

by Walter Rupesinghe

Sri Lanka excels at the San Francisco Peace Conference

On 6th September, 1951, Sri Lanka displayed immense courage and scintillating eloquence in standing up for Japan at the international conference held in San Francisco to finalise the Peace Treaty with that country. By doing so, Sri Lanka underscored the age old ties of deep affection and respect that existed between the two countries. This was indeed an unforgettable and shining moment in our diplomatic history and the story must be told for the benefit of the younger generation.

The End Of The War In The Far East

After the western powers ruthlessly dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6th and 9th August respectively, wiping out these two cities and causing horrendous casualties, the Japanese Government had no alternative but to accept the humiliating terms of surrender that had been laid down. Japan capitulated on 10th August, 1945, and the war came to an end. Some of the allied powers, who were filled with hatred for the Japanese, insisted that the terms of surrender should be rigidly enforced in an attempt to break the spirit of the Japanese nation.

For six long years the allied powers deliberated on the terms of the Peace Treaty to be signed with Japan. By mid 1951 a draft Peace Treaty was ready for adoption by the countries affected by the Far Eastern war. For this purpose an international conference was arranged to be held in San Francisco in September 1951. Being a stakeholder, Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) was invited to this conference.

The San Francisco Conference

Prime Minister D. S. Senanayake appointed Minister J. R. Jayewardene to lead the delegation to this important conference.

Minister Jayewardene walked into the conference hall in San Francisco on a September morning brimming with confidence and a determination to present Sri Lanka's views in a fearless and forthright manner and took his seat among the delegates of 51 countries. His turn to speak came on 6th September, 1951. In a voice filled with emotion and infectious conviction, he captivated the assembly with a stirring speech in which he steadfastly advocated that Japan should be allowed to live as a free and independent nation.

He stated:

"The main idea that animated the Asian countries - Ceylon, India and Pakistan - in their attitude to Japan was that Japan

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We in Ceylon were fortunate that we were not invaded, but the damage caused by air raids, by the stationing of enormous armies under the South-East Asia Command, and by the slaughter-tapping of one of our main commodities, rubber, when we were the only producer of natural rubber for the Allies, entitles us to ask that the damage so caused should be repaired.”



Address by J R Jayewardene Leader of the delegation of the Government of CEYLON (SRI LANKA) at the conference for the conclusion and signature of the Treaty of Peace with Japan - San Francisco, USA 6th September 1951

should be free"

And he added:

"Why is it that the peoples of Asia are anxious that Japan should be free? It is because of our age-long connections with her, and because of the, high regard the subject peoples of Asia have for Japan when she alone, among the Asian nations, was strong and free and we looked up to her as a guardian and friend.

We in Ceylon were fortunate that we were not invaded, but the damage caused by air raids, by the stationing of enormous armies under the South-East Asia Command, and by the slaughter-tapping of one of our main commodities, rubber, when we were the only producer of natural rubber for the Allies, entitles us to ask that the damage so caused should be repaired. We do not intend to do so for we believe in the words of the Great Teacher whose message has ennobled the lives of countless millions in Asia, that "hatred ceases not by hatred but by love". It is the message of the Buddha, the Great Teacher, the Founder of Buddhism which spread a wave of humanism through South Asia, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, Siam, Indonesia and Ceylon and also northwards through the

Himalayas into Tibet, China and finally Japan, which bound us together for hundreds of years with a common culture and heritage. This common culture still exists, as I found on my visit to Japan last week on my way to attend this Conference; and from the leaders of Japan, Ministers of state as well as private citizens and from their priests in the temples, I gathered the impression that the common people of Japan are still influenced by the shadow of that Great Teacher of peace, and wish to follow it. We must give them that opportunity."

He went on to say:

"On the main question of the freedom of Japan, we were able to agree ultimately, and the treaty embodies that agreement. On the other matters, there were sharp differences of opinion, and the treaty embodies the majority views. My Government would have preferred it if some of those questions were answered in a different way, but the fact that the majority don't agree with us is no reason why we should abstain from signing the treaty, which contains the central concept of a free and independent Japan.

