

Tamil Youths Rounded Up in Sri Lanka

Believed at Detention Camps; Action Follows Centuries-Old Struggle

By RONE TEMPEST, Times Staff Writer

VELVETTITHURAI, Sri Lanka—Three hundred women huddled under the branches of a banyan tree next to the main Hindu temple here this week in a daylong fast to protest the government's detention of their sons.

The women were Tamils from this small fishing town on the northern coast of Sri Lanka. Sixteen days ago, government troops broadcast an order here that all young men 18 to 25 report to the town square for questioning.

Most of those who answered the call have never returned home. Nearly all of those missing are believed to be at a government detention camp, along with 500 other Tamil youths. The camp is in Boosa, 250 miles away in the southern end of this island nation, which is dominated by Sinhalese Buddhists.

Reporters were told of conditions in the camp by several young Velvettithurai men who were detained with the others but were recently freed.

"I begged a major to release me," said Sampatham Vimal, 23. "They let me go after I told them I propose to go to London to do my studies in September."

Vimal said he was not mistreated in the camp, though he added that his hands were bound for part of the trip down the island in buses. As the buses traveled through the countryside, he said, crowds of Sinhalese jeered as they passed.

Army guards on the buses, he said, yelled: "Captured and caged, the Tamil tigers!" They referred to the nickname given Tamil separatist rebels here.

Young Tamils are prime targets in a three-week-old crackdown by the Sri Lanka government against a Tamil separatist revolt. At least 95 people are known to have been killed, and Tamil leaders say that many more have died—possibly several hundred.

On Tuesday, Alala Suneram, a former member of Sri Lanka's Parliament from the northern district capital of Jaffna, who resigned in 1983 rather than take an oath

against a separate state for the Tamils, described the detention of Tamil youths as a hostage situation.

"The government is trying to create the impression among the Sinhalese people that it has broken through," Suneram said. "They don't want to release the boys because the Sinhalese people will think they were hoodwinked."

In an interview Sunday, Brigadier Nalin Seneviratne, commander of the government military and police forces in the area, had denied that troops under his command are involved in arbitrary arrests of civilian youths. "We are picking them up," Seneviratne said, "but not indiscriminately."

Perhaps more than elsewhere on the island, the town of Velvettithurai, here at the very northern tip of the island across the Palk Strait from India, serves as a graphic example of the violent separatist revolt and heavy-handed government reaction.

Two Sri Lankan navy men were killed Aug. 4 by Tamil guerrillas on the streets of Velvettithurai. Townspeople assert that the sailors were harassing women in the market. The military has not commented on the incident.

Reprisal Follows Reprisal

That evening, the army detained at least 350 of the local young men after ordering them to the town square. The next day, an army truck in the town was rigged with explosives and detonated. At least two soldiers were killed.

In apparent retaliation for the soldiers' deaths, Sri Lankan troops, most of whom are Sinhalese, used gasoline to burn 130 homes and 30 small shops in the town, the local people said. Earlier, navy gunboats used grenade launchers and small cannon to fire on shoreline homes, they added.

On Aug. 14, Tamil guerrillas attacked a police station. That night the army returned and torched 41 homes and 10 shops.

Reporters who went to the town Monday were physically unable to count every burned or damaged

home or store. However, figures provided by the villagers and district citizens' groups appeared consistent with the damage seen during five hours of touring the area.

At least one residential area of 10 to 12 homes was destroyed. The town square was about half-demolished. Several stores, including a scent and ointment shop and several textile stores, were leveled.

Glass windows in the new market were shattered. Several townspeople who said they saw the attack reported that soldiers simply doused stores and homes with gasoline and set them ablaze.

Hindus vs. Sinhalese

For centuries, the minority Tamils of the north, mostly Hindu, have been in conflict with the majority Sinhalese of the south, mostly Buddhist.

Since independence was obtained from Britain in 1948, the strain between the two groups has increased, exacerbated by a succession of Sinhalese national leaders who have refused to allow Tamil to be used as an official language and who have instituted civil service reforms that Tamil leaders say work against their people.

Violent outbreaks between Tamils and Sinhalese occurred in 1956, 1958, 1961, 1977 and 1981, and were capped in July, 1983, when 400 of more people died in sectarian fighting.

Nowhere, however, has the conflict been more intense than here in Velvettithurai. Many Tamil leaders who still live in the capital of Colombo in the south—or even in Jaffna, not far from here—are opposed to the notion of a separate Tamil state advocated by the several guerrilla groups.

Among the 8,000 residents of Velvettithurai, though, it is hard to find a person who does not support a separate state for Tamils.

Walls of homes and businesses in the town are covered with revolu-

tionary posters of the guerrilla groups that operate in the area, including one of fairly complex design that shows a Buddha weeping blood tears over the plight of the Hindu Tamils.

Even parents with sons still detained by the government at Boosa, who were at the Pillair temple here for the fast Monday, said they support the separatist cause. One man, bent over with grief because of the imprisonment of his 25-year-old son on Aug. 4, said that he would still harbor a guerrilla fighter if one came to his door and asked for help.

V. Selladurai, president of the rural development society for the town, said that he and his wife have fasted since their son, also 25, was taken away by soldiers that same day. Fasting, a cleansing rite in Hinduism, is also an act of civil disobedience made famous by India's Mohandas K. Gandhi.

