

**INDIA
AND
SRILANKA-CHINA
RELATIONS
(1948-84)**

VIJAY KUMAR

The study examines, in the spectrum of international relations with specific reference to South Asian politics, Sino-Sri Lanka relations since China's independence, i. e. from 1948-84.

While analysing the economic factor in the process of development, the study gives due stress on India in influencing and shaping of relationship between its two neighbours. The book gives an elaborate treatment, in seven of its chapters, to internal political developments in Sri Lanka which were at the back of forging of relations between Sri Lanka and China. This has been done underpinning the role and interests of USA and USSR in the region in the context of the super-powers rivalry.

The book gives a wealth of useful information and insights into the dynamics of international relations in South Asia region which would be of interest to academics as well as others concerned with policy-making in the field of international relations.

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UPPAL PUBLISHING HOUSE
New Delhi-110002

UPPAL PUBLISHING HOUSE
3, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi-110002

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1986

Printed in India
Published by B.S. Uppal for Uppal Publishing House,
New Delhi-110002 and printed at Parashar Printers,
G.T. Road, Shahdara, Delhi-110053

*This book is dedicated to the
living memory of my grandfather,
Late Shri Ram Dutt Rai*

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living memory of my grandfather
Late Shri. K. S. S. S. S.

PREFACE

Sri Lanka, a small island country dangling from the southernmost tip of the Indian peninsula, has traditionally been a connecting link of the Eastern and Western trade route. Her strategic location in the Indian Ocean and athwart India besides its aerial and oceanic nodulity made China interested in the island. The unequal friendship of the giant and the pygmy separated by thousands of miles of sea between them prompted me to undertake the present study in an attempt to unravel the causes and factors of their deep and abiding friendship.

The present study approaches Sino-Sri Lanka relations (1948-84) in the wider spectrum of international relations with specific reference to South Asian politics. The study attempts to unfold various aspects of Sri Lanka's relations with the People's Republic of China since her independence in 1948. The relations were shaped mainly by the economic problems of a developing island country and the changing currents of world forces in general and Asian resurgence in particular.

My study gives due weightage to India factor in the South Asian region as influencing the shaping of the Sino-Sri Lanka relations. Providing "A Historical Sketch of Sino-Sri Lanka Relations," the study attempts to analyse the new relationships that have been forged between the two countries in recent

times. Apart from this, study the consists of five chapters and a conclusion. The chapters have been divided on the chronological basis covering different periods of rule of either of the two dominant political parties, the United National Party (UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) or their coalitions. The work aims to build up a theme of continuity and change, waxing and waning, in Sri Lanka-China relations during the UNPSLFP eras in the politico-economic fields.

Consequently, Chapter II, describing the first phase of the UNP rule, characterised by West-oriented upper-middle class elite dominance, highlights the cautious approach of Sri Lanka towards communist countries including China. However, under great internal economic pressures, Sri Lanka was forced to sign the First Five-year Rubber-Rice Trade Agreement (1952-1957) with China after being disenchanted with the west. Though the relations were cautiously confined to trade alone and all other kinds of contracts were avoided, this pact proved subsequently as the mainstay of their cordial relationship. This agreement became a permanent feature of Sri Lanka's foreign policy ensuring the constant supply of rice for her people and a permanent market for her rubber, whose prices not only kept sliding in the international market but also refused to stabilise.

Chapter III deals with the emergence of SWRD Bandaranaike to power who brought the new element of Swabhasha lower-middle class elite to dominance and confirmed the direction Sri Lanka was to take in foreign affairs. Rightly called the father of nonalignment in Sri Lanka, he represented the overall outlook of the people in international affairs deemed closer to India and opening the doors to friendship with all, including communist China. After his assassination in 1959, there was a brief rightist interlude and then came Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the widow of SWRD Bandaranaike, who followed the policy of her late husband in international affairs. However, the emphasis now shifted from a closer understanding with India to a perceptible tilt towards China. This forms

Chapter IV of the study. Chapter V deals with the return of a mellowed UNP coalition (1965-70) which, despite its pro-West leanings, remained nonaligned in international affairs. The cultural revolution in China generated heated exchange of notes between the governments of Sri Lanka and China, the trade relations between the two were not impaired, however, cooperation in other fields suffered. Chapter VI attempts to gauge Sri Lanka's China policy during the 1970-77 period when Mrs. Bandaranaike was returned to power with an overwhelming majority as head of a coalition of the traditionally committed Marxist groups. This was a period when the international problems of the country were acute and the South Asian balance of power was in a flux. The JVP movement only superficially indicated the internal problems of the island country and the Bangladesh crisis cornered Sri Lanka to take up a relative position vis-a-vis India and USSR on the one hand and China, USA and Pakistan on the other. Though Sri Lanka remained nonaligned in the general framework, its relationship with China continued to be warm. This chapter also ventures to fathom the profession and practice of Sri Lanka and China on such other important issues as Indian Ocean, new international economic order and disarmament. Chapter VII attempts to analyse the relationship between China and Sri Lanka in a changed international environment. By 1977, China and America had forged closer links making it easy for Sri Lanka to maintain deep and cordial relations with both China and the US. Both these powers adopted generous attitude towards this island country in a bid to extend it as a bridgehead in their power-politics game in Asia. While attempting to bring to a halt in Asia the extending tentacles of the Soviet Union and to slash the growing image of India, these two countries stealthily helped the Sinhala-Tamil riots in Sri Lanka. Emboldened with the support of its patrons, Sri Lanka government, instead of ending the riots, in which thousands of innocent Tamils were massacred, began to show its fangs challenging and provoking India to interfere in these riots. However, one redeeming stratagem on the part of China has been her attempts

to revive better relations with India in the eighties. Growing relations of China and Sri Lanka in the criss-cross of international political currents have been analysed in this chapter. The last chapter, i.e. chapter VIII, as usual, gives a summary and conclusion of Lanka-China relations between 1948-84, a period covering more than three decades of their political, economic, religious and social involvement and alliance. Notes and references have been placed at the end of every chapter to make it an easy reading even for the general public. A bibliography for general readers has been appended in the last.

