

A MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED BY THE
LIBERATION TIGERS TO THE SEVENTH
SUMMIT MEETING OF NON-ALIGNED
NATIONS HELD IN NEW-DELHI, INDIA
MARCH 7 - 15, 1983

TAMILS FIGHT

FOR

NATIONAL FREEDOM

STATE TERRORISM IN SRI LANKA

**THE HONOURABLE CHAIRMAN,
RESPECTED LEADERS OF THE THIRD WORLD,
DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES**

We wish to submit for your kind attention and urgent consideration a very grave and potentially explosive situation in Sri Lanka. It is the plight of the Tamil nation of four million people and their legitimate struggle for political independence based on the democratic principle of national self-determination. The Tamil nation was forced into this political path as a consequence of nearly thirty five years of violent and brutal oppression practised by successive Sri Lankan Governments aimed at the annihilation of the national entity of the Tamils. Decades of peaceful, non-violent, democratic political struggles to gain the very basic human rights were met with vicious forms of military suppression. The intensified military occupation of Tamil lands, the intolerable terrorism of the armed forces, the implementation of racist and repressive legislations, the mass arrest and detention of political activists - all these draconian methods were employed to stifle and subjugate the will of our people to live free, and stamp out their legitimate struggle for justice. This ever unfolding thrust of national oppression made unitary existence intolerable and finally led to the demand for secession by the oppressed Tamil people.

You are certainly aware that in the contemporary conjuncture national liberation struggles have assumed world historical significance. The right of nations to self-determination is the cardinal principle upon which many struggles for national emancipation are being fought today. It is the principle that upholds the sacred right of a nation to decide its own political destiny, a universal socialist principle that guarantees the right of a nation to political independence. The Tamil national independence struggle is fought on the very basis of our nation's right to political independence.

To the community of world nations Sri Lanka attempts to portray itself as a paradise island, cherishing the Buddhist ideals of peace and dharma, adhering to a noble political doctrine of socialist democracy and pursuing a neutral path of non-alignment. Paradoxically behind this political facade lies the factual reality, the reality of racial repression, of the blatant violation of basic human rights, of police and military brutality, of attempted genocide. Master-minding a totalitarian political system with the collusion of U.S. imperialism, the Sri Lankan ruling elite since 'independence' wielded their political power by invoking the ideology of national chauvinism and religious fanaticism and by actually practising a vicious and calculated policy of racial repression against the Tamil People. It is a tragic paradox that dictatorial regimes like Sri Lanka who stands indicted by world humanist movements for crimes against humanity could parade on a world forum with the mantle of democracy and dharma. Our objective is to expose this hypocrisy and place before you the authentic story, the story of the immense sufferings as well as the heroic struggles of our people who have no choice but to fight for dignity and freedom rather than reduced to slavery and slow death.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Tamils of the island of Ceylon (now called Sri Lanka) constitute themselves as a nation of people, forming into a coherent social entity with their own history, tradition, culture, language and economic life. The nation is popularly called Tamil Eelam. Tamils have been living in the island from pre-historic times before the arrival of the Sinhalese from northern India in the 6th century B.C. The Sinhalese people who constitute the majority nation of ten million have a distinct language, culture and history of their own. Historical chronicles document that the island was ruled by both Tamil and Sinhalese Kings. From the 13th century onwards, until the penetration of foreign colonialism Tamil Eelam lived as a stable national entity with a state structure and was ruled by its own kings. The Portuguese annexed the territory in 1619 yet ruled it as a separate national entity, as the traditional homelands of the Tamils. Dutch colonialism, which followed did not violate the national and territorial autonomy, until British imperialism in 1833 brought about a unified state structure amalgamating the Tamil and Sinhala kingdoms laying the foundation for the present national conflict. Another significant event in the British imperialist rule was the creation of an exploitative plantation economy for which a million Tamils from South India were brought as workers and settled in the island. Constituting a crucial part of the Tamil Eelam national totality, this huge mass of Tamil labourers who produce the wealth of the island yet subjected to most sinister form of racial repression.

DIMENSIONS OF NATIONAL OPPRESSION

The Sinhala chauvinistic oppression against the Tamil nation began to unfold its ugly forms soon after national 'independence' in 1948 when the British handed over state power to the Sinhalese ruling elite. This oppression was not simply an expression of racial prejudice, but a well calculated genocidal plan aimed at the gradual and systematic destruction of the essential foundations of national community. The oppression, therefore assumed a multi-dimensional thrust, attacking simultaneously on the different structural levels of the national foundation, the levels of the conditions of existence of a nation, its language, education, culture, economy and territory. As part of this genocidal programme formed the state inspired communal riots, which led to the mass destruction of life and property of the Tamils.

