

TAMIL INFORMATION



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LTTE DESTROY POONERYN ARMY CAMP

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) launched *Operation Thavalai*, a massive assault on the Pooneryn army camp and the Nagathevanthurai naval base in Kilinochchi District on 11 November. The two military bases lie only a few miles apart, west of Elephant Pass.

Sea Tigers landed near Nagathevanthurai naval base at 2.20 am in two rowing boats across the Kilali lagoon and began attacking the military's forward defence lines. Search lights in the base were smashed by gunfire. Another unit of 150 Sea Tigers landed in motor boats and entered the base. They targeted the communications building and damaged the radar and communication equipment cutting off links with other camps. Many sailors were killed in the unexpected attack and the others retreated east towards the Elephant Pass army camp.

At about the same time two Tiger units from the direction of Mannar in the south and Paranthan in the east, breached the defence lines and entered the Pooneryn army camp. The communications room and other buildings in the camp were damaged by Tiger shelling. In an hour of fighting many soldiers were killed. Col. Ranjan Silva assembled the remaining 500 soldiers and retreated west towards Sangupiddy. Thereafter the Tigers began removing the bodies and the captured arms. The Tigers found 36 Tamil prisoners locked in one room. They had been arrested during army operation *Valampuri* in October 1991 and detained in squalid conditions. Most of them were old men, women and children. Three

persons had died earlier for lack of medical treatment and two died of shock during the Tiger operation.

At dawn, military helicopters and bombers began attacking the Tigers. In Tiger counter-attacks a helicopter was damaged.

Amidst bombing the Tigers used boats captured at the naval base to ferry arms and the injured across the lagoon to the Jaffna peninsula. Early morning the Tigers announced over loudspeakers urging soldiers who fled into coconut groves and paddy fields to surrender. Another LTTE unit began attacking regrouped soldiers under Colonel Ranjan Silva, who pleaded over the radio for reinforcements. The LTTE came under heavy attack by the air force and many Tigers were killed.

According to reports, some of the high ranking military officers had decided not to send reinforcements to save the soldiers trapped west of Pooneryn. Colombo newspapers say Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe intervened and ensured that a rescue operation was launched. Meanwhile the Tigers also attempted, as a diversionary measure to infiltrate Palaly and Kankesanthurai army camps in the north of the Jaffna peninsula.

On 12 November army attempts to land on the sand banks, east of Mandaitivu was thwarted by a LTTE unit from Ariyalai which landed on the Kalmunai Point promontory west of Pooneryn. The army was only able to land at Kalmunai following LTTE withdrawal from Pooneryn. The rescue forces reached the besieged

army unit only on 13 November.

Both sides have suffered heavy losses. At least 1,000 soldiers and navy personnel are either dead or missing. The government has not been able to draw up a complete list of the dead, which has left parents in a state of shock and uncertainty. Another 435 soldiers were injured. The LTTE has announced that 411 of their cadre were killed.

There were 292 army trainees in the Pooneryn camp at the time of the LTTE attack and according to reports all were killed. Observers say the trainees had been sent to Pooneryn to prevent them deserting the army after completion of their training.

In *Operation Thavalai* Tigers captured Rs. 300 million (\$ 6 million) worth of arms and equipment, including two Main Battle Tanks, five 120 mm artillery guns and five naval boats.

Although the military expected an attack in view of *Maveerar Varam* (Great Heros Week) observed by the Tigers annually to commemorate the dead in the war, such a ferocious offensive had not been anticipated, particularly within weeks after the *Yal Devi* operation by the army in September to capture Killali and two days before the Hindu *Deepavali* festival. In the last three months the army had been interviewing Jaffna people arriving in Vavuniya, to gather information on preparation for a major offensive. *Yal Devi* was launched to discourage the Tigers from undertaking any attacks and another major military offensive on the Jaffna peninsula was being planned

for 1994. The pre-emptive strike by the Tigers has thrown the military into disarray.

Retaliatory military attacks on Jaffna peninsula began immediately. The Jaffna Government Agent's office was bombed on 13 November injuring 25 persons. Government Agent K.Manickavasagar himself was injured. On the same day St. James Church in Gurunagar was bombed killing nine civilians who were praying inside. Over 50 people were injured, seven of whom died in hospital. A woman lost her leg when a children school in Kondavil was attacked by the air force. Damage by bombs to the market and shops belonging to the Town Council in Chavakachcheri is estimated at Rs. 5. million (\$100,000). Shelling from Palaly and Mandaitivu military camps has caused extensive damage in many areas. Argentinean Puckara planes bombed Gurunagar, Sinnakadai and Pashaiyur and other areas in and around Jaffna town on 5 December killing 26 civilians

including ten people in one family at Navanthurai. The genocidal attack came between 8.30 and 9.00am while thousands of people were on the streets shopping and those killed included women and children. Seventy one other civilians were wounded.

The capture of tanks and five mile range artillery guns by the LTTE would give them an added advantage. The government seems to have other unexpected problems too. Most of the Chinese supersonic and other bombers had been at Katunayake airport from where they took off for bombing raids on the North- East. But international aviation agencies have protested against using a civilian airport for military planes and have warned Sri Lanka that air services would be suspended if the bombers were not removed. The government fears the Tigers may now target airports in the NorthEast using the captured 120 mm guns. Some observers believe that the massive loss of life

and arms would force the government to sue for peace. But hues and cries for a political solution seem to have fallen on deaf ears. The Defence Ministry has begun negotiations for immediate purchase of arms. Reports say Rs. 2,000 million (\$ 40 million) worth of arms will arrive in Colombo in the beginning of January 1994. Continuous bombing raids have been ordered, some reports say, by President Wijetunge himself, on Jaffna. According to the army the intention of bombing and shelling of Jaffna is to prevent the LTTE from launching other Pooneryn-type attacks. But the pattern of bombing and shelling show that these are nothing but revenge attacks on the Tamil population. The bombing continues despite appeals from the Jaffna Catholic Bishop Thomas Savundaranayagam and the assurance given by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe to the Jaffna Government Agent.

RESETTLEMENT WITHOUT BASIC NEEDS

Veeramunai village in Amparai District is an eye opener as far as resettlement programmes for Tamils are concerned. Two thousand five hundred and seventy six persons from 580 families were resettled on 28.03.92 in this village with the closest town being Akkaraipatru. This village was vacated on 12.08.90 when violence flared up in the area which resulted in 50 women being widowed. The fleeing villagers could not carry any of their possessions with them and sought refuge in Karaitivu and Thirukkivil where they remained in refugee camps until their resettlement.

Only one of the two former schools is now functioning to meet the

educational needs of the 720 students on roll. This school lacks a library, playground and prayer hall among others. The other school now houses the local police station.

The medical needs of the villagers are catered to by the mobile hospital service which is available three days in a week. The mobile service has proved to be totally inadequate to the impoverished villagers.

Roads in the village are in disrepair due to the long period of neglect. There is no bus service due to the state of the roads. Street lighting is the only supply of electricity to the village.

Communication is perhaps the

biggest hurdle for the villagers. Even a sub-post office has not been provided. The nearest postal facility is three miles away.

