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LTTE reclaim Jaffna with a show of force

THE LIBERATION TIGERS OF TAMIL EELAM (LTTE) took control of Jaffna town in late January, following a surprise withdrawal by Indian troops. Tamil militant forces from the North-East Provincial Council (N-EPC) have also retreated from the town and the LTTE say they are in the process of restoring civil administration and amenities.

Units of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) withdrew from Jaffna town late on 27 December, to camps at Palaly, Kondavil, Kopay, Kankesanthurai and Vadamaratchchi. An uneasy peace prevailed until a LTTE attack on an IPKF patrol at Chunnakam on 31 December was answered with artillery fire that killed three civilians and injured 12 others. People are still streaming out of Indian-occupied areas.

Soldiers of the N-E PC coalition's Tamil National Army (TNA) are also leaving Kankesanthurai daily by ship for Trincomalee - the Indian-backed militants' last stronghold - and Tiger sources say they expect Indian troops to vacate the Jaffna peninsula by 15 February.

After talks with Jaffna's Government Agent, the LTTE says the civil administration and banks will shortly resume normal facilities. Shops and schools are already open and University classes have recom-

menced. In the streets there is a visible but wary optimism.

The IPKF withdrawal followed a month of shadowy reports concerning militant clashes in Jaffna with Indian forces playing an increasingly reluctant role. Civilian casualties are believed to exceed 200 following militant encounters at Pandaterippu and a series of robberies by TNA cadres at Valikamam and Myliddy.

In a major incident on 21 January, LTTE forces launched an all-day attack on an EPRLF/ENDLF camp at Ariyalai, three miles from Jaffna town centre. Indian troops with helicopter support were rushed to the area but came under heavy fire during which 11 Indian soldiers died.

Jaffna hospital was evacuated and over 100 houses were destroyed. Many civilians were killed and local sources say the LTTE supervised the burning of over 70 bodies in the same area two days later. The clash is seen as a decisive factor in the Indian decision to withdraw, fearing as they do any further escalation of hostilities while engaged in diplomatic *detente*.

Following a visit to New Delhi, Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Ranjan Wijeratne said at a press conference on 18 January that the draft of a new Indo-Sri Lankan Friendship Treaty was now under review. Sri Lanka would continue to press

for total Indian withdrawal prior to 31 March, he said, in the light of the forthcoming Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in Colombo in mid-April.

N-E PC Chief Minister A Varadaraja Perumal spent much of January locked in discussions in Madras and New Delhi seeking a way out of the political cul-de-sac facing the Indian-backed militants. He has twice postponed an end-of-January meeting with Sri Lanka's President Premadasa and some doubt he will return from the Indian capital.

Meanwhile, LTTE deputy leader *Mahattaya*, President of the new *People's Front* political party surfaced at a series of high-profile press conferences at Koliakulam outside Vavuniya on 7 January. He reaffirmed the LTTE's willingness to contest Provincial Council elections but their unwillingness to disarm or to ally with other militant groups.

After major rallies in Mannar, Vavuniya and Kilinochchi addressed by *People's Front* General Secretary Yogaratnam Yogi, it is clear that the LTTE will continue to demand the repeal of the Sixth Amendment - which demands the overt disavowal of separatism - as part of their election proviso.

Recent Indian statements no longer make "the safety and security of Sri Lankan Tamils" and the devolution of powers to the North-East, an essential precondition to an IPKF withdrawal.

There is a strong current of Sinhalese opinion that sees devolution and a merged North-East Province as tantamount to secession. If there is full devolution there must be a buffer zone between the Tamil North and East, created from the Sinhalese areas of Batticaloa and Vavuniya Districts, which preserves the interests of the majority of their inhabitants. A referendum on the continued merger of the North-East has been postponed again until June.

It is an explosive issue that will require pragmatism as well as integrity from both sides, recharging as it does, the collective unconscious of 30 years of ethnic conflict.