Many are the debts of gratitude which I have acquired during the preparation of this book. It is necessary, therefore, that I acknowledge contributions that cannot be captured in a footnote. I must first thank my mentor and guide, Dr. D.M. Prasad, Professor and Head of the Department of Political Science, Post-Graduate Centre, Dumka, Bhagalpur University, who guided and encouraged me at every stage of this work. Amidst his manifold engagements, Dr. Prasad found time to watch over the progress of this work, made valuable and constructive suggestions, and helped me generously in many ways including permission to use his own personal library and archive.

My special obligations are due to my parents especially my father, Dr. Haridwar Rai, who has been a tower of strength and a perennial source of inspiration to me all along. Words are not enough to record my indebtedness to them.

Then, for their guidance and invaluable suggestions, I am extremely thankful to Prof. G. Bhagat, Mississippi University; Prof. M.D. Bhagat, Kashi Vidyapith; Prof. R.N. Trivedi, Ranchi University; Prof. D.M. Mullick, Bihar University; Prof. A.P. Padhi, Sambalpur University; Prof. M.P. Singh, Delhi University; and Prof. Hari Hara Das of Berhampur University.

I am also grateful to Dr. L.P. Sinha, Vice-Chancellor,

Himachal Pradesh University of Simla and late Dr. R.C. Prasad, University Professor and Head of the Department of Political Science, Magadh University, Bodh Gaya, who made most valuable suggestions and offered me the benefits of their scholarship and intellect.

I am thankful to Prof. S.U. Kodikara, University of Sri Lanka, for his initial suggestions and guidance. I also owe a debt of gratitude to my senior friends Shri M.K. Gaur, Assistant Editor, Indian Institute of Public Administration; Dr. Jawaharlal Pandey, Reader in Social Sciences, NCERT; and my teacher-friend Shri Maheshwar Rai, Senior English teacher in the local Marwari School, for their invaluable help and encouragement.

My thanks are also due to the members of the staff of the libraries of Bhagalpur University, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Indian Council of World Affairs, Indian Institute of Public Administration, and Calcutta American Centre.

I record with pleasure the help, encouragement and understanding my wife, Kiran Roy, rendered to me by keeping me away from the cares and anxieties of domestic life and assisting in correcting the typographical mistakes and arranging the bibliography. I also acknowledge with pleasure my gratitude to several friends and colleagues who have helped in various ways in the completion of this work. I am also under a heavy obligation to Shri C.M. Pandit who has meticulously typed the manuscript.

However, whatever ingredients these and other persons may have contributed to the work, the responsibility for their selection and mixing and producing the finished product, is undoubtedly mine alone.

Vijay Kumar

CONTENTS

Chapters	Pages
Preface	vii
1. A Historical Sketch of Sino-Sri Lanka Relations	1
2. The Phase of the UNP Rule (1948-56)	7
3. The Bandaranaike Era (1956-59)	35
4. Coming of Mrs. Bandaranaike to Power (1960-65)	55
5. UNP Coalition Government (1965-70)	81
6. Sirimavo Bandaranaike's United Front (UF) Government (1970-77)	113
7. Coming of the UNP under Jayewardene (1977 to the Present)	157
8. Conclusions	171
Bibliography	181
Index	189

CONTENTS

Pages	Chapters
vii	Preface
1	1. A Historical Sketch of Shrotri Lanka Relations
7	2. The Phase of the UNP Rule (1948-56)
35	3. The Bandanaike Era (1956-59)
55	4. Coming of Mrs. Bandanaike to Power (1960-63)
81	5. UNP Coalition Government (1965-70)
113	6. Sirimavo Bandanaike's United Front (U.F.) Government (1970-77)
157	7. Coming of the UNP under Jayewardene (1977 to the Present)
171	8. Conclusions
181	Bibliography
189	Index

A Historical Sketch of Sino-Sri Lanka Relations

Geographically, Sri Lanka, formerly known as Ceylon, is a pear shaped island dangling from the southernmost tip of the Indian peninsula. Known as the "pearl of the orient", she is above all countries the "land of jewels". In Sanskrit the land was rightly known as "Ratna-dvipa" which means the "Island of Gems". Even her shape resembles a rough stone, ready to be cut into a beautiful cabochon. Strategically located in the heart of the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka is almost mid-way between the Red Sea and the Straits of Malacca on the East and also between the southern continents of South Africa and Australia. On the East is the Bay of Bengal with an eastern fringe of land extending from Burma to Australia. On the west is another fringe of land extending from Arabia to the Cape of Good Hope. Eastward across the Bay of Bengal—more than a thousand miles from Sri Lanka—a slender finger of the Indian ocean penetrates the Indonesian island obliquely between the west coast of the Malayan Peninsula and Sumatra. The most coveted trade channel in the eastern seas, the Straits of Malacca, link the main trade route from the Cape of Good Hope with the South China Sea. Traditionally thus lying on the main sea route of the world and now being the connecting link in air communication between West Asia, East Asia, Australia and New Zealand, Sri Lanka, the 'utmost Indian isle', has been destined by nature to be the focal point of the Indian Ocean. By virtue of its position in the heart of the Indian Ocean and the natural harbour facilities it provides, the island

has attracted the attention of travellers and mariners from the earliest times. Indeed, no island in the world has so frequently been mentioned as Sri Lanka in the ancient records of travellers and religious missionaries. Traders and colonists from Pre-Islamic Arabia, from India and Malaya and also from China, sailed along the northern coast of the Indian Ocean exchanging goods and spreading their civilizations into distant lands including Sri Lanka. Probably even before the Mediterranean became an avenue for the seafarers of many nations, the sea routes from the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea toward India, Sri Lanka and beyond as well as along the northern part of East Africa were frequented by the boats of Arabs, Persians, Indians, Malaya and also Chinese. Vincent Coello rightly remarks :

