

LTTE declares 1994 A Year Of Battles

SRI LANKA'S civil war seems destined to enter a decisive phase as the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) declared 1994 as "A Year Of Battles" while new Army chief Lt.Gen. Gerry de Silva vowed to bring victory to government forces with tough new strategies as he assumed command on 1 January.

In the lull following the Tigers' successful attack on Pooneryn in November when over 1,000 soldiers died, the LTTE propaganda machine is preparing Jaffna civilians for a major escalation in the fighting. The Tigers' political wing is holding a series of workshops on new civil defence directives while buildings are plastered with posters extolling fallen LTTE martyrs and the final battle to come. Over 3,000 Jaffna schoolboys have joined the Tigers in the weeks since Pooneryn.

LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran has stiffened his command structure, relying on many of his former elite bodyguard currently serving as district leaders. *Balraj* becomes military commander while eastern chief *Karuna* takes over the *Charles Anthony* commando brigade. The reshuffle follows the recent trial of deputy leader *Mahattaya* and 120 sympathisers accused of betraying international representative *Kittu* to RAW, India's CIA and plotting to overthrow Prabhakaran. *Mahattaya* will be executed by firing squad on 16 January. Amnesty International has appealed for clemency. Some 12 civilians convicted as traitors were executed in Jaffna on 20 December says Tamil group PLOTE. Tiger ideologue Anton Balasingham, also said to be out of favour, told Sinhalese journalists that the LTTE now had its own police force and courts of law and in a war situation people found guilty of giving information to the enemy were executed.

Over 100,000 families across the North-East need help after six weeks of heavy rains caused unprecedented flooding, destroying homes and crops, bringing hunger, disease and infection in their wake. In the driving rain, indiscriminate attacks by the Sri Lankan airforce on civilians, churches, hospitals and schools continue. Reports from the field on pages two and three.

Former military chiefs call for War Cabinet

Indiscriminate airforce bombing of the Jaffna peninsula continues. Two days after a major protest march over the bombing of St James' church in Gurunagar, six bombs fell on Pashaiyur, Sinnakadai and Gurunagar on 5 December killing 43 civilians and injuring 70. More civilians died in air raids on Vadamaratchi and Kilinochchi and a family of five were killed in Mullaitivu. Nightly shelling from Army bases on the islands west of Jaffna and the military airfield at Palaly hit Jaffna hospital on 9 December injuring a doctor and two patients. In Kodikamam three year-old Natharshan drowned in a flooded bunker, thrown in by a shell blast. Jaffna has been ravaged by six weeks of heavy rains and flooding has created new health risks from diarrhoea, cholera, malaria and flu.

Both armies are now preparing for major offensives when the North-East monsoon ends in early February. Sri Lankan forces maintain a token presence a few miles west of the ruins of Pooneryn Army camp on Kalmunai Point. The Tigers' strategic ferry route across the lagoon at Kilali now uses a more direct two-hour route since the threat from Nagathevanthurai Navy base is nullified by the three water-jet patrol boats captured at Pooneryn. Over 1,500 civilians crossed on 24 December during a break in the heavy rains to the accompaniment of distant shelling from the Army's Elephant Pass camp further east.

Sri Lankan Army chief Lt.Gen. Waidyaratne assumed full responsibility for the Pooneryn defeat, resigning in late December saying he no longer wish to command a "failing Army" - a remark he later denied. New commander 33-year veteran and Sandhurst graduate Lt.Gen. Gerry de Silva, 53, promised tough new tactics to counter the military's defeatist slump. Poorly-equipped and

badly-trained, the Sri Lankan military are currently no match for highly-motivated LTTE cadre. Lt.Gen. de Silva wants a new crack commando force of 10,000 trained to face the Tigers on the front-line. His namesake, new police chief Frank de Silva has promised a crackdown on 22,000 of Sri Lanka's 80,000-strong security forces who have deserted in the last ten years, bleeding the military of morale and equipment.