Refugees die in escape bid

A BOAT containing Sri Lankan refugees fleeing to south India was intercepted by the Sri Lankan Navy on 23 January, and its occupants murdered, EPRLF sources say. The charred remains of 13 bodies including women and children were found at Thikkam in Jaffna. The dead were said to be from the Myliddy and Kankesanthurai areas.

Over 100 refugees a day have been arriving in Tamil Nadu for the last two weeks. South Indian sources say members of Indian-backed militant groups and their families are fleeing the North *en masse* fearing the new LTTE ascendancy.

Relatives of *Kuttimany*, the TELO leader killed in the Welikade prison massacre in 1983, are among recent arrivals.

Sources in Geneva say a question mark now hangs over the continued repatriation of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees from south India by international refugee agency UNHCR. Other reports say UNHCR has already asked the Scandinavian countries for funds to recommence the programme. Observers believe the return of 100,000 Sri Lankan refugees in Tamil Nadu may be mandated by a clause in the new Indo-Sri Lankan Friendship Treaty now being formulated.

POLITICS

Human rights under fire

HUMAN RIGHTS hit the headlines again this month in Sri Lanka as the opposition Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) launched a full-scale attack on the Government's record and the Government responded with a propaganda offensive of its own.

In early January, the SLFP moved a Parliamentary motion of no-confidence in the Government for "acting in defiance of fundamental rights and permitting illegal para-military groups to kidnap, torture and murder citizens." Although the motion was defeated, the Opposition achieved its objective - to highlight alleged Government involvement in human rights violations.

Then in Parliament on 12 January, SLFP leader Sirimavo Bandaranaike accused the Government of training "death squads" at Ganamulle army camp. There was a conspiracy she said to murder Opposition MPs, their families and supporters. Defence Minister Ranjan Wijeratne angrily denied the charge but other SLFP sources say they have a list of 3,000 SLFP supporters killed by Security forces, the Marxist insurgent Peoples Liberation Front (JVP) and death squads, since the February 1989 General Election.

Speaking later to foreign journalists, Mrs Bandaranaike called on international aid donors to send a team to investigate the situation in Sri Lanka. State Minister for Information A J Ranasinghe promptly accused the Opposition Leader of "treason".

The international community has nonetheless expressed its concern. In mid-January the Dutch government threatened to cut its aid programme by 50% if Sri Lanka's human rights record

did not improve by June. Other foreign aid donors may also take an increasingly concerned stance on human rights.

Diplomatic sources in Colombo estimate almost 30,000 people were killed in Sri Lanka last year. Official security sources put the figure at almost 12,000 but a church worker says, according to collated newspaper reports, over 9,000 people died in the South alone.

Going on the offensive at a Press briefing a few days later, Mr Wijeratne described human rights agency Amnesty International as a "terrorist organisation" who had funded those engaged in JVP propaganda. Amnesty expressed surprise, pointing out that it funded legal assistance to fundamental rights petitioners through the Bar Association of Sri Lanka.

Observers say the Sri Lankan Government is now turning its attention to expatriate groups and foresee a major propaganda offensive against JVP and SLFP supporters overseas. As in Sri Lanka, the strategy is also designed to deflect the criticisms of human rights agencies who, inevitably in the course of their enquiries, become "guilty by association" with opponents of the Government. There is also concern over the posting of Defence Secretary Sepala Attygalle and Police Chief Premadasa Udugampola - both accused of grave human rights violations - to London and Washington as diplomats.

The UN Human Rights Commission, whose proceedings open in Geneva in late February, will doubtless receive a spectrum of representations from exiled Sri Lankans on their homeland's deteriorating human rights record. As a number of Government spokesmen have implied in the last two months, the exiles are being watched and their names noted.

Kick-starting the economy

POWER AND ENERGY Minister Festus Perera told Parliament on 23 January that repayment on International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans in 1990 would exceed US\$80 million. Sri Lanka's largest foreign exchange commitments are soft-loan rescheduling and crude oil from Korea.

The Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) has suspended fuel supplies on credit to a number of State departments including the Transport Board and the State Plantations Corporation who collectively owe the CPC, the equivalent of US\$10 million up to the end of last year. State Minister Mervyn J Cooray said the backlog posed a serious problem to CPC raising further credit from the Asian Development Bank.

Sri Lanka's State institutions seem to be fighting a losing battle against corruption and mismanagement. The National Water Supply and Drainage Board registered losses of US\$20 million earlier this month, for the fiscal year 1987 despite foreign capital grants of \$US25 million and a plethora of international consultants.

The World Bank who estimate Sri Lanka requires over US\$2.5 billion over the next three years, say the Government will limit its welfare expenditure this year to 3.5% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This is part of a stabilising package designed to halve its fiscal deficit by 1992 to 8% of GDP.

Prices continue to spiral in Kandy and Colombo with staple foods such as rice, flour, sugar and Lakspray (milk powder) rising by over 60%.

Emergency Regulations ban politics in Universities and the workplace

WITH UNIVERSITIES due to re-open in January, the Sri Lankan Government promulgated another series of far-reaching Emergency Regulations prohibiting any form of political activity in educational institutions or the workplace.

The Federation of University Teachers Association (FUTA) expressed concern over the new Public Security Ordinances which forbid all unlicensed gatherings and drew attention to 210 undergraduates currently in detention and 277 who are missing.

The Ceylon Federation of Labour (CFL) said the measures would severely restrict Trade Union activities in Sri Lanka and the functioning of workplace committees was now at the mercy of management. The insurgent People's Liberation Front (JVP) was able to control key Trade Unions through its *Satan Peramuna* (Striking Committee) and enforce a crippling series of strikes late last year.

Less than 50% of students have returned to the campuses. Many have taken

jobs while others fear the attentions of pro-government "killer squads" who decorated the lake at Peradeniya University in Kandy with the heads of 18 youths only three months ago.

There is however a backlog of 18,000 students awaiting admission from the two years of University closure. The Government plans to reinstate Student Councils, abolished in 1985, to defuse any further development of the fierce factional violence that originally brought the campuses to a standstill.

●LTTE clash with Muslim militants ●Floods wreak havoc in the East

The Tigers tighten their grip on Batticaloa

A NEW WAVE of violence has broken out in LTTE-controlled Batticaloa following clashes between the Tigers and youths from the Muslim *Jihad* movement. The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) say over 70 party members have been abducted by the LTTE - to extort money or to disarm them.

In Amparai on 30 January, when police attempted to intervene in a kidnapping case, Kalmunai police barracks were surrounded by LTTE cadres and in a subsequent incident SLMC Provincial Council member M P Mansoor was killed. The LTTE then attacked a private hospital killing 5 Muslim patients and abducting 10 people, including a doctor. Some of those killed had been hospitalised only that morning after a demonstration outside the LTTE office.

The Tigers have banned all SLMC

activities in the North and East but after urgent discussions with Sri Lankan Government representatives, have released over 50 Muslims in their custody. Three Muslim LTTE supporters were kidnapped by *Jihad* in early January.

After the rout of the Tamil National Army (TNA) last month, the LTTE now appear in full control of Batticaloa and Amparai Districts. Senior LTTE leaders toured the District in mid-January meeting Government officials, religious leaders and student representatives. Observers say shops are open until late, Government and other offices appear to be functioning normally but Sri Lankan police are confined to barracks while armed LTTE units provide civil security.

Sources in Batticaloa say the Tigers have imposed further taxes on essential items and a poll tax on certain civilian

categories. Complaints of extortion continue, particularly from the Muslim community.

The Tigers say that stern action will be taken against "anti-social activities" - dealing in pornographic video, illicit liquor, the illegal use of electricity, the hoarding of food items and the unlicensed felling of trees. Reports from Amparai say the Tigers have established a ten-member *Panchayat* or conciliation committee, in every village to handle family and land disputes.