"We are starving," said Selladurai, who appeared healthy although deeply troubled. "We have lost our son. We are in a state of fear and grief. From the day of his arrest until now, we have not taken a meal."

Before it became known as a separatist stronghold, Velvettithurai was famous as a smugglers' cove. Cinnamon left from here bound for India, 30 miles across the Palk Strait, and jewels and beautiful silk saris made the trip back.

It is a pretty town—set on a calm stretch of the Indian Ocean, with a close-in coral reef to protect its shore.

But the two Sri Lanka navy gunboats that patrol its coast daily and sometimes fire on the town are evidence that there is trouble here.

Even the Sinhalese soldiers responsible for patrolling the Tamil area wish that Velvettithurai would return to its former occupation.

"In the good old days, there used to be smuggling across here," Brig. Seneviratne remarked.



United Press International

Corazon Aquino wipes away a tear at a memorial Mass in Manila.

450,000 Rally to Mark Aquino Anniversary

By BOB SECTER, Times Staff Writer

MANILA—With President Ferdinand E. Marcos shielded in his palace Tuesday by a cordon of barbed wire, water cannon and well-armed soldiers, an estimated 450,000 Filipinos renewed calls for his ouster during rallies commemorating the first anniversary of the assassination of the president's chief political rival, Benigno S. Aquino Jr.

Despite a nationwide military mobilization and warnings from officials that Communist terrorists would foment trouble, demonstrations throughout the country—the largest since at least 1 million people joined the funeral parade for the popular opposition leader last year—were generally peaceful.

Rallies in the capital and elsewhere in this island archipelago were marked by verbal attacks on government repression and, sometimes, by bizarre sights.

In Manila, the 11-year-old son of the man the government claims killed Aquino, Reynaldo Galman, turned up at the rally dressed in an outfit like that worn by his father, Rolando, when he was gunned down by soldiers seconds after Aquino was shot on the tarmac of Manila airport.

The government contends that Galman was a Communist hit man paid to slay Aquino, but the families of both Aquino and Galman say he was framed to cover up a military murder plot designed to eliminate the chief political threat to Marcos.

At nightfall, several thousand soldiers were stationed in the neighborhood of the palace, while police armed with truncheons and riot shields broke up small knots of demonstrators in a university neighborhood near the palace. Leandro Alejandro, student council president at the University of the Philippines, vowed that demonstrators would fight back if attacked by the police.

However, apart from a handful of incidents of tire-burning, both sides by and large kept their cool, avoiding a repetition of violent clashes between demonstrators

and police that have marked several protests over the last year.

Gen. Narciso Cabrera, police chief of Manila, said the crowd that eventually converged on a waterfront park for a rally totaled 450,000 people, and many felt that his estimate was extremely high. However, Agapito Aquino, younger brother of the slain politician, claimed that the protesters numbered 2 million.

The daylong activities began with an early morning memorial Mass attended by Aquino's widow, Corazon, and about 6,000 other mourners at the cavernous Santo Domingo Church, where Aquino's funeral had been held.

Speaking to the crowd, Corazon Aquino invited Marcos, her husband's archenemy, to join her at a prayer rally. "I am not ready to talk to Marcos but I am ready to pray with him," she said.

Officiating at the Mass, Cardinal Jaime Sin, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Manila, assailed special lawmaking and arrest powers that critics say have made Marcos a virtual dictator.

"We all know that the decrees that diminish our freedom and make a travesty of our democracy have not been repealed," Sin said in his sermon. "And we all know that the (government) forces that use violence on the defenseless are still in our midst."

Rally speakers attacked alleged government involvement in the Aquino assassination and called on Marcos to step down after 19 years in power.

Pimentel, other political leaders, Aquino family members and other speakers were joined on the platform by a larger-than-life bronze statue of the fallen leader.

The statue, sculpted in Italy, was unveiled in New York last week and flown here Sunday—then immediately seized by customs officials in lieu of almost \$4,000 in duty. However, acting on what they said were orders from Marcos, authorities later dropped the duty and released the statue to march organizers Tuesday morning.

Aquino Rally, March Held in L.A.

By MICHAEL SEILER, Times Staff Writer

Members of the Filipino community held a protest rally, march and memorial service in Los Angeles on Tuesday to mark the first anniversary of the assassination of Philippine opposition leader Benigno S. Aquino Jr.

About 75 protesters, representing a coalition of political organizations called the August 21 Committee, held a rally outside the Philippine consulate in the 3400 block of Wilshire Blvd., carrying signs reading "No Aid to the Dictator" and "Stop Marcos's Murders."

Later, they marched across town to the Filipino-American Community Center, in the 1700 block of West Temple Street, where 200 people were waiting for a candle-

light memorial service. Aquino had addressed a meeting there about a month before returning to his native land for the final time a year ago.

A plaque commemorating that speech was unveiled, and the sponsoring group presented a formal statement denouncing "the Reagan Administration's foreign policy of financial and military support for the (Ferdinand E.) Marcos dictatorship."

Philippine Consul General Armando Fernandez issued a statement earlier, saying he was "saddened by the way the opposition party (is) using Aquino's death to make political hay."

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