



WHY I DECLARED
PEACE

J. R. JAYEWARDENE

***Speech made by H.E.
the President J. R.
Jayewardene at the 51st
Annual General Meeting
of the Ceylon Planters'
Society held at the Hilton
International, Colombo***

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Mr. Chairman, Mr. Athukorale, Office Bearers and Members of the Planters' Association, Hon. Ministers, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is always a pleasure to address this Association which I have been doing without a break since 1978. You represent a cross section of the educated people of Sri Lanka and have among your members some of the brightest products of our schools. You also have in your plantations various other categories of citizens, the Estate Staff Association and those who work night and day to produce the tea, rubber and coconut. Therefore, the Planting Industry, we can accept, has been for almost a 150 years, one of the bulwarks of Sri Lanka's prosperity and progress.

Thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen, for wishing me on my birthday and the Chairman for citing a biblical quotation "*Blessed are the peace-makers*" he didn't conclude it and say; "*for they shall inherit the Kingdom of God*". I think I can

paraphrase it and say "for they shall see Heaven". On August 18th I almost did. One of the bombs, a live one, fell on my table, just two feet away from me. It bounced off the table and fell two yards away from me and exploded together with another one, which flew over my head, causing death, harm and destruction. On my right the Prime Minister was injured. On my left the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs was injured. Behind us, a public servant was fatally injured. Of several others injured, some died, some were wounded.

I am mentioning this, to request you Ladies and Gentlemen to be careful of those who in our society, seek to attain their objects—what they are, I do not know—by violence, by assassination, by causing injury, to harmless men and women. I can understand though I do not appreciate, it is a part of human society, where an attempt is made to get rid of a Head of State or a Head of Government. This has been the work of human beings since organized society was created. *In modern times, we have such examples in India, United Kingdom, in America, in our own country and all over the world, where a group of people, in a peace-loving, democratic society, who cause harm, death and injury, irrespective of those whom they seek to destroy. Something, I think, unique in the modern world. They call it terrorism. We have been plagued with this for quite a long time.*

In Mrs. Bandaranaike's time her Government was assaulted by what we now call the J.V.P. and attempts were made even to destroy her. I was in the opposition then. We, as members of the opposition said publicly that we would support the Government elected by the people and do whatever we can, to prevent it being destroyed, or overthrown by violence. The same way of thinking is not shown by the opposition to me today. Therefore, *I wish, all peace-loving and democratic-loving people of this country to help me and my Government to see that the heinous attempts of these people*

do not succeed. I find not only an attempt to try terrorism to achieve political or racial goals in the North and the East. But also in the South, it is attempted to destroy a democratic Government.

Since you referred to peace, I would like to say that the Accord as it is called today the Peace Accord, which I have signed with the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi in July, have had many aspects to it, which is not easy in one word or one resolution to say something. If I may dwell on it to this intelligent audience, so that you may go back on your estates, in your homes, in the villages, talk about it. As it seems to be the one topic that the opposition is now interested in.

It has three parts. One is the agreement, the other is the annexure and the third is the letter. The agreement contains the desire on the part of my Government to implement the proposals that we have been discussing for several years to create the provincial council system and permit those elected by the voters of the provincial councils to govern themselves to a larger degree in a autonomous way within the unity, integrity and the independence of Sri Lanka.

The only controversial passage in the Agreement is that we have agreed that the Northern and the Eastern provinces should be joined together as one unit, with one Board of Ministers, with one Chief Minister, with one Governor, temporarily. I emphasize the word temporarily. Until by a poll, if you wish to call it referendum but not a referendum as visualized in our constitution, a poll, where voters of the Eastern Province could decide whether to continue the joinder or not. This is rather different from the previous attempts at joinder. *I am mentioning this because when an attempt was made to join the Northern and the Eastern Provinces, earlier, as a member of the United National Party, I opposed it because that was a permanant joinder.* But I am not against Eastern Province if it wishes to join the Northern Province, either