Early in January, Batticaloa and Amparai Districts were devastated by floods and torrential rain. Roads were damaged and in Amparai a man was drowned by rising flood waters as was a nine year-old boy in Karaitivu. Most villages were flooded and people were transported by boat to higher ground.

MP A H M Aswar said at least 200,000 people lost their homes in Batticaloa, Amparai and Pollannaruwa Districts. In Batticaloa alone, more than 15,000 houses were badly damaged and 35,000 people rendered homeless. Over 50,000 acres of paddy and other crops were destroyed. Rehabilitation authorities say 62 refugee camps have been set up throughout Batticaloa District.

■ Norwegian aid representative Dag Larsson said in Batticaloa on 16 January that his government had allotted US\$9 million for relief and rehabilitation in Sri Lanka in 1990.

EPRLF leaders assassinated

GEORGE THAMBIRAJAH, a senior North-East Provincial Council (N-E PC) member and the moving force behind the conscript Tamil National Army (TNA) died in Trincomalee with three of his bodyguards on 10 January, when his jeep burst into a ball of flame following a LTTE rocket-grenade attack.

Three days later, the charred remains of Chelliah Ganeshamurthy, N-E PC Deputy Speaker and three EPRLF cadres were recovered from the Amparai Hospital grounds. According to the EPRLF news sheet *Viduthalai*, they had been taken into custody by Sri Lankan Security Forces.

Trincomalee remains tense, increasingly saturated by Indian troops and EPRLF militants, many of whom have arrived by sea from Kankesanthurai, Jaffna's port, in the last few days. The town is now a maze of barbed wire and checkpoints. Many telephone lines have been cut and fuel is available only at prohibitive prices. Many residents have already fled and those who remain are increasingly fearful. Eight miles outside the town over the Pankulam Arul river, the LTTE are already deployed in strength and appear to be biding their time.

The random killing of individual supporters of different militant factions is

now merely routine. Rajaratnam Prabakaran of Gnanapandithan Road was brutally killed, allegedly by EPRLF cadres, on 19 January.

Sri Lankan Security Forces issued firearms earlier this month to Sinhalese inhabitants of six villages on the Trincomalee-Pollannaruwa border following clashes between the LTTE and TNA cadres in the area in late December.

Police fire on Plantation workers

ONE person died and a number were injured when police opened fire on Plantation workers at Campion Estate in Bogowantalawa on 8 January. Trade Union officials condemned the attack. Billy Lawrence, manager of the Stonycliff Estate in Kotagala was shot dead the same day by unknown persons. His son was seriously injured.

A number of youths were taken into police custody in the Plantation areas in January for alleged involvement in several robberies during the last year. Three youths were arrested in Norwood and another seven in Nuwara Eliya. Sources in the Hill Country say one of the gangs operating in the area has murdered a number of young women, including an

American tourist in July 1989. The police have recovered the bodies of two victims following information provided by Ganesh, one of those arrested. He was later shot dead, police say, while attempting to escape.

Several parts of the Hill Country were badly affected by widespread flooding which caused landslides and destroyed houses. Over 9,000 people affected took refuge in Badulla town in Uva District.

In Nuwara Eliya and Maskeliya a number of line-rooms (Plantation workers' accommodation) were destroyed by floods and falling trees on several Estates. In Matale five people were killed in the ensuing chaos.

EUROPE

Feud and extortion threaten Tamil refugees in Holland

THE TEMPERATURE is rising in Holland over the activities of alleged LTTE front organisation, the Tamil Coordinating Committee (TCC), who were accused this month of intimidating other Tamil organisations and extorting money from the Tamil refugee population.

Press reports say two members of the Tamil Dutch Human Rights Organisation (TDHRO) were forced to sign a letter dissolving their organisation and were assaulted and had their lives threatened. TDHRO is widely regarded as the most independent of Tamil solidarity organisations in Holland and has several prominent Dutch MPs as patrons.

