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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

14 May 1985

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Dear Charles,

Visit of the Prime Minister to Sri Lanka

I enclose a copy of the despatch on the Prime Minister's visit to Sri Lanka submitted by our High Commissioner at Colombo, Mr Stewart.

You will have seen from Colombo telegram No 298 that, when Mr Stewart delivered the Prime Minister's message to President Jayewardene urging him to seek an understanding with Mr Gandhi, the President promised to let us have 'within a few days' a full account of the further steps which his Government proposed to take to try to improve relations between the Tamil and Sinhalese communities. We have since heard nothing further and cannot, I fear build too much hope on the President's promise. Since the Prime Minister's visit, the Sri Lankan Government have shown no evidence of wishing to relaunch their efforts to achieve a political settlement or increase cooperation with the Indian Government. Indeed in the past few days there have been disturbing signs that they may be trying deliberately to pick a quarrel with the Indians. This is both unfortunate and inept, given Mr Gandhi's apparent wish to be more helpful. It also suggests that President Jayewardene has paid little heed to the Prime Minister's message, probably because of the pressure he is under from his own right wing.

We shall continue to watch developments in Sri Lanka closely. In the meantime, you may like to know that the training visits to this country by two senior Sri Lankan policemen have gone ahead without problem.

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OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

Yours ever,  
Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)  
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street

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SRI LANKA

26 April 1985

## VISIT OF PRIME MINISTER TO SRI LANKA

The British High Commissioner at Colombo to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

## SUMMARY

1. The Prime Minister, accompanied by Mr Thatcher, visited Sri Lanka from 11 to 13 April 1985. The main purpose of the visit was to attend the commissioning of the Victoria Dam, one of the largest individual British aid projects. (Paras 1-4)
2. In speeches at the State Banquet President Jayewardene maintained that the current problem in Sri Lanka was one of terrorism rather than of ethnic conflict, and was critical of India; and the Prime Minister condemned terrorism and advocated a peaceful solution and reconciliation. In her speech to Parliament the Prime Minister announced a further aid grant of twenty million pounds and a special aid grant to help rehabilitate those affected by the present troubles in Sri Lanka. She called for a settlement of these troubles through dialogue and reconciliation, and for the recognition of the interests of all. (Paras 5-9)
3. In private talks the President claimed that he had gone as far as he could in making concessions to the Tamils and that his first priority now was to defeat terrorism. He claimed that the Government of India could do more to help. The Prime Minister expressed regret that the likelihood of a political solution had temporarily declined and urged the Government of Sri Lanka to improve their publicity overseas, and to try to improve relations with India. The Sri Lankans admitted some excesses by their armed forces and said they were doing their best to deal with the offenders. (Paras 10-11)

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4. The Prime Minister was asked for British aid towards the Samanalawewa dam project and promised to consider it. There were brief but inconclusive discussions about shipping and air services. (Para 12)
  
5. The visit achieved our aims of reinforcing the friendship between the two governments, commissioning Victoria Dam, and making it clear that the British Government would neither give support to nor treat with terrorists. The Sri Lankans also achieved their aims of obtaining prestige by being hosts to the Prime Minister, and of stating their case that they were victims of organised terrorism rather than of inter-communal strife. But they also exploited the Prime Minister by imposing on her an unnecessarily heavy programme. (Paras 13-16)

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BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION  
COLOMBO

26 April 1985

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe, QC MP  
Secretary of State for Foreign  
and Commonwealth Affairs

Sir,

THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO SRI LANKA

The Programme

1. I have the honour to report that the Prime Minister, accompanied by Mr Denis Thatcher, visited Sri Lanka from 11 to 13 April 1985. A copy of the programme is enclosed at Annex A.
2. The Prime Minister and Mr Thatcher were welcomed on arrival by Mr Gamini Dissanayake, Minister of Lands and Land Development and Mahaweli Development, and Mrs Dissanayake, and by myself and my wife. Security precautions at the airport, already tight, were further enhanced following a terrorist bomb attack on a train at the airport station on the evening before her arrival. The Prime Minister arrived suffering from a severe cold and so was unable to attend the small supper party which I later gave for Mr Thatcher and the official members of Mrs Thatcher's team.
3. After a formal welcome by the President of Sri Lanka on the following morning, the Prime Minister travelled to the Victoria Dam Site by helicopter with the President where she formally inaugurated the Victoria Dam Project after inspecting

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the dam and its power station and unveiling a commemorative monolith. The Victoria project at the time it was agreed was the largest single British Aid project ever granted. The dam was completed within the scheduled time and has been a major triumph of British engineering. At the inauguration, speeches were made by Mr Dissanayake, by Mr Ronnie de Mel, Minister of Finance and Planning, and by the Prime Minister. Mr Dissanayake spoke of the help given to the country in general and the Victoria project in particular by Britain, and thanked the Prime Minister who had helped to bring the project to fruition. Mr de Mel's speech, which was in Sinhala, was in similar vein. The Prime Minister's speech briefly sketched the history of Sri Lankan irrigation works and expressed her confidence in the economic policies pursued by the Sri Lanka Government. She gave an assurance of continued co-operation as long as the Sri Lanka Government continued to pursue sound development policies. She concluded with a tribute to the British companies Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners, Balfour Beatty Nuttall, and Preece Cardew Rider, as well as to those who worked on the project and those who will operate it (text at Annex B).