The appointment of the two de Silvas means all four armed service chiefs now belong to the island's 10% Christian minority. Continuing lack of military success will make them an easy target for a growing Sinhala Buddhist backlash created by Harvard Tamil academic Prof. Stanley Tambiah's recent book "Buddhism betrayed", which ironically charts the link between Buddhism and state violence. President DB Wijetunge's political survival also rides on some quick military victories if he is to retain the nomination for presidential elections in December 1994.

Five former service chiefs met President Wijetunge in mid-December to table a review of military shortcomings in the aftermath of Pooneryn. Their memorandum calls for a War Council or Cabinet to include senior ministers and opposition leader Mrs Bandaranaike; public services and the country to be put on a war footing; streamlining of supply logistics; a clearly enunciated military objective "to destroy the military capability of the LTTE and its sympathisers"; and a more offensive ground strategy.

In a New Year press interview, President Wijetunge offered peace talks with the Tigers but said "we should know in advance what they want to talk about". There could be no compromise of Sri Lanka's sovereignty or unitary character when there had already been unprecedented devolution through Provincial Councils said the President. Mr Wijetunge's token offer will not tempt the Tigers as positions ominously harden on both sides.

THE NORTH

Bombing the destitute

OVER 100,000 families in the North-East need help as monsoon floods wreak havoc, destroying homes and crops, bringing hunger, disease and infection in their wake.

Jaffna hospital is overflowing as diarrhoea, cholera, malaria and 'flu spread. Jaffna Red Cross has sent an urgent message to its Colombo headquarters saying over 40,000 families in the peninsula need relief assistance. Diarrhoea is spreading in Mullaitivu. Three people have died and many more admitted to Puthukudiyiruppu hospital. Over 30 irrigation tanks in the district have been breached and thousands of acres of rice lands are under water.

In neighbouring Kilinochchi over 10,000 families are displaced and 4,000 acres of paddy destroyed. Many food convoys were suspended after the LTTE attack on Pooneryn in mid-November and prices are rising steadily. Sri Lanka Red Cross Director Dr Hendeniya says the military blockade is preventing relief assistance and talks are under way with Army officials in Anuradhapura.

In Vavuniya, 3,000 families are affected and 2,500 acres of paddy at risk. This year's onion crop is completely destroyed and prices are rocketing. Refugees in the cluster of camps around Vavuniya are badly hit with *cadjan*-roofed shelters ready to collapse. Pressure is growing in camps in Vepankulam, Cheddikulam and Adampankulam on refugees repatriated from Tamil Nadu last year to return to

their home areas mostly in Army-controlled territory. Those who refuse to be resettled will not receive dry rations.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is reviewing its role of escorting relief convoys to the north after an escort vehicle driven by a Tamil employee was stopped at the Iratperiyakulam checkpoint south of Vavuniya on 23 December, with 432 petrol batteries, one of 42 items banned by the military blockade.

In the driving rain, random attacks on civilian targets by the Sri Lankan Airforce continue. In Kilinochchi on 6 December when GCE O Level exams were scheduled, three bombs fell 200 metres from the Faculty of Agriculture injuring five people including one student. Four days later, ten bombs were dropped on Kanagapuram, two miles down the Jayapuram road seriously injuring four people and damaging a rice mill.

In Mullaitivu, Sri Lankan aircraft launched a series of attacks on Alampil in late December killing over 20 Tigers and preventing an attack on a Weli Oya Army base say defence sources. In a separate incident, an infantry raiding party fired on Mullaitivu farmers returning from their fields leaving behind them a headless corpse. Three bombs dropped on Chavakachcheri on 30 December destroyed the hospital killing eight patients and injuring 58. The church was also damaged and the pastor's wife Mrs Andrani Lawrence killed.

Cyclone

Over 60 people were killed when a cyclone unleashing 80mph winds and torrential rains hit Tamil Nadu, south India on 4 December. Some 60,000 people were displaced and 30,000 houses damaged.

Impunity

A Trincomalee farmer was awarded Rs 30,000 by Colombo's Supreme Court after he was tortured at Kattaiparichchan Army camp in January 1992. Petrol was poured into his nose and mouth and he was beaten with rods and wire cables. No prosecution proceedings were instigated against Army personnel.