HALF A MILLION WORKERS DISENFRANCHISED

The first major onslaught of this genocidal oppression was directed against the Tamil plantation workers, who as the only organised proletariat wielded immense political power which the Sinhalese ruling class wanted to castigate. By enacting notorious citizenship laws (Citizenship Acts of 1948 and 1949) the Sri Lankan Government disenfranchised more than half a million Tamil plantation workers. This repressive measure reduced these people to a condition of statelessness and dehumanised them without any basic human or civil rights.

PLANNED ANNEXATION OF TAMIL LANDS

The most vicious form of oppression calculated to destroy the national identity of the Tamils was the state aided aggressive colonisation which began soon after 'independence' and now swallowed nearly three thousand square miles of Tamil Eelam. This planned occupation of Tamil lands by hundreds of thousands of Sinhala people aided and abetted by the state was aimed to annihilate the geographical entity of the Tamil nation.

REPRESSION ON LANGUAGE, EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION

Sinhala chauvinism struck deeply into the spheres of language, education and employment of the Tamils. Championing the ideology of ultra-nationalism, Mr. Bandaranayake came to political power in 1956 with the pledge to install Sinhala language and Buddhist religion as the only official language and state religion of the island. His first Act in Parliament, the Sinhala Only Act, put an end to the equality of status enjoyed by the Tamil language and made Sinhala the only state language. This infamous legislation had disastrous consequences. It forced the Tamil public servants to learn Sinhala language or leave employment. In the decades that followed all employment opportunities in the public service were practically closed to the Tamils. They were gradually rooted out from positions of power in the public sector as well as in the armed services.

Education was the crucial area in which the onslaught of racism deprived a vast population of Tamil youth from access to higher education. A notorious discriminatory selective device called "Standardisation" was introduced in 1970 which demanded higher merits of marks from Tamil students for university admissions whereas the Sinhalese students were admitted with lower grades. The present regime introduced a new scheme which turned out to be far more discriminatory than the earlier one denying thousands of deserving Tamil students the right to higher education, and created a huge army of unemployed youth.

ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION

The thrust of national oppression that penetrated into the spheres of language, education and employment had far reaching consequences on the economic life of the Tamil speaking people as a whole. For more than three decades all successive Sri Lankan Governments pursued a deliberate policy of totally isolating Tamil areas from all the national development projects. While the state poured all the economic aid into the South, while the Sinhala nation flourished with massive development programmes, the nation of Tamil Eelam was isolated as an unwanted colony and left to suffer the worst form of economic deprivation.

RACIAL RIOTS AND MASSACRE OF TAMILS

The racial riots that constantly plague the island should not be viewed as spontaneous outbursts of inter-communal hatred between the two communities. All major racial conflagrations that erupted violently against the Tamil speaking people were inspired and master-minded by the Sinhala ruling regimes as a part of the grand genocidal programme. Violent anti-Tamil racial riots exploded in the island in 1956, 1958, 1961, 1974, 1977, 1979 and in 1981. In these racial holocausts

