

The Sri Lanka Monitor

No 29

June 1990

Produced by the British Refugee Council

A fight to the finish

SRI LANKA's fragile peace in the North-East exploded into chaos in early June when guerrillas of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) overran 17 police stations in Batticaloa and Amparai Districts, sparking off a full-scale war that left 2,000 dead in 20 days.

The clashes were the culmination of a growing trial of strength between the guerrillas and the military in the ten weeks since an Indian Peace Keeping Force left Sri Lanka in late March. Erupting out of a minor incident in Batticaloa on 11 June, Tiger units quickly took over all major police stations in the North-East and surrounded Army Camps, capturing 600 policemen and large amounts of arms and ammunition. After 11 soldiers were killed near Kalmunai police station the following day, there was heavy fighting around Army bases at Kiran and Kaluwanchikudi, which quickly spread north to Trincomalee where Tiger units attacked Palampattar Bridge and to Kilinochchi Army base which withstood a four-day siege.

Two ceasefires in the next three days quickly broke down after allegations of "unprovoked attacks" by the Tigers and "large-scale troop movements" by the Army. At a political rally in Kandy, President Premadasa warned that the Tigers would suffer the same fate as the southern insurgent JVP, crushed by the Army last year, and it was clear that the talking was over.

Three Army divisions were airlifted East and after five days of savage fighting regained nominal control of the urban centres of Batticaloa and Trincomalee. But the Tigers still hold the countryside and the conflict has hardened into a familiar pattern of guerrilla attacks and Army reprisals. Local people say over 100 civilians were killed when the Army retook Kalmunai and that there are more partly-burned bodies outside the town. In Batticaloa, the feared *talaiyati*, or hooded informers have reappeared, helping the Army identify LTTE suspects.

In the North, the LTTE quickly took Mannar, blowing the bridge to Mannar Island but are being progressively pushed

2,000 die as North-East conflict comes full circle

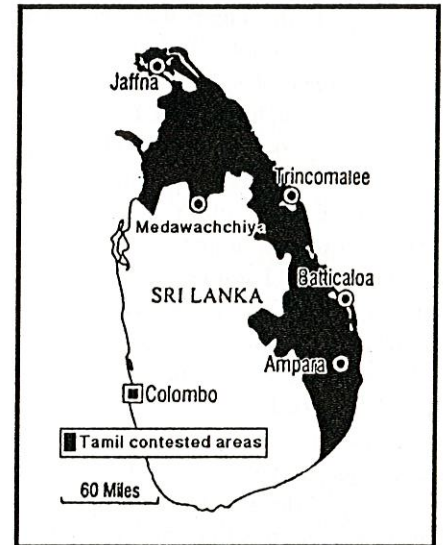
back by saturation bombing designed to relieve Army bases pinned down by guerrillas in Kilinochchi and Vavuniya Districts. The battle zone begins at Medawachchiya, 25 kms south of Vavuniya town.

In Jaffna, a two-week siege of the 17th century Dutch Fort by Tiger guerrillas has provoked regular bombing by the Sri Lankan airforce of an area one kilometre around the Fort. The LTTE say other areas of the peninsula including Manipay, Chunnakam and parts of Vadamarachchi have been bombed from the air and civilian casualties are said to be high. Over 65,000 people are said to have left their homes in surrounding areas.

In Colombo, the Government swiftly sought Parliamentary approval for supplementary estimates of Rs 2.7 billion (\$65 million) to buy arms and aircraft for the war in the North. Contributions to a National Defence Fund reached Rs 20 million (\$500,000) and thousands lined the Colombo streets in late June to enlist in the Army. There is a growing air of belligerence and chauvinism in the capital - and in the press - and Government Agents have been ordered to prevent refugees from the North-East converging on Colombo to avoid ethnic tensions.

Both sides have been accused of atrocities. Police Sub Inspector Piyaratne Ranaweera says he escaped with a head wound when 115 of the 600 police captured by the Tigers in the East were lined up and shot. Over 100 Tamil civilians were allegedly killed by the Army early in the fighting near Amparai Central Camp. The Government says 20 soldiers are seriously ill after the Tigers used poison gas in a week-long siege of Kiran, north of Batticaloa and the LTTE says many civilians died when Sri Lankan aircraft dropped napalm on civilian areas of Kilinochchi and Jaffna in late June.

