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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

17 December 1981

*Dear John,*

Sri Lanka: Visit of Foreign Minister

The Sri Lankans have told us both in Colombo and in London that President Jayewardene wishes his Foreign Minister Mr Hameed, to visit Britain as soon as possible in order to deliver a personal message to the Prime Minister and to call on Lord Carrington and the Home Secretary. Mr Hameed arrives in London today, and proposes to remain at least until Christmas Day in the hope of securing the desired appointments. The personal message from President Jayewardene will concern a 'declaration of independence' to be made by the so-called Tamil Co-ordinating Committee in London on 14 January.

After community disturbances last summer which led to the declaration of a State of Emergency in Sri Lanka, President Jayewardene formed a joint committee of Ministers and moderate leaders of the Tamil Community whose Tamil United Liberation Front Party forms the official opposition party in Parliament. His aim is to isolate the Tamil extremists and to defuse the demands for an independence Tamil state (Eelam) by increasing the autonomy of local government in Sri Lanka and by finding ways of protecting Tamil interests in matters of language, religion, education and job opportunities. He has apparently made progress and the situation in Sri Lanka remains calm though the State of Emergency continues.

The particular awkwardness from our point of view is that the declaration of Tamil independence is apparently to be made from London by members of the Tamil community. In a statement in October which attracted no attention in the UK, they declared their intention of setting up an independent Tamil state with a provisional government in exile. This move may have been inspired by the extremists precisely because of the progress being made by President Jayewardene with moderate Tamil leaders. The Tamil party in Sri Lanka have issued a statement in Colombo dis-associating themselves from the London group's action in

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strong terms. The President's message is therefore likely to ask us to take measures to control Tamil extremists in the UK. This will not, of course, be possible unless they have broken British law; FCO officials will be consulting the Home Office on this aspect. Nevertheless, the importance to us of Sri Lanka's stability and continued pro-western alignment means that we should take President Jayewardene's approach seriously. Our relations with Sri Lanka have been particularly cordial this year; the President was here for the Royal Wedding; Mrs Thatcher gave a luncheon for the Prime Minister: and The Queen has paid a State Visit to Sri Lanka.

Given the Prime Minister's other commitments and the generous attention which the Sri Lankans have received from us, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary is reluctant to press Mr Hameed's case for a meeting at No 10. However on balance we would see advantage if the Prime Minister was able to receive the Sri Lanka Foreign Minister very briefly, so that Mr Hameed could deliver the personal message and report to President Jayewardene that he had seen the Prime Minister.

Mr Hameed will of course be shown appropriate courtesies by the FCO. Lord Carrington also hopes that the Home Secretary will agree to receive Mr Hameed: I am therefore copying this letter to John Halliday in Mr Whitelaw's Office.

*Yours ever*  
*Roderic Lyne*

(R M J Lyne)  
Private Secretary

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