“For the great mariners, adventurers and geographers of ancient times, who traversed the oceans from the centres of trade and civilization in Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo and Constantinople to China in the Far East, the island of Ceylon was a beacon and a haven. Vessels bound for the east from the Red Sea ports of Jeddah or Suez or from the Persian entrepot at Ormuz voyaged across the Arabian Sea to the coast of Malabar in India and thence to the ports in Ceylon before proceeding onwards to their destination in Bengal or China. Equally, the Chinese traders following the same ocean routes arrived at ports in Ceylon on their way to destinations along the Arabian Coastline.”¹

The history of Sri Lanka's contact with China dates back to these ancient times. Travellers and monks frequented these places travelling by sea or by land through India. The ancient Chinese knew it as the 'Land without sorrow' or as the 'island of jewels' and ancient Buddhists gracefully referred to Sri Lanka as a 'Pearl on the brow of India' probably because of the trade in pearls and gems between Sri Lanka and China. Embassies from the island are known to have visited China in the first and second century A.D. In spite of the predominance of Mahayana Buddhism in China and Hinayana or Theravada in Sri Lanka, the sectarian differences did not stand in the way of their religious and commercial contacts. Sri Lanka has

always been regarded as the head-quarters of Buddhist learning and scholars from China used to come to Sri Lanka while visiting India. Ediraweeera R. Sarachandra rightly points out :

“Ceylon has always claimed and still claims to be the most important country in the Buddhist world, not only because its form of Buddhism is nearer to the original doctrines of Buddha, but also because . . . it has never been disputed that Buddhism has been preserved in Ceylon in its pristine purity.”²

The most noted Chinese traveller and monk, Fa Hien, visited Sri Lanka in 410 A.D. and left the best, though seemingly fantastic, account of the island of those days. Even though China today has been influenced by communism, it has not been able to eradicate all traditional ideas from the minds of the people. Rather communism itself has been influenced consciously or unconsciously by many aspects including religious traditions. The history of Sino-Sri Lanka relations probably reflect the continuation of that tradition.

Cosmas, a merchant of Egypt, who visited Sri Lanka at the beginning of the sixth century has left an excellent account of its trade relations with China and other countries. He wrote :

“As its position is central, the Island is a great resort of ships from all parts of India and from Persia and Ethiopia and in like manner it despatches many of its own to foreign ports. And from the inner countries, China and other parts in that direction it receives silks, aloes, clove-wood, sandal-wood and other products. . . .”³

The Chinese ships came to the ports of Sri Lanka with their silk and other items. The goods which were bound for Europe were chiefly paid for in silver and those intended for Exchange in India were transshipped into smaller boats and were distributed at the various ports east and west of Cape Comorin. A Chinese traveller, Chua Ju Kua, said to be an inspector of foreign trade from Pukien, reportedly visited Sri Lanka about the end of the tenth century. He has left a very good account

of the island and its trade with various countries.

The relationship between China and Sri Lanka was not only commercial but also diplomatic and religious. We have already referred to the despatch of an embassy from Sri Lanka to China in the first and second century A.D. Chinese annals also contain reports of embassies from Sri Lanka in the fifth century A.D. This embassy is reported to have visited China over land by way of India taking ten years to reach their destination. In the same century a group of five priests visited China bearing a gift of three-fold image of Buddha for the Chinese emperor. Further embassies arriving at the court of the Chinese emperor are recorded during the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. Besides, pilgrims from China came to visit Sri Lanka and people from Sri Lanka went to China on religious missions and for acquisition of knowledge. I-Tsing who visited Sri Lanka in the last quarter of the 7th century A.D. refers to the religious practices of the Island. There is evidence too that Sinhalese nuns went to China in the 5th century A.D. and helped in the ordination of women there.

As if religious, diplomatic and commercial relations were not enough, the Chinese, in 1405 sent a powerful naval expedition led by the great eunuch of the imperial palace Cheng-Ho who also touched Sri Lanka demanding tribute and obedience to the Chinese emperor. He led seven such expeditions in all (between 1405 and 1431) and the first was also intended to take to China the *dalada*, the tooth relic. The Chinese interest in *dalada* went as far back as 1284 when the great Kublai Khan had despatched a mission to the island to snatch the bowl and hair relics of Buddha. However, the mission failed in its purpose and fortunately, for Sri Lanka, went back without any sense of grievance. But unlike the representatives of Kublai Khan, when Cheng-Ho failed he went back enraged only to come back on a punitive expedition again after five years. This time when he came he seized the Sinhalese King—Vira Alakesvara—his family and some notables and carried them away to China as hostages. Sri Lanka was declared a vassal state of China and a nominee of the Chinese emperor, Parakramabahu VI, was installed as the new ruler. Parakramabahu VI visited

the Chinese capital as king of Sri Lanka bearing tribute twice, in 1416 and 1421. Admiral Cheng-Ho returned again about 1432, carrying 'friendly instructions', an obvious admonition to the king of Sri Lanka, that tribute had not been paid. This led to a revival of the despatch of envoys from Sri Lanka to China with tributes in 1436, 1445 and 1459. China's tutelage over Sri Lanka thus lasted for almost half a century.⁵

The existence of trade relations from ancient times have been accepted and emphasised time and again since the latter half of the twentieth century especially after the conclusion of the first Rubber-Rice Pact in October, 1952. In a joint statement signed on 5 February, 1957, the Prime Ministers of Sri Lanka and China admitted that their countries were bound by ties of friendship for many centuries. Chou En-Lai admitted that the contracts between the two countries go back to the earliest days. The civilization of China is one of the oldest and richest known to man Sri Lanka too is a country with an ancient cultural heritage. No doubt, therefore, that commercial, cultural and religious friendship existed between China and Sri Lanka since ancient times. Cultural exchanges and trade contracts between the two peoples started as early as the dawn of history.

