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PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T 95A/84

PRIME MINISTER
INDIA

New Delhi,
June 9, 1984

Dear Prime Minister,

see ho
letter of 30/4

Thank you for your letter which I received on the 3rd May. In many respects our appreciation of the situation in Sri Lanka is similar. We have to consider how best countries like ours can help the Sri Lankan Government to move forward in working out a political settlement.

Of course there are difficulties, but we should not lose sight of the basic issues to be resolved. When we discussed this problem in Goa, we had reasonable expectations of a political settlement. But subsequent developments have belied our hopes.

In my last letter I wrote of the course of the discussions at the All Parties Conference. Since then the Sri Lankan Minister for National Security has visited India at our initiative. We told him how urgent it was to avoid an atmosphere of confrontation between the communities as this could vitiate the political dialogue. We also urged the desirability of some visible progress in the talks. Mr. Athulathmudali agreed that the problem could not be resolved through military means and that a solution had to be found politically.

It is regrettable that all reports from Sri Lanka indicate that the Government there is not prepared to go much beyond the District Development Council schemes. Unless a measure of genuine autonomy is conceded to the Tamils, I am afraid there will be no solution.

Today, there is a virtual deadlock at the Conference, and the army offensive in the Northern and Eastern Provinces is taking its toll of human lives. Hundreds have been arrested. As a result, moderate Tamil leaders are being increasingly pressurised to disassociate themselves from negotiations with the Sri Lankan Government. They have taken our advice, albeit reluctantly, to remain in the Conference. Continuing stalemate is making them lose credibility with their people, so that leadership of the Tamil movement will inevitably pass to the radical elements. This is dangerous.

It seems to us that Tamil militant activity is being fuelled by the failure so far of the Sri Lankan Government to offer a suitable political alternative to the Tamils. You may have noticed that so long as some prospect of an early solution at the All Parties Conference was in sight, there was a respite in the sort of incidents which we have witnessed of late. In all this we must not ignore the traumatic effect of last July's ethnic disturbances on the Tamil community.

Your letter urges restraint on Tamil expatriates and suggests that the Indian Government could help in this area. We are opposed to secessionism and have repeatedly affirmed our commitment to Sri Lanka's unity and integrity. We do not encourage or support any form of violence. The recent kidnapping of the Allens in Jaffna, which to everyone's great relief was successfully resolved, serves to illustrate our attitude.

Unfortunately, however, we find that the Sri Lankan Government has used this incident as a pretext to launch a campaign against us. Government leaders such as the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka have made such utterly irresponsible and astounding statements that they are creating a war psychosis. I am sure you have been informed of this motivated campaign which seems to us to be designed to jettison the peace process.

We are still burdened with more than 30,000 persons who have come to India from Sri Lanka since the ethnic violence there last July. They are apprehensive about their security and are afraid of returning to their own country. We have given them shelter on humanitarian grounds. They suffer from acute frustration and are not easy to deal with. Nevertheless we are doing all we can to counsel the utmost restraint. However, we do not see how this problem can be overcome unless the root causes of the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka are resolved politically through the All Parties Conference.

This issue is bound to be discussed during President Jayewardene's visit to the United Kingdom. Britain occupies a special position in Sri Lanka. We realize it is not easy to exercise influence, beyond a point, on a sovereign nation. Nevertheless, we do feel that at this crucial juncture ethnic tensions will be aggravated and severe problems created not only for Sri Lanka but also for us unless meaningful progress is made soon.

We hope that you will use your influence to persuade President Jayewardene to give a positive lead by making constructive suggestions at the All Parties Conference. Military aid and anti-insurgency assistance are not enough to overcome a political crisis which has to be faced and resolved.

With warm regards,

Indira Gandhi

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
London



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

13 June 1984

LETTER FROM THE PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA

BF | I enclose a letter to the Prime Minister from Mrs. Gandhi, received today, in reply to the Prime Minister's own letter despatched in early May about the situation in Sri Lanka. The Prime Minister has not yet seen it. I should be grateful for advice and a draft reply. You will wish to consider in particular whether it would be better to despatch the reply before or after President Jayewardene's forthcoming visit.

Charles Powell

Peter Ricketts, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

NR



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

13 June 1984

Thank you for your letter of 13 June to John Coles with which you forwarded a letter from Mrs. Gandhi to the Prime Minister.

I will place this before Mrs. Thatcher at the earliest opportunity.

Charles Powell

Shri Pushkar Johari.

NR



Pushkar Johari
Acting High Commissioner

INDIA HOUSE,

ALDWYCH,

LONDON, W.C.2.

No. LON/POL/123/1/84

June 13, 1984

Dear Mr. Coles,

I am enclosing a sealed envelope containing a letter from the Prime Minister of India, Shrimati Indira Gandhi, to The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, with the request that it may kindly be forwarded to its high destination.

message dated 9/6/84

with kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

(Pushkar Johari)

Mr. A.J. Coles,
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
London, SW-1.