



J.R. Jayewardene as Finance Minister.

RAVI PRASAD HERAT

People certainly felt J.R. Jayewardene's power, executive authority and actions, but they were not directly exhibited by him to the public. Unlike some other contemporary executive Presidents, he did not resort to popular means or publicity to highlight his image.

None wrote songs in praise of him, or authored books. There were no columnists writing to please his senses. As politics was a weapon in the hands of the intellect, he had no intention to make an extra effort to teach politicians' ideologies to the people involved in politics. He was surrounded by remarkably experienced 'yes-men', not just counsellors in service. For JR, they were a great solace; there were no complicated issues among his followers for him to order them twice. When considering the thousands of things he did in the past, without publicizing, it is clear that he had not only ruled Sri Lanka, but the whole of Asia. It cannot be that the majority who criticize JR today do it with an understanding. He knew that it is those who did not understand him well that criticized him.

In the early '80s, over 200,000 Indian Tamils were rapidly settled in Mannar, Vavuniya, Trincomalee, Mullaitivu, Batticaloa and Ampara as an initiative of the PLOT organization, assisted by many Non-Governmental Organisations.

J. Parthasarathi was one prominent person controlling the issues that were emerging due to these settlements. Parthasarathi made arrangements for JR to talk about the Indian Tamil settlements in Sri Lanka at the Commonwealth Heads of States Conference in November 1983. Jayewardena addressed the conference on November 24, 1983.

"Sri Lanka is a small country. We have fifteen million people. Anybody can invade us. I am not arming to fight anybody. Our arms are purely for self-defence. If I have the strength and life, I will not let my people be subject to anybody. Fifteen million people can decide to die if they are invaded by somebody else and decide never to give in."

By March 1983, JR planned a new friendly accord with India and a joint examination operation to identify the LTTE camps in India. But India feared it. In the meantime, on May 20, 1984, during a visit to China, JR met the Chinese President.

"In the 2,500-year history of Sri Lanka, we have been invaded, but we never gave in. The spirit of man was unconquerable. He will fight. Fifteen million people will die unconquered, if we are invaded."

After this meeting, JR met the President of the Military Commission of the Chinese Communist Party, Deng Xiaoping. Then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi was angered by this when it reached her ears.

In response, the Chinese Prime Minister agreed to help in this matter. When Jayewardene met China's strongman Deng Xiaoping, he asked whether China could "provide some gunboats to protect us from the terrorists, as you have done in the past, which will help us to prevent illegal immigration from the Indian coast which is only 20 miles away from our northern boundary."

US visit

Two months later, the political stability in Sri Lanka was greatly shaken. On June 18, 1984, JR, at the White House Cabinet Office met Vice President George Bush and Secretary of State George Shultz and talked about the difficulties the war brings. He openly stated that terrorists are fighting to gain a separate state and establish a Marxist government.



The signing of the Indo-Lanka Accord in Colombo.



President Jayewardene with Prime Minister Ranasinghe Premadasa and Mahaweli Minister Gamini Dissanayake.

President Jayewardene said, "Mrs. Gandhi had supported the terrorists because she is concerned about winning support at the general election in Tamil Nadu. The problem in Tamil Nadu was that there were two claimants for leadership, one was Karunanidhi, and the other, M.G. Ramachandran who was originally friendly to Sri Lanka, but later supported the terrorists as it has become a major political issue in the State.... I want to drag Mrs. Gandhi to join the fight against terrorism. If she can stop the support for the terrorists, I could end terrorism in Sri Lanka."

Subsequently, in response to a question by Vice President Bush, President Jayewardene referring to Mrs. Gandhi said, "Though she does not openly support the terrorists, she lets off terrorists who were taken into custody." The Sri Lankan delegation to the United States comprised Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel, Secretary to President W.P.B. Menikdiwela, Private Secretary to the President Nihal Weeraratne, Ambassador Susantha De Alwis and Ambassador Ernest Corea.

