

G L I M P S E S
of a
N E W V I S I O N



SELECTED SPEECHES OF HER EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT
CHANDRIKA BANDARANAIKE KUMARATUNGA



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Glimpses of a New Vision - SELECTED SPEECHES OF HER EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT CHANDRIKA BANDARANAIKE KUMARATUNGA
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C O N T E N T S

FOREWORD	7
AN OCCASION FOR RETROSPECTION, A RENEWAL OF HOPE AND ASPIRATION	8
ETHNIC CONFLICT NEEDS A FINAL SOLUTION	14
AN ERA OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY	22
A DESIRE TO FORGE A PERMANENT PEACE	38
THE BATTLE FOR PEACE	45
THE BATTLE TO REBUILD THE NATIONAL UNITY	61





F O R E W O R D

The contents of this publication comprise texts of speeches delivered by H.E. the President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga on four eventful occasions of great significance, as well as two articles excerpted from a publication of the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs and National Integration.

These comprehensive deliveries provide a lucid and succinct exposition of the President's reflections on the on-going ethnic conflict and her visionary initiatives for the 'battle for peace' in particular and the nation-building in general.

The issues in the long-drawn-out ethnic strife and the numerous initiatives taken towards its solution for a lasting peace in Sri Lanka are apparently somewhat unclear to some, and it is hoped that this compilation will meet that need for an unambiguous awareness of these issues spectacularly.

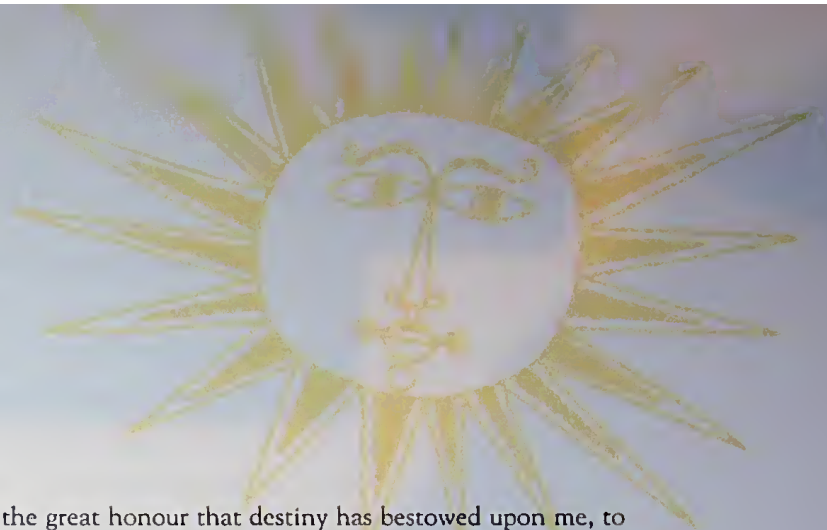




**AN OCCASION FOR RETROSPECTION,
A RENEWAL OF HOPE AND ASPIRATION**

ADDRESS TO THE NATION ON THE OCCASION OF THE
50TH INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION

Colombo - February 4th 1998



I am humbled by the great honour that destiny has bestowed upon me, to stand here, before my people, as the head of independent Sri Lanka, on this momentous day when the Nation commemorates 50 years of freedom from colonial rule. It is with a deep sense of duty and commitment to the Nation and in full awareness of the gigantesque responsibilities we have undertaken, that I step forward into the next 50 years, together with the members of my Cabinet and the government, spurred on by the confidence placed in us by our people.

I would like to first invite you to join me to pay homage to the great leaders of our independence struggle. We are beholden to them all, from Keppitipola Dissawe to Puran Appu, the heroic Buddhist clergy led by Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala, Wariyapola Sri Sumangala, Migettuwatte Gunananda, the Tibetan poet monk S. Mahinda, from F. R. Senanayake, D. S. Senanayake, D. B. Jayatilleke, John Kotelawala, Anagarika Dharmapala, Ponnambalam Arunachalam, P. Ramanathan, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, T. B. Jayah, the left leaders such as S. A. Wickremasinghe, N. M. Perera, Colvin R. de Silva, Philip Gunewardene and Bernard Soysa, working class leaders like A. E. Gunesinghe, N. Shanmugathan, Kandasamy, leaders of plantation workers like Natesar Aiyar, women leaders like Mary Rutnam, Daisy Dias Bandaranaike, Doreen Wickremasinghe, Selina Perera, Parameswary Kandiah, Noble Rajasingham, Vivienne Gunewardene, Kusuma Gunewardene, Florence Senanayake, working class women leaders such as Agnes de Silva, Ponsinahamy, and foreign leaders like Marie Musacus Higgins, Clara Motwani, Col. Olcott, and all the other unsung heroes of our freedom struggles against foreign domination.



AN OCCASION FOR RETROSPECTION,
A RENEWAL OF HOPE AND ASPIRATION

50 years ago today, we stepped forth into the dawn of freedom with the hope and vigour of a new Nation. The diverse communities inhabiting this land, expressly desired to forge a new and United Nation, where the richness of diversity would be respected and preserved within one united Lanka. The freedom fighters also nurtured a dream of a Government rich with democratic norms and institutions, where the people's will would reign supreme and of economic prosperity and social advancement with equal opportunities for all citizens.

When we commenced (in the words of Shri Nehru) our "tryst with destiny", half a century ago, the task ahead of us was daunting. I dare say, 50 years is but a brief moment in our history of over 2,500 years. Yet it is well enough time, for a nation to attain political maturity and to formulate and implement systems to strengthen its nationhood, uniting all the people living within it, whilst ensuring its territorial integrity and to have attained economic and social advancement, in order that the newly won political freedom transforms itself into a full freedom for its people - freedom from fear, from poverty, from ignorance, from disease and most of all freedom to be equal and live with dignity and self-respect.

The golden jubilee of independence is an occasion for retrospection as well as a renewal of hope and aspiration. This occasion calls for thanksgiving for our achievements as well as humility in accepting our failures. We can be justly proud of our successes in building strong and democratic forms of Government, honest and transparent systems of governance as well as our achievements in education and health, where Sri Lanka is placed high among the developing nations, in the Quality of Life indicators and also in the Arts. Our economy is growing well, savings and investments in infrastructure, industry and to some extent agriculture are expanding, incomes are increasing, innovative programmes of poverty alleviation and self-employment are progressing with success. We have undertaken extensive reforms in the spheres of education,

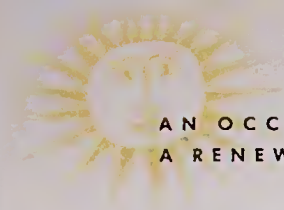


AN OCCASION FOR RETROSPECTION,
A RENEWAL OF HOPE AND ASPIRATION

health, agriculture, industry and the public service. A radical constitutional reform is proposed.

We must also, with humility examine our failures. We have failed in the essential task of nation-building. We have meandered and faltered along the path, whilst our neighbours in Asia and many other countries have forged strong and united nations in which people of various communities of race, religion and language live in harmony. The search for the causes and the apportioning of blame for this situation may be assigned to the historians. Let us, those of us, who have taken on the responsibility to guide and govern the Nation, whatever our political party or affiliations may be, march towards the future in unison, putting behind us mean desires for petty, personal or political gain. The nation's need today is so great and urgent that it permits space only for largesse of heart and mind, which will in the national interest supercede all that is irrelevant and small.

In 1948, when our forefathers first set out along the path of freedom, they envisioned a truly free and united Lanka. The first Prime Minister of Independent Sri Lanka, D. S. Senanayake said after unfurling the national Flag in February 1948; "Our nation comprises many races, each with a culture and a history of its own. It is for us to blend all that is best in us — in establishing peace, security and justice for all people". He also stated (in the State Council on 8.11.1945) "For centuries, the Sinhalese and Tamils have lived together in peace and amity. We have been governed by their Kings and they by ours". "There is no greater ambition in my life than to get all these communities together" (State Council on 9.11.1945). One of Sri Lanka's greatest sons, Sir P. Arunachalam spoke in similar vein (in a speech made at the 1st conference on constitutional reform in 15.12.1917) "No scheme can be perfect: or satisfy everybody. . . we must all give and take, we must sink our differences and present a united front to achieve our object . . . We all feel that racial representation is pernicious and has operated to widen cleavages . . . and to obstruct that unity and harmony". . . I further quote the words of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike who



AN OCCASION FOR RETROSPECTION,
A RENEWAL OF HOPE AND ASPIRATION

stated in presenting the Tamil Language Bill in Parliament (on 17th July, 1958) "so that we can march forward together and achieve that progress . . . under this freedom which we have, freedom for the Sinhalese - yes, remember too that it is freedom for the Tamils, for the Muslims, for the Malays, for the Burghers . . . and if it is not freedom in that way, for all, I too repeat the words of Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, who after being many years in jail and suffered many years to obtain freedom, pronounced that if freedom meant internal communal strife or injustice or suppression of minorities", "to hell with Swaraj."

We have failed to realise the dreams of our freedom fighters to build a strong and united Nation. The silent majority watched in horror, whilst a great nation with an ancient civilization steeped in one of the finest cultural and architectural heritages of the world, nurtured in the traditions of the noble Buddhist philosophy of peace, tolerance and love veered off into a terrifying era of ethnic political and social violence. The people have now awakened to the call for peace and amity.

The shrill screams of hatred and violence of the extremist few are being drowned by the sweet sounds of the multitude, calling for unity, harmony and brotherhood. We shall no more permit our people to be drawn down into the quagmire of jealousy, greed and bigotry.

History offers but a few opportunities to an individual or a Nation to reach up to the stars. We have missed many chances. We cannot, we must not, miss this one last moment, rich with opportunity.

May I predict with certainty, that this 51st year of independence will be the most decisive one for free Lanka.

In this year we must continue to commit ourselves to end the ethnic strife, while defending the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka.

We must have the statesmanship and the courage to succeed in our quest for lasting peace, which could be attained through the negotiated political solutions we have proposed.



AN OCCASION FOR RETROSPECTION,
A RENEWAL OF HOPE AND ASPIRATION

We must proceed with fortitude, to face the daunting challenges of terrorism and the political and social violence it has engendered within the entire social fabric of our country. We shall reconstruct every building destroyed by the enemy, better and stronger than before, They will rise up from the ashes, and stand as living symbols of the grit and determination of a people, in their march towards peace and humanitarianism.

And together, we must relentlessly strive to build a new Nation, a united, strong nation, brimming with the vitality and joy of renewal, where all of us, whatever race, religion or caste we belong to, shall together build one Nation, drawing strength from the richness of our diversity.


Then, and only then shall we have the space and the resources required for a strong and stable economic development which will offer a good and decent life for every Sri Lankan citizen.

Then, we will be able to divert the energies and incredible commitment of our youth who willingly sacrifice their precious lives at the altar of terror and violence, so that they may now build bridges of friendship and unity from North to South, from West to East.

Then we will ensure that a thousand, nay, a million, “sudu nelum” shall rise up from the muddied waters of strife and chaos, to unite brother with brother reaching out for Peace.

We can then say, we have attained full and true freedom. I know that you and I and all Sri Lankan citizens together possess the courage, fortitude and vision to reach for the stars. Let us resolve to do so, as we march into the next millennium with the great Indian poet Tagore, I shall say, “into that heaven of Freedom, my Father let my country awake”.

May the noble Triple Gem bless you!



ETHNIC CONFLICT NEEDS
A FINAL SOLUTION

SPEECH MADE AS THE CANDIDATE OF THE PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE
FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Colombo - December 14th 1999



The time has come for all of us collectively to focus our minds on the most important question that faces Sri Lanka today. The ethnic conflict in our country has gone on for almost two decades bringing great misery to our people and impeding economic growth. This war has seriously eroded our moral values. The cult of violence has taken root in our society. It is only a common effort by all our communities that can find the final solution.