"We feel that the allied matters I mentioned earlier are not insoluble if Japan is free, that they are insoluble if Japan is not

free. A free Japan, through, let us say, the United Nations Organization, can discuss these problems with the other free nations of the world and arrive at early and satisfactory decisions. By signing this treaty we are enabling Japan to be in a position to do so, to enter into a treaty of friendship with the Government of China if she decides to recognize her, and I am happy to state, enabling her to enter into a treaty of peace and friendship with India. If we do not sign this treaty, none of these eventualities can take place"

Disagreement with the submission made by the Russians

The Russian delegation had expressed the view that the freedom of Japan should be limited. Responding to this view Minister Jayewardene stated that what he had advocated was a completely free and independent Japan.

He said:

"That is why I cannot subscribe to the views of the delegate of the Soviet Union when he proposes that the freedom of Japan should be limited. The restrictions he wishes to impose such as the limitation on the right of Japan to maintain such defence forces as a free nation is entitled to, and the other limitations he proposes would make this treaty

not acceptable not only to the vast majority of the delegates present here but even to some of the countries that have not attended this Conference, particularly India, who wished to go even further than this treaty visualizes.

"If again the Soviet Union wishes the Islands of Ryukyu and Bonin returned to Japan contrary to the Cairo and Potsdam Declarations, why should then South Sakhalin as well as the Kuriles be not also returned to Japan?"

"It is also interesting to note that the amendments of the Soviet Union seek to insure to the people of Japan the fundamental freedoms of expression, of press and publication, of religious worship, of political opinion and of public meeting - freedoms which the people of the Soviet Union themselves would dearly love to possess and enjoy.

The reason why, therefore, we cannot agree to the amendment proposed by the Soviet delegate, is that this treaty proposes to return to Japan sovereignty, equality and dignity, and we cannot do so if we give them with qualifications. The purpose of the treaty then is to make Japan free, to impose no restrictions on Japan's recovery, to see to it that she organizes her own military defence against external aggression, and internal subversion, and that until she does so, she could invite the aid of a friendly power to protect her, and that no reparations be exacted from her that would harm her economy".

He ended his speech dramatically saying:

"This treaty is as magnanimous as it is just to a defeated foe. We extend to Japan the hand of friendship and trust that with the closing of this chapter in the history of man, the last page of which we write today, and with the beginning of the new one, the first page of which we dictate tomorrow, her people and ours may march together to enjoy the full dignity of human life in peace and prosperity"

Minister Jayewardene's speech was received with resounding applause. Even the ranks of Tuscany could scarce forbear to cheer!

Commenting on Minister Jayewardene's performance at the San Francisco conference the prestigious *New York Times* stated:

"The voice of free Asia eloquent, melancholy and strong with the tilt of an Oxford accent dominated the Conference.

The ablest Asian spokesman at the Conference was Ceylon's Finance Minister J. R. Jayewardene".

The Government and people of Japan have never forgotten that it was this little island of Sri Lanka which was their staunchest friend in their hour of need. They talk about it even today.

United

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Senanayake governments, disbanded his party in August 1968, and joined the UNP and fought the May 1970 election under the banner of the UNP. So did Dr. W. Dahanayake, the former leader of the Lanka Prajathantrawadi Pakshaya.

At this election Mr. Dudley Senanayake was succeeded by Mrs. Sirima Ratwatte Dias Bandaranaike. There was a tussle between Messers Dudley Senanayake and J. R. Jayewardene, over the question of supporting Mrs. Bandaranaike's Government, or not doing so. The differences between the two became so acute that only an injunction from the Supreme Court prevented a disastrous situation. However, shortly before Mr. Senanayake's death, both became friends again, and prevented a shattering blow on the party, which would have had serious repercussion on its future.

Mr. Dudley Senanayake continued to be the President of the party and made Mr. Jayewardene to be the Leader of the Opposition. After the demise of Mr. Senanayake, Mr. Jayewardene was elected the



D.S. Senanayake

leader of the UNP and from then a new light began to show itself in the affairs of the party. He did much to the party. He organised two Sinhala, one English and one Tamil journal for the purpose of publicising the party's view and activities.