The lack of basic facilities at Veeramunai even after a year from the initial resettlement is all the more important in so far as this was the first village to be resettled by inmates from a refugee camp in the east. The lack of facilities here prevailing for over a year is bound to have an adverse impact on all resettlement schemes and therefore needs to be attended to without further delay.

TIC ACCESSION LIST

A selection of documents received by TIC in November / December 1993

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>PC 4655
1,000 killed in raid by Tigers
Sri Lanka: The Sunday Times; 21-11-93
1p.
DESCRIPTORS: Attack on army camp / LTTE / Statement / Sri Lankan Government / Statistics / Killing</p> | <p>SHR 3281
Briefing: Colombo after Premadasa: the position of Sri Lankan Tamils in southern and Central areas of the island
London: British Refugee Council; December 1993
4p.
DESCRIPTORS: Arrest / Southern Province / Detention / Statistics / Central Province / Sri Lankan Tamils</p> | <p>SHR 3266
Structural adjustment in Sri Lanka: a grassroots perspective by Charles Abeysekera and others
Geneva; ICVA, August 1993.
18p.
DESCRIPTORS: Economy / Sri Lanka / Development</p> |
| <p>SHR 4656
VOA agreements placed before people
Sri Lanka: The Sunday Times; 10-10-93
1p.
DESCRIPTORS: Agreement / Sri Lankan Government / America</p> | <p>SHR 3280
Ulakat Tamilila Manadu (Newyork) : Tamilila Nattai Niruvuvom
Madras: Pannaddut Tamiluravu Manram; 4-7-82
16p. (text in Tamil)
DESCRIPTORS: Tamil Eelam / History / Sri Lankan Tamil / Human Rights violation</p> | <p>SHR 3272
Selected parliamentary speeches of Mr. Joseph Pararajasingham from 1990 to 1992: a collection from various publications.
DESCRIPTORS: Human Rights violation / Tamil Homeland / Discrimination / Sri Lankan Government</p> |
| <p>SHR 3282
Tivuppakuti makkalin inraya nilai: aadi 1993
London: PLOT; June 1993
4p. (text in Tamil)
DESCRIPTORS: Islands / Northern Province / Situation Report</p> | <p>SGN 374
Preservation of palm-leaf manuscripts in Tamil
India: Institute of Asian Studies
23p.
DESCRIPTORS: Manuscripts / Tamil</p> | <p>SHR 3263
Vanniasingham, S
A critique of Mr. Neville Jeyawera's research on Sri Lanka-towards a multi-ethnic democracy
Jaffna: People's Forum, Jaffna; 18th June 1993
30p.
DESCRIPTORS: Sri Lanka / Political History / UP Country Tamils / Book Review / Ethnic Problem</p> |
| <p>PC 4657
Pakistani doctors to heal war wounded
Sri Lanka: The Sunday Times: 15-12-93
1p.
DESCRIPTORS: Refugee camp / Medical facilities</p> | <p>OHR 267
Gillies, David
Human Rights, Democracy, and "Good Governance" stretching the World Bank's policy frontiers
Canada: International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development; 1993
37p.
DESCRIPTORS: Human Rights / World Bank / Aid</p> | <p>OHR 264
PARINAC, the back ground
Caracas: PARINAC; 1st June 1993
13p.
DESCRIPTORS: NGOs / UNHCR / Refugees / Repatriation</p> |
| <p>PB
UTHR
Land, Human Rights and the Eastern Predicament
Jaffna: University of Jaffna; 15th April 1993
52p.
DESCRIPTORS: Batticaloa District / Ambarai District / Genocide / Polanaruwa District / Muslims / UP Country Tamils / Detention / Human Rights violation / Sri Lankan Government / LTTE</p> | <p>SHR 3261
Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees: addendum to the memorandum to the minister for immigration and ethnic affairs.
Australia: Australian Council For Tamil Refugees; August 1993
26p.
DESCRIPTORS: Human Rights violation / Negotiation / TULF / Select Committee / Ethnic Problem / Refugees / Australia</p> | <p>OHR 265
Wiseberg, Laurie S.
Defending Human Rights
Defenders: The importance of freedom of association for Human Rights NGO,s
Canada: International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development; 1993
31p.
DESCRIPTORS: Human Rights / NGOs</p> |

AERIAL BOMBING- GENOCIDE, NOT SOFT OPTION

The majestic St. James Church in Gurunagar, Jaffna with three huge domes built 132 years ago was reduced to rubble on 13 November at 7.20 a.m. by two bombs delivered by a plane which flew in formation with another air force plane. Nine people were killed and over 50 were wounded after the bombing. The Mission house, the Parish Hall and the nursery were also completely damaged as a result of this bombing.

The Catholic Bishop of Jaffna DR. Thomas Savundaranayagam has described to President Wijetunge this single act of barbarity and called for an end to such acts, compensation to victims and support for rebuilding the church.

The bombing was not a freak and uncalculated act. The Sri Lankan Government has been engaged in aerial bombing of areas solely inhabited by the Tamils since 1984. It has never carried out even, strafing let alone bombing on the ethnic Sinhalese. As early as 1971 there was an all out war to capture power by the JVP in areas inhabited by the Sinhalese. Elpitiya and Wellawaya for example were centers of insurrection and armed campaign to unseat the government. Even then the government did not resort to aerial bombing clearly because the inhabitants were Sinhalese who were bound to suffer indiscriminately. Again in the 1988-1990 period there were several areas where the Police and army were unable to contain JVP threats to government authority. Badulla, Hambantota and Anuradhapura Districts had many no-go areas for the security forces. But strafing and bombing by the air force were not ordered or demanded by anyone. The government, the security forces and the media in particular were clearly cautious against such attacks. That

it should not be directed at the Sinhalese was the inviolate rule. That it should be directed at the Tamils is the unwritten Law.

The bombardment of civilians and civil objects as a means of conducting hostilities is prohibited by international law as provided in Article 13(2) of Protocol II of the Geneva Conventions which prohibits attacks on civilians. Article 13(1) of Protocol II provides that "the civilian population and individual civilians shall enjoy general protection against the dangers arising from military operations".

. But the Sri Lankan government has blatantly violated the Geneva convention since 1984 with the acquiescence of all the countries which supply the wherewithall to enable its execution. Resorting to aerial bombing only of the Tamil population is genocide pure and simple. The perpetrators of this genocide and those who abet the perpetrators to carry it out are equally guilty. The guilt of the perpetrator and those who abet the crime can be seen in its true light from the aerial bombing of the St. James church in Jaffna.

It is because the Tamil population is defenseless against these attacks which ensures maximum effectiveness in causing casualties and destruction of property. That the LTTE is the least vulnerable to such attacks is borne out by their continuing resistance over the years; for it is clear that if all the attacks were against the LTTE, they should not be there in the picture now. Even in 1987 the Jayewardene government responded to the Indian government on 12 February and indicated that "the Sri Lankan government has never carried out military operations against civilians nor ever will". However, the air

force to be effective in the war has to target the LTTE, which needs ground intelligence which is currently non-existent. Therefore the air force seeks the soft option of indiscriminate bombing. Its accountability does not come up as every raid is claimed by the government as against the LTTE. With this claim to back them the air force continues with the soft option. At times the efficiency of aerial bombing is questioned in the media as in the case of the Kilali offensive which resulted in high army casualties. The matter was raised as to why the boats could not be destroyed by planes instead of soldiers trying to do it in a land offensive. But the tempo could not be sustained as any questioning of the effectiveness would mean that what had been claimed throughout is false.