From the days of my youth, I have been deeply concerned by the minorities' problems in our country. I have spent many long hours and years studying, discussing and reflecting on these problems. The political basis of my thinking has been deeply influenced by the principles contained in the B-C Pact, formulated by my father and the Hon. Chelvanayakam. When the UNP stirred up racial discord during their 17-year reign of darkness. I together with my husband Vijaya, travelled into the Sinhala heartland, from village to village, speaking to the people of the need to understand the problems of the Tamil people and the minorities. We told them that the only durable and viable solution is a negotiated political settlement, and that violence from either side could never resolve the problem.

Then from 1993 onwards in all the major election campaigns, I gave the same message to the people. I took immense risks, regarding my personal safety, as well as my political future. Rarely has a political leadership from the South had the courage and the vision to openly state the truth about the minorities question. The resounding victories given to us by the people in 8 rounds of elections since 1993, gave us the strength to forge a new programme to rebuild national unity.



ETHNIC CONFLICT NEEDS
A FINAL SOLUTION

We formulated and presented proposals for extensive constitutional reforms, with the objective of creating a Sri Lankan society in which the Tamil people and other minorities would enjoy constitutionally guaranteed rights and privileges as equal citizens of this country. Our proposals embody clear and concrete measures for the devolution of political and administrative power from the center to the regions. We recognize that the Northern and Eastern regions where a preponderance of Tamil people live, are entitled to a meaningful sharing of power.

Our vision also embodies the guarantee of physical safety and safety of property for all citizens. It ensures them of equal opportunities in education, employment and in every other sphere of our society and economy.

Here I wish to add that, I am convinced that a division of the country could not serve the interests of either the Sinhala or the Tamil people. It would have catastrophic consequences for the future of separate States in Sri Lanka. In every case where a united country has been divided, nothing but misery has ensued for both States created out of one. A very large number of Tamil and Muslim citizens of Sri Lanka live and work in the greater part of our country peacefully, among their Sinhala brothers and sisters. It is my duty to take good care of all our citizens, specially the minority communities. We shall therefore not permit this country of ours to be divided into separate States.

My Government has done much to ensure that the Tamil people were safe and secure everywhere in the country. It shall be so, for so, for so long as we hold the reigns of government. The era of fearful uncertainty for the Tamil people is now over. Even under the gravest provocation, there has been no repetition, during my tenure of office, of the terrible events that occurred between 1977 and July 1983. The Tamil people will never forget these episodes in our history - of unparalleled trauma. Surely, the Tamil people will never forget that "Black July" occurred during the regime of the United National Party. That as a result of the violence, thousands of Tamil families left the


country in the fear that even their basic physical security would not be guaranteed by the Government?

Their departure from our shores was a grievous loss to our society. We lost many of the ablest sons and daughters of Sri Lanka, who were an immense credit to their motherland.

During my tenure of office, the LTTE unleashed, as before, brutal violence on civilians in various parts of the country. The bombing of the Central Bank and a commuter train full of passengers were examples of civilian terror, which the LTTE used as an instrument of war. No one can ever forget that on the eve of the 50th Anniversary Celebrations of our Independence, the LTTE bombed one of the world's holiest shrines of Buddhism, the Dalada Maligawa. These and numerous massacres of a Senior Buddhist monk and of innocent villagers, were highly provocative acts designed, to trigger massive reprisals on the part of the Sinhala community. It is sad to note that the UNP leadership attempted actively during these events to provoke the Sinhala people to racial violence. My Government, under my personal direction, did all that was in our power to ensure that not a single Tamil person was harmed. I am truly proud of the degree of restraint shown by the Sinhala people on these terrible occasions.

I now take this opportunity to apologise to the Tamil citizens of this country for the inconvenience caused by the various security measures we are compelled to undertake, in order to protect our citizens, Tamils, Sinhalese and others, from the constant attempts of LTTE suicide killers, to cause havoc. We have made serious attempts to minimize the inconvenience and harassment caused to all of you. As a responsible government, which considers that it is our bounden duty to ensure the safety of every single citizen, we cannot take the risk of leaving innocent citizens to the vicious attacks of the LTTE. I earnestly request the Tamil people to bear with us a little longer for your own safety, until we find an early solution to the conflict.

We have discussed extensively our constitutional proposals to end the war



ETHNIC CONFLICT NEEDS
A FINAL SOLUTION

and resolve the ethnic question in Parliament, in the country and with all concerned parties and groups and in particular with the UNP.

I repeatedly requested the Leader of the UNP to participate with us in the resolution of the Tamil problem. He consistently evaded involvement in the national debate, made no constructive suggestions of his own, and indeed consciously delayed an early implementation of the resolution to the problem. Now, in the last days of the presidential election campaign, he seems to suggest as a solution, a vague formula, involving the creation of an interim administrative council for the North and East. This is far less than what we have proposed in our constitutional reforms. Anyway, my Government has already taken action to set up just such a Council, long before the thought dawned on the UNP. Having stated that he would hand over the North and East to the LTTE for two years, the UNP candidate seeks now to deny having made such a highly irresponsible statement. If this is what the UNP offers as a solution to the gravest problem that our country has ever faced, all I can say is that they have offered to our people a monumental insult to their intelligence. Our people will not be seduced into accepting a solution, so bereft of thought and reflection, as a means of ending the war.

My Government has always endeavoured to replace the traditional conflictual politics we have experienced in our country, with a culture of consensual politics. I believe our two greatest victories in the sphere of nation building are:

Firstly, that we have brought most of the forces representing the Sinhala people in Parliament, together with all the political parties representing the minorities.

Secondly, that we have succeeded in persuading the Sinhala majority, that there is an ethnic problem in this country and that its only viable resolution lies in a politically negotiated settlement. My Government has succeeded for the first time in independent Sri Lanka in effecting a vast transformation in

the thinking of the majority, Sinhala Community. I created a new Ministry for Ethnic Affairs and National Integration which implements many programmes to promote the building of a new Sri Lankan Nation.

On the same principle, we embarked on the task of promoting a dialogue with the LTTE, no sooner we assumed office. The LTTE broke off, after 8 months, this dialogue unilaterally and went back to war. I have often stated publicly even after the hostilities recommenced, that we are prepared to open negotiations with the LTTE as soon as they demonstrate some sincere commitment to eschew their politics of terror and engage honestly in a negotiated settlement.

I am aware that a few third parties have attempted, during the past two years to persuade the LTTE to re-commence a dialogue with the Government. The LTTE has not responded positively up to date. In this context, I fail to understand the assurances given by the LTTE that they are seeking a dialogue, when they have clearly refused such a dialogue, when practically proposed.

I am able to understand the pain and feel the sorrow of all those of you who have lost their close friends and relatives in this terrible violence. I too have sacrificed a father and a husband on the altar of another form of political violence, which prevailed in this country. I wish to ensure the Tamil people, that I am equally concerned as you, in seeking an end to the war and a resolution to the ethnic problem.

We have succeeded in obtaining the support of every single political party and group representing the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim people. We have the agreement of the majority of the Nation. The UNP and the LTTE are the only two groups that stand alone in their constant commitment to a refusal of the resolution of the Tamil people's problem.

My Government was unable to implement the constitutional proposals as we do not possess a two-thirds majority in Parliament. We have now evolved a scheme by which we could bring in a new constitution even without the two-



ETHNIC CONFLICT NEEDS
A FINAL SOLUTION

thirds majority. For this, we need a clear and massive mandate from you and all the peoples of this country. I am confident that the Tamil people are awaiting the day when the Government of Sri Lanka would guarantee their rights, to say a resounding "NO" to the politics of terror and violence.

Friends and fellow citizens, my Government remains totally committed to ending the war and bringing in a new era of peace. I do not wish to bequeath upon our children the horrors that you and I have lived through in the past decades. Let us together march into the new Millennium with peace and in harmony, to rebuild a new Sri Lanka brimming, with the vigour and vitality of an enlightened and united Nation.

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THE ADDRESS MADE AT THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE
SUDU NELUM (WHITE LOTUS) MOVEMENT

Colombo - July 8th 1995



We are aware that the Sudu Nelum Flower - White Lotus - symbolizes the lofty values of peace and purity and prosperity. May I join all of you who are assembled here in expressing the hope and wish that it will be possible to usher in an era of peace and prosperity - an era of genuine brotherhood - to our country now pushed in to the abyss of hopelessness through separatism and a cruel war.

In the context of our culture, from ancient times the White Lotus symbolized purity and prosperity. Similarly, the colour white indicated peace. Though it stems from a muddy pool, we know that the Lotus is second to no other flower in beauty and fragrance. Let us today resolve to strive indefatigably and unflinchingly to cause peace, prosperity and brotherhood to emerge triumphantly and gloriously from the morass of ethnic conflict, just as a serene White Lotus emerges out of the mud and turbid waters of a pool. That, undoubtedly, is the aspiration of all the common people of this country, irrespective of all differences.

We very well know that our people have been living in this country for some thousands of years. We know that in our country, which boasts of a recorded history of over 2,500 years, several ethnic groups of people have been living peacefully together. We are aware that from as far back as the arrival of Arahath Maha Mahinda bringing the message of Buddhism to this country, that is, from a time of over 2,000 years, people of various races came over to this country and lived together in peace.



A N E R A O F P E A C E
A N D P R O S P E R I T Y

From ancient times, people of various parts of India - from the South, North and West of India migrated to Sri Lanka and made it their home. Not only that, we know that even from Burma a small group of people came over and settled down in this country. From far away Arabian countries too, people came here and we know that their descendants even to this day live in certain parts in Sri Lanka.

It is clear that these various communities belonged to various races and religions, talked different languages and had their own separate cultural identities. But the indigenous population, along with all these different communities, could develop into one united Sri Lankan nation, shaped and nurtured mainly by a Sinhala Buddhist Culture. Yet, in the recent past, for a period of about 500 years, our country came successively under the alien rule of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British, until we regained our national freedom in 1948. But the long foreign rule left to us a land on which the seeds of divisiveness and separatism had been widely sown.

Our failure to mould and develop a common Sri Lankan identity and a character in the social, cultural and political spheres, weaving into the national fabric the several ethnic groups that live in the country, has indeed, to be considered a tragic shortcoming. As such, it would not be wrong to say that the greatest challenge, before all of us today, is the building of a strong Sri Lankan nation with a common Sri Lankan identity and a character, bringing together the different ethnic and religious groups such as Sinhala Buddhists, Sinhala Christians, Tamil Hindus, Tamil Christians and the Muslims.

We, Sri Lankan people, have today scored a remarkable political victory after 17 years of untold suffering, harassment and struggle to defend democracy. In the enjoyment of that victory, our people earnestly look forward to the fulfilment of very many aspirations. Many people from our villages complain that they have not got employment opportunities. Some are bitterly critical that the implementation of our proposed development programme has not been



A N E R A O F P E A C E
A N D P R O S P E R I T Y

pushed forward with sufficient speed. Certainly, it will not be difficult for us to realize these objectives through proper economic development. But, I wish emphatically to impress upon you, that we will not be able to properly and adequately, enjoy the fruits of economic development as long as communal conflicts - specially, the ethnic conflicts in the North-East and the rest of the country too is embroiled in it. You will see, that we have just started launching, a very clear economic policy to again bring on to proper lines the economy of this country which the previous government had brought to utter ruin. But, a war started again in the North-East which compels, in the minimum, the expenditure of 5,000 million rupees on National Defence. Just when our parents, throughout the country were heaving a sigh of relief that the era when dozen after dozen of the dead bodies of their sons who were fighting in the North-East were brought in coffins to their villages, had ended, this terrible inhuman war started again and, their villages, again began to witness such tragic sights. Once the minorities of this country, mainly the Tamils, and to a certain extent, the Muslims had to wage a big struggle to gain their fundamental human rights and their economic rights. They carried on their struggle by democratic means for a long time, and later on, thinking that they would be able to realize these objectives quicker by violent means, started a war which has brought immense destruction.

After 1977, the Tamil people had reason to think that even the meagre opportunities they had to get their problems resolved, had got further restricted. There came into existence, a government which thought that, instead of finding political solutions to the problems of the Tamil people by democratic means, of discussion and dialogue, they could be resolved by mayhem and intimidation of people by cold blooded murder - murder by even burning people alive. That government committed these crimes, not only against the Tamils. They practised state terrorism against all of their political opponents, making no distinction of race or creed, and sought to keep people under suppression through violence, and its rule lasted for over 17 years.