Imperative

German State Foreign Minister, Helmut Schafer said a political solution to the North-East conflict was now "imperative" during a three-day visit to Colombo in mid-December.

Checkpoints

Police say they have set up 17 new checkpoints on all major roads in Nuwara Eliya District to combat a LTTE drive to infiltrate the Hill Country estate sector.

Refusal

The Australian government has turned down a request for the purchase of 40,000 hand-grenades by the Sri Lankan Army in its continuing war against the Tamil Tigers.

Marooned in Mannar

CONDITIONS are deteriorating at Sri Lanka's largest refugee camp at Madhu Church in LTTE-controlled Mannar District after heavy flooding and the suspension of government food convoys when UN officials withdrew from the camp in November following a security dispute with the Tigers.

Many refugees are housed in long open-sided *cadjan* (coconut palm)-roofed dormitories, vulnerable to the lashing rain. Over 2,000 of the camp's 30,000 residents have left including 22 families who crossed LTTE lines to Army-controlled Vavuniya. Officials from UN refugee agency UNHCR planned to return to the camp in early January for a needs assessment survey but were denied permission by the Tigers. High-level negotiations with the

LTTE in Jaffna are expected shortly. Housing, sanitation, health and food security are increasingly vulnerable at the camp, Sri Lanka's most sacred Catholic shrine.

Mannar Government Agent K Ganesh says 3,500 families in the district are hit by the floods. On Mannar Island, 2,000 houses and 1,500 on the mainland are badly damaged. Over 5,000 acres of paddy are under water. Total damage exceeds Rs 6 million (\$135,000). Over Rs 100,000 worth of cooked food and dry rations have been supplied. Local people demonstrated outside the Mannar Secretariat in mid-December demanding better conditions at Talaimannar hospital. India plans to repatriate another 2,000 Mannar refugees through Talaimannar in late January.

Over 70,000 Sri Lankan refugees remain in government-controlled refugee camps in Tamil Nadu and India is anxious to kick-start its controversial repatriation programme. UNHCR has asked New Delhi to postpone and has circulated a leaflet in the camps saying it no longer functions in LTTE-controlled areas.

Further south in Puttalam District, over 12,000 families are flooded out. Over 35,000 Muslim refugees expelled from Mannar District by the LTTE in October 1990, living in flimsy huts on the Kalpitiya peninsula are badly hit. There are ominous signs of increasing LTTE activity in Puttalam after attacks this month on boats ferrying supplies to Mannar island and coastal raids on fishing villages from Tiger bases deep in the Wilpattu jungles.

■ Security fears grow over local elections

Rains wash away refugee statistics in the east

BATTICALOA Government Agent (GA) K Monagurusamy says over 40,000 families are displaced in the district and 23,000 acres of paddy under threat as floods ravage the east. Villages in Senkalady and Vellaveli are submerged and irrigation tanks at Unnichchai and elsewhere have been opened to prevent them breaching.

Local MP Pararajasingham Joseph faxed President Wijetunge in late December calling for cooked food and dry rations for those displaced. Local NGOs say over 5,000 families in the Valaichenai area have received no assistance. There is now a growing influenza epidemic and over 200 people have been treated at Batticaloa hospital.

Heavy rains have reduced fighting in

the district this month but there are growing fears over the forthcoming local elections and LTTE's response. Defence sources say a leading LTTE cadre was arrested in Batticaloa town in early December and that the military is in control. GA Monagurusamy says the security situation remains too uncertain for democratic elections. Most Tamil groups oppose the polls but will stand rather than be sidelined. PLOTE leader D Sitharthan visited Batticaloa to hold discussions with TELO, EROS and EPDP to form a united electoral front. A hand grenade was thrown at the house of local MP G Karunakaran in late December.

The feared police commando Special Task Force (STF) have taken over from the Army in the LTTE stronghold of

Vellaveli in the south of the district and trouble is anticipated. Further north, the Tigers killed four Sri Lankan soldiers in an ambush near Vakarai on 21 December. The same day, 58 LTTE suspects including seven women were arrested in Sorawila and Mannampitiya after a Sinhalese businessman was kidnapped in Polonnaruwa. LTTE local leader *Colamba Ravi* was shot dead while trying to escape say police after an abortive ambush attempt in Eravur. Three Tamil youths were also shot dead during a police operation in Kaluthavalai in mid-November.