TAMIL EELAM

BAY OF BENGAL

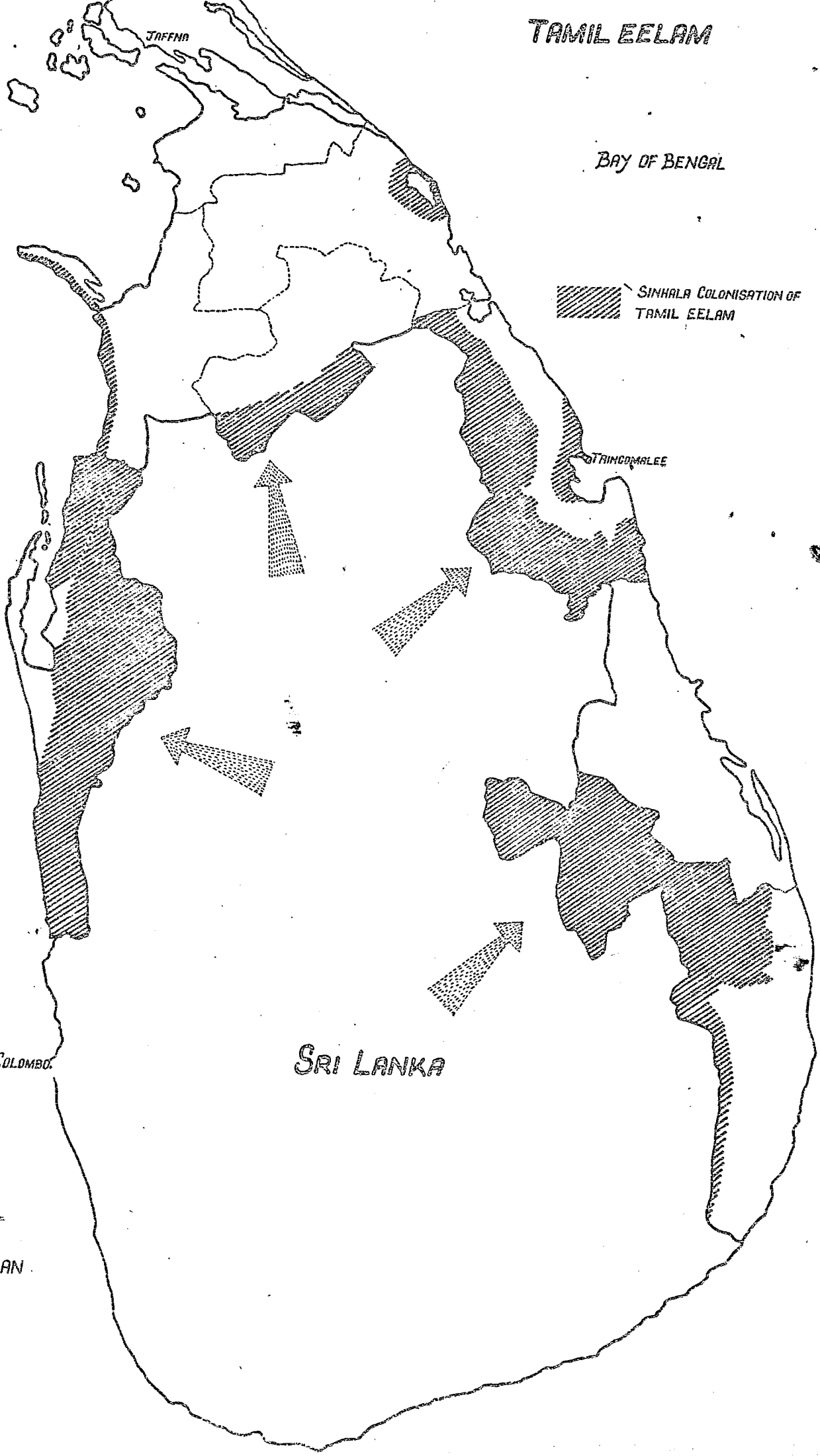
SINHALA COLONISATION OF
TAMIL EELAM

TIRINDOMALEE

COLOMBO

SRI LANKA

INDIAN OCEAN



thousands of Tamils, including women and children were mercilessly massacred, millions worth of Tamil property destroyed and hundreds of thousands made refugees. The state and the armed forces colluded with hooligans in their barbaric acts of arson, rape and murder. Instead of containing the violence, the Sinhala Government leaders made inflammatory statements adding fuel to the fire. The violent riots of 1981 showed the genocidal character of this horrifying phenomenon. It was during these riots the Sinhala police went on a wild rampage burning down the Tamil City of Jaffna, destroying completely the public library with all its treasures of historical learning, set fire to a national newspaper office and burnt to ashes hundreds of shops. The alarming aspect of this state terrorism was that it aimed at the destruction of the cultural foundations of the Tamil nation.

The cumulative effect of this multi-dimensional oppression threatened the very survival of the Tamils. It aggravated the national conflict and the struggle for secession became the only and the inevitable choice.

PEACEFUL CAMPAIGNS FOR FEDERAL AUTONOMY


Following the implementation of the Sinhala Only Act in 1956, the Tamil Parliamentary leadership organised mass agitational campaigns demanding a federal form of autonomy for the Tamil nation. The satyagraha (peaceful picketing) campaigns of 1961 was a great event in the history of the Tamil freedom struggle. This civil disobedience campaign unfolded into a massive national uprising, participated by hundreds of thousands of Tamil people, symbolising the collective resentment of the whole nation against the oppressive policies of the Sinhala rulers. Within a few months this successful satyagraha campaign paralysed the whole government administrative machinery in Tamil Eelam. Alarmed by the success of the Civil Disobedience Campaign the state oppressive machinery reacted swiftly. Under the guise of Emergency and Curfew, military terrorism was let loose on the peaceful satyagrahies. Hundreds of these non-violent agitators sustained serious injuries, and their leaders arrested. Thus, state violence finally succeeded in silencing the non-violent campaign of the oppressed; the armed terror ultimately crushed the ahimsa of the Tamils. The success of this violent repression encouraged the Sri Lankian state to utilise military terror against all forms of democratic political campaigns of the Tamils. Large contingents of armed forces were poured into Tamil areas and the Tamil nation was finally brought under military siege.