A N E R A O F P E A C E
A N D P R O S P E R I T Y

As a result, the youth of the South rose up arms in hand, and practising the terrorism taught to them by the government, surpassing even the methods and tactics of that government, inflicted a terrible devastation in the area. The youth of the North, having crossed over to South India on the sly, organized and equipped themselves very well and came back to Sri Lanka and launched a destructive war which has been going on for about the last 13 years.

Although, at the initial stage, the Tamil people did not extend open support to this struggle, they indirectly or in their heart of hearts, had some sympathy for it. The idea emerged in the minds of many Tamils, that they should demand a separate state, because, they thought they had no other means or alternative to win their rights. They thought so, not because they had any special desire to live in a separate state. This idea gained popularity, not because Tamil people living in the South, including the prosperous Tamils who have been living in Colombo for generations carrying on lucrative business and acquiring considerable wealth there, wished to migrate to Jaffna for good. They thought so, because, they could think of no other way to have their problem resolved.

Today the People's Alliance Government has convinced, almost the whole of the people of Sri Lanka, that it is possible to build one country where Sinhala Buddhists, the vast majority of the population, and the peoples of various other minority communities and religions, including Tamils, could live together as one people bound by a sense of brotherhood, enjoying full and equal rights. My dear friends, under this new set up, there is no place for any racism, religious intolerance or separatism. I think it is hardly necessary to point out to you that if we continued to be divided, if one community selfishly struggled to enjoy greater privileges than others, keeping the rest of the people under suppression, we would lose our much cherished Motherland. The most important question before the country today, is not whether the Sinhala Buddhists would manage to gain a position, where they would be able to live a better life than others. Nor is it, whether the LTTE in the North, which seeks to annihilate all others who are opposed to them - even those of their own community who differ from



A N E R A O F P E A C E
A N D P R O S P E R I T Y

them - will be able to establish a rule of theirs. The real question before all of us, is whether Sri Lanka will be able to continue as one country into the future, tiding over the present crisis. Because of this unwanted war, for the last 12 years, we have been wasting a massive amount of resources that could have been used to turn Sri Lanka into one of the most developed countries in the world. The valuable lives of nearly one hundred thousand of Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim youth, whose labour and talents could have been utilized to economically develop this country and who would have provided leadership to that economic development, have been lost. I believe, the conscience of any one of you will not fail to inform you, if honestly consulted that our country will not be able to face this destruction of resources any longer, without a serious threat to our very existence.

The great challenge lying before us today is not just stopping this war. I wish to remind you that the greater challenge, is that we should find political solutions to the central problems which have become the causes of this war, so that a repetition of it would not occur.

It is no secret that this is not an easy task. All the rulers of this country, from 1948 onwards, faced this problem. All the previous governments avoided directly confronting this problem and finding a durable solution to it. There were reasons for that. But I am not going to go into these reasons here now. In the course of all the important political events of last year, we declared to the people, that we would directly accept this challenge. Specially, in the 3 main elections held in 1994, in the course of our election campaigns throughout the length and breadth of this country, we declared that fact, and secured a mandate from the people to implement that proposal.

That is why we took action, within a few days of our coming into power, to formulate a solution to this problem. But, certainly, it was not the North-East question solely that attracted our attention. We also, as Ministers and Members of Parliament of yours, took steps to address problems of economic, social and



A N E R A O F P E A C E
A N D P R O S P E R I T Y

cultural development of the people, in accordance with the pledges given by us. I believe 60 to 70 percent of my time was devoted to this effort and we worked, 16 - 18 hours per day in handling these tasks. We, in regard to these matters, evolved a very clear policy and a programme. We were quite aware that the peace effort was not going to be an easy one. My regret is that many people in this country, including some journalists who preach on all matters to the people, have failed to understand the substance of the peace proposals. When taking action to put a stop to a destructive war like this, when seeking to remedy so pestered and ulcerous a wound on our national physique, we can ill-afford to spend so much of time on controversies on solutions. No country in the world which has handled such questions successfully, had done so. But in view of our commitment to the policy of transparency we follow, we have informed our people on all possible occasions as to what we were going to do. It is clear that as much as we are, the people of the North are also weary of the war and are yearning for peace. Since we were quite aware of this fact, we bent all our efforts to win over the people of the North-East to the peace effort. We took many steps to realize this aim. With this objective, we had discussions with the LTTE. Holding discussions with the LTTE was only one aspect of our peace effort. The most important objective of the initial stage of our talks had been to win the support of all the Tamil people, to the peace process or to our side. Here, by 'our side' I do not mean the SLFP or the PA. Here, by 'our side' I mean the peace effort. I am happy to state that in this regard we have already scored great success.

Today the people of the North, as much as the people of the South, have realized that the existing government is making quite an honest effort to find a solution to the ethnic problem. Today, the great majority of the Tamil people stand convinced, that since this government is honestly seeking to solve the problems of the Tamils, and also of all other minorities of the country, it has become unnecessary to pursue a war for that purpose. Today, in disregard of the wishes and aspirations of the Tamil people, only one Tamil organization is



carrying on a war. That organization is the LTTE. Since it was the LTTE which was responsible for the war, we had to have discussions with them. As some people allege, we have never been naively believing in the word of the LTTE or have been deceived by them. We had a clear understanding as to what the LTTE was saying. If we had not understood that the LTTE was an organization, which believed in terrorism and murder and they did not hesitate to murder even their colleagues as means of resolving problems, we certainly would have been utter fools. Even with that knowledge and estimate of the LTTE, with whom were we to discuss except the LTTE, which pursued the war? Were we to discuss, instead, with the editors of the newspapers who wrote editorials arguing that it was because of our naivete that we had discussions with the LTTE, to seek an end to the war? If some enemy jumps in front of us armed with lethal weapons, threatening to kill us, we should either be able to strike him down with our own weapons straight away or, if we are for moment not able to do that, we must talk to him to arrive at some agreement. We have had recourse to the second course of action. We very honestly, as a government committed to democracy, made an effort to see whether it was possible through dialogue to get them to agree to some solution. When we had talks with the LTTE it was not only them we had as our target. We also had our sights fixed on the people of the North who formed the power base of the LTTE. We thought their influence would make the LTTE to change its views. History abounds with instances, where such influence and pressure succeeded in bringing about changes of attitudes in people. But now, through that effort of ours, we have made it plain to the Tamil people as well as to the international community, which through direct or indirect means extended support to the LTTE, that the LTTE is not an organisation that will respond to such influence.

As we have been very honest in seeking peace; as we as a government went to the maximum limit possible to realize peace, the whole world has come to the conclusion that it is the LTTE that is at fault. It was at a time when all aid-giving countries and organizations, including the World Bank had refused to



A N E R A O F P E A C E
A N D P R O S P E R I T Y

give even a red cent in way of aid since the two previous years to the then existing UNP government, that our government came into power. Why had the then government been refused any aid by all aid-giving countries and organizations? Those countries and organizations had done so, on the one hand, in way of a rejection of the wrong policy followed by the UNP government in regard to guaranteeing of human rights in relation to the whole country, and on the other, as a protest against the then government's failure to make any genuine effort to put an end to the war in the North. It should be noted that these countries had urged continuously during 10 years of the 12 year period, the then government to adopt a positive policy as regards human rights and the war in the North and in view of the government's failure to respond positively had stopped all aid since the beginning of the last two years. But now, these countries are eagerly offering generous aid to us. At the Paris conference of the aid-giving countries, just 10 days after the LTTE resumed its war, breaking the cessation of hostilities agreement, we were able to secure more aid than the UNP government was able to secure in respect of one whole year. In fact, the negotiations for obtaining aid was in progress, when the LTTE re-started the war. We were still in Paris happily reflecting on our success at our aid negotiations and hardly 12 hours had elapsed since that event, when we heard that two of our air-craft had been shot down at the Palaly airport. We continue to receive the agreed aid for development. Further, the devastated North and the East has to be developed, but under the existing conditions, we cannot launch on the North-East development. For the development of the East, a number of countries have agreed to give outright grants (not loans). This happy situation has dawned, because, we find at the helm of affairs in aid-giving countries, very intelligent, informed and experienced statesmen who are quite unlike the local newspaper editors I referred to and some persons who shout out in vain in the Parliament.

The LTTE has very cruelly disrupted the first stage of the peace negotiations on 19th of April without any substantial reason for it. They are unable to offer



A N E R A O F P E A C E
A N D P R O S P E R I T Y

any acceptable excuse for their action. Now our government has launched on the second stage of the peace process. For the last three months we have been engaged in the war for ushering in of peace. This war for peace, is not one waged against any community living in our country. Now, here, I would like to remind you of some statements I made in the course of an address to the nation, soon after the LTTE restarted its war. I said, "I would like clearly to state that if we failed to realize peace through peaceful means, our government will not hesitate to have recourse to some other effective means for the enthronement of peace". By that statement we do not mean, that we will wage a war to destroy the Tamils. We will wage war against only the LTTE which rejects peace which, all people including the Tamils, so earnestly desire.

Some University Professors and academics have developed a frenzy today to preach racism, as if they have no other useful thing to do. There are, also, some Parliamentarians who subscribe and give publicity to their destructive ideas. You know that, when recently the Dimbulagala High Priest was cruelly assassinated by terrorists, these elements engaged in an effort to start a racial conflagration in the country, similar to the one that engulfed the country in 1983. Police investigations have revealed that fires in Galle had been started by some people, who belonged to a certain political party. I also must point out to you, that on the two days prior to the day (Saturday) on which the funeral rites of the dead prelate were conducted, it was a certain Member of Parliament of the same political party, that tried to put up on the walls of Colombo some highly inflammatory communal posters. We are investigating into these actions. Action will be taken against the offenders. Several people had made statements on the matter. It is, strangely, the people who put on a very innocent look, dressed in pure white like 'upasakas' who commit these grave offences.

My dear friends, it is my belief that you all, specially the Sinhala Buddhists, have gained the recognition and respect of the whole world as a noble people, who live up to lofty Sinhala Buddhist values, and they have already gone down in world history as such. At the most terrible and most violent racial



A N E R A O F P E A C E
A N D P R O S P E R I T Y

conflict that occurred in 1983, the great majority of the Sinhala people, took no part at all in the cruel actions committed. It is no secret to you all that violence was inflicted by groups of thugs belonging to the then ruling party, deployed at various points in the cities. But their effort to rouse up the people of the whole country with racial hatred, did not succeed. There are several other instances where various elements, had tried to rouse up people. The last occasion was the Presidential Election of 1994, when in the course of the election campaign Mr. Gamini Dissnayake, was assassinated. A great effort was made, even by making use of the opportunity provided by our government to give TV Broadcasts for the election campaign, to provoke the people. Inflammatory posters were put up every where, "Thilakas" were painted on the forehead of my face on my pictures on posters. It was the members of a certain political party which did all these things. There are also several other small - size Sinhala "heroes" of different hues who subscribe to the same hate campaign. There are some professors and doctorates holding academics among them. But on this occasion, we bow our heads in salutation to you all who remained calm, composed and steady without being swept away from your stride by the campaign of whipping up feelings, like the legendary Mahameru rock, and trod the right path of peace and sanity chosen by the people as a whole.

I believe that Sinhala Buddhists, as well as the other people living in this country, know fully well that the attacks made on us by the terrorists will be surely and successfully met by the armed forces of the government. We have chosen to have recourse to this approach, because there is no other alternative left to us. Dear friends, I assure you that this time our retaliatory action on the enemy will be effective and successful. I hope you all will, extend, not only your good wishes to it, but also your active support. We will militarily react in this manner, because we are not prepared to take the enemy blows lying down and perish. Yet, we believe that this is not a question, that can be resolved only by military means. Even though we may inflict defeat on the LTTE in the North, the problems of the Tamil people that have arisen and grown in the



social, political, economic and cultural spheres of the national life, have to be fairly resolved. Similarly, the problems of other communities of the country too should be resolved to ensure fair play to all. Unless this is done we must realize another LTTE could very well emerge in the future. We suppressed the JVP in 1971. But by 1988, another JVP much more ferocious and powerful came into existence. Today, Wijeweera is not among the living. He will not come back to life. But if the social economic and cultural problems faced today by the people of the South are not resolved, another Wijeweera may very well emerge in the South, in the future. While we take measures generally to resolve the social, economic, political and cultural problems embracing the whole country, we earnestly do everything possible to solve, on a lasting basis, the ethnic conflict which stands in the way of resolving all other problems. I must emphasize that the lasting solution to that problem should be none other than a political solution.