Therefore the targeting of Tamil civilians in the aerial bombing continues. For the air force the strategy is the soft option. But for the government it is calculated genocide.

That aerial bombing is genocidal from planning to execution is vouched by a Reuter report filed by Minoli de Soysa on 21 November. Describing the ravages caused by the continuing war he quotes extensively from Dr. Daya Somasunderam one of the two psychologists in the trauma clinic in Jaffna hospital. Referring to a nine year old trauma patient the doctor says "She needs a peaceful environment. As long as she lives here and is subject to continuous bombing, she won't recover. It's like filling a bucket with a hole in it". The doctor adds that "What we are seeing are severe forms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), something that has been experienced by Vietnam veterans". On the immensity of the problem faced, his words are "Everyone is affected one way or another. We see about 100 new patients a month. Even then I

estimate that only 10 % come for treatment. At least 70% of the children are affected. It is worse for them because their personality is still unformed and it affects their development". He concludes by saying that physical injuries can

heal but mental scars cannot.

The Tamil population is mentally scarred by the continuous aerial bombing and the Reuter report confirms that the long term intention is nothing but genocidal.

A whole population is being ravaged by aerial bombing which is resorted to by the government solely because they happen to be ethnic Tamils and not ethnic Sinhalese.

SITUATION REPORT

ARREST AFTER SEARCH

Police and troops surrounded Kannankudah village in Batticaloa District on 19 November and paraded the residents at the school grounds before two hooded men. Thirteen Tamils including two women were taken to the army camp at Vavunathivu after the search.

MILITARY VEHICLES SEARCHED

Defence Secretary Hamilton Wanasinghe instructed army commander General Cecil Waidyaratne on 28 November to employ Military Police to check all military vehicles for men and material transported.

CO- OPERATIVE WAR

Co-operatives minister Mallimarachchi announced at a press conference on 30 November that chocolates, biscuits, socks, T-shirts and vests would be channelled to the soldiers in the north through the co-operative stores which had donated Rs. 100,000 for the purpose. Promising to visit Poonagari army camp the minister disclosed that providing comforts to the soldiers there is his responsibility.

AMBUSH IN VAKARAI

Operational Headquarters of the Defence Ministry reported the killing of four soldiers on 22 December by the LTTE in an ambush at Vakarai in Batticaloa District.

EX POLICEMAN KILLED

M. Ashraff of Maruthamunai, suspended from police service for not reporting for work for over two years was found shot dead on 6 December at Akkaraipatru beach in Ampara District.

TROOPS AMBUSHED

Defence Operations Headquarters reported on 2 December the killing of eight soldiers including an officer when a foot patrol was ambushed by the LTTE at Echilampathai in the Trincomalee District.

LTTE AMBUSHED

Military sources reported the killing of a LTTE member in an army ambush at Kaluwankerni in Batticaloa District on 6 November.

VOTER REGISTRATION

Muslim Affairs State Minister A.H.M Azwar took up the new rules on registration of voters with the Elections Commissioner on 20 December following the exclusion of many voters in the new list. Even a retired education officer who had served as an elections officer had been left out, according to the representations made to the minister. The minister had instructed all Muslim organisations to ensure that all eligible voters are included in the new list.

COMMANDOS ENTER PARLIAMENT

Speaker M.H.Mohamed condemned the entry on 3 December of special Army commando units into the parliament without proper authority.

SEARCH IN BATTICALOA

Villagers of Santhiveli in Batticaloa District were subjected to a search in the early hours of the morning on 8 December and were paraded before a hooded informant. Seven Tamils were detained by the security forces after this search operation.

INTERNATIONAL CONCERN FORCUSES ON REPRISAL BOMBINGS

Continuous bombing raids by the air force on distinctly civilian targets was made abundantly clear when St. James church in Gurunagar and St. Anthony's church in Pasaiyoor in Jaffna District were destroyed in air raids in November. The Kilinochchi hospital was completely destroyed by a direct hit and the Jaffna hospital buildings were damaged. Jaffna District Secretariat, the centre of civil administration was another target for aerial bombing. The loss of civilian lives exceeded 25 with

women and children included. The Government Agent of Jaffna was among the 100 persons injured.

Intermittent shell fire from several army camps in the Tamil populated areas of North East continues to take its daily toll. Death and injuries resulting therefrom go unnoticed by outsiders. Aerial bombing of places of worship and hospitals has led to mounting concerns abroad. As recently as on 6 October President Wijetunge told visiting Members

of European Parliament that civilians are not targeted. But the events in November have demonstrated that his assertions are untrue.

The World Council Churches communicated with President Wijetunge expressing its disapproval of aerial bombing. In a press release the ICRC has given details of the damage to the Jaffna hospital, a declared no-war zone of the ICRC. The Vatican has been apprised of the concern of Sri Lankan churches.

MANNAR RED CROSS OFFICIALS IN DETENTION

Four Red Cross officials from the Mannar branch who went to Colombo for official purposes are held in detention from 30 August. President of the branch A.A.E. Loganathan, Vice President I.C.A. John Bosco, Secretary A. Pathmanatha Cruz and member of the governing body S. Mariampillai are held by Crime Detection Bureau without being produced in courts.

The local branch of the Red Cross has appealed to President of the Ceylon Red Cross and other concerned authorities for their release or early trial.

DENIAL OF MEDICINES CLAIMS OVER THOUSAND LIVES

Statistics at the Jaffna hospital indicate that 1,949 patients died in the hospital in 1993. The majority of the patients succumbed as a result of :-

Injuries from shelling, bombing and attacks while at sea
diarrhoea
malaria
cholera
influenza
malnutrition

The lack of medicines and vaccines has contributed to a large measure in the high incidence of patient deaths. Septicaemia fever alone claimed 15 lives within two weeks in December.

TAMIL VOTERS DISCRIMINATED

The Elections Department has sent out electoral register application forms in Sinhala only to Tamil voters. When this matter was brought to the notice of Desmond Fernando, Chairman of the Official Languages Commission he wrote to the Elections Commissioner that his act contravenes section 22 (2) (a) of the Constitution which allows for citizens to transact official business in the Tamil language.

This incident is another example of how even constitutional provisions relating to Tamils are routinely disregarded by government departments and their officials. Observers believe that such acts are attempts to deny franchise to the Tamil population in the Presidential and General election year.

IDENTITY DOCUMENTS

President Wijetunge ordered urgent action on 5 December for the issue of identity cards to the Tamils in the Hill country.

STATISTICS OF DESERTERS

A defence source indicated the total number deserters from the forces since the beginning of the northeast war as 9,717. The officer ranks included in this total was revealed as 366. Attempts made to persuade the deserters to return by an offer of amnesty have failed to yield results.

JOURNALISTS VISIT PALALY

Journalists flown on 15 November to assess the Poonagarai battle were instead shown around Palaly camp in Jaffna from where injured troops were being ferried by air force planes to Colombo.

NOVEMBER DIARY

NOVEMBER 01

CHOLERA EPIDEMIC: Health authorities reported over 150 cases of cholera in the Jaffna peninsula. Another 300 cases are suspected. Nine deaths have been reported and three of them confirmed as victims of cholera.