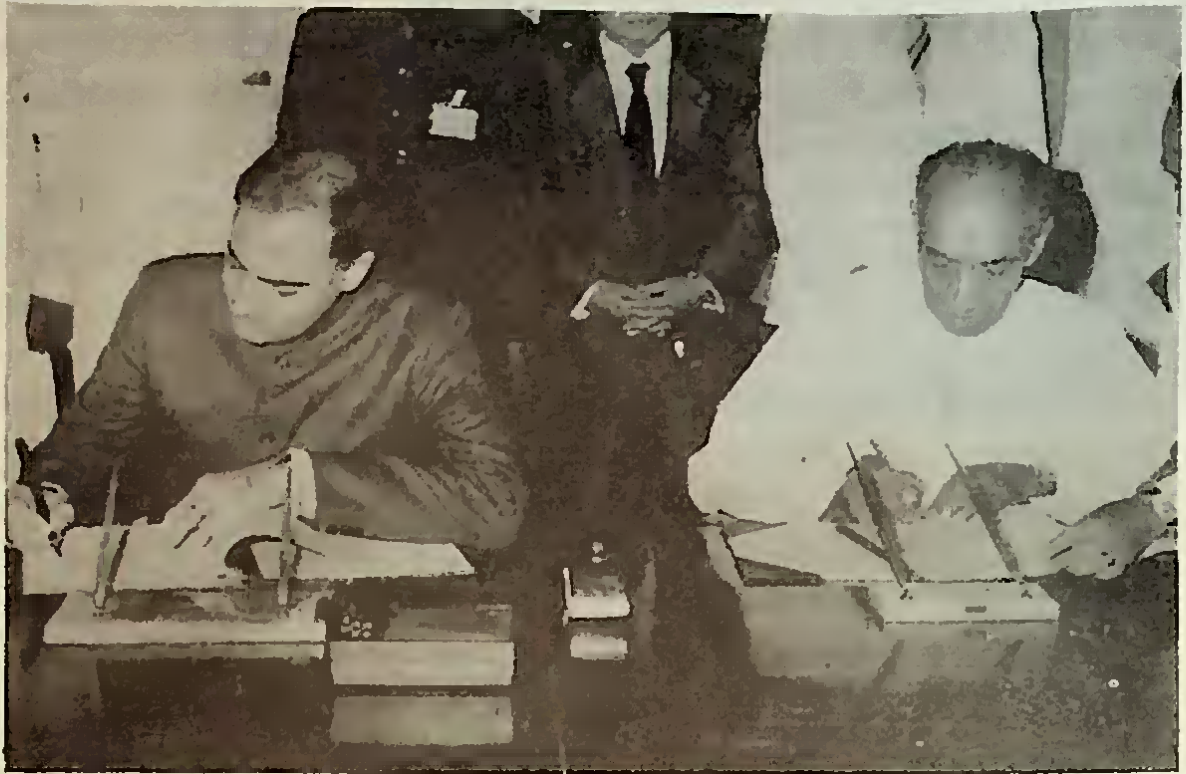
deciding before the joinder or after the joinder, by a universal franchise vote to decide whichever way they wish. That is a controversial item in the Agreement. But my Government intends to go ahead with the creation of the provincial councils with the provinces of North and East joined together, as I said temporarily, until if I may use the word by a referendum, Eastern Province decides what it should do. The rest of the Agreement is a reiteration of what we have been talking earlier. We have been talking now since 1983, particularly, since freedom.

How we could help those who are living in the Northern and the Eastern Provinces, Tamil speaking people, how could we help them to have a share in the Central Government of this country which they are entitled to do. Their fear was that under universal franchise the other provinces would dominate through the central legislature. That was the legitimate fear. Once the Sinhala Only Bill was passed, they began to fear that they had no place in the central legislature and they should therefore seek autonomy in the periphery in the Northern and the Eastern Provinces and then the Federal Party was formed, which later developed into a demand for an Independent State called "Eelam".