Today the whole of the North has become a virtual inferno. If at least some sections of the inhabitants of the North have been for 12 long years, living amidst untold hardships and continue to this day their fight, there ought to be some serious problem which impel them to do so. It would have been hardly possible for Prabhakaran to force the youth of the North to carry on a fight against authority for 12 long years. But, it is true that he some times forces unwilling youth to join in the war. He does so now very often. But, undoubtedly, there is a serious problem that needs speedy solution. In answer to this problem our government has formulated a series of political solutions, drawing also on studies done, ideas expressed and proposals made by various individuals and bodies over a long time.

Our package of political solutions is presently being discussed, specially, with political parties representing Tamil people. Under the direction of Minister Prof. G. L. Peiris, this process will continue during the few weeks ahead. Shortly, this package of political solutions will be put before the people of this country for their consideration.




A N E R A O F P E A C E
A N D P R O S P E R I T Y

You are well aware of the details of the war going on in the North-East. I, therefore, do not intend to dwell on them on this occasion. But, I must say a few words about the misinformation now being often dished out about it by various people. Dear friends, today the newspapers say various things about this war. We appreciate the need of these newspaper institutions to push up their sales, and we do not interfere with their right to say anything they like. If we act differently, we would be called upon to find jobs for their personnel also, who will be thrown out of employment. These newspapers say that the terrorists have now surrounded the Palaly Camp, preparations are on by the terrorists to attack it from all sides, soldiers experience a food shortage and they eat boiled unripened Papaws for want of anything else to eat. At the very start of this resumption of the war, we had all this sort of thing looked into. While in all of these military camps, there were stocks of dry rations sufficient to last at least 6 weeks, some had enough quantities of them to last as long as 6 months. But, it is true after the terrorist attack, due to some temporary difficulties, it had not been possible to transport to these camps greens, raw vegetables and fruits. We would like to remind you that our armed forces at the time of the last regime had almost been abandoned to carry on a destructive war, without having been provided with proper direction or a proper plan of action with clear objectives. They had been at times led to adopt communal stances. But, under our leadership they came to be provided with clear direction and a proper and well thought out plan of action with clear objectives to be achieved. Further, we took action to work a radical transformation in their attitude towards the war, in that we made them to realize clearly that ours was not a war waged against the Tamil people, but it was a war directed at the LTTE which fought even against the cherished aspirations of the Tamil people. Even yesterday, Minister Anuruddha Ratwatta had travelled by air and visited the camps in the North. There had been no missile attacks on the plane he flew in. He is in a position to give us first hand information because he visited and made a personal inspection of the camps. He has assured us that the morale of the soldiers in them is very high and they are prepared to fight with determination to win.

Today, through this Sudu Nelum Movement, we seek the support of all of you to the efforts we make to realize peace. It may be war at one moment, and political moves again at the next moment. Even discussion might start if appropriate conditions emerged. In all these efforts whatever their nature may be, we earnestly solicit the support of all those who value peace, the people of all races and religions, the people speaking all languages and the people belonging to all political parties.

All need not take up arms and go to the battlefronts of the North-East and be in the thick of battles. We all cannot do that. But we can help our heroic soldiers fighting in the North-East in many ways. Also, on the political front, we need the valuable assistance of you all who provide political leadership to the people in the villages. Now we are in the process of readjusting the relations between the various communities on correct and wholesome lines eschewing communalism after some centuries. In this difficult exercise, we need your assistance to guide and strengthen this readjustment preventing a relapse into attitudes based on racism or separatism. In this regard we expect you to play a tremendously great role. You all know better than any of us, about the life of the facilities of soldiers living in villages. Organizing yourselves on a political basis through the Sudu Nelum Committees we set up in the villages, you could do a lot of social welfare work to help these families.

Also, you should through these committees help in the holding of the funerals of the heroic soldiers who sacrifice their lives in the defence of the country, in a fitting manner. You also can help swell the funds of the National Defence Fund. Today we do not use the monies of the NDF to buy weapons; we use them only for the purpose of the welfare of the soldiers. You can participate in the sale of Sudu Nelum Flags that we will be organizing shortly, you can go from house to house in the villages you live in and sell these flags and collect funds for this valuable cause.




A N E R A O F P E A C E
A N D P R O S P E R I T Y

The people of the villages bordering on operational areas too are living amidst serious threats and hardships. They do not have many of the services and goods necessary for their day-to-day living. They do not have proper transport facilities. Traders who used to visit these villages to ply their business now do not do so in view of the fears they entertain about their safety. The villagers do not have pure drinking water in sufficient quantities. Already, our MP's have begun visiting these villages in organized groups to see to the needs of these innocent villagers. Under the Sudu Nelum Movement, we hope to do this on a better organized scale. Also the armed forces camps in places accessible to us experience numerous shortcomings - not in respect of their needs of military ware but as regards their welfare. Our Parliamentarians expect to visit these camps too under the Sudu Nelum Movement and do everything possible to provide the day-to-day needs of our soldiers. Further, we have already started a propaganda campaign to counter the racial and separatist ideas that have been spread among the people during the recent period of our history, causing disunity among the people. You can under your leadership and guidance, start discussions, seminars and cultural events in your village to remove these misconceptions. Sudu Nelum Movement has also a separate programme for students. We hope to launch this programme within the next two weeks in consultation with the Minister of Education.

In short you could do a lot in the area you live in, and in the areas accessible to you to consolidate the gains made by our heroic soldiers in the battle fields to bring peace to the country, even facing the risk of having to sacrifice their very lives in the process. You can take part in the effort to build a Sri Lankan State of which all of us could be proud of. We invite you to take up this great challenge through the Sudu Nelum Movement.

Let us resolve to work with determination to keep the Sudu Nelum Movement that blooms today, without fading for a long time to come. If the people of all of our communities - Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and Burgher and of all religions join hands with a sense of brotherhood, "White Lotuses" of peace




A N E R A O F P E A C E
A N D P R O S P E R I T Y

will bloom in tens of thousands in their hearts. Peace is the prerequisite for our prosperity. Our fervent appeal to the people on this occasion is to come together bound by a deep sense of brotherhood and create a durable peace which is the foundation for our development and prosperity.

This effort, most probably will necessitate a re-examination, a refashioning and a cleansing of some of the attitudes and ideas we held so far. We may have to rectify certain mistakes we up to date unwittingly committed. I would like to point out to you that the Sudu Nelum Movement has presented to you a good opportunity to engage in this exercise of self-examination and self-purification. For this I thank, on behalf of all of you, Mr. Mangala Samaraweera, the organizer of the Sudu Nelum Movement. I also take this opportunity to thank, the leaders and the members of all the parties of the People's Alliance Government and the people of all ethnic groups and religions, for the unstinted co-operation extended to the good efforts of the government. May White Lotuses of Peace bloom in the hearts of all of our people!


I thank you all.



A D E S I R E T O F O R G E
A P E R M A N E N T P E A C E

ADDRESS TO THE NATION AT THE
SECOND INAUGURATION AS THE PRESIDENT

Temple Trees, Colombo - December 22, 1999



It is with an intense and in immeasurably deep sense of gratitude to all my Sri Lankan brothers and sisters, who have once again reposed their faith in me as their President, that I humbly accept this electoral victory that has been miraculously bestowed upon me.

Particularly I must thank all those who have prayed for my well-being in the days since the terrorist cowards made their attempt upon my life, as well as those who have also prayed and worked so hard for this victory. Truly, from the depths of my being I thank you.

But before I speak further, I humbly request that the entire nation keep one minute's silence with me now in memory of those whose lives were stolen in the terrible destruction of December, 18; indeed, in memory of all Sri Lankans who have lost their lives to this hideous conflict.

(Silence)

Friends, there is no doubt in my mind that this victory with which the gods have seen fit to honour me is a victory not only for myself and not only for my two children whose mother has been spared, but a resounding victory for our entire nation. This victory is without doubt a very special and portentous gift of the gods.

For I believe that there now stands before you, before this nation, the one leader who is the single most qualified to lead us to the peace we long for. There now stands before you the one leader who understands precisely the sorrow in our nation's soul. The one leader who has felt every human pain that



A D E S I R E T O F O R G E
A P E R M A N E N T P E A C E

it is possible to feel and yet has survived with the strength, the ability and the resolve to triumph over pain and to eradicate its source.

I have suffered our nation's sorrow in every way humanly possible: in the vicious pain of losing a father. In the loving pain of motherhood. In the soul-destroying pain of losing a husband. And now finally, I have nearly stepped over the threshold of my life into the deep abyss of the unknown darkness, only to be miraculously saved by the powers that be in order that I serve you further with even more passion and with even more dedication than I had before.

Friends, the night of 18 December, 1999 will go down in history as the night this land was touched by the hand of darkness one too many times. To all those who have ever doubted my resolve to lift the curse of hatred and death that has fallen upon our land, I offer the challenge to look into my face now and voice your doubt. I challenge them to say, if they dare, that Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga is not genuine in her desire to forge a permanent peace with the arms of compassion and love.

I will answer them, indeed the very wounds I bear will answer them, that there is no individual on this earth more determined than I am to end this country's wretched and mindless bloodshed and destruction. I will answer them that there is no other political leader in this country who sees so clearly as I do the enemy that walks so freely about in our land. That enemy is hatred and he stands in front of me as I speak. I see him. I know him. I and my family and this nation, have felt his touch one too many times.

Indeed it is with unshakeable confidence that I declare that I have felt his touch for the last time. Because from this day forward I shall not rest until I have rid this land, of hatred and its curse of death and destruction.

This new lease of life, this national miracle, shall be the beginning of a vow, a new destiny for our country. Our vow and our destiny are that peace must reign.



A D E S I R E T O F O R G E
A P E R M A N E N T P E A C E

But peace does not arise from nowhere, just as presidents do not arise from nowhere. As a President is elected vote by vote by the individual hands of our people, so peace must be elected soul by individual soul.

A former President of France (Francois Mitterand) said:

Peace is a battle.

Peace is never given freely, never acquired.

Its conquest is the result of courage and of respect for others.

It demands awareness and commitment from everyone.

Peace is not the law imposed by the mighty but that which is founded on equality and dignity of all people.

And so the task of forging peace falls not only to your president but to all of us, including those who have in the past stood back, uncertain as to which role they should play. All of us, from this day forward, each every single day, must elect peace into their hearts and into their lives.

To the millions of Sri Lankans whose eyes are open to the truths of the spirit, my victory stands as a singularly fitting symbol of what must now come to pass. For as I hold the unique distinction of being the one political leader against whom an LTTE assassination attempt has failed. I say that I, as the President of this nation and the Leader of all my people of all races, religions and political beliefs, will be the one political leader against whom the entire LTTE terrorist enterprise will fail.

There are many who have watched this election campaign despairing that no politician talks about solving the ethnic conflict for any reason other than to win the people's votes. To any of you who have doubted, I say that my wounds are proof of my sincerity. When I first declared the presidential election nearly one and a half years before its due time, I clearly stated that my main objective was to end the war and bring in peace without any further delay.



A D E S I R E T O F O R G E
A P E R M A N E N T P E A C E

In fact, I truly believe that the gods have spared me to achieve just this purpose of peace and national reconciliation. And if I did not believe that, then I would not be worthy of the high office to which you, my Brothers and Sisters, have once again called me.

And so to the root of our current problem. Again I say, look at me, look at my wounds. These are not the wounds of politics. These are not the wounds of a just fight for equality. These are not the wounds of a noble cause of independence and self-determination. These are not the wounds of sheer, naked, and unadulterated hatred of man for man, and disregard of all that is humane which raises man from the sheer bestiality of animalism to that heavenly realm of spirituality. Those who inflict such wounds can no longer be allowed to go unchecked and unpunished.