NOVEMBER 02

POSTERS AGAINST ATTORNEY GENERAL: Posters sprang up on the walls of Colombo city calling for the removal of Tilak Marapane for his role in the alleged abetment of police crimes, including sexual crimes against women.

NOVEMBER 03

SPEAKER'S PEACE MISSION: Parliament Speaker M.H. Mohamed disclosed that he was prepared to go on a peace mission to Jaffna for talks with the LTTE if he could meet with LTTE leader V.Prabhakaran.

NOVEMBER 04

TAMILS IN UDAPPU HARASSED AGAIN: Police and troops surrounded Udappu village in the Puttalam District at 4.a.m. and conducted a search operation until 9.30 a.m.. separating visitors from residents. Three long-standing residents were arrested and taken to Puttalam.

NOVEMBER 05

AUSTRALIAN INTEREST: Second Secretary Patrick Dennis of the Australian High Commission in Colombo on a visit to Vavuniya inspected the refugee camp at Veppankulam. After visiting Koolankulam village he had talks with rehabilitation officials and NGOs.

NOVEMBER 06

JOURNALIST AND DEATH THREAT: Iqbal Athas, defence correspondent of Sunday Times, already under a death threat from Army Commander Cecil Waidyaratne received a wreath

from the Sinha regiment of the Sri Lankan army.

NOVEMBER 07

LTTE LOSSES: Operational headquarters of the Defence Ministry reported that five LTTE men were killed in a confrontation with the army at Unnichai in Batticaloa District. Rifles, radios, hand grenades and ammunition had been recovered in this incident.

NOVEMBER 08

TELO TAKES TO THE SEA: After a meeting with Defence Secretary Hamilton Wanasinghe over the fishing rights of the Mannar folk it was decided that TELO cadres would accompany the fishermen in Mannar to prevent their being apprehended by the navy as LTTE suspects.

NOVEMBER 09

DEMAND TO END EMERGENCY: Five opposition parties held a demonstration in Colombo demanding an end to emergency rule and for the contolling of the rise in cost of living.

NOVEMBER 10

TAMIL ABDUCTED: S.Mehanathan (29yrs) a body guard of Suresh Premachandran MP was abducted from a bus near the MPs hostel in Colombo by unidentified persons and taken in a jeep that followed the bus.

UNHCR SUSPENDS

ACTIVITIES: UNHCR announced the suspension of its activities in the North citing the security of its personnel as the reason for this decision. The decision followed a demonstration by Madhu camp reugees demanding dry rations.

NOVEMBER 11

DEFENCE LEVY INCREASED: A proposal in the budget presented in parliament has increased the defence levy from 3% to 3.5% and the additional revenue expected

therefrom is Rs.1225 Million (\$ 24.5 million). The entire opposition except four MPs walked out in protest at the budget not being presented by a cabinet minister.

NOVEMBER 12

CURFEW IMPOSED: An indefinite curfew was imposed in the whole of the Northern Province from 5p.m..

NOVEMBER 13

POSTING ON POONAGARI: Operational Headquarters of the defence ministry disclosed that three attempts by LTTE to dislodge troops from Poonagari had been beaten back thus enabling a consolidation of the position by the troops. This report also indicated that fifteen LTTE infiltrators had been killed at Palaly in Jaffna District.

NOVEMBER 14

UN SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE: Francis Deng the UN Secretary General's Special Representative on Internally Displaced Persons visited the Batticaloa District secretariat and met government officials and NGOs to study at first-hand the problems of the displaced persons in the district.

NOVEMBER 15

REPRISAL AIR RAID ON HOSPITAL: The district hospital at Kilinochchi was targeted by air force planes and bombing raids resulted in the death of three expectant mothers at the maternity ward.

PRESIDENT ON POONAGARI:

President Wijetunge appealed on state radio for calm in the south over the heavy troop death toll at Poonagari.

NOVEMBER 16

LTTE BOATS HIT: Security sources reported the destruction of three LTTE boats in the Jaffna lagoon by air force planes.

NOVEMBER DIARY

NOVEMBER 17

POONAGARI COUNT: Defence Secretary Hamilton Wanasinghe said that 60 to 70 from among the 105 servicemen listed missing could be captives of the LTTE. Bodies of 94 men including 6 officers had been recovered and bodies of 187 men had been cremated by the LTTE according to this report.

NOVEMBER 18

ASHES OF THE FALLEN: One hundred and eighty seven urns containing the ashes of cremated security personnel were handed over to the ICRC by the LTTE in Jaffna and Kilinochchi.

NOVEMBER 19

ABDUCTION AND KILLING: The bodies of Perinparajah and Vetrivel from Kiran in Batticaloa District were recovered. The two youths had been abducted the previous day from the local temple where they were attending a religious function by unidentified men.

NOVEMBER 20

MILITARY INQUIRY: Military officials disclosed that a military committee comprising four officers had been appointed to inquire into the Poonagari debacle.

LOCAL ELECTIONS IN EAST:

Minister John Ameratunge speaking to officials at the Trincomalee District secretariat asserted that local elections in the east is a certainty and that all arrangements were ready to ensure the conduct of elections on the appointed date.

NOVEMBER 21

TROOPS AND LTTE CLASH: A soldier and two airmen were killed by the LTTE in the Verugal area in Trincomalee District. In the Kattaiparichan area of the same district eight LTTE men were killed by the security forces in an ambush.

EMERGENCY JUSTIFIED:

Minister Wimal Wickremasinghe participating in the debate on emergency in parliament listed the major incidents in the country between September 23 and October 20 and indicated that 3 civilians, 8 Policemen and 149 service personnel had been killed during this period. Those injured numbered 302.

NOVEMBER 22

SERVICE PERIOD

EXTENDED: President Wijetunge extended the period of service of the army Chief of Staff General Gerry Silva by a year beyond 31/12/93, the date of his retirement.

NOVEMBER 23

ARMY WITHDRAWAL: Army camps at Mannar and Silavathurai were closed down and troops were withdrawn.

NOVEMBER 24

ANOTHER POONAGARI

COUNT: In a statement in Parliament Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe informed that 241 servicemen including 8 officers had been killed at Poonagari.

NOVEMBER 25

ICRC PRESS RELEASE: ICRC reported that in the week of LTTE attack on Poonagari army camp and government counter-attacks over 1,000 combatants and civilians were admitted to the Jaffna hospital. The hospital itself was hit and its X-ray room destroyed on one occasion according to this report.

NOVEMBER 26

CORDON AND SEARCH: Kiran village in Batticaloa District was cordoned off by troops in the early hours of the morning and men and women were taken to the Krishna temple where they were individually searched.

CIVILIAN DEATH: Veeramuthu

Thambirajah from Koduwamadu in Batticaloa District died in a confrontation between troops and LTTE.

BODIES UNEARTHED: Troops searching for buried arms on a tip off unearthed four bodies at the Amman Kovil road in Kalmunai, Batticaloa District.

NOVEMBER 27

SEARCH CONTINUES IN

BATTICALOA: Seven hundred villagers of Nasivanthivu in Batticaloa District were subjected to a search and parade before two hooded men.

