

CONFIDENTIAL

GRS 900

CONFIDENTIAL

FM COLOMBO 170525Z AUG 84

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 363 OF 17 AUGUST

INFO IMMEDIATE NEW DELHI

Pa sub
178

OUR TELNO 353 : SRI LANKA : INTERNAL SECURITY

SUMMARY

1. PRESIDENT IS GREATLY CONCERNED AT INDIAN GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE TO SRI LANKA'S PROBLEMS AND WANTS FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS TO BE AWARE OF REAL POSITION. THERE HAVE BEEN ARMY EXCESSES BUT THEY WILL BE PUNISHED. TERRORIST ACTIVITIES HAVE ESCALATED AND THERE IS NO QUESTION THEY ARE RECEIVING AID FROM INDIA. PRESIDENT IS WRITING STRONG LETTER TO MRS GANDHI ABOUT HER SPEECH IN LOK SABHA. ANTI-SRI LANKAN BIAS OF INDIAN PRESS IS ALSO CAUSING CONCERN. AN INDIAN INVASION COULD NOT BE RESISTED MILITARILY BUT WOULD LEAD TO A TAMIL BLOODBATH. PRESIDENT INTENDS TO IMPLEMENT HIS PROPOSALS FOR A SECOND CHAMBER BUT HOPES THAT TULF WILL AGREE TO CO-OPERATE.

DETAIL

2. AT HIS REQUEST HE SAW THE PRESIDENT THIS MORNING. LALITH ATHULATHMUDALI AND HAMEED WERE PRESENT. THE PRESIDENT STARTED BY SAYING THAT HE WAS VERY CONCERNED WITH THE ATTITUDE OF THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT TO RECENT EVENTS IN SRI LANKA AND REFERRED PARTICULARLY TO MRS GANDHI'S SPEECH IN THE LOK SABHA. HE WAS ANXIOUS TO EXPLAIN THE POSITION TO FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS. HE WANTED TO MAKE CLEAR THAT NO MATTER WHAT VIEW THE INDIANS TOOK, HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD PURSUE THEIR PRESENT LINE OF COMBATING TERRORISM WHILE STILL SEEKING A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE COMMUNAL PROBLEM.

3. HE SAID THAT HE COULD NOT DENY THAT THERE HAD BEEN EXCESSES BY THE SECURITY FORCES, MOST PARTICULARLY IN MANNAR WHEN SOME 100 HOUSES WERE BURNED DOWN. IT SO HAPPENED THAT THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THESE SHOPS/HOUSES WERE MUSLIM-OWNED. MUSLIMS FORM 50 PER CENT OF THE POPULATION OF MANNAR. THE GOVERNMENT WOULD TAKE STERN ACTION AGAINST THE GUILTY ARMY MEN. IT SEEMED THAT THERE WERE CERTAIN ELEMENTS IN THE ARMY WHO MIGHT BE DESCRIBED AS SABOTEURS.

4. HE DREW PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT IN SPITE OF THE INCREASED ATTACKS BY TERRORISTS ON THE SECURITY FORCES THERE HAD BEEN NO REPETITION OF THE VIOLENCE OF JULY LAST YEAR IN OTHER PARTS OF THE ISLAND WHICH HAD REMAINED ENTIRELY PEACEFUL. HE HOPED THAT THIS WOULD BE SEEN AS A VERY CONSIDERABLE ACHIEVEMENT.

5. THIS RECENT TERRORIST ACTIVITY WAS ON A GREATER SCALE THAN

CONFIDENTIAL

/ IN THE

CONFIDENTIAL

IN THE PAST. THERE WERE MORE FREQUENT ATTACKS AND THEY WERE OPERATING IN GANGS OF UP TO 50. MOST OF THEM WORE UNIFORMS AND WERE ARMED WITH WHAT APPEARED TO BE MAINLY WEAPONS STOLEN WITHIN SRI LANKA. THERE WAS NO DOUBT HOWEVER THAT THE EXPLOSIVES WHICH WERE USED WERE OF INDIAN ORIGIN. HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE EVIDENCE OF THE TAMILS TRYING TO BUY ARMS FROM OVERSEAS. NOR WAS THERE ANY QUESTION THAT THE TERRORISTS WERE RECEIVING A GREAT DEAL OF AID AND HELP FROM INDIA: HE WOULD NOT SAY FROM THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN DELHI, NOR WOULD HE SAY FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU, BUT UNDOUBTEDLY THE HELP WAS BEING GIVEN.

6. HE WAS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT MRS GANDHI'S SPEECH AND HE WAS SENDING HER A STRONG LETTER PROTESTING AT MANY OF THE STATEMENTS IN HER SPEECH WHICH WERE QUITE UNTRUE. HE FULLY UNDERSTOOD THAT SHE HAD HER OWN POLITICAL PROBLEMS BUT SHE WAS ALSO SERIOUSLY MISHINFORMED ABOUT MUCH THAT WAS HAPPENING IN SRI LANKA.