Even if these claims are doubted as politicians' jargons, it cannot be denied that trade relations between China and Sri Lanka can be traced back to more than 1,000 years. Even before Fa Hien visited Sri Lanka, the peoples of the two countries began to trade with each other, exchanging what they had for what they wanted. After that, records of such exchanges during the Tsin (A.D. 386-524), T'ang (618-906), Sung (907-1279), Yuan (1260-1368) and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties are found in both Chinese and foreign documents.⁶

The relationship with China remained dormant during the western dominance on the island. With the achievement of independence and infusion of Asian nationalism, there was renewed interest of China in Sri Lanka. Indeed, because of her strategic position athwart the sea-route between China and the west, there had been from the very early centuries of the

Christian era, trade links between the island and China and these relations were restored and developed on new foundations after the liberation of China and independence of Sri Lanka.

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The Phase of the UNP Rule (1948-56)

If the post-war world saw the emergence of a host of independent nations in Asia, including Sri Lanka, it also witnessed the rise of Communist China. While the independence of India, Pakistan and Burma was accompanied tragically by much violence, Sri Lanka was spared from this and was born in much "happier circumstances."¹ On the one hand it may be attributed to the relative smallness of the country and its insulation from India, and on the other to the character of its political elite. Nowhere in Asia was the national movement so elitist, so constitutional and peaceful,² as in Sri Lanka. As a result Sri Lanka slid greatly through a series of constitutional reforms into independence avoiding the violence faced by India, Pakistan, Burma and Phillipines. The Ceylon National Congress, the vehicle of the national movement emerged in 1918 and throughout its existence, consisted mostly of English-educated, upper class professionals of Sri Lanka. Though Indian Nationalists like Gandhi and Nehru³ visited Sri Lanka and inspired the patriots of the island to carry on their struggle against British imperialism, Sri Lanka used only constitutional means to attain its ends.⁴ Thus the national movement in Sri Lanka did not require the involvement of the masses in the same manner or scale as did the Congress movement in India. It was also never not handicapped by the communal problems as the minority, the Hindu Tamils, were advised by Indian nationalists, particularly by Nehru, to join the Sinhalese Buddhist majority to present a joint front against the British.⁵

The Ceylon National Congress went into a decline in 1945, when the Sri Lankan leader D.S. Senanayake refused to have any truck with it because of the presence of communists in its ranks. He organised in September 1946 what is known as the United National Party (UNP) which was a party of the conservative minded political notable with the backing of a number of ethnocentric political groupings, such as the Sinhala Maha Sabha (SMS), the All-Ceylon Muslim League, the Moors Association and sections of Ceylon and Indian Tamils. This party had the support of almost the entire national press, the 'big families', the landed interests, the *mudalalis* (shop owners) and the higher and the middle rank government officials as well as a few in the lower ranks.⁶ That was why during the negotiations for independence neither the Ceylonese Association of London, which represented the bulk of British investors in Sri Lanka, nor the local British business community asked for any safeguards.⁷ Before the General Elections in 1947, the UNP was able to coalesce together all these diverse interests and peoples under one banner raising its prestige in the island more or less to the level of the Indian National Congress in India.

On 4 February 1948 when Sri Lanka was granted independence as a dominion of the British Commonwealth, the UNP took over power from the British. The political leadership at the higher levels of the UNP was provided by a relatively small category of landowners and professional men, as well as retired public servants, including school teachers, and some industrialists and businessmen. Thus the persons who ruled Sri Lanka in the first phase (1948-56) of the U.N.P. Rule belonged to the upper layer of the middle class, "a thin layer of conservative and highly westernised elite"⁸ educated through the medium of English and West-oriented in their outlooks.⁹ Indeed the very creation of the U.N.P. in 1947 was possible because the elite was still thinking in terms of common class and cultural background.

A Sri Lankan scholar rightly points out :

"In short the governing class was still 'Colonialist

oriented'; the 'white' ruler had merely been replaced by a 'black' ruler, but policy, thought had known no change."¹⁰

The British took them in confidence and handed over power to these leaders quickly after granting independence to India. They were afraid to hold on to Sri Lanka any longer because it was assumed that it would drift closer to India to which it looked for inspiration in its march towards freedom.

Their aversion to Communism

Being in a "specially dangerous position" due to its situation on one of the "strategic highway of the world"¹¹ and the propinquity to India, a country fifty times bigger, casting a threatening shadow,¹² made the leaders of Sri Lanka more concerned about their new found independence and security. They could not look to India for this as history bore evidences of Indian invasions over Sri Lanka in the past¹³ and there was a lurking fear of it in the future.¹⁴ China was helpless as it was still in the throes of the civil war, though the Communists were steadily gaining ground. Sri Lanka leaders had no particular liking for the Communists because of difficulties with them both at home and abroad. The U.N.P. government leader D.S. Senanayake had left Ceylon National Congress to form his own party due to his aversion for Communists. Then again when the U.N.P. government had come into power in 1947 elections after a contest with parties mostly Marxist, the Marxist parties formed the main parliamentary opposition group until 1956. On the international level the attitude of Soviet Russia was to veto Sri Lanka's application for U.N. membership during this period.¹⁵ All these factors combined together with the socio-economic background of the U.N.P. leaders compelled D.S. Senanayake to identify the interests of Sri Lanka with Britain and through it with the Western bloc. The Cold war situation and American propaganda against Communist created a conducive environment for it. Their long and deep association with the British, the peaceful manner of the British transfer of power to Sri Lanka, the existing economic and commercial ties and Sri Lanka's search for peace and security made the leaders of the U.N.P. enter a defence agreement with United

Kingdom (UK) first on the eve of independence. In his first Independence Day message to his people, D.S. Senanayake, the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, gave vent to this sentiment when he declared :

“Whatever disagreement we may have had with the British in the past, we are grateful for their goodwill and cooperation which have culminated in our freedom. The seed of voluntary renunciation which they have sown will grow into stately, free of mutual and perpetual friendship.”¹⁶