NOVEMBER 28

VILLAGE SURROUNDED BY

ARMY: Kiran village in the Batticaloa District was surrounded in the early hours by security forces personnel who ordered all villagers including women to proceed to the Krishna Hindu Temple where they were subjected to a thorough search.

NOVEMBER 29

MUSLIMS CLASH:

Goonesinghepura area in central Colombo was the scene of armed clashes involving Muslims and Sinhalese. One person was killed and damage was caused to 8 trishawas, 2 motor cycles, a van and over 25 houses and shops.

NOVEMBER 30

NEW GOVERNOR: Lionel

Fernando was appointed as the new Governor of North East Provincial Council. Mr. Fernando had earlier served as Government Agent in Jaffna.

CALL FOR CESSATION OF BOMBING AND SHELLING:

Jaffna's Government Agent met Defence Secretary in Colombo and called for an immediate end to bombing and shelling in the Jaffna peninsula.

DECEMBER DIARY

DECEMBER 01

NEGOTIATIONS AND

MILITANCY: Speaking in Parliament SLMC leader M.H.M. Ashraff charged that successive governments refused negotiations with Tamil moderates thus paving the way for the Prabhakaran factor and warned that refusal to negotiate with Muslim moderates would lead to Muslim militancy.

DECEMBER 02

TAMIL DETAINEES: Speaking in Parliament on budget allocations for the Ministry of Justice, Joseph Pararajasingham MP raised the issue of 970 Tamils detained at Magazine and Kalutara prisons for over three and a half years without access to courts and demanded early trials.

DECEMBER 03

MUSLIMS AND SINHALESE

CLASH: Aluthkade and Keselwatte in central Colombo erupted in violence following a dispute between a Muslim and a Sinhalese. Police used tear gas and opened fire to contain the violence. One person was killed and 15 persons including 2 women were admitted to hospital with injuries.

DECEMBER 04

ARMY COMMANDER QUILTS:

Army commander General Cecil Waidyaratne submitted his resignation papers to President Wijetunge although his period of service extends upto 15 March 1994.

DECEMBER 05

GENOCIDAL ATTACK: Twenty six people were killed and 71 were injured when air force planes bombed Gurunagar, Sinnakadai and Pasaiyoor in Jaffna town between 8.30 and 9a.m.

DECEMBER 06

KILINOCCHI BOMBED:

Kanagambikaikulam, Vattakachchi and Viswamadu in Kilinochchi District were targeted by air force planes which resulted in five people being injured. G.C.E (Ordinary Level) and agricultural faculty examinations were disrupted as a result of the bombing.

DECEMBER 07

US OFFICIALS IN VAVUNIYA:

US Ambassador Mrs. Teresita Schaffer, the Second Secretary and two other officials from the US embassy visited the Asikulam and Sithamparapuram refugee camps in Vavuniya District. They also had discussions with the Director, Rehabilitation, NGO officials and members of the public to gauge the refugee situation.

DECEMBER 08

SIRIMAVO AND ETHNIC

PROBLEM: Leader of the Opposition Mrs. S. Bandaranaike reiterated at a press conference that an ethnic problem does exist and accepted that minorities need more powers devolved from the centre. She cited the 600,000 internally displaced and 150,000 refugees in India as evidence of the ethnic problem.

DECEMBER 09

JAFFNA HOSPITAL

SHELLED: Shells fired from the Mandaitivu army camp hit Jaffna hospital within the "Safety Zone" declared by the ICRC. A doctor and two patients were injured and buildings were damaged.

DECEMBER 10

AERIAL BOMBING

CONTINUES: Muriyadippu area adjoining the Bus Depot at Kilinochchi was targeted by air force planes. Seven civilians were injured and over fifteen cattle were killed.

DECEMBER 11

TIGERS KILL SOLDIER:

Soldier R.M.Premadasa of the army camp at Plantain Point in Trincomalee District was killed by two escaping Tigers who had earlier surrendered. Another soldier was injured.

DECEMBER 12

SKIRMISHES IN EAST: Defence Ministry reported that Verugal army camp in Batticaloa District came under attack by the LTTE resulting in the death of a soldier and injuries to two others. The killing of a LTTE cadre in an army ambush at south Mullaitivu is also included in this report.

DECEMBER 13

CO-OPERATIVES IN WAR:

Twenty lorry loads of commodities for use of soldiers in the north collected through co-operatives as donations were officially handed over to the army by the Minister of Food and Co-operatives, Weerasinghe Mallimarachchi.

DECEMBER 14

GERMAN ENVOY STRESSES

PEACE: Speaking at a function to mark forty years of diplomatic ties with Sri Lanka the German ambassador expressed the hope that the long-standing northeast war should be brought to an early end as it was an obstacle to the economic development of the country.

DESERTER FROM ARMY:

Police Headquarters reported the arrest of three members of a group named Jihad with arms and explosives one for whom turned out to be an army deserter.

DECEMBER 15

SEARCH IN BATTICALOA:

Police Headquarters reported the killing of three LTTE suspects in a search operation at Kaluthavalai village in Batticaloa District.

NO END TO WAR: Opposition leader Sirimavo Bandaranaike

DECEMBER DIARY

addressing an opposition rally at Nugegoda charged that the war would never end as the government desired its continuance. She also alleged that large payments as commissions were at stake in the arms purchases.

DECEMBER 16

SUMMARY JUSTICE: Giving evidence before the Polonnaruwa Magistrate Courts in the Mylanthanai massacre case S.Subramaniam said that soldiers ordered all the villagers to assemble in one place and began attacking them. Thirty five Tamil villagers were massacred by the army on 8 August 1992.

DECEMBER 17

WIFE OF DETAINEE KILLED: The body of Murugesu Kanakammah(55 yrs), the wife of a detainee held at Palaly army camp was discovered by sailors at her residence in Karainagar, a village under security forces control in Jaffna District.

DECEMBER 18

THEFT AT TEMPLE: Over Rs. 175,000 worth jewellery was stolen from the Nainativu Nagapooshani Amman Temple. The Jaffna islands' Assistant Government Agent A.Thiyagarajah has complained to the police.

DECEMBER 19

TAMIL ARRESTS IN COLOMBO CONTINUE: Four Tamils walking near the railway line at Bambalapitiya were arrested on suspicion by police.

DECEMBER 20

NEW RULES ON SEDITION: Under new Emergency regulations promulgated by President Wijetunge sedition has been extended to acts or publication to bring disrepute to the President or the Government. Offences under the regulations carry a prison sentence upto 20 years.

DECEMBER 21

POSTERS IN BATTICALOA: Security forces put out posters in Batticaloa stating that terrorist infiltration had been reported and any one harbouring, assisting or arranging contacts with them would be dealt with.

DECEMBER 22

LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLLS ANNOUNCED: The Elections Commissioner announced the acceptance of nomination papers between 5 and 12 in January for local government elections in the eastern province and for the town council in Vavuniya.

TWENTY TAMIL WOMEN

HELD: In a sweep carried out in several areas of Colombo police arrested 20 Tamil women who are being held at the Bambalapitiya police station.

DECEMBER 23

ESCAPEE SHOT: Police reported the killing of T.Thavendrarajah a LTTE suspect, while attempting to escape from custody at Eravur in Batticaloa District.

