



ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT BY THE PRESIDENT,
DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA
ON 20TH FEBRUARY, 1985.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT
BY
HIS EXCELLENCY J. R. JAYEWARDENE
PRESIDENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST
REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA

Hon. Members,

The Hon. Minister of Finance, other Ministers and Members of Parliament have dealt comprehensively with the Government's attempt to implement the policies placed before the people in 1977, or their failure to do so. The two months debate on the 1985 Budget in November/December last year is still remembered. I will not therefore refer to these matters now, except to mention as briefly as possible some of the successful results of these policies.

Economic growth was almost trebled, to 6.2% of the G.D.P. Unemployment was halved from 26% of the work-force to 12%. Investment as a percentage of the G.D.P. was doubled from 16% to 30%. Inflation was brought down to 7%. The building of 100,000 houses has been completed. The Gin Ganga and Inginimitiya Irrigation Schemes, the Maduru Oya and Victoria Dams have been completed. The Kotmale, Lunugamwehera and Randenigala dams and the first stage of the Nilwala Ganga Scheme will be completed this year and the next. 4,170 minor irrigation schemes were also

completed as well as the rehabilitation of several major irrigation works.

Our Budget deficit was brought down from 23% of G.D.P. in 1980 to 13% and we hope to reduce it to 9.8% by the end of the year. Our overall balance of payments which was in the red for several years will show a surplus of almost Rs. 6,000 million. Our international resources now represent about 5 months of imports and at Rs. 17,200 million more satisfactory than we have had for many years.

All these were achieved in the midst of the adverse international economic environment in which we had to operate ; international economic recession, oil price rises, high interest rates, volatile exchange rates, low commodity prices and protectionism.

We achieved what we did due to the correctness of the economic policies we initiated in 1977 abandoning the restraints and policies of the pre-1977 period. We avoided complete economic and financial disaster and even starvation thereby.

Not only we but political parties all over the World are re-thinking their policies in the context of modern developments in nuclear power and technological discoveries.

The Socialist Government of France has abandoned its attempt to introduce a Socialist Education System and imposed a brake on nationalisation. Making a fortune is no longer prohibited. Private businesses creating wealth and jobs, as well as investment by non-Socialist taxation, are encouraged.

China, a Communist country, says there can be two systems under one Government. Free Trade Zones have been permitted in a number of cities on the coast line and international multi-nationals are investing in them heavily to sell goods to the hundreds of millions living in China. Chinese leaders have openly stated that some of Marx's theories are not suitable for adoption in conditions that exist today.

Cuba has inaugurated a Free Trade Zone. Its policies with regard to the Zone are very similar to ours.

Our Government has followed many new policies since 1977 and in the future we have to consider similar new ones that suit our country, its people and the resources we have.

In the election manifesto issued by the SLFP-sponsored candidate for the Eheliyagoda by-election in May 1983, the following passage occurs :-

- “(a) Oppressive measures such as the Anti-Terrorism Act are introduced in order to achieve this end.
- (b) A struggle for a General-Election dissolving the Parliament in 1983, before the scheduled date.
- (c) By virtue of the power and strength he receives as a MP, he would be in a position to mobilize an extensive extra-Parliamentary mass campaign uniting the said campaign with the liberation movements in the North.”

The SLFP sponsored candidate was defeated at Eheliyagoda in May 1983. Thirteen Sinhalese soldiers were killed by a bomb blast in the Jaffna Peninsula on July 23rd, 1983. Riots broke out in Colombo on the next day, the day of the funeral in Colombo. The events of July, not only smeared the name of Sri Lanka throughout the World they also showed that all those in the North and the South who seek to overthrow an elected Government by violence ; by creation of communal and religious discord ; by terrorism and other similar methods, had joined hands.

During the six-year period the following appeals to the electorates had resulted in victories for the Government Party, the United National Party ; at Local elections ; Municipal Council elections ; DDC elections ; By-elections ; Presidential election and Referendum in October/November 1982, and two victories in by-elections in Minneriya and Kundasale in September 1984.

The Presidential Election and the Referendum results meant that the President could hold office from

February 1983 till February 1989, and the Parliament could function till July/August 1989.

This may have made those thirsting for the sweets of political power think of quicker means of achieving their desires than through elections.

By-elections will be held soon for the vacant seats at Trincomalee, Padiruppu, Mahiyangana and Mulkirigala, while in the Northern Province the possibility of doing so is being studied.