Over 300,000 people displaced by the fighting are now in over 100 improvised refugee camps across the North-East and another 100,000 are said to be with rela-



tives. There are serious shortages of food and fuel and relief provisions are so far minimal. Almost 2,000 people have been killed, the majority of them civilians.

As the Army moved into the East in mid-June, President Premadasa said this was a war against the LTTE and not the Tamil people but the distinction is already blurred. Muthuvel Karunanidhi, Chief Minister of the South Indian State of Tamil Nadu and its 60 million Tamils has accused the Sri Lankan Government of "genocide" but it is already clear that New Delhi, while calling for a ceasefire, is unwilling to physically intervene as it did in July 1987.

As Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary Bernard Tillekeratne left for talks in New Delhi in early July, Defence Minister Ranjan Wijeratne said that the war in the North was now "a fight to the finish" and that no country including India could force Sri Lanka into a ceasefire. The Sri Lankan Government clearly believes that a military solution must now take precedence over a political solution to the Tamil problem. For perhaps thousands of civilians in the North, Mr Wijeratne's words will become a sentence of death.

EELAM WAR TWO

How it happened and why

WAS IT A GAMBLE or a blunder? Frustration or folly? Did the Tigers set out to start a war in the East or were they perhaps overtaken by events?

On 10 June, a Sinhalese attacked a Muslim tailor found consorting with his wife in a Batticaloa refugee camp. Camp security took both men to Batticaloa police station where the Muslim was beaten up. After hospital treatment, he complained to the Tigers who arrived at the police station late at night and took away two constables, both Tamils.

Early next morning, 250 LTTE cadres took over the police station and large quantities of arms and ammunition stored there. Five other major police stations around Kalmunai were seized by the Tigers and 11 soldiers and eight policemen killed when an Army truck approached Kalmunai police station.

The conflict spread like a forest fire across the North-East and two successive ceasefires showed neither side willing to back down. The result is *Eelam War Two*, as the press now describe it. This view contends that the Tigers, having lost patience with peace negotiations, decided to go all-out for *Eelam* - a separate state in the North-East, which has always been their prime objective. Some say the Tigers decided to throw down the gauntlet and pick up the gun precisely because Mr Premadasa was now willing to accede to their demands for fresh elections and the repeal of the Sixth Amendment.

An All Party Conference was to meet on 11 June to rubber stamp Parliament's approval and legal draftsmen had prepared fresh legislation. The hardest part of the bargain would be for the Tigers to disarm and let the military into the North-East in large numbers to police

the proposed elections.

LTTE leader Prabhakaran, it is said, feared losing control of his rank-and-file jungle cadres, visibly restless with the negotiating process and spoiling for a fight. Others say that Prabhakaran has always opposed the talks and when he saw how his unquestioned military leadership would be slowly supplanted by a political bureaucracy, he let the Tigers off their leash.

Whatever the process, there was already an undeclared war between the Tigers and the military in the North-East over the last ten weeks. The LTTE said they would administer law and order and both police and soldiers were routinely beaten up and disarmed, becoming virtual prisoners in their barracks.

The Tigers however say vast quantities of arms were stockpiled in police stations and elite police commandos transferred to the East. Over 40 new Army bases had been opened and colonisation by Sinhalese migrants of the areas around them. The military were building up to a pre-emptive strike and to teach them a lesson would only strengthen the LTTE's hand at the negotiating table.

But somewhere it all went wrong and there are still unanswered questions. What was the role of *Karikalan*, Batticaloa's hard-line but unstable LTTE leader? Did a spark of anger from him set fire to the North-East?

Some reports say the motive was millions of rupees held in various police stations and point to the killing of *Castro*, LTTE's Kalmunai Commander by Ampara leader *Kannan*, dissatisfied with his share of the spoils. But what was the money doing there in the first place? It was perhaps not then an accident, just another savage irony.

EPRLF high command murdered in Madras

TWELVE leading members of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), the Tamil militants who ran the North-East Provincial Council (N-E PC) in Sri Lanka in collaboration with an Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), were killed in a murderous attack in Madras on 19 June.