DECEMBER 24

REGISTRATION OF NGO'S: Following the recommendation of the Presidential Commission on NGO'S new emergency regulations promulgated by President Wijetunge make compulsory the registration of NGO's which receive assistance of more than Rs 50,000 per year.

DECEMBER 25

X 'MAS KILLING: Shells continued to be fired on the Christmas night from the army camps at Palaly and Mandaitivu. A child was killed and some buildings were damaged when a shell exploded within the ICRC "Safety Zone" around the Jaffna hospital.

DECEMBER 26

ICRC DENIES COMPLICITY: ICRC refuted in a press release newspaper reports that its official Grenon Felder was to be deported from Sri Lanka for involvement in the transport of banned items to the north.

DECEMBER 27

AERIAL BOMBING: Two air force planes dropped six bombs in the Alampil area of Mullaitivu District. Five members from the same family were killed and several buildings were damaged in this air raid.

DECEMBER 28

PURCHASE OF AIRCRAFT: A six member team of air force officials returned from China after a 19 day stay to negotiate the purchase of a Y-8 transport plane to replace the one lost with 19 airmen over Elephant Pass

DECEMBER 29

CHOLERA AND RAINS: Two people died of cholera in Vaddukottai. Following heavy rains diseases are spreading rapidly

DECEMBER 30

CIVILIANS KILLED IN BOMBING: A public procession held to demonstrate against the atrocities directed at civilians and the economic blockade was targeted by Chinese made F-7 attack aircraft planes at Chavakacheri in the Jaffna District. Five persons were killed and nearly 50 people were injured.

DECEMBER 31

PROVINCIAL COUNCIL DISSOLVED: The Southern Provincial Council controlled by the combined opposition parties was dissolved by the Governor thus bringing the third province to be without a Council in the country.

RETIRED SERVICE COMMANDERS THROW BALL BACK INTO PRESIDENT'S COURT

Faced with the *Yal Devi* and *Poonagari* military disasters against the back drop of an all out military solution to the Tamil national problem President Wijetunge took two steps to absolve himself of blame.

One was to place the onus for the military's failure squarely on the Sri Lankan army. Army top brass had earlier played into his hands by persuading President Wijetunge to declare that there is no ethnic problem, which could be taken by the army as an indirect order to destroy Jaffna. However, President Wijetunge was able to reassert himself because of the failure of operation *Yal Devi*. Sensing Sinhala Buddhist anger at the Kilali fiasco President Wijetunge did not give in to the demands by General Waidyaratne to bring in some form of censorship to limit the damage to army morale. The Poonagari disaster closed all options for the commander and President Wijetunge was able to extract his resignation with the prospect of a future ambassadorial posting as is the vogue for retiring commanders.

The President sought further to drive home the point that only the army was to be blamed for the military failures. Immediately following General Waidyaratne's resignation the President requested five retired service commanders to look into this phenomenon of army failure to deliver the victory he sought even in conjunction with the air force and navy. Lt. Gen. Dennis Perera, Rear Admiral Basil Gunasekera, Rear Admiral Alfred Perera, Air Vice Marshal Pathman Mendis and Air Vice Marshal Harry Gunatillake who formed the "Wise Men of War" in a memorandum however did not blame anyone in the army for operational failures. They stressed the need for a war cabinet to conduct the war and significantly wanted the leader of the opposition to be brought into such an arrangement. In short, the "Wise Men of War" have put the ball back in the President's court without openly saying that he is to be blamed for the military setbacks. If the President is to act in terms of the memorandum, he has to liaise with Srirmavo Bandaranaike which needs a

political decision on his part. This is particularly so as she holds the clear view that the ethnic problem does exist. Since he continues to cling to his position that no ethnic problem exists he cannot act according to the memorandum of the "Wise Men of War" and finds himself in the same position as General Waidyaratne after the *Yal Devi* operation.

Pushed into this embarrassing situation President Wijetunge took the second step to keep all blame away from him. With presidential elections due in 1994 he dealt a double blow through the promulgation of new rules on sedition under new Emergency Regulations. Under the new rules nobody could articulate any opinion blaming him for any of his acts. With the presidential elections due President Wijetunge's priority is winning the election war and has sought to insure his position through the new rules on sedition. This is the single foremost political decision the President has taken since assuming power and its sole aim is securing the Presidency for him through other means if not democracy.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN WANT

Commissioner General of Essential Services Christie Silva speaking to the media in the 2nd week of November disclosed that the government was seeking alternate humanitarian assistance to the 30,000 refugees at the Madhu refugee camp. This follows the withdrawal of the UNHCR from the camp since 10 November. A role for the ICRC in the escort of food convoys was being considered

according to the Commission. Referring to the overall refugee situation he gave the total number of internally displaced persons as 563,000 belonging to 150,000 families. The food situation in the Mullaitivu District worsened with the suspension of all transport to the district from 11 November. The first food convoy escorted by the ICRC left on 8

December after the suspension. The flood situation had already disrupted normal life in the district and left the majority as destitutes.

SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT HAND IN CWC SPLIT

The National Council of plantation trade union and political party, the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC), meeting at Hatton decided to call on General Secretary M.S. Sellasamy and eight Central Provincial Council (CPC) members to submit their resignations before 17 January. The National Council, chaired by CWC President and Rural Industrial Development and Tourism Minister S. Thondaman also declared that Sellasamy was prohibited from entering the CWC head office in Colombo.

The dramatic development in Hill Country politics began with a rift in the relationship between the government and the CWC. Throughout the early 1970s the CWC supported the United National Party (UNP) while the Sri Lanka Freedom Party was in power. CWC also pledged its support to the UNP at the 1977 general elections and in 1978 Thondaman was appointed a minister in the UNP government.

Despite the cordial relationship between the leaders, open antagonism between members and officers of the CWC and UNP trade union Lanka Jathika Estate Workers Union (LJEWU) became marked in the Hill Country, as both unions competed in recruiting new members. As assaults and destruction of offices continued, the leaders felt the need for an agreement. In late 1978 an agreement was entered into signed by Thondaman and former Senator R. Jesuthasan for the CWC and Ministers Gamini Dissanayake and Cyril Mathew for the LJEWU. The agreement, among other issues, provided that the unions should not canvass each other's membership. The nomination of the Worker Delegate to the annual ILO Conference has also been a contentious issue between the two unions. It was agreed later that the Worker Delegate would be appointed from each union for alternative

years. Although the CWC had an uphill task dealing with the government, hard bargaining by the leaders proved fruitful most of the time and relative peace prevailed in the Hill Country.

Privatisation of tea and rubber plantations was supported by the CWC, whilst it was vehemently opposed by other trade unions. The plantation companies now say that a guaranteed offer of 300 days work in a year for plantation workers is impossible and are emphatic that only a maximum of 240 days could be offered. The companies also say they should have no restriction on retrenchment and transfer of excess labour. The companies further say gratuity payment to workers at the end of employment should be the responsibility of the government and that the government should also impress upon international lending institutions to lend each company Rs 200-300 million at a concessionary interest of 2% repayable over 20 years. This means that the current five year lease of estates granted to companies would have to be extended to more than 20 years. The extended time period, the companies contend, is necessary to make the plantations profitable. The companies have also demanded a ten-year moratorium on all taxes.