When my Government came to office in 1977, we tried to implement our manifesto. As problems facing the Tamil speaking people, with regard to admission to Universities, with regard to education, with regard to settlement in the colonisation schemes, with regard to managing their own affairs through District Councils and with regard to language, should be settled and we attempted to do so. But a body of youth grew up, particularly in the Jaffna Peninsula who were adopting violent methods of achieving their goals. The first violent act was the murder of the Mayor of Jaffna, a Tamil, Mr. Duraiappah who was a member of the S.L.F.P. He was murdered in cold blood in Nallur Temple in 1976, and this was

done by Prabhakaran, who was a youth of 18 at that time. You know the history since then. Up to 1983, though there was violence, sporadic violence in the North and the East, we were able to travel about in those areas. I had Presidential Elections in 1982 October, had a referendum in the same year in 1982. We campaigned in the North and the East without fear. But in 1983 July, 13 soldiers were killed by a bomb in Jaffna and riots broke out throughout the southern part of the island. That was the beginning of what became ultimately a minor war.

My Government had then been 6 years in Office, we had opened up the whole economy. We started development plans on a large scale never attempted before. We had massive aid from foreign countries and there was a new look among the people. But since 1983, much of the money which we devoted for development had to be channelled for other purposes, for violent purposes, for the training of troops, for the enrolment of bigger and bigger armies, buying of ships, planes and ammunition. If I may use the word for "war purposes" which was never my intention when I became Prime Minister and President. As a matter of fact I thought I could reduce the armed services. I thought I could follow the example of Costa Rica through which country I came after the 1978 Non-Aligned Conference in Cuba, where they had only the Police. The Police were given certain military training to help them to quell riots. I thought that should be our object. *By birth, by training, by education, by my own conviction, I am a non-violent man. I am not for violence in any way except that as Head of Government I have to permit violence to maintain the security of the State and its citizens. But personally I am not for violence in any form or manner. That was the idea I wished my Government to follow.* We had done that but when this terrorist activity was upon us in 1983 till July 1987, for 4 years we had to follow the violent course. Whether we could have



militarily suppressed the terrorists with help coming to them from India across the Palk Straits which we were trying to stop with the expenditure of large sums of money. Whether we could have got the help of India not to train the terrorists, not to give them arms, not to give them money; whether we could have been able to face a minor war in the North and East and continue our development programme, it is difficult to say. But I know that other countries too have appealed when they were in distress to foreign powers. *India, when China attacked her in the 1960s asked for help of the United States of America. I have cited this to Rajiv Gandhi and the Indian High Commissioner. The Americans sent their big bombers; Madras and New Delhi almost sank under the weight of their bombers.*

At that time the Soviet Union was with China, and India had to seek help from America which they got in unlimited quantity and for 2 years the American military mission was in India. If India had to go for help from a foreign country, why should not a small dot like Sri Lanka go for help to a friendly power.

Then Great Britain in the Second World War and the First World War, but particularly the Second World War, when Germany invaded the shores of the British channel, pleaded with Roosevelt for help. They got it. American arms are still in the United Kingdom. So this is nothing new in the world.

From 1983 the Indian Government, the Central Government was trying to mediate between the Government of Sri Lanka and the separatists. I have not called them terrorists as some of them are not terrorists, as the TULF. They do not adopt violent methods. The Indian Government had tried to mediate between our Government and the separatists. They have arranged meetings in Thimpu, Bhutan; in New Delhi; Sri Lanka and Bangalore. I have attended over a 100 meetings and we have drafted certain constitutional proposals which I have tabled in Parliament in February this year. Now we intend to implement them for the first time. In July this year Mr. Rajiv Gandhi sent me a message that he was prepared to come to Sri Lanka and sign an Agreement with me between the Governments of India and Sri Lanka to help to solve this problem.