The TCC has also been accused of the systematic extortion of up to 200 guilders (US \$100) a month from the 500 or so Tamil refugees who remain in Holland. One Tamil said that other members of their family in Sri Lanka are under threat if they do not pay. There have been regular reports of extortion by LTTE sympathisers from other European countries such as Germany since 1985.

A spokesman for the Regional Crime Bureau in Stuttgart said every Tamil refugee entering West Germany was given a leaflet asking him to report attempted extortion. But the campaign has met with little success because - as in Holland - almost no-one is willing to register a complaint with the police.

In Amsterdam, the TCC said it was deeply offended by the range of accusations from TDHRO and threatened legal action. The TCC maintains it has no links with the LTTE in Sri Lanka and undertakes only cultural activities in Holland. Talks between the two Tamil associations are currently underway with the Dutch Refugee Council and international refugee agency UNHCR acting as mediators.

The controversy has come at a bad time, legal observers say, in the light of attempts to promote a positive climate of opinion on behalf of Tamil asylum-seekers in Holland. Dutch lawyers recently convinced the European Commission of Human Rights to ask the Dutch government to suspend deportation orders as an

interim measure while a number of Tamil cases were before the Commission - the first time it has made such a request. But the Dutch right-wing press is now adamant that the Tamil liberation struggle in northern Sri Lanka is being funded by social security money from Holland.

The TCC/TDHRO feud will not serve the security of Tamil asylum-seekers in Holland, given that four of the five TCC members accused of the assault on TDHRO are awaiting a Council of State decision on their refugee status.

■ Uncertainty still surrounds the forcible return of 64 Tamil asylum-seekers to Katunayake Airport, Colombo on 31 December. Some reports say their plane was turned back at Dubai while others suggest they arrived at Gatwick Airport, London and were refused permission to leave the plane.

On arrival at Katunayake, six were detained by police and the others stripped of their passports and identity documents. They were asked to report to immigration authorities in Colombo.

The hit-list grows in the South

DESPITE Government claims, there has been no sign of violence abating in the South during January. Killings, robberies and the destruction of property have continued as before.

On the first two days of the month, smouldering bodies were found in Mid-deniya and Beliatte and the Army claimed that 16 JVP activists were killed in a cave in Galaha. Eight bodies of youths were seen in a river in Wellatota in Matara District on 7 January and on 12 January, a further 15 people were killed allegedly by the JVP.

At Gallewella, Michael Nilaweera and RMM Ratnayake were killed on 12 January and their bodies burned. A hitherto unknown paramilitary group the *Black Crows* claimed responsibility. A poster near the body said "Punishment for murder, robbery and damage to Government property."

The bodies of ten people killed by pro-Government vigilantes were found by the roadside at Peradeniya on 14 January. Another 17 were found by roadsides in

Matale, the following day.

Press reports say a list of 80 names of highly-placed and influential JVP supporters has been drawn up by the National Intelligence Bureau and submitted to the Defence Ministry.

THE SRI LANKA MONITOR is part of an information processing service set up by the British Refugee Council to keep Sri Lankan refugees in Britain, Europe and elsewhere, informed about the current situation in their home areas.

If you have any information you wish to share, or any enquiries you wish to make regarding developments in Sri Lanka,

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After the death in custody last month of JVP military leader *Keerthi Wijebahu*, police also recovered a "hit-list" containing the names of 300 Security personnel, from his headquarters in Piliyandala. Press reports early in the month speculated that JVP Head of Propaganda *Shantha Bandara* had been captured in Ratnapura District. Both JVP and Security sources deny his capture and observers fear he may suffer the same fate as leaders *Wijeweera* and *Wijebahu*.

Human rights observers have expressed concern over the increasing number of incidents of rape and robbery involving police or Security personnel. Seven policemen have been charged with sexually assaulting an American woman, teaching at an international school in Colombo. In mid-January, seven other policemen were arrested in Gampaha on charges of robbery. Four policemen are already in custody for rape and abduction at Minnuwangoda. A man who attempted to rob a shop in Colombo this month was identified as a Naval officer.