According to the CWC, the number of days of work was agreed before privatisation. The cut in work has drastically reduced the wages of the workers lowering further their low living standards. The companies have reneged on written undertakings given to the CWC to maintain terms and conditions of employment under terms no less favourable than they had enjoyed. The CWC has also pointed out that the companies have deliberately cut back on inputs such as fertilizer and agricultural practices such as weeding and

replanting resulting in decreasing of labour productivity and that workers whose families have lived in the up-country for over a century have been relocated to low-country estates. CWC opposes extension of leases without proper agreements and has also demanded that uncultivated land on estates be given to the workers, 98% of whom do not own land.

The dispute between the CWC and the plantation companies has led to a tussle between the CWC and the government, particularly after D B Wijetunge became President. The new President, who is also an M.P. from the Hill Country is bitterly opposed to granting lands to Tamil plantation workers and also seems to favour the position of the estate management companies. President Wijetunge told Thondaman at a meeting on 22 November that as 'President of the country he would decide as to who should receive lands and Thondaman need not advise him on the issue'.

In order to bring pressure on the CWC, President Wijetunge decided to appoint a committee to inquire into the construction of the Kotagala Vocational Training Institute. The construction was approved by the government five years ago and would benefit plantation youth supported by the Norwegian aid agency NORAD. This was the last straw for the CWC. Thondaman decided immediately to convince Gamini Dissanayake of the Democratic United National Front (DUNF) to move a no-confidence motion against the UNP's Central Province Council (CPC) Chief Minister WPB Dissanayake. But to the dismay of Thondaman eight CWC members in the CPC decided not to vote for the no-confidence motion.

The eight rebels say they cannot support Gamini Dissanayake who is

against the interests of plantation Tamils and who was responsible for the burning of the Nuwara Eliya town in July 1983. They also refused to attend a meeting summoned by Thondaman at Kotagala on 19 December. When the no-confidence motion came up for debate on 21 December the CPC Chairman Sarath Kongahage upheld an objection by a UNP member and ruled that the motion was vague and could not be debated.

Thereafter the 268-member CWC National Council decided to take disciplinary action against Sellasamy and the eight dissidents. Sources say Sellasamy is suspected by Thondaman of influencing the CWC Provincial Council members, but openly he is accused of failing to discipline the rebels. Sellasamy, for his part has accused Thondaman and his grandson Arumugam who is

the Officiating Finance Secretary of the CWC, of misappropriating millions of rupees from union funds.

Sellasamy has obtained an interim injunction from the Colombo District Court against the National Council decision prohibiting him entering the CWC head office and has also complained to the police that all files and documents in the head office had been illegally removed by Arumugam. A warrant has now been issued for the arrest of Arumugam. Some CWC officers say Thondaman is highly influenced by his grandson, former CPC Education Minister Sathasivam and former police officer Kandasamy and predict that the 'triumvirate' may cause his downfall.

Although reports say that the rift between the CWC and UNP has been healed after a meeting between

Thondaman and Prime Minister Ramil Wickremasinghe in late December, back-stabbing seems to continue. UNP has appointed CWC rebel A. Kathiresan as the new CPC Education Minister and it appears has thrown its weight behind Sellasamy.

There are currently 31 registered trade unions on the plantations and a division within the CWC will not only affect the plantation Tamils but will weaken the bargaining power of the Sri Lankan Tamil community in any negotiated settlement to the national problem. The CWC has been a source of strength for the Tamils of the North-East, particularly since the formation of the Tamil United Front. The leaders must settle their differences amicably taking into consideration the immense problems facing the Tamil community in Sri Lanka.

AIADMK ACCUSED OF SUPPORTING LTTE

Tamil Nadu Congress (I) leader S R Subramaniam told reporters in December that senior police officers in the southern state were providing secret support to the LTTE. He said that Tiger movement in coastal areas had increased and diesel and explosives were being smuggled. Complaints to the police have been ignored and the ruling AIADMK was using the LTTE to destabilise the opposition parties.

Tamil Nadu Congress (I) leaders have been saying for the past few months that LTTE activity in the state has heightened. However, the Indian Home Minister has throughout said that the situation is under control.

SLFP TRY TO HOODWINK VOTERS

The All Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC) and the Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP) have refused to participate in a Public meeting organised by the main opposition Party the Sri Lankan Freedom Party (SLFP) in Nugegoda recently under the banner "Fight the terrorist - Resolve the ethnic conflict politically". These parties say the SLFP is trying to hoodwink the public by posing to take a neutral stand in the ongoing ethnic conflict to obtain votes at the next general elections.

ACTC and NSSP said that it was clear from the theme of the meeting that SLFP would want to treat the war in the North-East as a "terrorist" problem. The two parties would not accept such a position.

PARENTS ACCUSE GOVERNMENT

Parents and relatives of over 40 military personnel belonging to the First Light Infantry Regiment who were involved in administrative services have accused the government and the military for failing to provide them information about the fate of their relatives following the major LTTE attack on the Pooneriyon Army Camp on 11 November.

Government release of statistics on only LTTE casualties has further angered the parents.

MEDIA'S WAR

The Free Media Movement held a discussion on 11 November at the public library in Colombo on the topic "The war and the media". Speakers took the opportunity to vent their anger at the death and other threats faced by journalists. The death threat on defence correspondent Iqbal Athas by army Commander Cecil Waidyaratne was foremost on the minds of the speakers.

This discussion has thrown open the whole ambit of the freedom of the press into focus. The electronic media being under the complete control of the state has no freedom other than to express government view. With only the Lake House among the print media under state control newspaper journalists who voice any views not acceptable to the government are under constant threat.

President Premadasa virtually stifled any free expression of views in the press through many arm twisting tactics. On becoming President, D.B.Wijetunge distanced himself from these dubious ways even though he had docilely accepted them earlier. The press was in no better a position than the NGO Sarvodaya which fell foul with Premadasa. But the press had to keep up sales and chose to churn out news palatable to the government and the Sinhalese public. Lake House was running the war on paper even better than the military would like it to be. It depicted the generals as Goliaths and victory was only a matter of time. The rest of the print media did not want to be left behind and beat the war drums harder to out do the Lake House.

The magic moment for all came when President Wijetunge blurted out that there was only a terrorist problem that remained for every one to solve. Thus any word beginning

with the letter T became synonymous for the press with Tiger be it Tamil, Tea or Thondaman. Goebbel's error of anti semiticism was studiously avoided by referring to Tigers and not Tamils. But the results have proved the same. The war was being won by equating Tamils with Tigers. Every Tamil arrest became a Tiger arrest in the newspaper. So did every Tamil injured or killed become a Tiger injured or killed. The war was virtually against the Tamils as portrayed in the press. Any alleged offence by a Tamil was publicised and any similar act by a Sinhalese or Muslim if reported went with no mention of the ethnicity of the offender. Any newspaper cartoon will depict a Tamil with holy ash or sandalwood paste on the forehead - a reference to Hinduism. But nothing even remotely connected with Buddhism would be displayed with a Sinhalese figure in a cartoon.