Sri Lanka Recognises China

Despite the “bogey” of Communism haunting the foreign policy of D.S. Senanayake and the U.N.P., Sri Lanka was one of first non-communist countries to recognise Communist China. Sri Lanka has sometimes claimed that it was the first Asian country to recognise the new government at Peking. In fact, Sri Lanka was preceded by a matter of days by Burma, India and Pakistan in extending recognition to China. Sri Lanka withheld recognition of Communist China for some time but when Britain decided to accord recognition to China, Sri Lanka recognised China on January 5, 1950 and terminated her relations with Taiwan. Some scholars on Sri Lanka have plausibly inferred that policy of recognition of China was largely influenced by the attitude of the United Kingdom.¹⁷ However, some other scholars feel that there were certain regional factors which influenced Sri Lanka’s decision. Burma, India and Pakistan had recognised China. When Burma which had a lot to fear from China had recognised her, Sri Lanka could not possibly delay it for long because China, though big and powerful, is distant and not to be feared in Sri Lanka. Unless China overruns India or Burma it can enter the Indian Ocean only through the Pacific ocean of which there was little possibility in 1950.

Invitation to China

During Sri Lanka’s independence celebrations in 1948 D.S. Senanayake decided to invite foreign powers and in his first

flush of enthusiasm included Russia and China in the list. Abiding by the traditional courtesies of communications to foreign countries his Foreign Ministry attacked to these invitations the conventional friendly phrases. Both Russia and China responded in equally polite manner. But even in trifling matters fear of communism became strong with D.S. Senanayake. Later on, when Russia wanted to know whether it would be possible to establish permanent diplomatic missions in Colombo D.S. Senanayake did not reply to the Russians and is reported to have rebuked his Foreign Ministry "Enough of your polite gestures and friendly compliments."¹⁸

Indeed in Asia the systems of Democracy and Communism were on trial. While China represented the forces of Communism, Sri Lanka and India that of democracy. By entering a defence agreement with Britain Sri Lanka could protect itself and felt safe. Standing with Britain was to depend on the people who didn't have a sort of madness to upset this world and who were not anxious to bring revolution. So D.S. Senanayake advocated that :

"as far as our foreign policy goes . . . it will be our endeavour to be friendly with all the people" but "for our prosperity and advancement we want association with all the people whose association is going to be of benefit to us." He further held that "we want to defend ourselves not against ourselves but against the enemy (of Communism) that is knocking at the door."¹⁹

Democracy, being a transplantation of the Westminster model, would not be endangered if Britain itself was the guard. But to have any truck with communists was to invite revolution, disorder and chaos. That was why even after having granted recognition to China, the U.N.P. government seemed reluctant to establish formal diplomatic relations with her. The Chinese Premier, Chou En-Lai, invited Sri Lanka to send her representatives to Peking to negotiate the establishment of diplomatic relations.²⁰ In reply D.S. Senanayake informed the Chinese government that Sri Lanka would use the good offices of British diplomatic representatives in China until she was in

a position to have her own diplomatic mission there. According to D.S. Senanayake, as no further communication on the subject was received from China, the matter was dropped. Though diplomatic relations could not be established, Sri Lanka later conceded that the "Chinese government has always the right to have a diplomatic mission because the giving of recognition to a particular country is an invitation to establish a diplomatic mission."²¹ But as Sri Lanka was not enthusiastic about it and China was busy putting its own house in order the question of diplomatic missions was for the time being put aside. Moreover in the early years China was not very keen on establishing diplomatic missions on non-communist soils. The influence of Stalin was quite discernible on the foreign policy of China. Though not a member of the U.N., when Soviet Union opposed Sri Lanka's entry into the U.N., it was assumed that China supported the Soviet move for it was a mouth-piece of Soviet Russia. Soviet Union opposed Sri Lanka's admission in the U.N. on the ground that very little was known about the "national status or constitution of Ceylon" and there was no manifest evidence that it was "a sovereign and independent state." Moreover the press reports were not favourable to Sri Lanka and "to all intents and purposes" it was a "British colony." Soviet delegate specifically pointed to certain rights which Sri Lanka had offered to Britain for her air and naval bases. He also referred to the fact that Sri Lanka's diplomatic interests, in some cases were looked after by the British diplomatic representatives. These evidences pointed out that Sri Lanka was still a "puppet" of Britain and therefore not genuinely a sovereign state.²² A commentary "Ceylon after three years" appearing in *China Monthly Review* voiced the same language as Soviet counterpart used in the U.N. Security Council. It said :

"Three years after gaining its 'independence' from Britain Ceylon was neither independent nor stable. Ever rising costs of living, wage cuts and red hunts for civil servants, and British and American military and political activities were the Chief contributions of the United National Party government. . . ."

“America held control over the news service supplied to Ceylon daily papers. . . .”²³

No Admission to Communists in Sri Lanka

The U.N.P. government not only ignored the question of establishing diplomatic relations with Communist countries, but, adopting a wholly negative attitude, consistently refused to grant visas to foreign communists to visit Sri Lanka. D.S. Senanayake and his two successors Dudley Senanayake and Sir John Kotelawala were suspicious of China and believed that Communist countries would utilise every opportunity to make contact with leftist parties inside the country. D.S. Senanayake's government not only refused application for visas by communist delegates from Russia and China to enter Sri Lanka,²⁴ but also denied permission to the British science writer J.G. Growther, the President of the Communist led British Peace Committee, on the plea that “the enemies of democracy would not be permitted to take advantage of democratic liberties to campaign for the extinction of democratic institutions.”²⁵ A confirmed opponent of Communism, Senanayake's “political horizon was dominated by White-hall and Downing street.”²⁶ His one fear, almost pathological in its manifestations, was the fear of “Communist subversion” fighting against which was his dominant preoccupation.²⁷ His eagerness to support any policy of ‘containment’ of communism was made clear when he granted harbour facilities to an American flotilla on its way to the Korean war on the ground that it was meant to oppose aggression by international communism. The Communists, on the other hand, did not stand far behind in judging every move of Sri Lanka to be anti-Communist. When the Commonwealth conference of Foreign Ministers was held in Sri Lanka during 9-14 January 1950, the Soviet commentators wanted to impress their Chinese friends that the conference looked forward to organise an “anti-communist front in South-eastern Asia.”²⁸