4. From Victoria Mrs Thatcher travelled with the President by car to Kandy where she was received by the Mayor of the Municipal Council before being entertained to lunch at the Presidential Lodge. After lunch she gave a press conference in the Queen's Hotel before returning to Colombo, again by helicopter. The press conference was conducted under some difficulty. The room chosen was like an oven and its acoustics



terrible.

Replying to a flurry of questions on the problems of international and local terrorism the Prime Minister firmly stressed that terrorism should be stamped out. She said that we would do everything in our power to stop the purchase of arms for terrorists. She believed that the Commonwealth has an important role to play in maintaining links between its members but that she did not see the Commonwealth as a whole playing a meaningful role in solving Sri Lanka's problems although individual members could play a part.

5. In the evening she attended a State Banquet at which President Jayewardene made the only substantive public speech on the Sri Lankan side during the visit (text at Annex C).

It was a strange discourse during which he rehearsed at some length the democratic history of Sri Lanka and of the disturbances of the past few years. He maintained, as he often has during recent months, that the problem in Sri Lanka is one of terrorism rather than of ethnic difficulties, and he included a bitter attack on the Government of India for allowing terrorists to move freely and issue propaganda in Tamil Nadu. There was an apparently irrelevant reference to British troops being stationed in Belize, Cyprus and other countries which immediately raised speculation in India as well as Colombo that he was about to ask the Prime Minister to station troops here in Sri Lanka. He also mentioned moneys being collected in Britain to buy narcotics and weapons to kill Sri Lankans.

6. In her reply the Prime Minister, after some warm references

/to



to the reception that she had received and to the democratic tradition in Sri Lanka, condemned terrorism and violence and expressed her pleasure that the President would continue to work for a peaceful solution and reconciliation. She also hoped that this reconciliation could become the basis for joint efforts with India to reduce tension. She referred to the interdependence of even distant countries and to the links between our two countries.

7. The Prime Minister began the following day by meeting privately at my house Dr Tiruchelvam, a member of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), an ex-MP who had lost his seat when, in common with other TULF members, he had refused to take the oath called for by the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution pledging all holders of public office to oppose the establishment of a separate state within Sri Lanka. The meeting was brief and cordial. The Prime Minister again expressed her unremitting opposition to terrorism and violence and Dr Tiruchelvam, after a description of the disabilities suffered by the Tamil people in Sri Lanka, confirmed his party's publicly expressed opposition to violence also. He maintained that the failure of the All Party Conference was due to the refusal of the Sri Lanka Government to implement proposals which had already been agreed during the Conference. The widely held opinion that it was the TULF which ended the negotiations was not true.

8. After a brief meeting with the British staff of this Mission and of the British Council, the Prime Minister addressed



the Sri Lankan Parliament. This was the first time that any non-member of the Parliament had been invited to make such an address in the Parliamentary chamber, and the Prime Minister's speech was of course the most important political event of her visit. The Prime Minister rehearsed the history of democratic representation in Sri Lanka, described briefly her visits to other countries during the current tour, and after a brief survey of Britain's foreign and aid policy, announced a further aid grant of £20 million sterling and a special aid grant to the Save the Children Fund to help in the rehabilitation of those affected by the recent troubles. She sympathised with Sri Lankan efforts to combat terrorism and supported a firm response to those who use violence. She went on to call for a settlement through dialogue and reconciliation and recognition of the interests of all those involved. The full text of her speech is attached at Annex D. The Prime Minister had arrived in Sri Lanka suffering from a heavy cold and her speech to Parliament was interrupted by a bout of coughing. The cough attracted widespread international press attention, but here in Sri Lanka it only caused a widespread wave of sympathy for the Prime Minister who was seen to have comported herself superbly throughout a cruelly tough programme at the hottest time of the year.

9. After Parliament the Prime Minister opened the Mahaweli Museum and then went on to talks with President Jayewardene and some of his Ministers at the Presidential Lodge. Mr Thatcher meanwhile visited the British Council premises and met their staff. The programme concluded at a formal farewell ceremony,





with a Guard of Honour mounted by the Sri Lanka Navy and a drive to the airport for which President Jayewardene disregarded protocol to accompany the Prime Minister personally.