He was not coming as a mediator. He was coming as a friend. Was I to reject that or was I to say "Come my friend?" You gave your bread and other help to the terrorists by force. You tried to send them by ship. We have no means of resisting you. You are too big, but we never said you are right. We do not say you were right even now. If you think you have done

wrong I will forgive you. Do come, and he came. He wanted to come on a Sunday. But I delayed a few days as I was not ready. He came and he and I signed the documents I mentioned, the Agreement, the "annexure" is harmless. The "letter" deals with some matters he and I are to discuss in the future. There are no decisions on that. One is that the Trincomalee Oil Tanks should be run by our Governments in a joint agreement in which we have a major share. What is wrong with that. *Certainly, the S.L.F.P. can say it is wrong because their policy was to give the tanks to India, as you see in Hansard, as I have decided to table in Parliament do not call for tenders. When we called for tenders and gave it to a foreign firm, not to India. India also tendered but she did not get it. The firm that got it went bankrupt and the oil tanks are still rusting, but the S.L.F.P. said do not call for tenders. Give it to India.*

The other matter in the letter is what we will discuss with India. Where we are to send our troops for training? We obviously cannot send them to India because they cannot train both the terrorists and our troops. I have said that to Rajiv Gandhi, but now he has agreed not to train them. He has agreed to send them back from India. He did not do it all this time. I said "I will discuss with you". We are sending them to Pakistan. We are getting trainers from the U.K. but Mrs. Bandaranaike's policy was publicly stated "do not send our people for training to Pakistan". So where the devil am I to send them? How am I to fight the terrorists? The third matter was that I should discuss with him before friendship with countries that are enimical to India. Most certainly. But you must discuss with me before you have agreements with countries that are enimical to Sri Lanka. This is a matter we can discuss together. There is no harm in discussing with any body. Even with Prabhakaran we can discuss, now that he has laid down his arms. The other one was that the VOA should not be used for

military purposes. I totally agree. The Americans have said that they do not intend to do so or any other foreign Broadcasting Corporation can broadcast with the permission of the Government of Sri Lanka, but Mrs. Bandaranaike's policy was to close down the VOA, which I will not do. So you see the opposition – there are only two parties that oppose us, S.L.F.P. and Mahajana Eksath Peramuna of Mr. Dinesh Gunawardene, They are saying things that we are doing which they have said they will do and I am not doing them at all. The letter indicates these matters and others which we will discuss. We have not discussed yet but we will discuss and come to an agreement which will be made public.

These are all matters that the public have been roused about. What if I did not sign this, if I may call the whole thing 'the Accord'. This country would carry on a long, prolonged, very expensive war and which at that time every day Sri Lankans were dying. I am not talking of the terrorists. 6000 have died up to date and lives have been lost, *life which none can give but all can take. It goes against the entire grain of my being, and I signed the Accord and I intend to stand by it and my party will vote enblock for it. Make no mistake about it. They will vote enblock from the President downwards and pass the necessary legislation.*

The Accord will not come up for discussion. Under the constitution the President can declare War and Peace. You can remove the President, either by the constitutional procedure provided or at an election. But he alone can declare War and Peace. I have declared Peace.

It gladdens my heart when people come and tell me, "Sir, I lost my son. I have lost a relation, but you have seen to it that no more will die from my family". It gladdens my heart also, though it grieved me then. *When we were campaigning in the South for a by-election a family came and said "we lost our*

son. The funeral was yesterday. Here is my other son. We give him also to you". That is how our people, react. The common man not the politician, the man who votes for us, who votes for me. I am a elected President. Elected by the people of the whole country. Very few in this world are elected like that. I won by over a million votes. When they come and say these things, not people seeking for power, who wish to sacrifice our youth, men and women at the alter of their fame. I will not do that.

Therefore, Ladies and Gentlemen, you who belong to this great society, whose problems have been mentioned by your Chairman in a long and interesting speech, some of which I am hoping to help. Therefore, you have started now an era of peace, even on your estates. I do not ask you to wind up your mobilised troops. They will be necessary any time if there is a violence in the South, and unnecessary killings. Every day they are killing and I hope to get over that problem in the next two months and I want your help fully. Because no people who believe in violence, as we had during the Second World War, as we had in the terrorist campaign in our country; no people who believe in violence, who live in violence, who thrive on violence can in a society governed by the great religions of the world can have Peace, and this is what this Accord brings to this country, an era of Peace, and I thank you for applauding me and wishing me on my birthday.

REFERENCE

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