On June 19, 1984 morning, he addressed a gathering assembled for a meeting under the leadership of the President of the *Washington Post* newspaper, Katharine Graham.

"We cannot carry out a political campaign in the Tamil-speaking areas. So we must eliminate terrorism. I do not care what India thinks; we have to maintain our unity and stability. Karunanidhi, the former Chief Minister, is trying to come back to power through the Sri Lanka Tamil problem. Our complaint is that the Tamil Nadu government is helping terrorists. It has become an internal political issue for them. As for India, why do they not take a more helpful attitude. What I am saying to Mrs. Gandhi is that terrorists come secretly in to Sri Lanka from South India. I want to ask her not to encourage the different terrorist groups to get together and not to give them assistance."

There came a period of no room for peace but a series of battles.

On May 26, 1987, the Sri Lanka Army launched the military operation called Operation Liberation involving 8,000 soldiers and directed at Vadamarachchi. The plan was prepared by General Cyril Ranatunga as suggested by Lalith Athulathmudali and Sepala Attygalle. A few days later, speaking



President Jayewardene gifting a baby elephant to US President Ronald Reagan in Washington.

at the opening ceremony of the head office of the Central Bank, JR said, "Until Jaffna is freed, the Sri Lanka Army would fight." By May 28, 1987, the Sri Lanka Army had destroyed 32 bunkers. Velyvetithurai was also captured. To a journalist's query to JR that the Indian newspapers had reported about Prahakaran's home town being damaged, JR's responded, "Ask them to go to hell."

When Rajiv Gandhi contacted JR over the phone, JR said that he would do what was necessary to Jaffna. As the conflict was ongoing since June 1, 1987, a special communication system started between JR and Rajiv. All messages were named Top Secret. They were exclusively known only to JR and Rajiv/RAW.

On June 2, 1987, Gandhi responded to Jayewardene, in a message marked "Top Secret":

"Thank you for your message of June 2, which I received this evening. I am most distressed to hear about the brutal massacre of bus passengers in Ampara. This deserves the strongest condemnation. I am glad that you have agreed that your government would be prepared to receive the humanitarian relief with the association of the Sri Lanka Red Cross. The first relief mission consisting of 20 fishing craft will set sail from Rameswaram at 1130 hours on June 3 for Kalmunai point which is 5 km off Jaffna."

The Indian vessel Vickram that brought food to Jaffna and 19 other fishing boats were refused entry by the Sri Lanka Government at the Palk Strait.

Rajiv Gandhi arrived in New Delhi from Goa. Chandran, alias Chan-



President J.R. Jayewardene and Mrs. Elina Jayewardene.



The Time magazine cover on the Indo-Lanka Accord.

115TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY FALLS TODAY

JR: THROUGH THE PRISM OF HISTORY



President Jayewardene with the Queen and Prince Philip.



President Jayewardene with close friend President Fidel Castro of Cuba.



Statue of President J.R. Jayewardene in Japan.

this, India is engaged in threatening the future of Sri Lanka and perhaps the region. Unless India acts positively, the future of Sri Lanka will witness hard times but so will the future of India. You cannot play with fire without worrying about the spread of it to beyond what you can control."

JR-Rajiv bonhomie

Jayewardene firmly believed that a coup was imminent, if he was not going to continue the war in Northern Sri Lanka to an end. At the same time, India had clearly indicated that the war must stop or they will continue to arm the LTTE. India had also offered to sign an Accord. On the Accord, Jayewardene said, "Signing the Accord was a political decision. I consulted my political colleagues before I signed it. The induction of the Indian Army was a security decision and I made that decision as the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Sri Lanka."

Often many wonder what would have been the course of Sri Lankan history, had Jayewardene not signed an Accord with Gandhi. Jayewardene's thinking soon after the Accord was signed was best expressed when he said: "After I signed the Accord, Rajiv told me that he will get the IPKF to hold the elections in the North-East. He also told me, 'I don't want these fellows to have the North and East merged. I will help you.'"