7. HE WENT ON TO COMPLAIN ABOUT THE STRONG BIAS OF THE INDIAN PRESS AND THE ANTI-SRI LANKAN LINE THAT IT TOOK ON ALL OCCASIONS. HE WAS SHOWN A COPY OF A FRONT PAGE ARTICLE IN THE HINDU ABOUT THE VIOLENCE IN MANNAR AND A NUMBER OF SERIOUS FACTUAL ERRORS WERE POINTED OUT TO ME. FOR EXAMPLE, IT SAID THAT ONLY 4 OF 5 HOUSES REMAINED STANDING IN MANNAR. THIS WAS QUITE RIDICULOUS.

8. THE PRESIDENT THEN SAID THAT HE FULLY REALISED THAT IF INDIA INVADED, THERE WAS NO WAY THEY COULD BE STOPPED MILITARILY BUT THE SRI LANKANS WOULD NEVER GIVE IN. BUT IF THE INDIANS DID INVADRE NO GOVERNMENT IN SRI LANKA COULD PREVENT A TAMIL BLOODBATH. IN ALL PARTS OF THE ISLAND THE SINHALA WOULD RISE UP IN ANGER.

9. HE THEN MOVED ON TO THE ALL PARTY CONFERENCE WHICH IS DUE TO MEET AGAIN TOMORROW FRIDAY 17 AUGUST. HE SAID THAT HE HAD INDICATIONS THERE WAS SOME APPRECIATION OF HIS SUGGESTED SECOND CHAMBER WHICH COULD BE USED TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN THOSE WHO WISHED TO RETAIN ONLY DDCS AND THOSE WHO WISHED TO HAVE PROVINCIAL COUNCILS. HE ENLARGED ON HIS PROPOSALS (ALREADY REPORTED TO YOU) AND EXPLAINED THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD APPOINT PROVINCIAL MINISTERS FROM THE SECOND CHAMBER WITH EXECUTIVE POWERS. THE DDCS WOULD REMAIN BUT HE WOULD GIVE THEM MORE POWERS AND WOULD PERMIT THEM TO COME TOGETHER FOR CERTAIN PURPOSES IN "ZONAL COUNCILS". IN REPLY TO A QUESTION HE SAID THAT BY "ZONAL" HE

CONFIDENTIAL

DID NOT NECESSARILY MEAN ALL THE COUNCILS OF THE PROVINCE; IT MIGHT BE PREFERABLE FOR, SAY, THREE OF THE DDCS IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE TO COME TOGETHER AND NOT ALL FIVE. HE SAID HE WAS NOT PREPARED TO GIVE EXECUTIVE POWERS TO A PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY. HE WAS WELL AWARE OF THE PROBLEMS FACING MRS GANDHI WITH HER VARIOUS STATE ASSEMBLIES AND STATE CHIEF MINISTERS. HE HOPED THAT TULF WOULD ACCEPT THESE PROPOSALS AND HE WAS HAVING INFORMAL TALKS WITH THEM BEFORE THE APC. IF THEY DID SO, IT WOULD ALSO BE NECESSARY FOR THEM TO RENOUNCE EELAM AND TO TAKE OATH IN ORDER TO SIT IN PARLIAMENT OR IN THE SECOND CHAMBER. BUT IF HE COULD NOT GET AGREEMENT AT THE APC, HE COULD NOT ALLOW THE MATTER TO DRIFT ANY LONGER AND HE WOULD IMPOSE THE GOVERNMENT'S SOLUTION BY LEGISLATION. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT IF THESE PROPOSALS WERE CARRIED THROUGH IT WOULD NOT NECESSARILY MEAN THE END OF TERRORISM AND THAT SRI LANKA MIGHT HAVE TO FACE A LONG STRUGGLE. NEVERTHELESS, IF TULF ACCEPTED THE PROPOSALS AND CO-OPERATED, AND IF INDIA ACCEPTED THEM, THEN IT WOULD SURELY BE TIME FOR THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT TO ASSIST SRI LANKA BY CONTROLLING THE TERRORISTS IN TAMIL NADU.

10. FINALLY HE SAID THAT HE WOULD BE WRITING TO THE PRIME MINISTER ON THESE LINES. HE WANTED TO MAKE QUITE SURE THAT "FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS" AND ESPECIALLY BRITAIN WERE FULLY BRIEFED ON THE SITUATION IN SRI LANKA.

NICHOLAS

LIMITED
SAD
SCU
DEF D
PUSD
RES D
CONS D
CCD
NEWS D
PLANNING STAFF
PS
PS | LADY YOUNG
PS | MR WHITNEY
PS | MR RAISON
PS | PUS
SIR W HARDING

COPIES TO:
SAD / OOA
D14 c MOD
PS | No 10 Downing St

3.
CONFIDENTIAL