Among the dead were EPRLF's Secretary General K.Pathmanabha, Sri Lankan MP M.Yogasangari and N-E PC Finance Minister P.Kirubakaran. The

EPRLF leadership and 3,000 cadres and families went into exile in India when the IPKF left Sri Lanka in March. Also killed were three Indian nationals including two alleged members of RAW, India's CIA, and 22 others were injured.

Speculation has linked both the Tamil Tigers and the EPRLF splinter group the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) led by Douglas Devananda with the killings. Both groups have denied involvement.

Deported

Sixteen Sri Lankans en route to Italy were expelled from Yugoslavia on 7 June after police smashed a smuggling ring trading in illegal immigrants.

Stranded

After an undercover visit in mid-June, Labour Minister G.M.Premachandra, stopped all contract labour to Kuwait on discovering over 10,000 Sri Lankan housemaids were stranded in the Gulf state after being duped by employment agencies.

Death threats

Lawyer Batty Weerakoon, appearing for Mrs Manorani Saravanamuttu at a magistrate's enquiry into the death of her son, journalist Richard de Zoysa, has received death threat letters, says human rights agency Amnesty International. Mrs Saravanamuttu and Mr Weerakoon's two police guards have received similar letters. In an affidavit, Mrs Saravanamuttu named a senior police officer as one of her son's abductors. The case continues on 16 July.

Peace appeal

The British Refugee Council and 17 other development agencies with experience in Sri Lanka wrote to President Premadasa and LTTE leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran on 21 June, appealing for an immediate ceasefire, a return to negotiations and mediation by the United Nations.

Death squad

Vigilante squads made a reappearance in Colombo District when 15 partly burned bodies were found at Mabima and Wakkadawala in the Sapugaskanda police area on 22 June. Local papers described the dead as "criminals and JVPers".

Police authorities in Madras immediately rounded up over 700 Sri Lankan militants including 150 EPRLF members and observers say this signals a new crack-down on the exiles in South India.

In late June, all of the 100,000 Sri Lankan nationals in Tamil Nadu were told to register immediately with the police as well as landlords providing them with accommodation. After police harassment, many property owners have told Sri Lankans to quit their lodgings.

The Army stands its ground at Jaffna Fort

Civilians flee as Sri Lankan bombers blitz Jaffna

JAFFNA FORT, where 250 Sri Lankan soldiers and police are trapped by an LTTE siege has become the symbolic centre of the struggle for the North.

When fighting broke out in the East, the Tigers quickly took over police stations at Point Pedro, Kankesanthurai and further south at Mannar, Kilinochchi, Mankulam and Vavuniya. All policemen, according to the Tigers, were allowed to leave. Attacks on Army bases in Mannar yielded large quantities of arms but Kilinochchi and Mankulam held out against a concerted LTTE assault.

Attacks on the Fort and Palaly airbase began on 15 June, answered by shelling which killed several civilians. After ten days of stalemate, the airforce dropped thousands of leaflets over Jaffna warning residents to evacuate an area one km around the Fort and heavy bombing of the area supported by helicopter gunships followed for the next week.

LTTE sources say much of Jaffna town has been devastated including New Jaffna Market, Hospital Street and Hindu Ladies College. *Reuters'* journalists in the town say there have been heavy civilian

casualties and the LTTE claim napalm was used. Much of the civilian population were saved by bunkers dug in the last six weeks but over 65,000 people have left their homes in the peninsula.

Vadamarachchi, Manipay and Chunnakam have also been heavily bombed in late June as have hundreds of refugees inside Nallur Temple and St Anthony's Church, Pasaiyur. Local people say "barrel bombs" filled with incendiaries and scrap metal causing fearsome injuries are being used.

By 23 June, Sri Lankan forces at Palaly had retaken Myliddy and people fled to Avarangal and Atchuveli, which were also shelled. Food is now in short supply and petrol sells for ten times its normal price. At Thandiadi ten miles north of Vavuniya on 28 June, soldiers overran an LTTE bunker complex killing 40 guerrillas including the Vavuniya District leader.