The editorial columns are rife with suggestions for winning the war. Politicians are castigated for not visiting the battle zones and the lack of tooth paste and cadjans for frontline soldiers are highlighted. MPs who beat the war drums most are given prominence in the press and they call the efforts of the past presidents at solving the war as seeking the mess of political pottage. The clarion call of the press is for the appointment of a full time defence minister citing Lalith Athulathmudali and Ranjan Wijeratne. Here again the press deliberately loses sight of the fact that both of them failed to end the war and left the situation worse than when they stepped in. The journalists who pedal the war and blame the politicians for not visiting battle zones choose not to do it themselves. But foreign journalists have done it time and again. Among locals only the "RAVAYA" journalists ventured

into the battle zones and it was a revelation for all. The policemen in LTTE captivity blamed the Sinhala journalists no less than the politicians for their plight. They even faulted Prof. Nalin de Silva and Gunadasa Amerasekera for being false Sinhalese. The *Ravaya* journalists had cracked open the iron curtain and revealed that the war in progress is nothing but a war against the Tamils.

The discomfiture of the press at *Ravaya* revelations was so evident in that they sought to do what *Ravaya* journalists did but from the safety of Colombo. The high casualties in the *Yal Devi* offensive gave the opportunity for boosting sales by questioning the successes of the operation and the first person who did it happened to be Iqbal Athas. The war hysteria had been written and rewritten in the newspaper columns that its criticism became intolerable to those running the actual war. A death threat or wreath was inevitable in the circumstances. The Poonakari battle gave the opportunity for the journalists to hit back at those who threatened them with death. Even editorial columns took bold with the use of phrases like tragedy, disaster and catastrophe. But the print media will abandon this criticism once the lives of the journalists are not endangered. The Free Media Movement too will only cry for a halt to the attacks on journalists and not cry for a halt to the war. The *Island* newspaper has already led the backtracking by reserving space on the front page daily for a picture of the Late General Kobbekaduwa under the national flag. The print media as a whole will emulate the *Island* newspaper and call for another bloodletting and the likes of *Ravaya* journalists will be swamped in this ground swell.

DESTABILISING THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

Events in December prove that opposition control in three provincial councils is proving irksome to the Sri Lankan government-Provincial councils were created to facilitate devolution of power from the centre to the provinces and functioned without mishap during their first lease of life except for the Northeast provincial council which was not under UNP control and was dissolved by President Premadasa. Significantly the major opposition party, the SLFP did not contest the first elections which led to the seven councils coming under UNP control.

Elections in May 1993 however, led to three councils coming under the control of opposition parties. The tug-of-war for power sharing between the centre and provinces

immediately took hold and is continuing. The western provincial council has already sought legal remedy on the vexed question of control over some key educational institutions. Judicial decisions also led to the removal of two chief ministers whose appointments were not acceptable as per the law. Consequently the Southern and South Western provincial councils went under the control of the opposition parties. Adding to the equation was the prospect of a defection among members in the Central provincial council.

In this context of party power play, provincial councillors became highly prominent with compulsions from several fronts. Several councillors went missing and claims of abduction were made.

The disappearances and subsequent denials of abduction by the persons affected have benefited the interests of the central government which dissolved the Southern provincial council. The Central provincial council is also afflicted by defections, alleged abductions and government interference. At present the opposition parties have control over only two provincial councils. An objective analysis of the events in December cast a grave doubt as to the willingness on the part of the Sri Lankan government to allow provincial councils to function as envisaged in the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. The whole issue of devolution of power has now been thrown open again.

DEFUSING THE CONFLICT SITUATION

The Australian Government which has been seeking to assist in the resolution of the civil war in Sri Lanka has taken a positive step in December. The Australian Defence Minister announced in parliament the decision of the government to stop the sale of 40,000 grenades to the Sri Lankan army although the Australian armaments industry stood to lose on this score. Such a sale would be against Australian national interests Defence Minister says.

Observers believe that if other governments follow the Australian example, the road to peace in Sri Lanka would be easier to traverse.

DISAPPEARANCE OF TAMILS IN THE EAST CONTINUES

A. Namasivayam (63 yrs) and his daughter Rani (35yrs), a mother of three children, N.Kumar (30yrs) and S.Kannan (30yrs) disappeared on 13 November from the Mannampitiya village in Polannaruwa District. The latest disappearances add to the growing number of Tamils listed as missing in the eastern province.

SOLDIER DECAPITATED

The decapitated body of a soldier was found in Trincomalee District on 07 November. Security sources indicated that the dead soldier had departed in a jeep without permission with another soldier who is now listed as missing.

TAMIL RESIDENTS HARASSED

Police harassment of Tamil residents in Colombo has taken a new turn with confusion prevailing over the registration of Tamils with the local police station. In Dehiwala and Kalubowila areas police distributed new forms for registration even after registering twice at the police station. Even an acknowledgement issued by the police to the effect that a registration had been done was disregarded when the new forms were handed over.

In some other areas Tamil residents who went to register were turned away on the ground that forms were not available.

GUNADASA AMARASEKARA WARNED TO KEEP OFF

A number of military officers have jointly written to Gunadasa Amarasekara, a prominent exponent of the racist philosophy of JATHIKA CHINTANAYA (National consciousness) asking him to refrain from making comments about the military. A part of the text of the letter reads as follows:

"You being a dentist by profession, have been strongly criticising military operations in your publications and platforms,

drawing attention to how the war should be properly conducted. Instead, why don't you come to the battle front and provide your professional services to the soldiers and give them your support.

Medical attention is one of the important aspects of the war today. You have been talking excessively about the war along with your colleague Prof. Nalin de Silva in public meetings. If you are unable to come and serve the soldiers in

the battle front, why do you not at least give your services on one or two days to the military hospital in Colombo? You are making money from Private Channelling of patients and keep talking of how the war should be fought. It does not make any sense as to what you are trying to achieve."

NEW WAR CABINET PROPOSED

In a memorandum to President D.B. Wijetunga, five former military chiefs have proposed a "War Cabinet" to conduct the war, functioning with the advice of the President, the Defence Ministry and the Finance Ministry, which would include opposition members. Reports say the following have also been proposed in the memorandum:

(a) Hand over law and order responsibilities completely

to the police and entrust the three armed forces with the clearly enunciated task of destroying the military capability of the LTTE and its sympathisers.

(b) Strengthen the military bases in the North and to ensure that they are not attacked.

(c) Strengthen civil administration

in the zones "liberated" from the LTTE by appointing and training a State Services Task Force.

(d) Take action to retake or destroy weapons and ammunitions captured by the LTTE.

JAFFNA GA SPEAKS OUT ABOUT BOMBING

Addressing a press conference in Colombo Jaffna Government Agent K. Manickavasagar, accused the security forces of callous and indiscriminate bombing of Jaffna after LTTE's Pooneryn attack.

He said that leaflets dropped by the airforce asking people to move away from LTTE camps often fell into the sea. It was ridiculous to ask people to move away from Tiger camps, because these camps are scattered all over the peninsula and it would be impossible and impracticable for

people to do so. Since batteries are banned and there is no electricity supply to the North, people are unable to listen to the radio broadcasts of the security forces from Palaly military base, he further added.

In response to the accusation of ill-treatment by the LTTE of the

people, Mr Manickavasagar said that the LTTE had imposed certain strict procedures to follow in the Tiger controlled areas which might have affected some individuals.

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