The floods have also slowed down refugee resettlement. Batticaloa officials say almost 8,000 families were resettled in 1993 leaving 4,689 people in ten camps and over 55,000 displaced with friends and relatives. The rains have washed all the statistics away. Further south in remote Amparai District, Tamil refugees in camps in Karaitivu who visited Thirukerni to arrange returning home were threatened by Muslims from nearby villages. Over 10,000 Amparai families are affected by the floods.

New North-East Provincial Governor Lionel Fernando's first official duty was to visit refugee camps in Trincomalee District. Mr Fernando, a Sinhalese and a former Jaffna GA is remembered for his probity and is seen as a new potential intermediary with the north. One Sri Lankan soldier and three LTTE cadre died in a dawn confrontation on the Pulmoddai-Trincomalee road on 31 January.

Election fever

THE most persistent of New Year predictions says President Wijetunge will take advantage of a divided opposition and hold a general election in mid-1994, six months ahead of schedule. Presidential elections are also due in December 1994. Mr Wijetunge announced tough new Emergency regulations on 20 December, against sedition or incitement outlawing the right to demonstrate, picket, leaflet or display posters by those who "create or attempt to create discontent".

The press and opposition parties agree that regulations 25A and B are so wide-ranging that they can bring any political activity to a standstill and that Mr Wijetunge is preparing the ground for his next campaign. His hand was strengthened this month by the return of former Finance minister Ronnie de Mel to the ruling United National Party (UNP) and the appointment of defecting opposition heir-apparent Anura Bandaranaike as Higher Education minister.

Tamil party TULF again denounced plans to hold local elections in the east and Vavuniya District shortly as a "farce".

TULF leader M Sivasithamparam says free and fair elections cannot take place in the middle of a civil war with thousands of people displaced. Nominations will open on 5 January for seven days. Most Tamil parties see the polls as a prelude to a referendum to split the merged North-East Province.

Fresh elections will be called after new Governor LM Jayaratne used a technicality to dissolve the Southern Provincial Council on 30 December. The ruling opposition coalition with a majority of one was destabilised by the abduction or defection - even he is not sure - of W Francis whose absence prevented the council's budget being passed. Legal experts say the Provincial Council Elections Act provides a further four months for the council to pass a budget. There is more than one way it seems to win an election.

Colombo hangover

COLOMBO soldiered on dutifully through the gloom cast over the New Year celebrations by the LTTE victory at Pooneryn. Many Christmas parties and dances were cancelled and contributions made instead to the "Fund for Fallen Heroes" which now tops Rs 1 million. But in other sections of the capital complained a sour *Sunday Times* editorial it was more like the ballroom of *The Titanic*.

Tamils in the city, especially North-East refugees remain under threat but arrests dropped this month in the absence of any large-scale security scare and the holiday shut-down. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Dr Wimal Wickremasinghe however was taking no chances. Moving a motion to continue the State of

Emergency in mid-December Dr Wickremasinghe said, "The presence of LTTE elements in Colombo and its suburbs is evident by the large number of arrests and recoveries of explosives and arms in the city and its suburban areas in the recent past". Over 20 Tamil women were arrested in roundups before Christmas and are currently held at Bambalapitiya police station.

Security has been tightened on Colombo-bound trains and road checkpoints outside the city. Tamils fleeing the North-East are prime suspects. Two men and two women were arrested on Colombo-bound buses outside Vavuniya in mid-December. Sources say stringent new security guidelines are in preparation to prevent Tamils filtering south.

UNP-CWC alliance under threat

Power struggle in the Plantations

INFLUENTIAL Plantation trade union and political party, the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) is heading for a split after its 268-member National Council decided on 2 January to suspend General Secretary and State Industries Minister MS Sellasamy and eight Central Provincial Council (CPC) members.