Defence sources say that in a daring operation in early July, a Sri Lankan Bell 414 helicopter gunship landed inside Jaffna Fort, leaving vital supplies and lifting eight wounded men to safety. The Fort, a relic of the 17th century, has become a crude symbol of outright victory. Both sides mean to claim it - even if they have to sacrifice the population of Jaffna in the process.

Trincomalee: ordeal by fire

FIRST HAND REPORTS say half of Trincomalee's commercial quarter has been gutted - first by the retreating Tigers and then by the advancing Army.

Following the clashes in Batticaloa and Amparai, Tiger units took over police stations at Uppuveli, Kinniya and Amayapura in Trincomalee District on 13 June. As Fort Frederick and Army bases at Thopur, Thiriyai and Muthur came under attack, Commando regiments were rushed to Trincomalee to retake the town. There was fierce fighting for several days before the Tigers withdrew reportedly driving 20,000 people into the surrounding countryside.

Other reports say the majority of Trincomalee's inhabitants remained hidden in their homes as Tiger positions were strafed by helicopter gunships. Tamil shops and houses were burned down by the advancing Army and suspected LTTE sympathisers were shot. While the Army took the city, its environs remained fiercely contested through the Tigers' control of Kinniya and 40 Special Task Force commandos were killed during a clash at Muthur on 16 June. An unnamed number of civilians died when Muthur was shelled by Navy gunboats a few days later.

There are now over 30,000 refugees outside Trincomalee - Tamil, Sinhalese and Muslim, with a large concentration at Nilaveli. Some fleeing North to Mullaitivu say there have been rapes and attacks on civilians by the military. The decomposing bodies of 14 policemen abducted by the LTTE from Madathady and Uppuveli were found in late June.

While the road to Colombo is secure, the rural areas remain a battlefield. The first Tiger fortifications begin seven kms north of Trincomalee and nine soldiers were killed in a landmine ambush at Palamodai on 26 June. The city is under curfew from 1pm when house-to-house searches begin for Tiger suspects. The Army is now said to be planning a big push west into the Vanni where the Tigers are said to have strategic bases deep in the jungles and another major operation north into Mullaitivu, the LTTE's lifeline to Jaffna.

Southern Tamils fear backlash

TENSION IS GROWING amongst Tamils in Colombo and the Hill Country who fear that the new war in the North will trigger a backlash to rival 1983, when 3,000 died in ethnic riots throughout the island and countless more fled the Plantation areas.

Since 12 June, Police have been rounding up young Tamils from *chummeries* (youth hostels), hotels and temples in Colombo. Over 2,000 are said to be in custody and there are allegations of torture. Some 20 Tamils abducted by masked men from a shoe factory at Dematagoda, a Colombo suburb, have disappeared.

Over 3,000 people from the North-East arriving in the city for the St Anthony's festival are being housed in churches and community centres. Police posters have appeared throughout the capital warning people to stay indoors and not to accommodate strangers.

In the Hill Country, line rooms - Plantation workers' accommodation - were attacked at Pimbura Estate in Matugama and Kumarawatte in Moneragala District where 400 workers fled into the jungle. Two Tamils, P. Logamurthy and N. Santhosam, were abducted and killed at Lunugala in Badulla District on 21 June. Local residents blamed security forces. The following day, four Tamils were hacked to death on Bogakumbara Estate in Bandarawela.

Trade Unions have condemned the attacks and arrests in the Hill Country. Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) President S. Thondaman says the detention of Tamils in Plantation areas is a direct repudiation of the Government's assurance that the hostilities in the North-East are not directed against the Tamil people. The CWC said in late June that 50,000 workers in Uva Province would launch a protest strike.

REFUGEES

Thousands displaced in the North-East

OVER 300,000 people are now refugees in the North-East, crowded into temples, schools and community centres - caught in a no-mans-land between the Sri Lankan Army and Tiger guerrillas. Relief efforts have been hindered by the continuing fighting and figures remain uncertain. Refugee estimates for Trincomalee District range from 30,000 to 90,000.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) organised a relief column to Trincomalee soon after the Army regained control on 21 June. There is tension there in the makeshift camps already divided along ethnic lines - Tamil, Sinhalese and Muslim - and there are fears of further trouble. Many Tamils in outlying areas of Trincomalee District are fleeing north through the jungles and 40 were killed in small boats by naval shelling off Pulmoddai in late June.

