

Sri Lanka

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

21 December 1981

*Dear John,*Sri Lanka: Visit of Foreign Minister

The Prime Minister has agreed to receive Mr Hameed, the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, at 10.15 on 22 December. I attach briefing.

Mr Hameed will have a meeting on 23 December with Mr Hurd (who will be visiting Sri Lanka in January) and will call on Mr Raison at the Home Office the same day.

The Sri Lankans have asked us not to draw attention to the visit. We have explained that callers on the Prime Minister are usually listed for the press; and that if it were to become known that Mr Hameed has called without being listed this would arouse special interest. The Sri Lankan High Commission accepts this. If explanations are necessary, perhaps the Press Office could say that Mr Hameed, a Commonwealth Foreign Minister on a private visit, asked to pay a call and was received briefly as a courtesy. The Sri Lankan High Commissioner, Mr Moorthy, will accompany Mr Hameed.

*yours ever**Roderic Lyne*

(R M J Lyne)
Private Secretary

John Coles Esq
10 Downing Street



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CALL ON PRIME MINISTER BY FOREIGN MINISTER OF SRI LANKA

POINTS TO MAKE

1. The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh enjoyed very much the 4 day State Visit to Sri Lanka in October. A highly successful visit in friendly and calm atmosphere.
2. Pleased that the violence between Tamil and Sinhalese community in the summer has abated. Admire President Jayewardene's calm and firm handling of situation.
3. Welcome President Jayewardene's continued efforts to reconcile communities and to isolate extremists. Hope that moderate opinions in both communities will prevail.
4. Regret that Tamil Co-ordinating Committee operates in London. We keep a close eye on its activities and shall continue to do so. Provided they keep within British law, we have no power to prevent their political activities, even when they run counter to the policies of the British Government.
5. Will you visit other capitals in Europe? Suggest important to explain this delicate situation frankly and fully to Government of India.

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BACKGROUND

1. President Jayewardene has sent his Foreign Minister urgently to London to deliver a personal message to the Prime Minister about the Tamil problem. We believe it relates to the activities in London of the 'Tamil Coordinating Committee' (TCC), a small group of Tamil residents in London who produce skilful propaganda but who, according to the Security Service, have little capacity to mount demonstrations. They were originally established as the mouthpiece of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), a moderate Tamil party which constitutes the official opposition in the Sri Lanka parliament and which formally seeks Tamil independence by constitutional means but is probably prepared to accept much less. The son of the leader of the TULF, Amirthaligam, lives in London and has established a UK branch. He has a personal feud with the leader of the TCC, K Vaikunthayasan, although he is also a member of the TCC. K Vaikunthayasan has Communist connections, but there is no evidence of Communist funding of the TCC. (The most likely source is wealthy Tamil businessmen).

2. On 12 December TCC issued a statement in London that on 14 January 1982 they intended to declare an independent Tamil State (Eelam) and form a provisional government in exile. This decision by the London Tamil group seems aimed at gaining international publicity.

3. There has been no mention of the 'Declaration of Independence' in either the UK or Sri Lankan press and the only reference to it has been a subsequent TULF statement dissociating the party from such 'irresponsible moves by overseas Tamils' and condemning them as being unhelpful to the advancement of the Tamil cause. Nevertheless, the Sri Lankan Government are clearly concerned at this development and its consequences at home and abroad. Given the TULF's attitude, our High Commissioner in Colombo does not believe that it will affect the efforts by the President to seek reconciliation with the Tamils. The danger is that it will lead to further violence by 'Tamil Tigers' and a renewed backlash by Sinhalese chauvinists. Even without further violent incidents by



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Tamils this move will tend to inflame Sinhala extremists and may weaken the President's ability, though not his resolve, to isolate them.

4. It would clearly be difficult to meet a request (if one were made) to limit the activities of Tamil exiles in London. While we would wish to be as helpful and sympathetic as possible to the Head of State of this moderate, non-aligned member of the Commonwealth with whom we maintain excellent bilateral relations we can do nothing to prevent the TCC's activities unless they break the law.

5. It would be appropriate however for the Prime Minister to welcome the efforts being made by President Jayewardene to reconcile the two communities in Sri Lanka. The UNP Government was elected overwhelmingly in 1977 with a manifesto which pledged reconciliation and changes to redress the grievances of minority communities. The new 1978 Constitution grants certain fundamental rights: all Sri Lanka citizens are guaranteed equality of status in every field irrespective of race, religion or origin. The Tamil language has been given the status of a 'national' language (though Sinhalese remains the official language), provisions have been made for its more widespread use in business and education, and the Government began earlier this year to bring into operation its plans for strengthened local government which is particularly designed to give the Tamil community a greater local involvement and responsibility for local development.

6. After the violent intercommunal disturbances of last summer, which led to the declaration of the State of Emergency, President Jayewardene formed a joint committee of Government Ministers and the moderate leaders of the TULF under his Chairmanship to consider these problems urgently; particularly ways in which peace could be quickly restored between the communities and progress made toward more longer term development and a lasting reconciliation. These discussions have been in progress throughout the autumn and it is thought that some progress is being made. The State of Emergency continues although press censorship has been lifted. We understand from our High Commission that the country is quiet and that the security forces have the situation well in hand. The Deputy High



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Commissioner and Defence Adviser separately visited Jaffna the capital of the Tamil region recently and all appeared quiet.

7. The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh paid a successful 4 day State Visit to Sri Lanka from 21-25 October. No incidents of protest or violence marred the visit during which hundreds of thousands of cheering Sri Lankans lined the route and greeted The Queen wherever she went.