THE DEMAND FOR SECESSION

In 1972, a new republican constitution was adopted which removed the fundamental rights and privileges accorded to national minorities. This infamous constitution created the conditions for the political alienation of the Tamils and cut a deep wedge between the two nations. Confronted with steadily mounting national oppression, frustrated with the failures of democratic political struggles demanding basic human rights, the Tamil nationalist parties converged into a single movement (The Tamil United Liberation Front) and resolved to fight for political independence on the basis of the nation's right to self-determination. At the general elections of 1977, the Front demanded a clear mandate from the people to launch a national struggle to establish sovereignty in the Tamil homeland. These elections took the character of a referendum and the Tamil speaking people voted overwhelmingly in favour of secession. Thus a new historical era in Tamil politics

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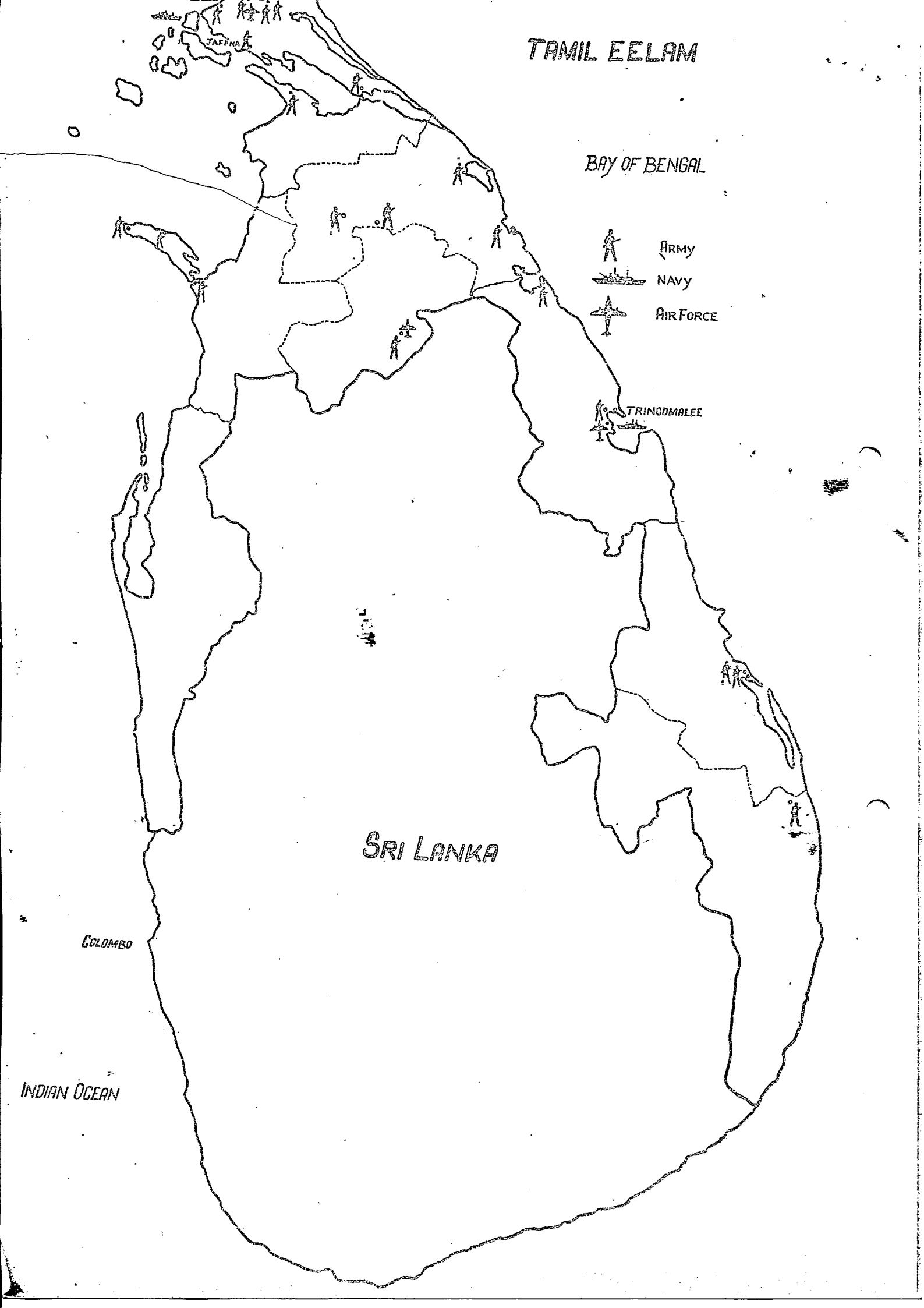
-  ARMY
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INDIAN OCEAN



began, ushering a revolutionary struggle for a national independence.

