

No govt. can repeal Accord. (1988, August 24). *The Island*.



The Island

Wednesday 24th August, 1988 Registered in Sri Lanka as a Newspaper Vol. 8 No. 202 PRICE Rs. 4.00

No govt. can repeal Accord

By Suresh Mohamed

— President

J. R. Jayewardene yesterday said no government would be able to make political capital. A country cannot be governed if decisions are taken and things done to gain political capital. Are we to start the war, the violence and killings all over again he asked.

At the prize awarding ceremony after exhibition entitled "Peace and Unity" organised by the Information and Publicity Department and held at the John G. Dissanayake Memorial Hall in Colombo, the President said that the Indo-Lanka Agreement was a historic one. It was a step towards peace, harmony and unity and it was a step towards the end of disharmony and division. Those who opposed the Accord were people who were against peace and non violence.

President said that this would be a temporary measure on an experimental basis. There should be no fears about a permanent merger. After a year a referendum would be held in the East and the people could exercise their vote to de-link the two Provinces, if they so desired. There were some who criticised the proposed merger as there was nothing else in the Accord to find fault with.

The President said that the LTTE which was the only group that opposed the Accord continued to fight because it craved to win and achieve its sinister objectives. There were some people who opposed peace. There were Hitler and Napoleon who did that. That was the way of the world. The problems confronting the Tamils and Muslims should be resolved. Former Chief Justice, S. Sharvananda was appointed Provincial Governor of Western Province and a Muslim was appointed Governor of Southern Province. Nobody opposed that. A Sinhalese would take the place of Governor. Northern and Eastern Provinces once PC elections were held there.

He added that India spent Rs. 10 million a day to fight the terrorist war in Sri Lanka. The LTTE would either lose or begin to seek peace. "I can ask the IPKF to quit even tomorrow and they will go. Then the Sri Lankan security forces would have to continue their battle in the North. About 55 Sri Lankan soldiers had been killed since the Peace Accord was signed. Earlier about 250 were killed every year. In 1983-84 alone

(Continued on page 3)

No govt....

(Continued from page 2)

900 Sri Lankan security personnel were killed and 1400 injured. Most of those injured lost limbs and were maimed. Today 489 Indian Army personnel had been killed and 1414 injured in the offensive against the LTTE. If the IPKF didn't come Sri Lankan youths would have had to lay down their lives and maybe much more than 489 would have been killed", he said.

The President said the IPKF came to the country at his invitation to maintain peace but regretfully they were called upon to fight a war. The PLOTE, EPRLF, TELO, EROS and ENDLF together with the TULF supported the Peace Accord. The LTTE earlier accepted the Accord but went back on its word after one month. After several years there was peace in Sri Lanka for one month after the Agreement was signed. Some arms were handed over and the government intended to conduct Provincial Councils elections by the end of last year. The North-East temporary merger was to have come into effect

from April 1988. But that was not possible because the LTTE backed out.

President Jayewardene disclosed that leaders of other militant groups came to see him and discuss matters. Some of them were responsible for killing Sinhalese, the Anuradhapura massacre and other bomb blasts. If those groups also opposed the Accord things would have been more difficult. It is hoped that they honestly accepted the Accord which was based on peaceful and non violent principles.

The former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M. G. Ramachandran openly helped the terrorists. South India provided them with money, arms and training. It was at a time like that Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi invited Sri Lanka to sign a Peace Accord and bring a halt to all terrorist activities. The Accord did not advocate division. In fact it fortified the democratic process within a unitary state. Referring to the volatile situation in the South, the President said that battalions of troops had been sent there to deal with acts of terrorism. Recently two persons were killed in Akuressa. Ministers and MPs ask for security and so does Provincial Council Members both in the UNP and the USA. There were not sufficient troops to send to the North under those circumstances where protection was needed everywhere. To train more personnel money was required to pay their salaries, provide food and uniforms in addition to purchasing weapons and

ammunition. President Jayewardene noted that Mrs. Bandaranaike sought military assistance from India in 1971. There were some Indian troops based in the Katunayake Airport. Had she required 50,000 troops then she would have definitely asked for them.

Tracing the history of the country's ethnic conflict the President said the problem aggravated after the blast in July 1983 which killed 13 Army soldiers. The situation then gradually turned into a raging war. Acts of violence first started with the killing of SLEP Mayor in Jaffna, Alfred Duraiyappah, in 1976. He added that he opposed the late S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike's merger of the North and East because it was to be a permanent feature. The consent of the people had to be sought for such a move.

Minister of State and Information, Dr. Anandattissa de Alwis said in his Address of Welcome that President J. R. Jayewardene was a bold and courageous leader who did not retreat in the face of a crisis.

He added that Sri Lanka was fortunate to have a President like Mr. Jayewardene to steer the country at a time it was going through a dark period.

Among others present were Education Services Minister, Samaraweera Weerawanni, Colombo District Minister, Weerasinghe Mallimarachchi, Deputy Minister of Information, Wijeratne Banda and Western Province Governor, S. Sharvananda.

AV-62

AV-62