However the Parliament was dissolved on May 18, 1977 and the general election was fixed for July 21, 1977. At the election, out of 154 contestants seeking election, 139 were returned in Parliament of 168 members. One seat could not be contested owing to the death of a contestant. The SLFP won only 08 seats out of 147 contested. All the others who aligned with the SLFP were defeated. Mr. J. R. Jayewardene was elected Prime Minister and continued to function in the capacity till February 04, 1978.

On that day he became the first Executive President of the Republic of Sri Lanka, in consequence of an amendment to the Constitution. Later in the same years, a referendum was held and the will of the people was that there should be no general election till, 1989.

When Mr. J. R. Jayewardene became the President, Mr. R. Premadasa was made the Prime

Minister on February 23, 1978. He was elected the second Executive President of Sri Lanka on December 19, 1988 and he assumed duties at the historic temple of the sacred Tooth Relic in Kandy on January 02, 1989. He led the UNP to victory at the general election held on February 15, 1989. He survived the attempted impeachment by some UNP and opposition members of Parliament.

When he was assassinated on May 01, 1993 by a suicide bomber Mr. D. B. Wijetunge was appointed the third Executive President. In the Presidential election held in 1994 Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunge came into power. She dissolved the Parliament in 2001. There the UNP got hold of power and Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe became the Prime Minister.

At the General election held in 1994 Mr. Mahinda Rajapakse came into power and became the Prime Minister and at the Presidential election held in 2005 Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa became the fifth Executive President of the island.

Some says the UNP is in shambles now. Is there none to rally the party. Does Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe mark time. What about Mr. Rukman Senanayake?



Thirty eight per cent of Britons believe in the existence of angels

Theologically, angels are a perfectly respectable notion, says Christopher Howse.

A university lecturer has criticised parents for being dismissive when their seven-year-old daughter told them that she saw an angel at her bedside every night, which she felt comforted by.

Quite right, too. Perhaps she had seen an angel. Children, if they are truthful and well, should be taken seriously. They know the difference between pretend and real. Parents collude with children in treating Teddy as a person, but, though Teddy falling out of the car may be heartbreaking, the child well knows it is not the same as your sister falling out.

Angels are not cuddly toys, and it is not just children who believe in them. They have become an adult craze. Gone are the merely jokey fancies, such as the angel Clarence in *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) or John Travolta, heaven help us, as an angel in *Michael* (1996). Unjokey

Do you believe in angels?

books like *Angels in My Hair* by Lorna Byrne or *Angels Watching Over Me* by Jacky Newcomb sell millions.

Miss Jacky Newcomb, at the paranormal end of the angel spectrum, enjoys endorsements from Uri Geller, Miss Lorna Byrne, whose memoir *Angels in My Hair* was bought for a six-figure sum by the publishers of *The Da Vinci Code*, is more devotional. "Remember strangers give you messages from your Angels too," she says. "It could be a shop assistant, a bus driver, a neighbour's child."

Guardian angels remain most popular, with 38 per cent of us believing in them, if we credit a single opinion poll. But it doesn't take a vision of a winged messenger with a flaming sword to convince people, once the possibility of angelic intervention is entertained. Gloria Hunniford has found angels very helpful in finding parking places.

If you ask me, there's something in all this. One day, after lunch, the late Jennifer Paterson, formerly one of the *Two Fat Ladies*, accidentally locked me out of my house in Shepherd's Bush by closing the front door behind us in the front garden. What impressed me was her instant success in attracting the attention of a passing youth and persuading him to shin over the back wall and break into the

house. I assumed he was part of the skilled Shepherd's Bush burgling community. Later I wondered: perhaps it was an angel.

It is the clergy who are behind the curve on angelic belief. The Bible says that the angel Gabriel, for example, brought word to the Virgin Mary. But the wobbly Sixties generation of priests tended to explain away such references as a metaphor for more earthly kinds of messenger.

Gabriel is also credited by Muslims with delivering the word of God to Mohammed in the Koran. It would be a brave know-all who publicly poo-pooed that belief.

Theologically, angels are perfectly respectable. God is an uncreated spirit; human beings are bodily creatures with a spiritual component; angels are spiritual creatures with no bodily component. They have intellect and will and are much cleverer than we are. Satan is an angel gone to the bad.

Traditional Jewish, as well as Christian, speculation holds that there are millions more angels than there are human beings. So encountering one at your bedside would be only too likely.