Hon. Members of Parliament can rest assured that as they are functioning as Members not by their own votes or anybody's fiat, but by the wish of a majority of the votes at a Referendum, that I will not defy the wish of the People by dissolving Parliament and holding elections to satisfy those who preach one thing and practise something else.

Honourable Members are aware of the proceedings of the All Party Conference which commenced in January 1984.

I am tabling all relevant documents which were part of the official proceedings of the Conference for perusal by Members up to the last meeting of the Plenary Sessions on Friday the 21st December 1984.

At the Plenary Sessions of the All Party Conference on Friday, 14th December, 1984, as Chairman of the All Party Conference, I made a Statement outlining proposals which were the outcome of discussions at the meetings of the All Party Conference ; at meetings with Leaders of Delegations ; with recognised Political Parties ; with the team of Lawyers helping the Conference and informal discussions with Ministers. The proposals which took the form of draft legislation representing the views of the majority of the Delegations forming the All Party Conference were presented to the Sessions and were commended by me for the "deep, careful and thoughtful consideration" of the Delegations. My statement of 14th December, 1984, is tabled.

On Friday, 21st December, 1984, at the All Party Conference Plenary Sessions, I informed the

Delegations that their task had now come to an end. I was hopeful that all the hard work and deliberations that the Conference had engaged itself in would help to bring at least some peace, unity and stability to the country.

In making this announcement to the Conference, I said that the Leaders of all the Delegations that attended that Sessions were informed and they had agreed to my decision and there was no objection by any of them to the step taken.

The Delegations were to be provided with whatever other relevant material was available, relating to the decentralisation of subjects and functions, and were requested to inform me of their views as early as possible, in writing.

In the final analysis the Government would have had to make a decision and introduce necessary legislation in Parliament. (Ceylon Daily News of 22nd December 1984 – Tabled.)

I also said that the proposals would have to be gazetted and examined by the Supreme Court, and it may sometimes be necessary to have a Referendum or a General Election which the Supreme Court or I would have to decide.

At the end of the Sessions, the Conference Spokesman, the Minister of National Security, Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali, made the following statement to the Press – "The fact that the Conference has ended does not mean the Parties will stop talking informal exchanges and public discussions will continue." (Ceylon Daily News of 22nd December, 1984 – Tabled.)

I had agreed to meet the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) Leaders and Leaders of some of the other Delegations again in January 1985 and had kept several days free for this purpose. The Leaders of the TULF had said that they were leaving for Madras on the 22nd or 23rd December and would not be back till after the first week of January 1985.

In the meantime I had tabled the All Party Conference proposals for discussion in the Cabinet on Wednesday, 19th December 1984. It was put off for discussion on Wednesday, 26th December, because members had no time to study the proposals as they were tabled only on the morning of the Cabinet meeting of the 19th December.

I spoke at a Mass Rally in the Bulathsinhala electorate on Saturday 22nd December in the afternoon and explained these proposals to the people and said these proposals are now open for study. (Sunday Observer of 23rd December 1984 – Tabled).

I was therefore surprised to read a statement by Mr. A. Amirthalingam, Leader of the TULF, in the "Weekend" of Sunday 23rd December and in the "Ceylon Daily News" of Monday 24th December that the proposals are totally unacceptable to the Tamil people. (Weekend of Sunday 23rd December 1984 and Ceylon Daily News of 24th December 1984 – Tabled).

At its meeting on Wednesday 26th December 1984, the Cabinet therefore decided that, as the TULF has said that there was no purpose in discussing these proposals further, nothing could be achieved in discussing or arriving at a decision on them and therefore the Government will not implement these proposals. (Ceylon Daily News of Thursday 27th December 1984 – Tabled).

It was at the request of the Parties invited to attend the All Party Conference summoned in December 1983 including the SLFP that I invited the TULF to participate. However soon after that the SLFP left the Conference.

The Government is proceeding to hold elections to the vacant seats and to the District Councils in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. As they would be accepting a United Sri Lanka it would be possible to talk to them about the difficulties of their voters and seek remedies, political, economic and social.

In my address to Parliament on the 23rd of February 1984 referring to "Terrorism" I said "The All Party

Conference now sitting affords an opportunity to all Parties represented there to meet together and discuss peacefully ways and means of easing tension and solving problems.