#### The Private Talks

10. The Prime Minister was alone in a car with the President on several occasions, during which time I understand he made an impassioned appeal for understanding of the Government of Sri Lanka's point of view on the communal and terrorist problems. He emphasised again and again that he had to give priority to overcoming the terrorism. He maintained that he had gone as far as was politically possible in making concessions to the Tamils. Although acknowledging that the Government of India had gone some way to prevent the transport of arms and terrorism to Sri Lanka, he insisted that the Government of India could do much more by closing training camps for example. The formal talks, which were truncated because of slippage in Saturday morning's programme, were again largely concerned with the terrorist menace. The Prime Minister mentioned her disappointment that the political solution, which seemed in sight when she last met President Jayewardene in Delhi in November, now seemed to have receded. She mentioned the efficiency of the propaganda put out by the Tamil separatist groups and urged the Government of Sri Lanka to publicise their own case more effectively. She instanced the recent seizure of arms bound for Sri Lanka in Madras as an indication of the good faith on the part of the Government of India, and hoped that the Sri Lankans would be able to establish a more effective co-operation with Mr Gandhi's Government. She had been struck by the fact that a Tamil



Parliamentary candidate had been assassinated by terrorists while campaigning.

11. The question of excesses by the Sri Lankan armed forces was raised. Mr Athulathmudali, Minister of National Security, explained that although it had been impossible to find witnesses to testify against members of the armed forces at courts martial, nevertheless administrative action by discharge or cashiering had been taken against some 300 of those known to have committed excesses.

12. There was a brief submission by Mr de Mel on the Samanalawewa project. He asked that a maximum amount (he mentioned up to 30%) of concessional aid be made by HMG to finance the British component of this project. The Prime Minister mentioned the problems of ECGD cover for Samanalawewa and the difficulty of committing the whole of British aid to one further project. She made no commitment but promised to consider the proposal further in London. The questions of shipping rights and the Air Services Agreement were raised briefly, but were referred to further discussions between the appropriate authorities.

#### Conclusion

13. Our aims for this very brief visit were further to reinforce friendship between our two governments and two peoples, formally to commission the Victoria Dam, the second largest individual project for which British aid has been granted, and to make it clear that the Prime Minister and her Government would never give support nor treat with terrorist movements. All of these objectives were brilliantly achieved, and

/there



there is no doubt that British prestige in Sri Lanka - always high - has now reached a new level. The Prime Minister's bearing and consistent charm won the hearts of all those whom she met, and since she left I have been bombarded with sincere congratulations by my diplomatic colleagues and Sri Lankan friends, including many Sri Lankan Ministers.

14. From the Sri Lankan point of view the visit has also been a great success. They wanted above all the prestige of having probably the best known head of government in the world to visit them and they wanted the opportunity to show the Prime Minister that they were the victims of organised terrorism; according to them, a far more important factor in the current troubles which beset Sri Lanka than differences between the Tamil and Sinhalese communities. They were greatly encouraged by the Prime Minister's reiterated condemnation of terrorism and violence, by her promise of continuing aid and co-operation and by her increased understanding of the whole situation here in this country.

15. I have written above that the visit was a great success from the point of view of both governments. However, I and others were struck by the ruthlessness of the Sri Lankan Government in forcing the Prime Minister to follow an inhumanly gruelling programme in temperatures up to 100°, and their determination to squeeze every possible drop of advantage from the visit. I had battled vainly before the Prime Minister's arrival to try and fit some rest periods into the programme and to ensure that the travel arrangements were such as to



impose the least strain on the Prime Minister and Mr Thatcher. In particular, I was unable to persuade President Jayewardene to give up the idea of the drive from Victoria to Kandy over thirty miles of largely unmade road in the heat of the day and at an enhanced security risk. He was determined to have this hour alone with the Prime Minister without officials in order to lobby her on his own points of view. The Prime Minister coped admirably and apart from one bout of coughing during her speech to Parliament, betrayed no evidence either of fatigue nor of distress from the heavy cold with which she arrived. I shall not recount the number of times we experienced intransigence at all levels in drawing up the programme, but I must record that at official level we were told adamantly that the Prime Minister could not see Dr Tiruchelvam; I finally had to settle the matter with the President himself.

16. The Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Mr Premadasa, was not present during the visit. He had previous commitments in Japan and Jamaica, but his absence had raised widespread speculation about the reasons for it. It is widely believed that because of the nature of the visit, he knew that he would be pushed into the background by the President and the Ministers immediately concerned with Victoria, and he decided that he would be better off away.

17. I am sending copies of this despatch to HM Representatives

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at New Delhi, Dhaka, Islamabad, Washington, UKMIS New York,  
to the Minister of Overseas Development and to the Governor  
of the Bank of England.