After the accidental death of D.S. Senanayake, his successor and son, Dudley Senanayake, largely followed his father's policy during his short first tenure as Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. The foreign policy orientation remained pro-West. Though the

famous Rubber-Rice Pact of 1952 with China was entered into during his tenure, diplomatic relations could not be established till 1956. His father had evaded establishing diplomatic relations with China in the hope to keep minimum contacts with the Reds. Dudley Senanayake implied however that Sri Lanka's financial position did not permit the opening of an embassy in Peking and therefore he also refused to do so on the same grounds. But if Dudley Senanayake kept up the same tempo set up by his father towards Communist countries, John Kotelawala went on step forward by giving vent to his anti-Communist feelings publicly. Being the 'Hammer of the Hammer and Sickle' and an inveterate enemy of communism which was a "lamentable creed" for him, he stated: "if there is anything that I can do whether in my country or anywhere else to stop the further advance of communism, I shall certainly do it."²⁹ He consistently refused to grant visas to foreign communists to visit Sri Lanka on the ground that "visiting Communists were apt to disseminate more harm than goodwill."³⁰ Thus he took steps to deny Henry Politt, Secretary General of the British Communist Party, to land in Sri Lanka.³¹ Despite repeated requests Kotelawala refused to permit the visit of a Chinese goodwill mission to Sri Lanka in 1953.³² He also took steps to ban the import of Communist books, periodicals and films in Sri Lanka and frequently charged Soviet Union of sending large sums of money to the Communists Party of Sri Lanka through Swiss banks.³³ However, these charges could not be substantiated. Still the policy of keeping communists at an arm's length continued throughout the U.N.P. rule. Till the end of 60's communism had not been a powerful force in the politics of Sri Lanka yet the 'psychopathological' fear of communism of the U.N.P. leaders verged to the extent of absurdity. Even with China which had stood by Sri Lanka in its time of need by exchanging much needed rice for Sri Lanka's rubber, the policy of 'minimum contacts' was maintained. Kotelawala stood firm in his opinion that Sri Lanka's relations with China were confined to trade and should remain so. Practically no contacts with China at cultural and political levels existed. The Rubber-Rice Agreement of 1962, which has remained a constant factor in Sri Lanka-China relations, was accepted only as an economic decision which is evident by the continued anti-communist stand

of the U.N.P. leadership.

The First Five-Year Rubber-Rice Agreement with China

The only major factor linking China and Sri Lanka between 1948-56 was the Rubber-Rice Trade Pact between them concluded in 1952. Sri Lanka's economy essentially being an export economy, revolving principally around the production of three major plantation crops—tea, rubber and coconut, depends on international price of its goods. Hence, whenever the prices for her products in the world market register a decline she suffers serious dislocation of economy. Rubber as an export commodity has played an important role in Sri Lanka's economy. It is one of the three important trade commodities mentioned earlier.

Before 1950 Sri Lanka was able to export rubber to an extent of 110,000 metric tons annually. The one principal buyer was the United States (US) which purchased her rubber upto 135,853,280 lbs. in 1950. But to meet the increased demand of rubber due to the Korean war, the US produced a huge amount of synthetic rubber. The price of natural rubber began to fall because of large use of synthetic rubber in the US and other western countries. Consequently, there was a cut in the buying price of natural rubber by the US towards the end of the year. In the second half of 1951 the US government made no further offer to buy Sri Lanka rubber. The export of rubber from Sri Lanka to the US fell to 46,586,874 lbs. in 1951, a two-third reduction compared to 1950. During the first six months of 1952, it was further reduced to a meagre 17,835,015 lbs. The price of rubber which had shown a boom during the height of the Korean war in 1950-51 began to decline so that in the second quarter of 1952 it was 56 per cent lower than in the first quarter of 1951, the peace period. The decline in the price of rubber was due to the gradual release of its stockpile by the US and also to its decision to protect its own synthetic industry. Thus deserted by US Sri Lanka could not even go to sell rubber to USSR as the government had rejected a Soviet offer of buying the islands entire rubber production in 1948. And China was excluded from the international rubber market due to the UN

embargo, contributing further to the declining prices. As the Korean war gained tempo and Communist China entered the conflict in November 1950, UN countries engaged in the war, began to restrict the shipment of strategic commodities including rubber to Communist China. Through export licences, Britain for example, prohibited Malaysian rubber from going to China, depressing the Singapore price which was usually accepted as the 'world price'. As a result, after the initial boom in Sri Lanka's economy during the Korean war, its economy soon began to deteriorate in 1951-52. There was a fairly substantial fall in the revenue of the government but the expenditure remained almost static.

Besides that, rice which is the main staple food of the people in Sri Lanka is not produced sufficiently to feed a growing population and had been imported in huge quantities. As a matter of fact, Sri Lanka could hardly meet half of its needs by its production, the rest had to be imported from other countries. But there was world shortage of rice in 1951-52 because of low production and the law of supply and demand being in operation, the price of rice was on increase. In the spring of 1952, the Sri Lanka government had increasing difficulty in procuring essential rice imports at reasonable prices and by June the food situation was serious as the rice stock was running dangerously low. A ministerial mission was despatched to London and to Washington to seek help and assistance.

The Sri Lanka ministerial mission went to Washington to negotiate with the American Administration the sale of whole rubber output for the year 1951-52. The American government offered the Singapore price (the world price) which was lower than the Colombo price. The Colombo price was higher as a result of Chinese purchases in contravention of the UN embargo. They demanded the same from the US and the negotiations broke down as they did not agree to it. Sri Lanka's request for American rice at a cheaper rate was also turned down and they were asked to purchase American rice at the competitive open market price. Though Sri Lanka in the beginning ventured to buy rice at the American market price, owing to a "sharp and unexpected rise" in the price of rice in the American market the

negotiations were abandoned after the purchase of only 30,000 tons. Americans were also not able to assure the Sri Lankan representatives of a five-year \$ 50,000,000 economic assistance programme under "Point Four" which they were seeking, for the Americans had little confidence that Sri Lanka could escape the "Battle Act"³⁴ which was being passed by the Congress.

