indian vegetarian restraint. According to her , on Monday morning boys from nearby St. Peters College had come and looted the restraint.

12.00 a.m. I met two families who lived in Wallawatte. Two professors, one from the University of Moratuwa and the other from the University of Kelaniya had come along with the mob-army men and Buddhist monks. Some affected refugees-university students, clearly recognised one as Professor J.

1.00 p.m. Mr Wakely came and said that lunch would be delayed and to please excuse him. Though he didn't say so, he gave the impression that something was wrong. Soon word was going round. Mr Wakely had come in the lorry with 2 soldiers as escorts with at Dahiwela a mob had got in and sprayed something. Fearing that the food will be poisoned, as a precautionary measure, the parcels were dumped in the sea by him.

3.30 p.m. Care biscuits were distributed.

5.00 p.m. Some people were having diarrhoea. I too was not feeling well.

6.30 p.m. I was having a high fever.

9.00 p.m. Dinner parcels arrived. There was no lunch today. I couldn't eat. I swallowed a disprin and fell asleep.

Sunday, 31st July, 1983

7.00 a.m. Volunteers organised, and Catholic and Hindu devotional songs were sung. It was superbly coordinated and I was surprised and at the same time proud of the response. I too joined in although I was terribly sick.

8.30 a.m. 1500 refugees left for Jaffna by ship.

10.00 a.m. I fainted and was taken to the medical post.

12.30 p.m. Lunch parcels arrived but I couldn't eat. I lay in the sick room with high fever.

Monday, 1st August, 1983

I was in the sick room all day.

Thursday, 2nd August, 1983

I was in the sick room the whole day. The fever had gradually reduced but I was feeling very weak.

Wednesday, 3rd August, 1983

I was feeling better but I was not allowed to leave the sick room in case there was a infectious disease. A foreigner from Save the Children (UK) with a slight limp was supervising the medical post.

Thursday, 4th August, 1983

7.00
a.m.

Hurrah! I left the sick room. I began to wander around the camp. I was feeling very active now.

8.30
a.m.

I met someone who was staying at the housing scheme in Delhande, Nugegoga. According to him, government officials came in government buses. They had come armed with weapons and their leader had sheets of paper in their hands. No doubt they were electoral register lists. Soldiers, air force men and university students had lead the mob. He had recognised two Buddhist priests from the Gangaramaya Temple.

10.30
a.m.

We were informed that most of the refugees would be transferred to St. Thomas' College.

1.00
p.m.

Lunch parcels arrived.

4.30
p.m.

Care biscuits and tea was supplied. We were asked to get ready to be transferred to St. Thomas' College, Mt. Lavinia.

6.30
p.m.

We were transported during curfew time in 40 buses (1600 refugees) to St. Thomas' College. The others were left behind at Ratmalana. While we were transported although it was curfew time, people were on the Galle Road. They were jeering, hooted and clapped at us. The two army trucks which were escorting us went one in front and one behind. The soldiers did not make any attempt to stop the crowd jeering. They even threw stones. It was like Jesus being taken to Calvary.

7.00
p.m.

We arrived at St, Thomas' College

7.30
p.m.

We occupied all the classrooms in the College.

9.00
p.m. Dinner parcels arrived and were distributed. I ate and went to sleep.

Friday, 5th August, 1983

8.30
a.m. Breakfast was served. We were made to sit in the hostel dinning room and food was served on plates for the first time. We were also given forks and spoons. Dishes full of good looking food was laid on the table. Everyone was surprised. We started eating. Some men were filming us on a video camera. Now I realised why we were transferred and all the fuss was to film us and show the outside world that we were looked after very well.

12.45
p.m. Lunch was served and we were filmed again.

1.15
p.m. There was an urgent message for me. My parents had wired from Jaffna inquiring after me. They had sent a message to a Muslim friend to trace me and send me to Jaffna. I said good-bye to my friends and went off with my friends. Although I hated life at the camp, I felt sad leaving my friends and the other refugees who were all like one family to me. I am giving the diary over to a friend of mine who has friends in the United Kingdom, as he has a better chance of getting the diary across to the outside world. I have only related incidents which I have personally seen or heard. There are thousands of horror stories to be told-the murders committed by the Sinhala Buddhists. I swear by the Holy Bible that everything written in this diary is true. For security reasons-otherwise the Sri Lanka government would murder me and my family, I am not disclosing my name.