ARMED RESISTANCE AND THE TIGER MOVEMENT

The struggle for national freedom having failed in its democratic popular agitations, having exhausted its moral power to mobilise the masses for peaceful campaigns, gave rise to the emergence of armed resistance movement in Tamil Eelam in the early seventies. Armed resistance as a mode of popular struggle arose when our people were presented with no alternative other than to resort to revolutionary resistance to defend themselves against a savage form of state terrorism. The armed struggle, therefore is the historical product of intolerable national oppression; it is an extension, continuation and advancement of the political struggle of our oppressed people. Our liberation movement which spearheads the revolutionary armed struggle in Tamil Eelam is the armed vanguard of the national struggle. The strategy of revolutionary armed struggle was formulated by us after a careful and cautious appraisal of the specific concrete conditions of our struggle, with the fullest comprehension of the historical situation in which masses of our people have no choice other than to fight decisively to advance the cause of national freedom. Our total strategy integrates both national struggle and class struggle, interlinks the progressive patriotic feeling of the masses with proletarian class consciousness to accelerate the process of socialist revolution and national liberation.

The armed struggle of our liberation movement is sustained and supported by wider sections of the Tamil masses, since our revolutionary political project expresses the profound aspirations of our people to gain political independence from the autocratic domination and repression of the Sri Lankan state. To achieve the revolutionary tasks of national emancipation and socialist revolution, our project aims at the extension and transformation of our protracted guerrilla warfare into a people's popular war of national liberation.

WORLD'S CONSCIENCE CONDEMNS SRI LANKA

The development of Tamil liberation struggle into a dimension of armed resistance of the people alarmed the Sri Lankan repressive state. The Government responded with extreme repressive measures against our people, using all means in its power to crush the freedom struggle. Draconian laws were rushed through Parliament to proscribe our movement, and the state controlled media is utilized to slander the freedom fighters and all the political activists as "terrorists". Mass arrests of innocent people, trials without jury, inhuman torture, death sentences have become the order of the day.

The most notorious law is the Prevention of Terrorism Act which denies trial by jury, enables the detention of people for a period of eighteen months and allows confessions extracted under torture as admissible in evidence. Hundreds of youths are being held behind bars and subjected to torture under this draconian law. In a recent wave of repression, the Sri Lankan armed forces have arrested several members of the Catholic and Methodist clergy and prominent Tamil educationists and charged them under the Terrorism Act. This oppressive measure has caused massive outcry in Tamil Eelam, Tamil Nadu, and all over the world. The Prevention of Terrorism Act has been universally condemned by the world human rights movements, particularly by the INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF

JURISTS and by AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL as violating fundamental human liberties. Amnesty International in an appeal to the Government of Sri Lanka has expressed grave concern about those who were arrested under this law and held incommunicado. The International Commission of Jurists, in a report, has condemned the state terrorism of the Sinhala armed forces unleashed against the Tamils and has denounced the Prevention of Terrorism Act as a piece of legislation that violates Sri Lanka's obligation under the international covenant on civil and political rights.

AN APPEAL TO THE WORLD LEADERS

Our liberation struggle, as an oppressed nation fighting against the oppressor, constitutes an integral part of the international struggle, the struggle of the revolutionary forces against the forces of reaction, the forces of imperialism, neo-colonialism, zionism and racism. Though each liberation struggle has its own historical specificity and its unique conditions, in their essence they articulate a universal historical tendency of the human aspiration for freedom from all systems of oppression and exploitation. In this context, Tamil Eelam national struggle is similar in content to that of the Palestinian struggle or Namibian struggle or any national struggle of the oppressed people based on their right to national self-determination.

WE THEREFORE APPEAL TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, WHO HOSTS THIS GREAT FORUM, AND TO THE LEADERS OF THE THIRD WORLD TO SYMPATHISE AND SUPPORT THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE OF THE EELAM TAMILS. IN THE NAME OF HUMANITY, LIBERTY AND JUSTICE, WE CALL UPON YOU TO CONDEMN THE GENOCIDAL OPPRESSIVE POLICIES OF THE SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT AND TO RECOGNISE OUR PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO NATIONAL SELF-DETERMINATION.

We, the Liberation Tigers, wish to express our support and solidarity to all the revolutionary liberation struggle of the oppressed masses of the world.

POLITICAL COMMITTEE

LIBERATION TIGERS OF THAMIL EALAM