Despite the U.N.P. leaders' pro-west and especially Kotelawala's pro-American attitude, Sri Lanka did not get even one dollar aid from the United States.³⁵ America prohibited even the export of sulphur to Sri Lanka which was used to spray rubber trees to save them from the pests. America had denied all aids and assistance to Sri Lanka at a time when its economy was in a mess. The industry was facing critical times. Its price was falling. The price of rubber in Sri Lanka's market was the equivalent of US \$ 0.594 per pound in January 1951, declining to an equivalent of US \$ 0.3049 in March 1952 touching the lowest of about US \$ 0.221 in November 1952. The wages of the rubber plantation workers had been cut by 32 per cent. The country was in an "impossible position. . . as a result of the slump in the price of rubber and the shortage of price." Keeping American terms for the sale of rubber would have meant throwing "300,000 labourers out of employment."³⁶

Mounting opposition pressure at home urging an increase in trade relations with China (which was already importing rubber from Sri Lanka as it was free for all) and their fruitless long awaiting for American aid and assistance left the UNP leaders no choice except either to negotiate with China or to face the economic crunch. Some time in the spring or early summer of 1952, the Chinese government had even invited the government of Sri Lanka through her ambassador in Burma to enter into some kind of trade pact with her and discuss the possibility of a large rice purchase. According to the press release on February 1953, the government of Sri Lanka knew of the Chinese invitation during the negotiations with the American Administration in the summer of 1952. This might be one of the reasons why though so hard pressed for rice, the Sri Lanka government did not accept the American terms of selling their rubber at Singapore price and purchasing rice in the American market. How-

ever, the government was reluctant to negotiate with China until every means of purchasing rice outside the Communist world had been explored. Meanwhile, in September 1952 the Chinese stepped up their purchase of rubber in Sri Lanka market at a price considerably above the world market,³⁷ inviting the Sri Lanka rubber producers to join hands with the leftist groups to throw their weight in favour of negotiations with China. And as no nation can afford to be guided by ideological consideration alone at the cost of its national interests, the government of Sri Lanka too was forced by economic compulsions to enter into a Rubber-Rice Trade Pact with the People's Republic of China. A trade mission went to Peking in mid-September 1952 in response to earlier Chinese invitation and in October the delegation signed a Trade Agreement for the supply of rice from China and in December a long term barter agreement rice in exchange of Sri Lanka rubber was signed.

Terms of Trade

Mr. R.G. Senanayake, Minister of Commerce and Trade led a trade mission to Peking in September 1952 to negotiate purchase of rice and discuss other trade matters. In October 1952 it entered into a contract under which China agreed to supply Sri Lanka 80,000 metric tons of rice between October 1952 and January 1953 at a price of Rs. 720 or £ 54 per ton f.o.b. China ports. The first consignment of rice was to reach Colombo about the 17th November 1952.

This agreement was for purposes of short term barter trade but it was followed in December by another negotiation for a long term trade agreement under the terms of which Sri Lanka was guaranteed 270,000 metric tons of Chinese rice for a five-year period, and China agreed to buy 50,000 metric tons of Sri Lanka rubber each year over the same period. The prices at which these commodities were to be exchanged was stated in the agreement but were subject to revision annually by the two parties.³⁸ The price of rubber was actually revised for the period from 1st June to 31st December 1955 after negotiations conducted at Peking.

The amount of rubber to be traded was not without significance. China took about 60 per cent of Sri Lanka's rubber exports in 1953, and more than 95 per cent of its sheet rubber exports. The price of rubber was guaranteed to be higher than the Singapore price and the price of rice was lower than the world market price. At the current world price one ton of rubber purchased only three tons of rice whereas the Chinese offered in exchange for one ton of rubber over five tons of rice. The subsequent negotiations reportedly brought in a ratio of over 6.5 tons of rice to one ton of rubber. The Sri Lanka Minister of Commerce and Trade, R.G. Senanayake, giving a statement on the trade agreement between Sri Lanka and China, stated in the House of Representatives :

“ . . . we could have got rice at eighty or ninety pounds a ton but we could not afford to pay that price and no other rice was available. . . Rather than go to China were we to starve ?”

“Our rubber was fetching Rs. 1.10 a pound. That was the world price, were we to reject this offer of Rs. 1.75 a pound . . . (which has) resulted in a gain of Rs. 98 million to this country.”³⁹

The Times (London) on January 21, 1953 rightly reported from Colombo :

“No Ceylonese government could have afforded to accept the American offer on its merits and none would have been able to justify such an acceptance before the electorate in the face of the Chinese offer.”

Chester Bowles, an American diplomat, thoroughly proficient in Asian affairs aptly put it when he commented :

“The Ceylonese Government, one of the most conservative in Asia, simply could not refuse such favourable terms.”⁴⁰

The agreement assured a constant supply of rice to Sri

Lanka at a time of world scarcity. It not only saved the rubber industry of Sri Lanka but also helped her economy to gear up by liquidating the deficit in her trade and payment balance and averting the drain on her external assets. The rice imports were a source of great relief to both the government and citizens of Sri Lanka. The popularity of the pact can be gauged by the fact that it was welcomed by almost all shades of opinions in Sri Lanka and when the whole agreement was approved by Parliament in early 1953 only one vote was cast against it.⁴¹