Let all those who act in the name of hatred and terror in the North-East and their supporters in the South be warned: far from being weakened by fear of attack, our resolve had been incalculably strengthened by your cowardice.

Let all those who aid and abet terror be warned: let those who by act or omission support terror be warned: let those who secretly or openly condone the path of violence pursued by the cowards of the LTTE be warned: the days of terror in this land are numbered and that number is small.

Let all citizens of this country, Tamil and Muslim and Burgher and Sinhala, be warned that this government will not for one second be deterred from taking the strongest possible action against anyone who supports terror.

The people of this country have made clear their desire. They seek peace and have elected a leader of peace; they seek national unity and have elected a leader who has proven, able to unify our forces. But it is also certain that they also seek brotherhood and they have therefore elected not only a strong president but clearly shown their support for a strong and vibrant opposition.

I believe that we must fully appreciate the meaning of the size of the victory

that I have won. It is clear to me that the people of this nation do not intend the torch of peace to be carried by one half of our people while the other half rests. I believe that our people intend these two parties to share the burden appointed to us by destiny. This nation has the strength to create two strong parties. I believe that these two strong parties together must use this strength to once again create the nation.

The political fight is never an easy one. I therefore sincerely commiserate with Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe in his unsuccessful attempt to win the presidency. And yet I say to Mr. Wickremesinghe that he should take heart. He must take heart, because the very significant support that he and his party commands can mean one thing and one thing only: that the people of this country still intend for him to play a major role in our efforts to forge the new Sri Lanka of tranquility and tremendous opportunity that stands so close at hand.

Mr. Wickremesinghe, I stretch out my hand to you to join this government, both you and your supporters. I call upon you and your supporters to honour now by your actions the commitment to which you gave yourself throughout your election campaign, the commitment to this nation's peace, without compromising in any way with those who attempt to sow terror even for narrow political gains.

At the same time, I stretch out my hand to the leaders of all our nation's communities and faiths. Together, let us set out to clear away this culture of terror and death, let us invite all our cadres to join in this journey to rehumanise our nation's soul. Let us do as our various faiths tell us all to do, and leave behind the pettiness and spitefulness and difference to achieve this first, most desperate and most urgent target of peace, before we attempt to achieve all else.

I sympathise with those young and innocent people of our nation who have for too long been intimidated by terror into supporting the LTTE. I embrace



A D E S I R E T O F O R G E
A P E R M A N E N T P E A C E

you as dearly as I embrace my own children and entreat you to give up this hatred which is gnawing away at your heart, and to join in this nation's collective noble effort for your salvation and ours. It is only through that understanding that you will be able to convince your leaders that hatred is not the solution to any human problem.

In particular, I stretch out my hand to all our Tamil brothers and sisters who believed, mistakenly, in the benevolence of Mr. Prabhakaran to reject for once and for all the LTTE and all the violence and hatred they stand for. You must see the light of peace. I urge you to use every ounce of influence at your disposal to bring Mr. Prabhakaran to the negotiating table without any further delay. I urge you to persuade with every conceivable argument anyone who is a member or a supporter of the LTTE to renounce violence and join us in establishing peace.

I still believe in the goodness of man. I believe the time has finally come for the goodness of man to reign supreme throughout this nation. This is my one ambition, and from the achievement of this ambition, everything else that we long for and cherish will flow without hindrance

From the threshold of death I have come back in order that I join with all of you to achieve this most urgent and noble task for our beloved land, for our people and for our children.



T H E B A T T L E F O R
P E A C E

EXCERPTED FROM A PUBLICATION OF
THE MINISTRY OF ETHNIC AFFAIRS AND
NATIONAL INTEGRATION



The little time spent in reading this would go a long way in your understanding the true nature of the search for peace in Sri Lanka.

The issues we address here are not about your immediate future. It is about the future of your children and your children's children, the future generations of Sri Lanka.

Is it not your children, or your brothers, who are dying in the battlefields of the North and East today?

It is fast being realized that this unfortunate war should be brought to an end through every means possible. If we fail in this task today, those who will pay the sacrifice in the future will be your children and the children of your children. It is an inevitable truth we have to face today.

With that being so, is it not important for us to inquire as to how this war could be ended and peace restored in our country? It is necessary here to agree on certain fundamentals. The most important of this is the awareness that Peace can only be restored through a political solution of the ethnic issue in our country.

It is quite likely that you would question as to how peace could be achieved when the Tigers of the LTTE are armed to the teeth and waging war. Your concern is genuine. When one side is engaged in war, it is not possible for the other side to relax with folded arms. Which makes war against an identified enemy the necessary reality at this hour.

But while pursuing the battle against the LTTE, it is important for us to ask why it is that the Tigers have been able to convert the Tamil youth into armed fighting cadres, ready even to become suicide bombers paying little heed to the value of human life including their own. It is here that we have to face another fundamental truth in the search for peace. The Tigers have succeeded in drawing the Tamil youth to arms and death, purely because throughout the past decades the Tamil people have failed to obtain genuine solutions to the many problems that face them.

In such a situation, even if the LTTE is militarily defeated, unless and until there is an acceptable political solution to the genuine issues of the Tamil people, expectations of a lasting peace in our country can only be a mirage.

The first genuine efforts towards seeking a just solution to the problems of the Tamil people were made by the late S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike. That was through the Bandaranaike - Chelvanayakam Pact. The next serious effort in this direction was from the late Dudley Senanayake. That was through the Dudley-Chelvanayakam Pact.

Yet, the unfortunate truth is that in both instances, the narrow politics of opportunism was able to prevent a solution.

From the time of independence, the Tamil people have sought through every democratic means available - legal, constitutional and peaceful agitation - to redress their grievances. All such efforts were met with failure. With this record of failure, when did the struggle of the Tamil people take on the proportions of an armed opposition? This transformation of the Tamil struggle into armed militancy, separatism and terror began during the Jayewardene - Premadasa era which came into being in 1977.

In a situation where an ethnic crisis has been transformed into a war, which has progressively increased in intensity and destructive capacity, the search for peace in Sri Lanka requires a proper assessment about the various efforts made at peace so far and the aims and political realities which necessitated such attempts.



T H E B A T T L E F O R
P E A C E

THE JAYEWARDENE ERA

During the J. R. Jayewardene administration, there were three attempts made at seeking peace in the North and East. The first was the All Party Conference which went on from January to December 1984. The second was the Thimpu Talks from July 15 to August 17, 1985. The third was the Indo-Lanka Pact of 1987.

On all these occasions and particularly in the first two attempts, the J. R. Jayewardene administration acted on the main premise that the problem in the North was only one of terrorism. On the other hand, it is important to remember that the anti-Tamil race riots of 1977, 1979 and 1983 demonstrated the government's machinations to further its narrow political aims through these crude manifestations of racial violence. It is necessary and relevant to recall how the UNP government of the day took cover under the suppression of racial violence to suppress its own political rivals and introduced several legal measures for this purpose.

We cannot forget how the Jayewardene government took the shameless step of depriving the civic rights of its principal political rival, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike. Of how it sought to suppress anti-UNP political forces in the South by imprisoning or driving underground several leaders. How it sought to curb an emergent anti-UNP political leadership, by imprisoning Vijaya Kumaratunga and others by preferring charges against them under an alleged Naxalite conspiracy. The Jayewardene government acted in the same nakedly ruthless manner in dealing with the North. One example is how the UNP destroyed by fire the Jaffna Public Library during the District Development Council elections in 1980. In 1983, it forced the moderate Tamil leadership out of the democratic political mainstream by expelling the TULF from Parliament through the obnoxious Sixth Amendment to the Constitution.

We cannot forget how the UNP used the Prevention of Terrorism (Special Provisions) Act of 1980, better known as the Anti-Tiger Act, to crush and



T H E B A T T L E F O R
P E A C E

suppress all opposition and agitational politics in the country whether it be political opposition, trade union activity or mass agitation by people's organizations. Subsequently, the UNP used the events of the Black July in 1983, where the Jayewardene government had a clear hand in the manipulation of anti-Tamil violence, to proscribe and send underground the JVP, which had by then entered the open democratic mainstream. Thereby, the Jayewardene government paved the way for the politics of terror in the South. The manner in which the UNP's thugs went about, electoral registers in hand, to destroy the lives and property of the Tamil people in July 1983, was responsible in no small measure to push the Tamil people towards the LTTE.

The Jayewardene administration was shameless and despicable in the manner in which it set aside the real task of searching for a genuine solution to the ethnic crisis and instead used the threats mounted by the LTTE to strengthen its own political position.

It was a two-pronged approach by the Jayewardene Government which led to the ethnic issue being made more complex and pushed the country to the brink of danger. This twin approach was the unleashing of political oppression in the South and the treatment of the North-East problem purely as one of terrorism.

The Jayewardene government took fright and began to understand some of the dimensions of the crisis of its own creation, only after the bombings in the virtual "backyard" of power, the bomb explosion at the CTO in the Colombo Fort and the bomb explosion at the Pettah bus stand. It was these shockwaves that pushed the UNP to move ahead on the basis of agreements reached with India at the Thimpu Talks and move towards the Indo-Lanka Accord, the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution and the establishment of Provincial Councils.

All militant political parties of the Tamils, other than the LTTE, accepted the Provincial Council system. The leadership of the EPRLF was instrumental in establishing the North-East Provincial Council.



THE BATTLE FOR P E A C E

J. R. Jayewardene sought to wash his hands off the whole crisis by handing over the task of militarily subduing the LTTE to the IPKF that came here under the Indo-Lanka Accord.

However, the Indo-Lanka Accord which was entered into in secret, with no respect for any accepted political norms of transparency and public discussion and the Provincial Councils which were a result of that Accord, did not win much confidence in the minds of the public.

Meanwhile, Ranasinghe Premadasa who had made his target the nomination of the UNP for the presidential election due in 1988, sought to build his political strength by refusing to devolve to the provincial councils the powers which came under his ministerial purview and spreading anti-Indian feelings through opposition to the IPKF.

THE PREMADASA ERA

Shortly after winning the presidential election, President Premadasa demanded the immediate withdrawal of the IPKF, which by that time had brought the LTTE fighting strength under considerable control. Departing from the norms of etiquette in the matter of international relations, particularly with close neighbours, Premadasa succeeded in earning the displeasure of India on the one hand and on the other carried out a policy of enmity towards the EPRLF which had won control of the North-East Provincial Council.

This was in fact an infantile approach to statecraft. Yet, Premadasa made these moves with the aim of winning the confidence of the LTTE.

With this began the political honeymoon between Premadasa and Prabhakaran. The leaders of the LTTE came to Colombo. They were lodged in five-star comfort. They began discussions with President Premadasa. The talks lasted through almost one year and during this period the Premadasa government gave huge sums of money, a large stock of modern weapons, a whole fleet of Pajero jeeps and large consignments of cement to the LTTE.



T H E B A T T L E F O R
P E A C E

The LTTE made use of all these resources gifted to them by its official adversary, the Government of Sri Lanka, to fight the EPRLF in the North-East and shift the balance of power in that area in their favour. It is significant that it was while the LTTE was so engaged in talks with Premadasa that it carried out the assassinations of other Tamil political leaders such as Mr. Amirthalingam, within Colombo.

Ranasinghe Premadasa carried on this deal with the LTTE in pursuit of a sinister political goal. His statements and actions of that period reveal this underlying purpose quite well. It was the belief in the success of this dangerous policy that made Premadasa boast that he would remain in power until the year 2000.

What was this goal? It was none other than the appeasement of Prabhakaran and the Tigers and by this means make Prabhakaran his partner in the control and administration of the North-East in the grand design of Premadasa retaining overall power in the country.

The more practical aim in this strategy was to enlist the help of Prabhakaran and the LTTE in getting the votes of the Tamils of the North and East in the presidential election of 1994 and thereby ensure that he remained in the presidency and consolidated his position for a further term.

To give it in the words of Premadasa himself, "who ever thought the Tigers would come for discussions. I have trust in the Tigers".