I am Sir

Your obedient servant

*J A B Stewart*  
J A B Stewart



## PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT: PROGRAMME

## THURSDAY 11 APRIL

- 2025 Arrive Colombo (Katunayake Airport). Met by Gamini Dissanayake as Minister in Attendance and by High Commissioner.
- 2035 Leave airport by car.
- 2115 Arrive President's House.
- 2140 Private Dinner for Mr Thatcher and officials at Westminster House.

## FRIDAY 12 APRIL

- 0740 Formal welcome by the President at President's House.
- 0810 Leave President's House for SLAF sports ground.
- 0815 Leave Colombo for Adhikirigama by helicopter with President Jayewardene!
- 0850 Arrive Adhikirigama. Drive to power station.
- 0905 Arrive Power Station.
- 0940 Arrive Dam Site. Commissioning ceremony.
- 1140 Leave Victoria for Kandy by road.
- 1230 Greeting by Mayor of Kandy.
- 1300 Arrive President's Pavilion at Kandy.
- 1315 Lunch at President's Pavilion
- 1515 Press conference.
- 1600 Leave President's Pavilion for Police Grounds, Kandy.
- 1615 Leave Police Grounds for Colombo by helicopter.
- 1700 Arrive Colombo.
- 1710 Arrive President's House.
- 200 State dinner. Overnight at President's House.

/SATURDAY 13 APRIL



SATURDAY 13 APRIL

0800 Leave President's House for Westminster House.  
0810 Arrive Westminster House.  
0840 Leave Westminster House.  
0850 Arrive Parliament building.  
1030 Leave Parliament.  
1040 Arrive Mahaweli Centre.  
1110 Leave Mahaweli Centre for President's House.  
1120 Arrive President's House.  
1125 Final talk with President.  
1145 Departure ceremonies.  
1215 Leave Colombo for Katunayake by road.  
1250 Arrive Katunayake.  
1300 Departure.



SPEECH BY THE RT HON MRS MARGARET THATCHER F.R.S., M.P.

AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE VICTORIA DAM, SRI LANKA

ON 12 APRIL 1985

Mr President, Ministers, distinguished guests, friends.

I am proud to be present at an historic moment in Sri Lanka's development. For centuries the Mahaweli Ganga has flowed unchecked through these hills. With the commissioning today of the Victoria Dam, its energy is harnessed to a noble cause: the development of the full potential of your land, your natural resources and your people.

This breathtaking engineering feat is a product of the modern age. But it rests on a tradition stretching back some 2000 years. In the days of your ancient kings, mighty irrigation works were at the heart of a flourishing civilization.

Mr President, of one thing I am certain. Together we have given birth to a project which will stand for decades as an example of what development co-operation can achieve.

When we set our hand to the task of helping you with this project, it was not only because the economists told us the investment was justified. Nor was it simply because we supported your decision to accelerate the Mahaweli development programme. It was because we felt we could with confidence endorse the economic policies your Government was committed to pursuing, and to the success of which the Victoria Dam will contribute.

The measure of that confidence was our largest ever contribution to a single aid project.

I am sure that confidence will prove to have been well placed. And that you will continue to pursue policies which will lead you towards self-sustaining growth.

Resources are now more limited than they were when we committed ourselves to this project. Victoria has been unique. But I can assure you that we hope to continue our co-operation with you, for as long as you continue to pursue sound development policies.

Mr President, Victoria also exemplified the contribution that British consultants, manufacturers and contractors can make to development.

Sir Alexander Gibb and partners have designed and supervised the construction of dams throughout the world, many of them, like Victoria, breaking new ground in structure and technology.

Balfour Beatty Nuttall successfully poured three quarters of a million cubic metres of concrete into Victoria. They have a record of achieving their objectives on time and within budget.

/Preece Cardew and Ryder





Preece Cardew and Ryder have designed and supervised the construction of what is already the largest power station in Sri Lanka, with potential for substantial further development.

These companies, and others like them, have a track record of success. They compete with the best the world has to offer. I am confident that they will win further business here in Sri Lanka.

Mr President, visitors from many countries will marvel at the Victoria Dam, at the functional elegance of the design and the quality of the engineering skills which went into it.

But development is not about concrete, however carefully poured, nor about power stations, however efficiently run; it is about people.

It is people who have brought this project into being, people who will operate it and people who have made sacrifices to achieve it. Above all, it is people who will benefit. Their land will be irrigated and their homes provided with electricity.

So Mr President, it gives me great pleasure to declare the Victoria Dam and Hydro-Electric Project well and truly commissioned. May it fulfil its promise of a better life for your people.