The CWC set the government an end-of-the-year ultimatum in late November for solving Plantation workers' problems after CWC President and Tourism Minister S Thondaman received a cold reception from President Wijetunge over ownership of land and a minimum guarantee of 300 days work a year. A committee of enquiry by President Wijetunge into a CWC-initiated vocational training centre in Kotagala has heightened the conflict and brought the 27 year-old CWC-UNP alliance to the brink of collapse.

Mr Thondaman decided to take the battle to the Hill Country and prompted

opposition DUNF leader Gamini Dissanayake in early December to move a no-confidence motion against UNP-controlled CPC Chief Minister WPB Dissanayake. But in an unprecedented development, eight CWC councillors, allegedly instigated by Mr Sellasamy, refused to support the motion saying the DUNF leader is an enemy of plantation workers' interests. CPC Chairman Sarath Kongahage threw out the no-confidence motion. The CWC National Council chaired by Mr Thondaman then moved to deny Mr Sellasamy entry to the union's Colombo head office. Mr Sellasamy has obtained an interim court injunction against the prohibition.

The root of the conflict seems to lie in the succession to the CWC throne. Since the appointment of Mr Thondaman's grandson Arumugam as CWC's Finance Secretary two years ago Mr Sellasamy has been denied a role in decision-mak-

ing. CWC officers confirm that Arumugam enjoys wide powers and is being groomed as Mr Thondaman's successor. Mr Sellasamy alleges that Mr Thondaman and Arumugam have misappropriated millions of rupees from union funds and has instructed the banks not to honour cheques drawn by them. He has also complained to the police that Arumugam had stolen files from CWC's head office and a warrant has been issued for Arumugam's arrest.

Meanwhile the UNP, throwing its weight behind Mr Sellasamy has replaced Thondaman supporter CPC Education Minister S Sathasivam by Sellasamy loyalist A Kathiresan. Mr Thondaman has written to the UNP Secretary Sirisena Cooray saying the decision is calculated to destabilise the CWC and sabotage CWC-UNP links. Some senior UNP members are worried that a split would cost the party substantial votes in the Hill Country.

Double jeopardy

AFTER a three-year investigation of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) by a Presidential Commission of Enquiry, Mr Wijetunge announced new Emergency regulations on 22 December introducing compulsory registration of NGOs with incomes more than Rs 50,000 (\$1,000) a year and comprehensive monitoring of their finances.

The Commission's 258-page report which remains unpublished also recommends instituting a Commissioner for NGOs, a Secretariat with information centre and data bank and the formulation of a code of conduct. Selected extracts from the report leaked to the press accuse unnamed NGOs of self-seeking, embezzlement and promoting conversion to Christianity with foreign aid, a growing public controversy in recent months. The report also recommends a separate Commission of Enquiry into *Sarvodaya*, Sri Lanka's largest national NGO with projects in over 30,000 villages.

Sarvodaya's charismatic Gandhian leader Dr AT Ariyaratne welcomed the Commission's recommendation in a speech at Colombo's Malalasekara Hall saying the organisation had nothing to hide. One of the Commissioners, Human Rights Task Force Chairman, Justice JFA

Soza in a 167-page dissenting report opposed further investigation of *Sarvodaya* and Dr Ariyaratne, saying no person or institution should be tried twice. Dr Ariyaratne, who has a considerable rural political following was seen as a potential rival by the late President Premadasa who established the

Commission in December 1990. A review of the Commission's activities for the Geneva-based International Commission of Jurists in 1991 described "a litany of harassment" by police claiming to act on its behalf.

Sri Lanka's leading human rights NGO, the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) described President Wijetunge's Emergency measures as "obnoxious" and "totalitarian" and along with other community organisations like MIRJE has called for their withdrawal, for publication of the Commission's report and open debate on the conclusions.

Fundamental freedoms of association and expression are being curtailed says CRM particularly in the monitoring of financial contributions to human rights NGOs whose function is to monitor the use and abuse of state power. Those who support dissent risk reprisals. Further protests are expected.

President Wijetunge has also introduced new guidelines for soliciting and obtaining foreign aid after "irregularities and violations by a number of ministries and Provincial Councils". All foreign aid in future will be channelled through the Department of External Resources at the Ministry of Finance.

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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