This was the public boast of Premadasa. However, to this day the public of Sri Lanka remain ignorant of the content of the secret talks that took place between the Premadasa government and the LTTE leaders in the comfort of five-star accommodation.

But what was the final outcome? The LTTE was careful not to fall into the trap of Premadasa. Eelam War 2 was launched by the Tigers in June 1990. The fighting began with nearly a thousand police and troops being sacrificed to the Tigers in their police stations and camps. This massive national tragedy was



THE BATTLE FOR
P E A C E

made possible by President Premadasa's near treasonable order that the police and troops should not counter the Tiger attack, but should remain in their camps and stations. Some of the troops who were captured by the LTTE as a result have been suffering in the hands of the LTTE until very recently. Many, many more were cruelly killed by the Tigers.

The immediate outcome was Premadasa having to complain that the LTTE had bitten the hand that tried to feed it. War became inevitable. Premadasa who was engaged in the sinister task of using the problems of the Tamil people and the crisis that emerged through these problems to strengthen his own political position was ultimately done to death by the Tigers themselves.

The policies of D. B. Wijetunge who succeeded Premadasa amounted to none other than laying stepping stones to the Tigers. His position, as often stated, was that there was no ethnic issue in the North, but only that of a terrorist problem. His boast was that as long as his era lasted, Eelam would not be conceded.

D. B. Wijetunge who pushed the entire country further in the direction of war and a military solution, took no steps whatever to address the pressing issues of the Tamil people. His sole aim was only that of appeasing majority opinion or feeling. He spoke in simplistic terms of holding the spoon which would dish out what he thought was suitable for the minorities.

While the policies of the Wijetunge administration were pushing the country towards more war and destruction, Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, who led the opposition campaign in the Southern Provincial Council election emerged into national political leadership with the clear message of peace and reconciliation. It was the message that the North-East problem could only be solved by a political solution in which there was no place for militarism, communalism or racial extremism. In the General Election of August 1994 Chandrika Kumaratunga took the same message of peace through a political solution to the entire country.

In the Southern Provincial election, Chandrika Kumaratunga's unambiguous position in favour of a political solution won a clear mandate from the predominantly Sinhalese of the Southern Ruhuna, effectively silencing the forces of racial extremism. The General Election in August 1994 also saw a majority of the people in all regions endorse this policy of a political solution and national reconciliation.

This was the same message she took to the country in the Presidential Election in November 1994, where she received an unquestioned mandate from the people, despite that election being conducted on the worst racial extremist lines by the main opposition UNP.

When we look at the history of Sri Lanka since independence, Chandrika Kumaratunga is clearly seen as the first leader from a predominantly Sinhalese political party, who in a situation when the ethnic crisis had emerged as a principal issue, departed from the racist position, rejected the chauvinistic communal stance, made clear that the rights of the Tamil minority would be recognized and on this basis sought a mandate for a political solution. It was the acceptance of this appeal for peace and reconciliation by Chandrika Kumaratunga which saw her being elected to power by the Sinhalese and Tamil people, who had been the victims of a cruel war for twelve long years.

The Tamil people in areas of the North and East out of the control or dominance of the LTTE, went even beyond other areas in the country and in some electorates endorsed Chandrika Kumaratunga with 99% of the vote to ensure her election. This was because of their belief that the only way to solve their problems and bring an end to a long and cruel war was through a government led by her.

In the Presidential Election, when the UNP's Presidential Candidate Gamini Dissanayake was assassinated, the UNP heaped all the blame for the assassination on Chandrika Kumaratunga. At a time when the UNP carried out its entire election campaign in a manner aimed at rousing the most dangerous feelings of



THE BATTLE FOR P E A C E

racial extremism, Chandrika Kumaratunga remained unshaken from her stance on the need for a political solution.

The response of the people to this bold and courageous position was overwhelming. She was elected President with the largest number of popular votes and the highest ever percentage of votes in the history of presidential polls in Sri Lanka.

There are some significant political achievements in this victory, beyond the personal success of Chandrika Kumaratunga. These include:

1. Obtaining the mandate on a clear pledge that a political solution would be presented to solve problems of the Tamil minority.
2. Making it clear to the people that such a solution could only be achieved through the devolution and the sharing of power.
3. Obtaining a definitive rejection of both Sinhala and Tamil extremism.

The first effort of Chandrika Kumaratunga after election as President was to bring to the path of peace the LTTE which had entrenched themselves in the North and East. Towards this end, she lifted the embargo on the transportation of 28 items of essential consumer goods to the North, and by this means extended the hand of peace to the LTTE and the Tamil people. In response, the LTTE released several of the security forces personnel it had held prisoner.

Very soon, negotiations between the Government and the LTTE began. The people of the North who gathered in their thousands to greet the Government's delegation to the first talks in Jaffna, gave ample demonstration of their eager expectations of peace.

While the talks were in their third round, the LTTE began seeking ways of moving out of the negotiations. This was for no reason other than the pressure for peace that was being exerted on the LTTE and its leader Prabhakaran, by the people who had till then come under the armed dominance of the Tigers.

These pressures on the LTTE were based on the understanding by the Tamil people that President Kumaratunga was genuine in her efforts for peace. The awareness was also growing among the Tamil people that if this opportunity for peace was not grabbed, it would lead to a major tragedy for the Tamil people of the North and East. It was this twin awareness that made the Tamil people pressurize the LTTE to arrive at a political solution with the Government.

However, the LTTE was not of the same mind. They were increasingly angered by the growing popularity and trust that Chandrika Kumaratunga had won with the Tamil people. This trust was won on the basis of clear actions such as her unwavering commitment to a political solution, the lifting of bulk of the economic embargo on the North, and the government's opening of the two land routes to Jaffna through Pooneryn and Elephant Pass. Worried and angered by this new development which threatened them, the LTTE abandoned the negotiations and unilaterally resumed the war.

Now the security forces and the Tigers are engaged in combat. But there is a significant change that has taken place in this new confrontation. What is it?

When the Sri Lankan forces were engaged in war with the LTTE under the Jayewardene, Premadasa and Wijetunge administrations, the response of the world community was to condemn the Government in Colombo. The international community made no secret that they accused the Sri Lanka Government of the day of being the agent of the majority Sinhalese to harass and oppress the minority Tamil community; of violating the human rights of the Tamil people; of permitting the security forces to kill and drive terror into innocent Tamil civilians.

Hitherto, the Sri Lanka Government was humiliated through the propaganda carried out by the LTTE among the international community. The reason for this was the uncertain position adopted by the Sri Lanka Government about the allegations of the LTTE and its overall lack of concern for the rights of the people.



THE BATTLE FOR
P E A C E

The consistent position taken by the UNP governments that the Tamil people had no ethnic problem but what faced Sri Lanka was purely a terrorist problem, succeeded in persuading the world of the LTTE's propaganda that both the Sri Lanka Government and the Sinhala people were a savage lot and thereby win over international support to the LTTE.

However, when the fighting was unilaterally resumed by the LTTE in April this year, there was hardly any room for the LTTE to carry on its game of propaganda and international disinformation. This was for no other reason than the manner in which Chandrika Kumaratunga initiated the peace process which the LTTE abandoned and the clear position in favour of peace and political solution taken by the President and her government.

This position of Chandrika Kumaratunga and her government moved in tandem with the aspirations of the people. During the peace process and when the fighting was resumed, the people aligned themselves for peace with the full understanding that on this occasion the war was imposed on the Government by the LTTE and with the clear demand that both sides should move into the search for peace.

Foreign countries and international organizations also accepted this position and issued statements in overall condemnation of the LTTE's unilateral resumption of war and urging a return to the negotiating table. The LTTE was unable to maintain anymore the image it had built for itself as the victim of a savage and ruthless government and majority. The international response was in no way in keeping with the LTTE's expectations. It was not only the USA, UK, Australia, Canada, Germany and France which issued strong condemnations of the LTTE, even the European Union and Amnesty International found it necessary to accuse the LTTE of abandoning the peace process and resuming war.

This advantage came to the Sri Lanka Government only because the Chandrika Kumaratunga government had made clear its acceptance that the



T H E B A T T L E F O R
P E A C E

Tamil people of this country had genuine problems and its commitment to the necessity of a political solution to these problems.

Of primary importance in this situation is the ability of the Chandrika Kumaratunga government to retain the trust placed in it by the Tamil people of the North and East. The LTTE which finds this as a major threat to its dominance and ambitions, will seek by all means to make the Tamil people disenchanted with Chandrika Kumaratunga and her government. It is important to bear in mind that the Tamil people who became the victims of this war are those who have always had abiding expectations of peace.

That was why they gave such a warm welcome to the late Vijaya Kumaratunga when he visited Jaffna in his own search for peace. The Tamils of the North expressed their desire for peace in 1982, when in the presidential election that year they gave a resounding vote in support of the SLFP candidate Hector Kobbakaduwa, when the Sinhalese in the South gave their vote to elect J. R. Jayewardene. We are well aware of how the people of the North extended the hand of peace to the Peace Marchers who made the journey to Jaffna early this year.

The only means of breaking this trust of the Tamil people is to arouse extremist communal feelings in the South, provoke ethnic violence, attack the Tamil people living in the South, destroy their lives and property, and heap the blame for such violence on the Chandrika Kumaratunga government. Such developments will certainly destroy the confidence the Tamils have in this government, to the complete satisfaction of the LTTE.

It is with this sinister aim of fuelling violent reactions in the South that the LTTE carried out attacks on threatened villages in the North and East and assassinated persons who the public look up to such as the Dimbulagala Nayake Thera.

Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that the people do not fall victim to this sinister scheming of the LTTE. The prevention of any racial violence



T H E B A T T L E F O R
P E A C E

directed against the Tamils is of utmost importance in isolating the LTTE from the Tamil people. Fuelling the least racial violence would make us the unknowing tools of the LTTE.

However, repeating a mere mantra for peace will not help separate the LTTE from the Tamil people. There should be concerted action in this direction. If the Tamil people have placed any significant trust in the Chandrika Kumaratunga Government, that could be strengthened and held firm only by taking the necessary steps to decentralize government and share power in a manner which will bring about meaningful solutions to their problems.

When the President addressed Parliament on January 6, 1995, she made very clear the position of her government on this matter. She reminded the House of how her father who was elected Prime Minister in 1956 sought to introduce power sharing through Regional Councils and that the search for a political solution to the problems of the Tamil people would be based on the path taken by the late Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike.

While the war which has been forced upon us continues, there should be parallel and intense activity in clearing the way towards a political solution. The organizations of civil society, people's organizations, political parties, trade unions, professional bodies should all participate in the debate and discussion of a political solution.

Today, our country is at a decisive moment in history. It is the time when it is necessary that the people are made aware of the need for a genuine political solution to this long standing problem, whatever the isolated groups of extremists on either side may say.

In the past, Sri Lanka was governed under three regions known as Ruhunu, Maya and Pihiti. The evidence of history shows that each region had its own ruler, and the administration was done in keeping with the specific needs of each region.

If that is the example of history, it is necessary that a system of regional government within a united Sri Lanka should be introduced with the least delay, under which the expectations of the Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslims could be achieved while preserving the separate individuality and cultural values of our peoples.

Acting with confidence in a military solution only, in the absence of a deliberate move to initiate a political solution, would only have temporary gains. It is necessary to bear in mind that this is not an attempt to obstruct military action or discourage those who are engaged in the strategies of war. There is no question today that the LTTE which has brought untold damage to the lives of the Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims with its fascistic terror should be defeated in the arena of their own choice, the battlefield.

However, this is a war which is conducted solely against the Tiger forces of the LTTE and not one that is directed against the Tamil people. We should leave no room for the so-called patriots who take cover under this war to further their own narrow and opportunistic politics. There can also be no room for those chauvinistic academics and rabid thinkers who serve the cause of opportunistic politics with savage theories that every single Tamil should be killed and the Sinhalese alone should remain supreme.

While there should be no quarter given to the LTTE to hide its savagery which has come from its doctrinaire acceptance of Tamil extremism, there can also be no room whatever provided for Sinhala extremism. The so-called patriotic forces who keep demanding that a political solution should only be offered after the complete defeat of the LTTE, are in fact seeking to push more and more of the Tamil people into the LTTE's waiting arms and continue with an extended war. That will be an excellent opportunity to the many arms dealers who lie behind these voices of so-called patriotism to enhance the profits of war at the cost of the lives of our people.