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SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY MR J R JAYEWARDENE, PRESIDENT OF  
THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA AT  
A STATE BANQUET IN HONOUR OF THE RT HON MRS MARGARET THATCHER FRS, MP,  
AND MR DENNIS THATCHER MBE, ON 12 APRIL 1985 AT COLOMBO

The Right Hon. Prime Minister and Mr Thatcher,  
Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

There are many reasons why my Government and I and the majority of our people are happy that you accepted my invitation to visit us.

Madam Prime Minister, the strong bonds that exist between our two Nations were forged over two centuries of association. They date back to 1796 when the representatives of the British Government decided to take over the former Dutch possessions in the maritime areas of Sri Lanka. The destinies of our two Island nations were thenceforward inextricably intertwined.

So many aspects of life in Sri Lanka today emerged from moulds that were cast during this association. Foremost among these is our democratic tradition, upon which we pride ourselves.

In 1833 Trial by Jury was instituted. In 1866 the Municipalities of Colombo, Kandy and Galle were created with members elected by the people. They were the first such institutions in Asia. In 1931 the State Council, with Ministers chosen from among members elected by Universal Franchise, was created and functioned till 1947 and Freedom. Mr Dahanayake, MP, a former Prime Minister and I are the only two alive from that Legislature.

We choose our leaders through the ballot. Since 1931 the country has had 10 General Elections and a Referendum, when the People by a 53% vote postponed the General Election until 1989. Parliament cannot postpone a general election nor the election of a President even by a two-third majority. Governments have been returned and defeated on several occasions and I myself bear the scars of these electoral battles as few democratic leaders alive today can claim.

Our Buddhist traditions dating back for 25 centuries re-inforce our determination to abjure violence as a mechanism of change. The practice of governing with the consent of the governed is also fully in keeping with the long established philosophical traditions guiding our people. We take justifiable pride in the fact that democratic institutions flourished at the grassroots level in Sri Lanka hundreds of years ago, following the traditions existing in the 6th century B.C. among some of the peoples of the States in the Indian Gangetic Plain where the Buddha lived and preached. H G Wells calls this period of History, the period of the adolescence of the Human Race, for in the West lived Socrates, Aristotle, Plato and their contemporaries; in Persia, Zoroaster; in India, Gautama the Buddha and in China, Confucius, all preaching modern concepts of Physics and Philosophy.

/We have always cherished



We have always cherished and followed such tenets of Democracy as individual liberty, the Writ of Habeas Corpus, freedom of speech and association, and the right to vote. We have in our Constitution declared them as Fundamental Rights and made them justiciable. Yet today we have been reluctantly compelled to impose some restrictions on the exercise of these freedoms since "terrorists" are exploiting the opportunities afforded by a free society to destroy these very freedoms.

We in our country have been concerned with the forms of democracy, and not with democracy itself which the majority accept. Successive Governments have amended our Constitution, from time to time, yet always retaining its democratic principles. Today the President is the Executive authority elected once in 6 years by the whole Nation, and exercises it with a Cabinet of Ministers chosen from the Legislature. We have attempted to create a strong and stable executive so necessary in a developing country. The elected members enact laws in the Sovereign Legislature, which functions for 6 years. An independent Judiciary interprets them.

I hope future generations will use the powers they exercise through the Presidency, Legislature and Judiciary wisely, for the welfare of the many.

While we and a few others among the developing nations consider the forms of democracy as important, a growing number of nations consider as important the substance of democracy itself, as they did not enjoy it earlier, and are turning to it now.

Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Turkey are dramatic examples, Colombia, Jamaica and Nigeria are somewhat less dramatic. El Salvador looks as if it may become an example. Portugal, Spain and Greece took steps a few years earlier to establish democratic institutions. India among the people of the World's second most populated country has recently underscored the strength of democracy. Pakistan, which I visited last week is the latest example. I wish her well. We who know the value of democracy should help her to preserve it.

The menace of terrorism is a danger aimed at the democratic fabric of society, threatening to rend it asunder. We in the Democratic World have to co-ordinate our strategy to eradicate this menace. There is no alternative. Any delay on our part to counter terrorist violence will only encourage these forces of evil to escalate their campaign and subvert our democratic system.

I have repeatedly said there is a "Terrorist Problem" and not an "Ethnic Problem" in Sri Lanka. I go back to the Manifesto issued by my Party to the electorate in 1977 where we referred to the, "Problems of the Tamil-speaking people" as follows:

"The United National Party accepts the position that there are numerous problems confronting the Tamil-speaking people. The Party, when it comes to power, will take all possible steps to remedy their grievances in such fields as -

/(1) Education;



- (1) Education;
- (2) Colonisation;
- (3) Use of Tamil Language;
- (4) Employment in the Public and Semi-public Corporations.

We appointed a Select Committee of Members of all Parties in Parliament to consider the above proposals as well as others.