Further, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was later to tell British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher that "No Sinhala leader has done so much to help the Tamils as Jayewardene." This was the rapport the two men had developed even after Delhi had been waging a proxy war for years "to teach the Sri Lankan leader a lesson."

If history in the making is not accurately documented, without fear or favour, the ultimate results can be tragic. Little known incidents such as Rajiv Gandhi prevailing on J.R. Jayewardene to keep the letters of the Accord a secret, but Jayewardene refusing to do so are landmark events in the relationship of two countries. These must be documented for the benefit of future generations.

In this context, President Jayewardene said: "I could have done it, but it would have inevitably leaked out, and when that happens, it would become a major scandal."

It is possible to say that, in this era of the history of Sri Lanka, JR could be one of the greatest personalities because his intuition and luck blended perfectly.

Yet, for him, in his political journey, the role model was Mahatma Gandhi.

of the sudden stop of the meetings that took place between Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation and Voice of America Service (SLBC/VOA). After a brief period, when JR asked for helicopter spare parts from America, America responded saying that to fulfill the request, permission from India is required. America said that those measures were adopted as Sri Lanka kept America ignorant of the accord.

If the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who is young and inexperienced in politics, examined JR's advisory, he wouldn't have been killed by the very hooligans he sustained. In early July 1987, Jayewardene was still being intimidated by India. In his heart, he still wanted a military solution to the North-East crisis. On July 2, 1987, Jayewardene met Professor Edward Azar, a distinguished scholar on conflict resolution from a US University. Azar interviewed President Jayewardene on several issues.

In this interview, Jayewardene had said on India: "Rajiv should be the first to know that no matter how pure a goal might be, violence is least efficient. India understands the role of non-violence. It is a shame that present leaders of India do not adhere to the Indian tradition of non-violent struggle. Civilized societies such as India cannot permit the regression to the law of the jungle. Terror and violence to suppress people will not work. You cannot bully your way through all the time. Rajiv cannot win without the resort to civic norms and the tradition of non-violence. We in Sri Lanka have a great deal of dignity, courage and a sense of justice. We will not be defeated irrespective of some setbacks."

On the future of Sri Lanka, Jayewardene, desperate for a solution, either political or military said: "One has to be realistic. We are involved in the struggle to build a democratic and just nation for all our people. We want to avoid making mistakes, but we want to prevent terrorism and violence. We are optimistic but also realistic. Look at the documents and records of the past and especially the past three years. We have done everything we can to manage social and political change in Sri Lanka without violence. However, as recent events have shown, India has been unable to deliver at its end. India says the ball is in our court. However, I am not sure to whom to throw it back. In

From Sri Lanka too, Ranil Wickremesinghe went to Russia, requesting assistance for the war. About a month later, the Indo-Lanka Peace Accord was signed. On July 29, 1987, at 10 am, on an IAF aircraft, Rajiv Gandhi arrived in Sri Lanka to sign it.

Almost accidentally, the American Embassy of Sri Lanka got to know about the Indo-Lanka Accord because

drasekaran, the RAW person in charge of Sri Lanka was assigned the task of gathering the ideas of the Tamil organizations over this matter. MGR responded to it, thus: "Do not let the LTTE get defeated. The LTTE should be protected."

This followed the launch of the operation named, Operation Poomalai: Dropping of 25 metric tons of food to Jaffna from 1,500 feet above sea level, from five AN 32 aircraft.

This followed Sri Lanka's absence at the Foreign Ministers' Meeting of the SARCC Summit held on June 17.

N.D. Thiwari of India went to Russia asking for war assistance.

'Will forgive, but not forget'

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After the Accord was signed reminding Rajiv his work of dropping food to Jaffna a month earlier, JR said, 'I will forgive India for what it did then. But I will not forget it.' Although JR's opponents battered him as a strong American-follower, whether JR is really so can be examined, taking the signing of the Indo-Lanka Accord into consideration. JR did not inform Washington about the accord.

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