

The coldly-worded and stern letter delivered by BG Deshmukh to Premadasa reflected Rajiv's anger and frustration . (1989, July 31). India Today.

SPECIAL REPORTS

the worst crisis the country has faced since Independence.

Even as the diplomatic war between Sri Lanka and India continued last fortnight, for Premadasa there was no respite on any front. JVP raiders attacked at least five police stations, killing 10 policemen. In rural areas further south, several buses were burnt. And though thousands were arrested and troops in armoured personnel carriers blocked roads to check passing vehicles for JVP workers, it was clear that the Government had made no headway in its campaign against the Sinhala chauvinist extremists.

With violence increasing and with the Government proving ineffective, the impact on trade and commerce has been crippling. Consider the plight of the garment export business which was the island's biggest foreign exchange earner



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last year, netting 1½ billion Sri Lankan rupees. This year, production has been less than half, deliveries are hopelessly late and the prospects for the rest of the year are dim. Most exporters have missed the last date for availing of the US import quota—June 30. Many businessmen fear that next year the buyers could go to another country. Taking advantage of the quota system, some Indian businessmen too had set up garment manufacturing units and export businesses in Sri Lanka. Now, many of them are contemplating closing shop.

Throughout the troubled fortnight, the Government repeatedly claimed that following the crackdown the situation was returning to normal and that the transport strike was showing signs of fatigue. Official spokesmen claimed that a substantial number of public buses were back on the roads. But the situation on the ground belied such claims. Ironically, the only parts of the island unaffected by the

strike and the current anarchy were the Tamil-dominated north and north-east. This is what prompted Rajiv into making the crack in his latest letter to Premadasa that a semblance of normalcy prevailed only in areas where the IPKF was active.

Yet, unfortunately even that "normalcy" is an artificial one and no one, not even on the Indian side, had any doubt that the time had come to think in terms of recalling the IPKF. From New Delhi's point of view, all that remained to be salvaged from the ruins of its Sri Lanka policy was some pride. Admitted a senior general: "On the battlefield we may not have finished the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) but we have definitely done well. The army and the soldiers won't feel defeated even if they have to leave. But no major regional power can afford to have its army thrown out by a



RAJIV-PREMASA

Letter War

"The IPKF will not stay in Sri Lanka a day longer than necessary (but)...our two governments are morally and legally bound to ensure that the Tamils are given the autonomy they were promised."
—June 20

"I have often paid tribute to the bravery of the many IPKF officers and men who lost life and limb...(now) I am sure the complete withdrawal of the IPKF will enable me to secure the trust and confidence of my people."
—June 2

"Unless the LTTE have undertaken to hand over their arms and to renounce violence, not only towards the Sri Lankan Government but the other citizens of northeastern province, their announcement of (truce) will be meaningless."
—June 30

"The only condition that should be satisfied for the withdrawal of the IPKF is a decision by the President of Sri Lanka that they should be withdrawn. The request made by me has satisfied that condition."
—June 30

"If discussions for this purpose are not acceptable to you, we will have to decide the details of IPKF's withdrawal unilaterally, consistent with our responsibilities and obligations."
—July 11

"You have been seeking to disarm the LTTE for the past two years and the process is not complete, nor have you been able to bring them to the negotiating table."
—July 5