There is tight security in the Palk Strait from joint Indian and Sri Lankan naval patrols and only 222 Sri Lankan refugees have arrived at Mandapam camp in Tamil Nadu since hostilities began.

Vavuniya has been badly hit by the surrounding fighting and Rehabilitation Coordinating Officer S. Nagarajah told Tamil newspaper *Virakesari* that as many as 50,000 have been affected. Bureauc-

DISTRICT	CAMPS	REFUGEES
Amparai	15	23,881
Trincomalee	17	90,000
Batticaloa	12	80,000
Polonnaruwa	9	300
Anuradhapura	9	3,639
Mannar	13	48,000
Colombo	5	751
Vavuniya	18	30,000
Moneragala	3	600
Jaffna	*	65,000
Kilinochchi	*	10,000
Mullaitivu	*	no figures

* displaced or with relatives

racy remains a barrier and initially only those with food stamps were given assistance. Shops and cooperative stores remain shuttered, looted or burnt down and food stocks supplied by the Tigers ran out in late June. Vavuniya hospital is closed and many local doctors have disappeared.

The Government issues Rs200 (\$5) a week dry rations for large families but observers say this only buys rice and wheat flour. There is a growing demand for shelter, roofing materials and medical supplies, says the Sri Lankan Red Cross.

Further south at Medawachchiya, the current frontier zone of the fighting, there are 4,000 Muslim refugees from Mannar and surrounding areas. Muslim Affairs Minister A.H.M. Azwer has promised

immediate assistance. There are almost 50,000 Sinhalese refugees throughout the North-East say national development agency *Sarvodaya* - half of them in Amparai District alone.

The Government has appointed Mr Charitha Ratwatte, Commissioner General of Essential Services with special powers to ensure adequate supplies to affected areas. But observers say current refugee figures are underestimates and since relief cannot reach areas where fighting continues there is risk of starvation and epidemic.

Batticaloa was very close to starvation until a relief column arrived in late June. Many refugees are slowly filtering back home but there is growing apprehension over the mood of the Army and the police. All males in the town between 12 and 15 were screened in a high-profile operation on 1 July and 70 arrested.

Caritas Internationalis, the Catholic Church's relief arm has appealed for \$750,000 aid for Sri Lankan refugees and the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies for a further \$500,000. Diplomatic sources say the Dutch government will shortly release \$26 million to the Sri Lankan Government in programme aid suspended in January to ease the refugee crisis.

Southern militants biding their time

POLICE in Weligama arrested ten of a revolutionary "cell" or *balakaya* of the southern insurgent Peoples Liberation Front (JVP), known as *The Gang of Thirteen* in early June. Official sources said they would be charged with involvement in 58 murders, five bank robberies and 111 cases of arson in the South.

Recent statements from the JVP allege they have lost only 20% of their strike force in the South and are biding their time. Observers say the thousands being recruited into the Army in Colombo in the growing hysteria over the war in the North will encourage the JVP to infiltrate the military as they did three years earlier. Others say the Army will use the recruiting drive to net potential subversives.

Robbery and violence continue unabated in the South despite the Army's mopping up operations and security forces have been implicated in an number of incidents.

Virugala police detained a Panagoda army corporal for involvement in a number of robberies and two former soldiers

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, contact

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ISSN 0955-5943

Funded by voluntary agencies Worldwide.
Technology by Islington Community Publishing,
c/o ISPC, Annette Road, London N7 6EX
Printed by Printco, 374 Willesden High Rd.,
London NW10

were arrested at Kokavella. A reserve Police Inspector was apprehended after robbing a house in Negombo and a reserve Sub Inspector, five reserve policemen and a member of the Home Guard were suspended at Galewella on charges of criminal damage.

Cordon-and-search operations by the Army in the Rathalwela jungles near Katagarama in the deep South flushed out a JVP hideout but only one man, named as Gunapala, was arrested with a quantity of arms and ammunition.

In Embilipitiya, the continuing focus of Army activities in the South, 22 people were arrested in late June. Another 52 were arrested in Manawella, some said to be in possession of explosives. Over 300 youths have now given themselves up to Independent Surrender Committees in the South and after investigations 30 detained at Kuliyapitiya were recommended for release.