Since 1977 the Government has implemented the recommendations of this Committee. Tamil was made a National Language in the Constitution; rules governing entrance to the universities were amended and any racial bias governing those rules removed; the regulations prescribing racial considerations governing entry to the Public Services and promotion in the Services were also removed.

District Councils were created and District Ministers appointed. Elections were held; our candidates were assassinated and so were members of the Police leading to riots in Jaffna; meetings and polling booths were broken up by armed gangs.

The riots of July 1983, largely in Colombo and Kandy were the culmination of the terrorists killing members of the armed services in the North. The terrorists say they are seeking to change the elected democratic government of the whole of Sri Lanka and not only to create a separate State of EELAM. They say so publicly in statements appearing in the Indian Press; they are interviewed by Journalists and move freely in Tamil Nadu and the rest of India, appearing on platforms with members of the TULF and other Indian leaders. At the same time they openly admit murdering citizens of Sri Lanka of all races, religions, castes and sexes.

What is the nature of the friendship that permits a human being or people to associate with criminals who openly admit murder of, and plan to commit further crimes on, one's friends. I adopt a different attitude to my friends whether they be nations or individuals.

Your nation and its people have suffered millions of deaths in several wars during the last 100 years. We have not. Some of our citizens though fought side by side with you in all these and suffered with you air raids and the other consequences of War in the 1940s. The protective shelter of the British Empire spared us the lives and property you lost.

I am against violence. I said so at the Commonwealth Conference presided over by Mrs Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, at Delhi in November 1983, at which you were present, Madam Prime Minister. The Goa Declaration accepted my idea and included Non-violence.

We are fighting a war in some parts of the North and East of our Island. Nine Policemen were killed by one bomb in the Eastern Province two weeks ago. Are they not human? Have they no parents, wives and children? Do they not feel the warmth of human friendship and do not their dependants yearn to feel the touch of their vanished hands and the sound of their voices that are still?

/You quoted Bismark



- 4 -

You quoted Bismark to the American Legislators, as saying "Do I want War? Of course not, I want Victory."

Madam Prime Minister I want "Peace, Non-violence".

Your country keeps troops stationed in some parts of Central America to sustain democracy. You have troops in Cyprus, in the South Atlantic, in the Sinai and Beirut. You have loaned some to 35 foreign countries. In the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean too your Navies are on duty across the World. You said to the American people,

"We do not believe that Force should be the final arbiter in human affairs".

"Britain meets her responsibilities in the defence of Freedom throughout the World. She will go on doing so".

Madam, I salute you.

You also touched on terrorism in Ireland. You called it "a threat to Freedom both savage and insidious". How true!

We have also lost some of our best young lives.

Your citizens too are being misled to contribute to seemingly innocuous groups. They are used to buy narcotics and weapons to harm and kill Sri Lankans.

The future of Democracy in our Motherland is in danger. We will not succumb to the threats of the assassin's gun or the coward's mines. Come such evil forces against us as they may, we shall so behave that a United Sri Lanka, Free and Democratic, yet shall stand.

May the words I have spoken be taken across the Seas to the United Kingdom, the Home of Freedom and Democracy.

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ADDRESS BY THE RT HON MRS MARGARET THATCHER FRS, MP,  
TO THE SRI LANKAN PARLIAMENT ON 13 APRIL 1985

Mr Speaker, there are few privileges for a British Prime Minister to rival that of being invited to address the legislature of a fellow Commonwealth country. I thank you for the honour which you do me and, through me, the people and Parliament of the United Kingdom.

Over the years I have enjoyed many contacts with Members both of the Government and the Opposition in Sri Lanka. Last year we had the particular pleasure of receiving your President on a visit to London. I was pleased also to welcome your Prime Minister, Mr Premadasa, whom I first met in 1975, and Mr Anura Bandaranaike, the leader of the Opposition, whom I see here today. It is for me a crowning of those contacts, stretching back over 30 years, and a fulfilment of a dream to be able to visit your country and speak to you in this Chamber.

Over 300 years ago, a sturdy British traveller, Peter Munday, wrote that Sri Lanka was "the fruitfulest, the most pleasant, and the most delicious island, that is in all these parts of the world." Even my brief visit has shown me enough to know how well this verdict still stands.

You are representatives of a country and a people with a long and proud history. The remains of an ancient civilisation are visible in many parts of your Island. Two thousand years ago your irrigation system far exceeded in scale and sophistication anything existing in Europe. That great chronicle, the Mahavamsa, has passed down to us the story of your Island's development. Your history brought you into contact with Portugal, with the Netherlands and, finally, with Britain. It is a source of pride to us that today so many of your institutions and so much of your legal systems are fashioned on those of the United Kingdom.