At no stage should we forget that it will be possible to strengthen the



T H E B A T T L E F O R
P E A C E

confidence the Tamil people have placed in President Chandrika Kumaratunga and her government by presenting a political solution while the war is being relentlessly pursued and taking the speediest and most convincing action to implement such proposals.

If we are to see the dawn of a lasting peace in our country, it will only be possible through a broad national structure which will ensure that Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and all other people live with the dignity born of the enjoyment of equal rights. That is the one means of dispelling the mistrust that exists among the various sections of our people which has led to the ceaseless bloodletting of this war. The Battle for Peace is the battle for the day when all our people can live in the dignity of equality.



**T H E B A T T L E T O R E B U I L D
T H E N A T I O N A L U N I T Y**

EXCERPTED FROM A PUBLICATION OF
THE MINISTRY OF ETHNIC AFFAIRS AND
NATIONAL INTEGRATION



Try, as you read this to forget your race or ethnicity, whether Sinhala, Tamil, Moor, Malay, Burgher, Chetty or any other. Think of yourself only as a Sri Lankan and consider this comparative look at the war, as it was then and as it is today.

The People's Alliance Government was elected with a mandate to end the cruel and destructive war, which has been going on for 12 years and establish a stable and viable peace in the country. Accordingly, from the date of our election, we used all our strength in an honest dedication to peace, to save the people of the North and East, and all of Sri Lanka from the shattering consequences of this war and establish a genuine democracy free of corruption. It is with a full understanding of the difference between the LTTE and the Tamil people, that we initiated this task with the substantial lifting of economic embargoes on the North. We were not unaware that part of these goods sent to the people of the North would be intercepted and find their way to the LTTE. But our desire was to win over to democracy the peace loving people of the North. To instil in those people the necessary confidence and hope in the Sinhalese of the South. It was evident from the response we received from the ordinary Tamil people that this expectation was met in full measure.

Similarly, we are also grateful to the vast majority of the Sinhala people, the Maha Sangha , the clergy and religious leaders of the Christian, Hindu and Islamic faiths, and the followers of these great religions for the encouragement and added strength they gave to our honest endeavour towards peace.



THE BATTLE TO REBUILD
THE NATIONAL UNITY

However, there is also in our society those who are wholly opposed to the establishment of peace amongst our people. These are sections motivated by terror who cannot rest until they hear the sound of guns and bombs, and the wails of the injured, the dying and the mourning. These are people who cannot live in the absence of violence, whose life has no meaning or purpose other than war and destruction. They have no politics other than the politics of war and destruction. People who follow an unchanging pattern of belligerence based on ignorance.

Such sections exist both among the Sinhalese and Tamils. Among the Tamil people, this group is clearly the LTTE. They are unable to face the prospect of an ordinary unarmed, peaceful life, after the culmination of war. The absence of the gun would mean the end of their dominance. They find it difficult to face up to the day when their role as petty kings, dominating and controlling the Tamil people through the power of arms will be over.

The principal challenge to a durable and genuine peace comes from these sections both among the Sinhala and Tamil people. To them, war is a satisfying racket. Those who have made war, violence and discord the very substance of their politics, thrive on the stoking of chauvinistic feeling, the rise of racialism, the heightening of inter-religious tensions. They feed and fatten on the muck of racial and religious enmity, cause disturbances whenever and wherever possible, and seek to destroy all efforts at peace and harmony in our society.

The LTTE abandoned the peace process on wholly false and unjust premise, took little time in renewing hostilities and compelled a government committed to peace to engage in combat. Whether we like it or not, there is now no choice but to engage in battle to restore peace to our people and our country. It has become necessary to carry out a battle for peace to save the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim people of the North and East from the cruel war of the LTTE and to bring liberation to the people who are dominated by the LTTE. This fact is today well understood by all in our armed forces from the highest officers to



THE BATTLE TO REBUILD
THE NATIONAL UNITY

the lowest ranks. This is also understood and appreciated by all those who voted for the People's Alliance and even those who did not vote for it.

The International Community, which was so far unable to come to a clear conclusion on the war that was going on in the country, took little time in fully appreciating the honesty of purpose of the People's Alliance Government, and has pledged and extended their support, both in word and deed, in a manner never before seen since this war began.

If the LTTE is genuinely prepared to abandon its destructive course of action, and with honesty or purpose is ready to enter the democratic mainstream to be of real service to the Tamil people, and live together with the Sinhalese, Muslims and all other people in a united Sri Lanka, it is our duty to give all encouragement to such a move. That is in keeping with the highest ideals of the Sinhalese, the Buddhists and all ethnic and racial groups in our country. That was why we had to accept the willingness of the LTTE to enter into the cessation of hostilities agreement. We could not turn a blind eye to such an approach. We had to respond to it. Therefore, we made known to the Tamil people our goodwill and good intent. We demonstrated our commitment to peace, not only in words but in our actions too. That is why we invited the LTTE to political discussions. However, contrary to what some keep repeating, we took no steps to weaken the armed forces through the peace process. The security forces remained on alert. They were ready for any eventuality. Their necessary training exercises continued. We looked into the many shortcomings they were faced with and sought to remedy them. The Deputy Minister of Defence visited the bases and camps of the security forces to explain the nature of the peace process to the troops.

Whatever the doubts and misgivings that the security forces may have had were aired and discussed in the open. We instilled in the security forces a new sense of confidence and responsibility.

No sooner the LTTE unilaterally abandoned the peace process and resumed



THE BATTLE TO REBUILD
THE NATIONAL UNITY

hostilities, the UNP which was defeated by the people, and all those who gorge themselves in the muck of racial and religious hatred, made a concerted effort to heap the entire blame for a war that had been going on for the past twelve years on the Government of the People's Alliance. Many are the unthinking claims made for this purpose. That the Government had lost control of the administration in the East; that it was fooled by the LTTE; that the security forces were weakened; that there is no proper leadership for the security forces to carry on a war. The accusations are many. What is interesting is that those who make these accusations either seek to give the impression that they have been reborn with no knowledge of the past, or believe that the people of Sri Lanka have so easily forgotten all the facts of the recent past.

You are well aware of how a party which carried on this war for a full 12 years of its 17 years of corrupt Government, seeks to wash its hands of all blood and blame by the accusations it heaps on the present Government. That is not all, they now tell this Government about the proper pursuit of the war. People who bequeathed as their legacy of governance, a war which costs Rs. 2500 million a year, is now trying to preach to us about the conduct of war. They talk so shamelessly about the security of the people, and the responsibilities of Government. It is a question to the ordinary Sinhala people whether these re-emergent saviours have any sense of shame left in them. Those who nurtured this war like a beggar's sore; those who earned billions in commissions; those who survived the conspiratorial assassinations of their own military and political leaders, are today trying to teach us the proper ways of conducting this war. These are people who secretly gifted the people's adversary with weapons, ammunition, vehicles, medicines and cement, clearly for the purposes of war. It is these people who carried on secret negotiations for months in five-star comfort and grandeur and donated millions in cash to the LTTE, who today accuse us of being fooled by the LTTE. What all this amounts to, is a gross insult to the average citizen of this country. An insult to you who needs no introduction to the crookedness and political chicanery of these people, who were thrown away from the seats of power by the masses of this country.



THE BATTLE TO REBUILD
THE NATIONAL UNITY

It is for this very reason that it had become necessary for us to give our people a little reminder, to refresh their memories about how the UNP led this country to this destructive war, and how they subsequently conducted it.

The UNP sought the mandate of the people in 1977 by declaring that the Tamil speaking people had genuine grievances. It gave a pledge that if elected to power it would seek to obtain a genuine solution to these grievances through an All Party Conference. The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) contested that election seeking a mandate to establish a separate Tamil State of Eelam in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. What the Tamil leadership of the day sought was the decentralization of power giving, enabling an autonomous administration in the North and East. This is made clear by the fact of the TULF later accepting the District Councils and contesting the elections to these councils.

The UNP won a huge victory in the 1977 election. However, instead of taking prompt or immediate steps to summon the promised All Party Conference, it encouraged and organized violent action against the Tamils which went on for nearly one month from August 15 to September 13, that year. There were, 1,141 houses destroyed by fire. 120 Tamil people were killed. There were 74 instances of rape of Tamil women. The recorded instances of looting were 1,209. 50,000 Tamil people were made refugees. It is important to remember that the total number of Sinhalese who died in that phase of violence and rioting was ten. Those Tamils who lost their homes and were made destitute were transported in ships, and trains to the safety of the North. These are not truths from a distant past, and would be familiar to many who lived through that period.

When the Tamil leadership continued their agitation to decentralize power, the response of J. R. Jayewardene was to use his steam-roller majority in parliament to introduce the Constitution of 1978, and through this means, acquire to himself as President, the whole gamut of powers of the Executive



THE BATTLE TO REBUILD
THE NATIONAL UNITY

Presidency. The Government paid no heed whatever to the protests which came from both the Sinhalese and Tamil People against this move. The Jayawardene Government did not give ear to the moderate leadership of the Tamils. It went further and sought to erode their position both within and without parliament.

For the first time in the history of parliamentary democracy in the world, the UNP Government of that day made this country the laughing stock of the world by the Government moving a motion of No Confidence against the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition was Mr. A. Amirthalingam of the TULF. In this and many other ways, the UNP Government acted in a manner which led the Tamil people to lose faith in the democratic system. In 1981, the TULF accepted the District Councils as an alternative to autonomy and self-Government of Eelam. They contested the elections to the Jaffna District Council, in the midst of strong opposition from militant Tamil youth. In this election, senior ministers of the UNP Government went to Jaffna with a gang of thugs and criminals from the South. They disrupted the election process and carried out large scale thuggery, intimidation and corruption in the conduct of the polls. They destroyed by fire the Jaffna Public Library, one of the finest in South Asia, which had 94,000 volumes and was a pride of this country. They vandalized and destroyed many a cultural monument of the Tamil people in Jaffna. Not satisfied with these attacks on a people, their culture and dignity, the UNP extended the attack to the up-country plantations, destroying by fire a large number of line-rooms of the Tamil plantation workers.

What did all this convey to the Tamil people? Is it not the clear message that the Government of the majority Sinhalese would not concede any of the rights of the Tamils, and a challenge thrown to win them if they could? It was the UNP that compelled the Tamil youth to take to arms. We cannot forget for a moment that the background to this cruel war was set by the leaders of the UNP such as J. R. Jayewardene, Cyril Mathew, Ranasinghe Premadasa, Gamini



THE BATTLE TO REBUILD
THE NATIONAL UNITY

Dissanayake and others in that party who followed their policies. Is it not clear to us all today, that had the leaders of our people carried out an intelligent discourse with the democratic Tamil leadership and reached consensus on a political solution, it would have been possible to avoid all the tragedy and destruction of this war?

None of these leaders made any effort to find just and reasonable solutions to the genuine demands and grievances of the Tamil people. Instead they took every step possible to push the Tamil people out of the democratic framework. By making a mockery of the efforts of the moderate Tamil leadership, they helped destroy the respect and honour they had within the Tamil community. Consequently, parliamentary democracy itself was looked at with ridicule by the Tamil community. The idea soon spread among the Tamil youth that the only way to obtain their rights was through the gun.

In July 1983, when 13 soldiers were killed in a land-mine explosion in the North, the UNP Government of the day made use of this incident to launch and encourage an unprecedented attack on the Tamil people in other areas. The marauding elements who took to the streets did so with electoral registers in their hands. They selected Tamil homes to attack. They had lists of company directors and businessmen to help identify the factories and business houses to be attacked. There is not the least doubt today that behind this well organized unleashing of racially motivated violence were leading members of the UNP Government of the day. That was why the security services turned a blind eye and ignored the appeals for help and protection, until most of the damage had been done.