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SRI LANKA: THE POSITION OF THE TAMILS

1. The Tamils of Sri Lanka form a significant, and mainly Hindu, minority community in a predominantly Buddhist country. Their community constitutes some 20% of the population of nearly 15 million people and is made up of Indian Tamils (immigrants of the 18th and 19th centuries and predominantly estate workers) and the Ceylon Tamils who are Sri Lankan nationals and live mainly in Jaffna in the North and North-Eastern coastal belt of the island.

2. Under the Indo/Ceylon Agreements of 1964 and 1974 Indian Tamils will either be 'repatriated' or given Sri Lankan citizenship in the proportions of roughly 5:3 under the first agreement (covering 825,000 Tamils) and 1:1 under the second (covering 125,000). The Agreements are still being implemented and 342,658 persons had been repatriated by mid-1980. The Indian Tamils are generally regarded as inferior by the Ceylon Tamils and live and work relatively unassimilated and peacefully on the estates in the hill districts in central Sri Lanka.

3. Long-standing grievances exist, however, among the Ceylon Tamils over their status in the community and have gradually come to the fore since independence in 1948 and a succession of Sri Lankan Governments dominated by the Sinhalese majority. The Tamils, an industrious community, are mostly traders and had achieved considerable influence in the public services and high positions in the academic field under colonial rule in greater proportion than their numbers would indicate. Since Independence, they have been increasingly concerned (and vociferous) about the alleged erosion of their status in Sri Lanka, particularly that of their language, culture, education, employment and on matters of land distribution. The Tamil and Sinhalese communities are not completely divided on sectarian lines but there is much mistrust and ill-feeling between them. This has resulted in communal clashes and violence over a number of years. The position of moderates in both communities has not been helped by Governments in the past who appear to have done little to relieve the problem or by

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hardliners within the Sinhalese community, indiscipline within the (mainly Sinhala) police or by the activities of extremist Tamil groups within Sri Lanka - particularly the terrorist group known as 'Tamil Tigers' who are thought to have been responsible for a number of murders (particularly of policemen and soldiers) and bank robberies, particularly in and around Jaffna.

4. Partly as a result of feelings of insecurity, difficulties with education and employment and most of all because of the policies of recent socialist Governments of Sri Lanka many Tamils, particularly middle-class professionals and managers left the country. There are now relatively small, but vociferous, and ardently nationalist communities overseas, particularly in the United States, France and Britain.

5. In the 1977 election the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), fighting on a separatist platform, had a major victory in the 'Ceylon Tamil' traditional areas in the North and East winning 16 seats in Parliament. They now form the official opposition and their leader (Mr Amurthalingam) has acknowledged that the new Constitution does make improvements in Tamil status though maintaining that these do not go far enough. The TULF are still, officially, committed to separation (which the Government have rejected) but have been working within the constitutional framework to improve matters.

6. This year the deep mistrust between the communities again surfaced and there were some nasty incidents in May when the (Sinhalese) police reacted violently to aggression in Jaffna by a few Tamil extremists. In August trouble spread to various parts of the island and the police reported 7 deaths by violence, 196 incidents of arson and 35 of looting. Two hundred arrests were made. The Government immediately ordered the Armed Forces to the trouble-spots and granted them the same powers of arrest and search and use of firearms as the police. On 17 August a State of Emergency was declared and the Government drew particular attention to provisions which impose the death penalty for arson or looting. Since this was declared (and renewed monthly) there has been little unrest



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though tensions in some areas have remained high. Press censorship has now been relaxed.

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HAMEED, ABDUL CADER SAHUL, MP (UNP)

Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Ceylon Muslim. Born 1929. Educated St Anthony's College, Matale and Zahiri College, Matale. Interested in Adult Education and has organised several Adult Education Centres. Has been President of the Central Ceylon Muslim Educational Society and of the Central Province Muslim Parents' Association. , Joined UNP 1956, was elected second MP for Akurana, a largely Sinhalese Buddhist constituency, at the March and July elections in 1960 and 1965. Deputy Leader of the Ceylon Delegation to the UN 1966, when he first made his mark. First MP for Akurana 1970 and 1977 (seat now called Harispattuwa). Active in CPA. Attended London meeting in September 1973 and stayed on as Category III visitor. Also Category III visitor 1975.

This is the first time that the Foreign Minister portfolio has not been held by the Prime Minister and reflects J R Jayewardene's expressed desire to concentrate on domestic affairs. Speaks English, Tamil and Sinhala with equal facility. Despite the general UNP debacle in 1970 he succeeded in improving his position and became an important voice in the party. Was critical in private of some of Mr Jayewardene's tactics while Leader of the Opposition.

Small in stature, he is somewhat pompous and pontifical in his speech. Enjoys the limelight and in particular official visits abroad; would like to cut a dash in world affairs, but has so far not been impressive.

Married with three young children.

SRI LANKA: FACT SHEET

Full Name : Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

Area : 25,332 sq miles (65,600 sq km)

Population : 14.8 million (1981 census) of whom 72% are Sinhalese, 20% Tamils, 7% Muslims

Population increase : 2% per annum (1.7% allowing for net migration)

Capital : Colombo (population 585,776 in 1981)

Religions : Buddhist (67%), Hindu (18%), Christian (8%), Muslim (7%)

Languages : Sinhalese (the official language), Tamil (which has the status of a national language) and English

Government : Parliamentary democracy. Executive President - Junius Jayewardene; Prime Minister - Ranasinghe Premadasa; and unicameral legislature, the National State Assembly, consisting of 168 elected members

Ruling Party : United National Party (since July 1977)

Gross National Product (at market prices) : US \$ 3433.7 million

Per Capita Income (1980) : US \$ 231

UK Exports (1980) : £76.8 million

UK Imports (1980) : £33.6 million

Total Sri Lanka

 Exports : £530 million

 Imports : £1026 million