You were the first of the Asian countries associated with Britain to acquire a legislative council with non-official members. Thus, some 150 years ago, in 1833 began the tradition of representative, democratic government which continues today and which this splendid building symbolises. Thirty years later you were the first country in Asia to select those who were to govern your chief towns. And in 1931 you were the first country with British Administration to obtain universal adult suffrage. Democracy has deep roots here and I know you are committed to preserving them.

I welcome also your recognition of the universality of these principles. That was made explicit in your support for the Falkland Islanders after the Argentine invasion in 1982. Your support has made a deep and marked impression in Britain and we thank you for it.

Mr Speaker, there is no more satisfying experience than to travel round the world breathing the air of freedom in different climates. My visits over these past few days to the flourishing and vibrant states of South East Asia and now to Sri Lanka have given me that experience. They have proved, too - if proof were needed - that democracy and economic freedom go hand in hand. There can be no more convincing demonstration of the success of that partnership than the amazing examples of economic growth which I have witnessed during my travels of the past week.

/Democracy is the foundation



Democracy is the foundation on which enterprise can build and innovation flourish. I admire the bold policies to sustain an open economy which you are pursuing and which enjoy wide support. I recall the speech by your Prime Minister in which he said:

"We believe in the enterprise of free men and our economic policies are fashioned on this premise that the state should provide the opportunity and the framework through which man can earn his due reward through his own toil and labour."

We welcome your readiness to open your markets to productive investment. We respect the courage and resolve with which you have undertaken responsible policies of economic adjustment.

In 1977 you took the difficult decision to float the rupee. You relaxed trade restrictions. And you established the Greater Colombo Economic Commission to develop Investment Protection Zones offering substantial attractions to foreign investors.

Like you, we in Britain are seeking growth through relaxation of Government controls, through the stimulation provided by market forces, by reducing the role of the State in the lives of individuals.

We admire too the ambitious development objectives which you have set yourselves: the harnessing of the Mahaweli Ganga for the development of new agricultural lands and hydroelectric power; the imaginative programmes, with which I know your Prime Minister is particularly associated, to improve urban and rural housing, in particular through self help and direct popular participation.

We in Britain also recognise our duty to help. First we accept that we must keep our markets open to your trade despite the difficulties in which this can often place some sectors of our economy. I believe our record is a good one. The British market is open to the world. 80 per cent of our imported goods enter duty free. Less than 7 per cent are subject to the non-tariff restraints.

During my recent visit to the United States, I urged the Congress of that great country to resist pressures for protectionist measures and recalled that we could not preach economic adjustment for the developing countries while refusing to practise it at home. That is why we support moves for a new round of multilateral trade negotiations in the GATT: the momentum of trade liberalisation must be sustained and extended into new fields.

I have heard it said that the developing countries do not want a new Round because there would be nothing in it for them. Mr Speaker, I profoundly disagree. A new Round must address the major preoccupations of all the members of the GATT. I hope the developing countries will say clearly which items they want to pursue. Like the previous Rounds of negotiations which have done so much to free world trade and spread prosperity, a new Round must be a process of give and take. We are ready for some "giving" as well as some "taking" as part of a balanced outcome.

/Secondly, it is our duty



Secondly, it is our duty to help. We in Britain are particularly proud of our aid programme. Since 1977 it has helped Sri Lanka to the tune of over £150 million. As you mentioned, Mr Speaker, yesterday I was at the inauguration of the Victoria Dam which lies at the heart of the great Mahaweli Scheme. Seven centuries ago, a Sri Lankan king, Parakramabahu, said no drop of water should be allowed to reach the ocean without profiting man. The Victoria Dam is the expression in concrete and steel of that idea. Not only is it a construction which will bring vast benefits to your farmers, it is also a monument to our people's concern for the future well-being of Sri Lanka and to the ability of British Firms to contribute to the development of your economy. Our contribution of over £100 million is clear proof of our belief in the potential of your economy. It is particularly rewarding that Britons and Sri Lankans have worked side by side to achieve this bold and enduring development.

I am delighted to announce today that my government has decided to offer Sri Lanka further aid of £20 million. This grant will be used over the coming years to strengthen Sri Lanka's economy for the benefit of all your people. I am also happy to say that Britain will provide special aid to the Save the Children Fund to help those who have suffered from your recent troubles.

Sri Lanka has long been a warm and sincere friend of Britain. There is much that unites us. Our common commitment to an equitable and just system of law helps underpin the democracy our peoples enjoy. These traditions must be maintained, whatever the difficulties and stresses that sometimes confront our societies.

We, like you, enjoy the cut and thrust of debate whether in the law courts or in Parliament. This shared tradition of peaceful rivalry extends to cricket. We have paid dearly on the pitch for your new-won Test Match status, but it was as welcome to me as I am sure it was to Mr Dissanayake.