I feel that the terrorist campaign has made agreement difficult. I wonder whether they want a solution. Some think that a solution will make terrorism wither away. Others think that any solution will be impossible unless terrorism is first eliminated".

I think the last sentence is correct.

The number of personnel of the Armed Services and the Police killed and attempted to be killed from July 1983 to 15th January 1985 is 139. The civilian number is 339.

For what purpose is this human slaughter being continued?

The terrorists who said they were the armed wing of the political movement for separatism or 'EELAM' to

preserve the rights of the Tamils living in the North and the East were later exposed as insurgents bent on overthrowing the Government. Now with the array of weapons discovered in their arsenals it is clear they are ready and equipped to wage a war and are doing so against a duly democratically elected government not only in the North and East but throughout the Island.

The Government of Sri Lanka has made representations on several occasions to the Government of India that there is evidence that terrorists operating in Sri Lanka are being trained in camps situated in India. We have also complained that the Leaders of this movement live in India, and meet and conduct these illegal activities in India.

Now not only the Government but all political Parties and Leaders in Sri Lanka agree with this view.

The Government of India has denied that terrorists are trained in camps in India, that they operate from there and cross over with arms to Sri Lanka. We have suggested a Joint Surveillance Zone which will attempt

to prevent infiltration into Sri Lanka of terrorists from Indian soil. This surveillance can also prevent movement of refugees from Sri Lanka to India. Why should India object ?

We have information both oral and written that the hit and run tactics of the terrorists are to be changed soon. At least three of the Terrorist Groups have united and agreed on a common Military Strategy, which will culminate in a "head on battle" with the Sri Lanka Army, as soon as they have sufficient numbers of trained men and weapons.

Preparations are now being made for the final, and what is believed by them to be a decisive battle.

There is documentary evidence that some of those in positions of authority in South India are actively responsible for attempts to unite the Sri Lanka Tamil Terrorist Groups, under a common programme.

Terrorist leaders have also stated that the Indian Central Government and the Tamil Nadu State

Government are today extending their good wishes to them. (Vide the first Congress of the EPRLF held on 28th June, 1984 in Tamil Nadu).

There is also evidence of links between these groups and the World's major terrorist organisations, which collaborate in training ; in the exchange of weapons ; organisational aid and the granting of asylum. Backed by totalitarian regimes, international terrorist organizations direct their violence against the free countries of the World. The causes for which they purport to fight tend to blur as the terrorist network becomes increasingly sophisticated and inter-dependent.

We are all affected by international terrorism. We are all threatened by it, directly and indirectly. Directly when the leaders and citizens of democratic countries are kidnapped or murdered. Indirectly the effects are more insidious, because the threat is to our way of life. The life-blood of democracy is under attack, the parliamentary process, and freedom of expression, of trade and of transport through boycotts, blackmail and the ever-present fear of unexpected attack.

Immense resources needed for the development of our country, for education, research, health and welfare have had to be diverted to provide greater security for civilians everywhere. Protection must be extended to civil aviation, public buildings, places of worship, diplomatic missions, the headquarters of international organisations, schools and the mail.

All this is to protect ourselves against international terrorists. But it is very difficult to safeguard against terrorism while guaranteeing the freedom of the individual. It may not be long before we compromise the very beliefs on which democracy is built. International terrorism, by creating such a situation, is both undermining and challenging the moral strength of the democracies.

The borders of Sri Lanka are Point Pedro and Devinuwara in the North and South ; Batticaloa and Colombo in the East and West. The terrorists are attempting to shoot their way into the heart of Sri Lanka to the borders of what they call the State of EELAM. If

we do not occupy the Border, the Border will come to us. We intend to act before they succeed.

We have to combat "terrorism" and defeat it with all the resources at our command. We may have to equip ourselves to do so at the expense of development and social and economic welfare plans. Let us then unitedly decide to do so and as one Nation and one People bend ourselves to this task.

I wish to conclude my address by affirming my commitment to the supremacy of this Parliament as the Sovereign Legislative Assembly in our country.

I wish to emphasize that the final arbiters of the peaceful and constitutional future of this country are the People ; the voter – belonging to all nationalities and religions, rich or poor, male or female and their representatives sitting here in this august Assembly. No one else individually or collectively can usurp that place, nor will they be allowed to do so. They can argue publicly or privately, write or speak and perform all the legitimate acts of opposition to Government proposals in a democratic country. Thus far and no further. My Government and I, and I am sure every Member of Parliament, endorses this view.