What the President of this country did in that darkest hour of our recent history, was not to appeal to the people for peace. Instead President Jayewardene's call was for a war against the Tamil people. What this irresponsible action of a power crazed Government and leader did was to bring the entire Sinhalese people to contempt and shame before the international community. It is



THE BATTLE TO REBUILD
THE NATIONAL UNITY

necessary to bear in mind that the burden of leading our people to such contempt should be borne entirely by the corrupt leadership of the 17 year curse, who now try to preach to us about the proper conduct of war.

When the Black July of 1983 brought us all to shame before the world, the armed separatist groups obtained a great advantage. Young Tamil youth, men and women, in their thousands joined these organizations. It was mainly the developments in Black July that led India get more directly involved in our internal problems. The UNP turned India who had been a friendly neighbour into a virtual enemy of this country. Considering all this, it is possible to mark that Black July as the beginning of this war of separation. It was certainly the major point of take off of the real armed conflict, in an ethnic crisis that was steadily deteriorating.

What are the patriotic victories that were gained by the UNP's criminal elements and their accomplices in the Black July of 1983. It is interesting to look at the police records. Setting fire to 8,077 homes, 471 murders, injury to 3,769 persons, 3,835 reports of looting. This is only what was recorded. Many were the incidents, including murders which went unreported. Not less than 12,000 permanent jobs were lost. That was the number of persons, of all races, who lost employment due to the destruction of factories and workplaces. Compare well the reparations we obtained for the lives of 13 Sinhala soldiers.

You could not have forgotten how the UNP permitted the cold-blooded murder of 53 political prisoners, including Kuttimany, who were in the protective custody of the State. You can well imagine how much the entire Sinhala people were shamed by this single incident.

Consider the ringing truth in the statement from the dock by Kuttimany when the court announced the imposition of the death penalty on him. "After I am gone, graft my eyes to a blind Tamil from the North. That Tamil will then see how legislation such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act which is used against the Tamils today, will be used against the Sinhalese people tomorrow."



THE BATTLE TO REBUILD
THE NATIONAL UNITY

Kuttimany was killed in July 1983. Yet all of us had vivid proof of his prophecy coming true.

In this short term of the People's Alliance Government, the damage and losses caused by the LTTE since it resumed hostilities after April 19 are by no means small or insignificant. However, when they destroyed two naval craft and two aircraft, with the loss of 169 lives of troops and civilians, the Sinhala people were not pushed into any anti-Tamil hysteria. It is interesting to ask the question as to how our people acted with such calm, restraint and understanding. What has the UNP and the so-called patriots who craftily support it, have to say about this difference in the reaction of our people to the loss of 13 lives and 169 lives? Even now, it is not too late for them to realize that the Sinhala majority in this country is not gone mad with racialism. Our people have always been in favour of peace. Similarly, the People's Alliance also had no intention of fulfilling the LTTE's own expectations. We were not interested in stoking communalism and setting the stage for another racial riot. From this, it is made clear to the world that the Black July of 1983 was not the work of the Sinhala people at large, but the sinister work of the UNP government of that day, and the racial extremist forces that were ranged behind it.

It is necessary to recall here how the UNP introduced the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution and successfully debarred from parliament all the democratically elected leaders of the Tamils. Today, there is unanimity in the view that this was one of the most short-sighted and politically foolish moves, which pushed the Tamil people further into the belief that there was no alternative to them but that of war.

Now, let us consider how the UNP leadership conducted this ethnic war which they themselves were responsible for causing.

What the UNP leadership did at the outset was to introduce a draconian act such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1979, which had complete disregard of all other laws and judicial traditions in the country, under which,



THE BATTLE TO REBUILD
THE NATIONAL UNITY

on mere suspicion any person be arrested and detained indefinitely. It also set about establishing the criminal gangs who would abduct, kill or otherwise cause the disappearance of those whom it suspected or feared. This was accepted by International Human Rights organisations such as Amnesty International. Just like how in 1987 and 1988 they took away hordes of Sinhala youth from the southern Sinhala villages on the mere suspicion of being involved in terrorism and caused the disappearance of thousands, it also caused the disappearance of thousands of youth in the North. They beat up and tortured and thereby violently suppressed those who were opposed to the UNP. They introduced special amnesty laws to save the perpetrators of these barbaric acts from future reckoning before the law. This was like issuing permits for cold blooded murder. Instead of the civilized method known to our people, of bringing a wrongdoer before the courts, filing plaint and having a fair trial, with contemptible arrogance the government permitted the wrongdoers to take the law into their own hands. The ruling party arrogated to itself the power to do away with any citizen who was opposed to it. It is not necessary to recall here the details of the tragedy and destruction caused in the South by these means. It is possible for our people to understand well, on the basis of how opposition was met in the Sinhala areas in the South, as to what treatment would have been given to the people in the Tamil areas in the North.

The armed forces of a country should win the respect and confidence of all people. However, the manner in which the UNP used the armed forces for political purposes to sustain its control over power and the establishment, led to the security forces earning the displeasure not only of the Tamil people, but of the Sinhala people too. A political party which acted in a manner that led to the loss of professional dignity and self-respect of the security forces, now seeks to preach to us about giving proper leadership to the forces.

It was during that government, that international Human Rights Organizations branded Sri Lanka before the entire world as a country with an arrogant administration which encouraged murder, State terror and inhumane



THE BATTLE TO REBUILD
THE NATIONAL UNITY


torture. Therefore, it has now become necessary for the People's Alliance Government to create the necessary atmosphere where the professional dignity and self-confidence of the security forces and police could be restored.

The primary duty of the security forces is to protect the people, the Constitution and the sovereignty of the people. However, what took place in the recent past was the use of the security forces for the protection of the political party which was in power. It is necessary to emphasize here that the People's Alliance government has embarked on action to drastically change this situation, and restore the respect and confidence in the security forces among all sections of our people.

We cannot ignore or forget here how, in the midst of the many hardships and shortcomings faced by the soldier on the front, those in power carried on with their Gam Udawa Carnivals and celebrated their birthdays with musical extravaganzas at State expense. They spent billions for sheer self-glorifying opulence.

They even made special thrones to display their desire for power and pomp. They did not forget to give contracts to their criminal agents for the laying of lawns and supply of grass sods, and thereby help keep them in money and comfort. While these were going on, the public had to collect the cadjan, mats, soap, toothpaste, biscuits, and other necessities and donate them to the camps of the security forces. The leaders of that day did not think it necessary to use the money they wasted on carnivals and jamborees to supply the essential needs of the soldier on the front. That is how they treated the security forces.

When no solution was offered to the ethnic problem in the country, and the war was deliberately dragged on with the purposeless loss of thousands of young lives, India intervened to bring about some settlement. As a result, it became necessary for Sri Lanka to sign the Indo-Lanka Accord. There were signs that the war would be over. The Tamil militants and guerilla organizations one by one gave up arms and entered the democratic political mainstream. It



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THE BATTLE TO REBUILD
THE NATIONAL UNITY

was only the LTTE that remained aloof. They had no trust in J. R. Jayawardene. Their leadership believed that even at the last moment he would cheat them. However, because of the intervention of the Indian Army they had little room for manoeuvre. That was when the imbecile leadership of the UNP took one of the most puerile decisions in our recent history. It was like poking your finger in the eye of the person who was waiting to shed tears.

The Indian troops were able to apprehend and take into custody some of the principal leaders of the LTTE including Kumarappan, while they were illegally transporting weapons. The Government demanded that they be handed over to the authorities in Colombo. When the Indians realized the gravity of the situation and cautioned the government against bringing them to Colombo, the arrogance of the Government prevailed, and arrangements were made to transport them to Colombo. At that stage, the entire group used their cyanide capsules to commit suicide. The LTTE made that the excuse to resume hostilities. The Indian troops came under attack from the LTTE. However, they faced up to the challenge and freed Jaffna city and a large part of the North and East from LTTE control.

It was during this time that the Provincial Councils were established under the 13th Amendment to the Constitution. The operations of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) compelled a large number of the LTTE's leadership to hide in the jungles of Mullaitivu. It was the presence of the IPKF in those areas in 1987, '88 and '89 which enabled the elections to the Provincial Councils, the General Election and the Presidential election to be conducted in the North and East. During (1988-89) while the death toll among Sri Lankan security forces came down to 207, the toll of the IPKF rose to nearly 1,155.

The Tamil political organizations which had laid down their arms, accepted the provincial councils and obtained power in the North-East by contesting the provincial council election. They believed there would be a provincial administration with the real decentralization and devolution of power. But



THE BATTLE TO REBUILD
THE NATIONAL UNITY

They soon realized that the leadership of the UNP was carrying out a complete charade. The North-East Provincial Council was the only provincial council where an opposition party had won a majority. The UNP which did everything possible to disrupt the functioning of this provincial council, soon began secret discussions with the LTTE. It did not devolve to the provincial council, the powers it was legally entitled to. No encouragement was given to launch development projects. It was at this time that Ranasinghe Premadasa entered the presidential race in 1988, with a secret understanding with the LTTE. Premadasa was successful in reaching some agreement with the JVP as well. This understanding was based on his pledge to send back the IPKF if he was elected president. Whatever the fate of the many other promises he gave to the people, it did not take him long after becoming president to carry out this promise. On June 2nd, 1989 speaking at a Buddhist temple at Battaramulla, he made a public announcement that the IPKF would be asked to vacate Sri Lanka by October 31 the same year. That is how that government treated those who came to assist us in the conduct of the war against the LTTE.

The Premadasa government did not have the simple decency to offer a word of thanks to the Indian Government which as a neighbour sought to help end the internecine fighting in our country and to that end sacrificed the lives of at least 1,155 Indian troops. The humiliation caused to India after coming to our assistance, and the manner in which they were asked to go before they had completed their task, created a situation in which any other government too would have great hesitation before coming to our assistance. This was proved by the total lack of foreign assistance, even in words, during the term of the UNP government.

Be that as it may, it was during the honeymoon relationship of Premadasa and the LTTE, that arrangements were made for the LTTE to take over every camp, guard post and billet from which the IPKF withdrew. We have not forgotten how the LTTE even boasted that they were in a position to recommend to the Premadasa government how transfers and promotions should be given to Police constables.

There were many occasions when the LTTE compelled police inspectors to salute leading armed cadres of the Tigers. This caused great strain and pain of mind to most personnel in the police at the time.

There is no one who does not know by now that when the second phase of the Eelam War began, it was the Premadasa administration which gave the orders to all police personnel in stations in the Batticaloa and Ampara Districts to surrender to the LTTE. As we now know it, hundreds of policemen who followed these instructions and surrendered were taken to the jungle at Rumaskulama, lined up and shot dead. That is how Premadasa sacrificed the police who protected his power and his throne.

The LTTE's Mahendarajah alias Mahattaya, together with 200 LTTE members tried to pass the Kilinochchi military barrier while fighting was going on at Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Ampara. The commanding officer of the Kilinochchi military camp placed them under arrest. He did this because he had received information that fighting had already resumed with the LTTE in other areas. The commanding officer sought instructions from higher authorities as to what he should do with the LTTE cadres, including Mahattaya. The instructions he received were most surprising. He was told that as the fighting was in Batticaloa and Trincomalee, there was no need to give cause for fighting in Kilinochchi too. Accordingly he was instructed to release Mahattaya and his group.

The Sri Lanka Army was not considered or regarded as a single army in a single country. It was considered as separate units that were special to Ampara, Batticaloa and Trincomalee. The war that had been resumed was not considered as a war against the State and government of Sri Lanka. It was considered a war that was special to those districts in which the fighting was on. Is it possible to pursue war in this manner? Don't such orders send confusing messages to the forces? What is the confidence that the ordinary troops can have in those who pass down orders of this nature Can any intelligent government order the release of an enemy leader who has come under arrest by its own military arm?



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I am humbled by the great honour that destiny has bestowed upon me, to stand here before the people, as the head of independent Sri Lanka, on this momentous day when the Nation celebrates 50 years of freedom from colonial rule. It is with a deep sense of duty and commitment to the Nation and in full awareness of the historic responsibilities we have undertaken, that I step forward into the next 50 years, together with the members of my Cabinet and the Government, imbued with the confidence placed in us by our people.

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CHANDRIKA BANDARANAIKE KUMARATUNGA
THE PRESIDENT OF THE
DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA



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