The English Language itself provides another bond. Your President has suggested that English should be given the status of an official language in Sri Lanka. The British Council, which is celebrating its fiftieth year in your Island, is delighted to help by expanding its English teaching programme at your President's express request.

We are linked, too, through the Commonwealth and what Harold MacMillan called, during his visit here in 1958, "The Golden Thread of Tradition binding its Members". Central to that tradition is our shared commitment to democracy. Mr Speaker, Democratic values cannot be taken for granted.

Both our countries have been the victims of terrorist violence, the virulent disease which afflicts so many countries today. So I can sympathise with your efforts to combat terrorism here in Sri Lanka. A firm response to those who use violence, who try to achieve with the bullet what they cannot do through the ballot, is vital.

Freedom, Mr Speaker, means more than freedom just to argue and disagree. If it were only that, we should have neither stability, nor nationhood, nor justice, nor progress. Freedom carries with it a responsibility to assert and champion those great values that are the sinews of parliamentary democracy and which enable us to live in harmony with one another.

/But Governments must stand ready





But Governments must stand ready to work with those in minority communities who are willing to argue their cause peacefully and democratically.

I followed the All-Party Conference last year with close attention. I shared the widespread regret in your country that it was unable to reach agreement on the basis of the proposals made by your President.

I firmly believe that the complex problems that arise between communities can only be settled through consultation and reconciliation. Democracy depends on the resolution of issues, however difficult, through debate and recognition of the interests of all those involved. In a democracy all have a right to be heard, but then fair decisions have to be made and upheld.

I am glad to have been given an opportunity during my brief visit to meet representatives of all the parties and of your many communities. I believe I now understand more clearly the problems which confront you and those whom you represent.

Mr Speaker, co-operation between neighbours through regional organisations and associations has an ever greater contribution to make to stability and to economic progress. That has been our experience in Europe despite many difficulties. I admire the imaginative effort which has brought together your country and the six other members of the South Asian Regional Co-operation Forum, which I understand is to meet at Heads of Government level later this year. We wish you well.

Mr Speaker, that same spirit of good neighbourliness is needed in greater measure than ever if we are to secure a more stable world in which individual countries can concentrate on their development free from the fear of conflict.

You here in Sri Lanka, no less than we in Britain, have an interest in efforts to reduce tension between East and West. In today's world no country can insulate itself entirely from the consequences of the competition between East and West, between tyranny and democracy. It is up to every democratic country to decide how it can effectively contribute to the defence of freedom and justice and to helping those who know neither to achieve them. For some, like Britain, it is by joining an alliance of like-minded nations. For others it can be through speaking up at the United Nations and other international organisations for those principles. This Sri Lanka does in ample measure and we, your friends, are grateful for it. Your President yesterday said that he wanted peace. So do I. But not peace at any price, not peace by sacrificing freedom and justice and everything which contributes to the dignity of man.

In the past few months before coming to speak to you, I have held two long meetings, with Britain's great friend and ally, President Reagan, and another meeting with the new leader of the Soviet Union, Mr Gorbachev. The United States and the Soviet Union are now meeting in Geneva in an effort to reach agreement on the reduction of nuclear weapons and the consequent reduction of the burden of expenditure on arms, thus freeing more resources for the well-being of their people. It will be a long process and a

/difficult one.



difficult one. We should not expect any early results. I know from my talks that both leaders are convinced that another world war, nuclear or conventional, must never take place. I believe, too, that a basis could be found to assure the security of both sides at a lower level of armaments. But we must guard against facile assumptions that nuclear weapons are uniquely evil and threatening. Deterrence based upon them has worked for the last forty years and they have played an important part in maintaining peace in Europe. Nor must we assume that a world without nuclear weapons would be more peaceful. After all, conventional wars have killed 10 million people throughout the world since 1949.

Mr Speaker, here in your Parliament much is familiar to a visitor from Westminster. It is this sense of familiarity and of ready understanding which is fundamental to the trust and friendship between us. It therefore gives me great pleasure, as one Parliamentarian to another, to bring you the greetings of the British Parliament at Westminster, so distant yet so close in spirit. We salute you as one democracy to another. We look forward with you to a future in which a united Sri Lanka grows steadily in peace and prosperity, with your many peoples living together in harmony.

President Jayewardene during his visit to London last year quoted movingly from Shakespeare's Hamlet: "Those friends thou hast and their adoption tried, grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel". Those present will never forget the way he said it; he struck a chord in our hearts, for emotions are always deeper than thoughts. It is my earnest hope that my visit has placed another hoop of steel around the special friendship between Britain and Sri Lanka.

May I thank you, Mr Speaker, for giving me the privilege of addressing the Parliament of Sri Lanka, the Parliament of a free people.

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