The Rice-Rubber Pact marked the beginning of the first important intercourse between Sri Lanka and China which are ideologically diametrically opposed to each other. It showed to Sri Lanka the disadvantage of excessive dependence on traditional markets and the advantages of exploring the new ones.⁴² Exploiting her control of the world price of rubber, the United States kept this price low for a long time snatching huge profits from Sri Lanka. In June, 1951 and afterwards, seizing the opportunity offered by Sri Lanka's urgent need for rice, the US suddenly cut down her rubber purchases by large amounts and insisted on selling rice to Sri Lanka at a high price and buying rubber from her at a low price, thus openly squeezing her. This act of making a high profit through inequitable exchange completely exposed the predatory nature of neo-Colonialism and aroused the extreme dissatisfaction of Sri Lanka's public opinion. This agreement was at once a "consequence and a cause of Sri Lanka's disenchantment with the policies of the Americans." It gave to each party what each badly needed. This agreement was indeed a landmark in as much as it marked the gradual movement of Sri Lanka's foreign policy towards a "neutralist stance" and also signalled the "re-entry of China in the diplomatic world of non-Communist states." It was not a matter of who came to save whom because both parties were obliged to one another. The fact that China came to rescue a small nation in the opposite camp in its days of distress produced a sympathetic reaction in the people of Sri Lanka which was subsequently exploited by the Communist and other leftist parties of Sri Lanka. It also enabled China to project a friendly image before the developing countries of Asia. Sri Lanka, on the other hand projected her

true creed for the first time. D.S. Senanayake's policy of 'Middle Path' in foreign affairs had lost its significance in its pro-west stance. This agreement cleared the cloud which had shrouded the foreign policy of Senanayakes. Sri Lanka was "the first to sell rubber to China in defiance of the US Embargo" for which Sri Lanka was "more than once threatened by third parties who told her to stop her trade with China."⁴³ But she refused to be intimidated. So the pact became in the Bandaranaike era, "the copingstone of a new trend of friendship and amity in Sino-Ceylonese relations."⁴⁴ The temporary absence of diplomatic relations caused no hindrance to contacts between China and Sri Lanka. This agreement thus "was at once a vigorous demonstration of Sri Lanka's independence in external relations and of her capacity to withstand pressures from Western powers."

However, though the public was sympathetic towards China, the UNP leaders despite the favourable trade agreement with China "did not deflect . . . from their anti-Communist bias."⁴⁵

US Reaction and UNP Stand

Once Sri Lanka accepted the better terms offered by the Chinese for its rubber, the United States brought tremendous pressure to bear upon the Senanayake government to end these negotiations, in particular threatening to cut off its economic assistance. But it was the unsympathetic attitude of the United States which was considerably responsible for compelling Sri Lanka to trade with People's Republic of China. Now US was adamant that it could extend aid if Sri Lanka scrapped the Rubber-Rice Trade Pact with China. As Sri Lanka refused to do so, America stopped all economic assistance to it. Still, even without US aid the US continued to enjoy a privileged position in Sri Lanka.

Kotelawala in Power

When Kotelawala came to power in 1953 he justified Sri Lanka's trade pact with China and tried to clarify the position of Sri Lanka regarding the pact. He wanted to dispell the

cloud of misunderstanding between Sri Lanka and other democratic countries, especially United States regarding the nature of the pact. He wished to voice that the agreement was only of economic nature and had no political dimensions. While on a world tour he said at Honolulu on December 14, 1954 :

“The Agreement with China was quite foreign to the traditional pattern of our trade, which is confined almost entirely to the countries of the Commonwealth. . . . The mistake that has been made in America as well as elsewhere, is to think that our Agreement with China is indicative of our political thinking that we are either pro-Communist or are particularly receptive of Communist teachings. Nothing can be farther from the truth. In its first place, Communist and its totalitarian methods are diametrically opposed to the religious and moral outlook of our own people and they have no attraction for them. Buddhism abhors all the forms of violence and regimentation which are inherent in the Communist creed and cannot, therefore, coexist with Communism.”¹⁶

Continuation of the Trade Pact

The trade relation with China, therefore, in great measure, was an utilitarian arrangement born out of necessity rather than being an outcome of deeper desire of furthering cordial and friendly relations with it. At one time it was alleged that Kotelawala would have liked very much to exchange the Chinese agreement for promise of American aid. He, however, denied any such intention, but for a man so pathologically anti-communist this could be a general guess. Indeed, the fear of India and that of China, both with a history of having subjugated Sri Lanka in the past, was also working behind this thought. However, the new feeling of nationalism with the “baffling qualities of an earthquake”¹⁷ which was sweeping Asia did not favour a breach of contract with an Asian power. The whole of Asia was in ferment and was up against colonialism, especially, the colonialism of the west. People of Asia belonging to the ancient civilizations had become conscious and proud of their old commercial, religious and cultural links binding

them in a bond of kinship. Their common experiences of colonialism and exploitation, and after independence their commonly shared problems of poverty, ignorance, disease, unemployment and squalor created a brotherly feeling among the peoples of Asia as a whole. Sri Lanka was no exception to it. A notion of "Asian solidarity", "Asian unity" or "Asian consciousness" was growing which was manifested in the anti-western attitude and since the only western power physically present in Asia was, US, anti-western attitudes among Asians became synonymous with anti-Americanism.⁴⁸

Fear of India and China

No doubt the fear of China and India—the two giants of Asia, must not be played down. The first Asian Relations conference held under the auspices of the Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi, in 1947 not only foreshadowed the emergency of a collective voice against colonialism but also brought to the surface for the first time the undercurrent of rivalry between China and India for leadership in Asia, and the fear of "economic and demographic" aggression by these countries over smaller states like Sri Lanka. On the one hand Sri Lanka pleaded for the desirability of an Asian economic organization and establishment of "an Asian UNO", which was possible only through the cooperation of India and China, and on the other, it was afraid of them. Werner Levi rightly observes :

The conference marked the apex of Asian solidarity and the beginning of its decline. The reasons for this were the intense rivalry between India and China in the conference and the common distrust of the two Asian giants among the smaller countries of the region.⁴⁹

Kotelawala's Desire to Join SEATO

This distrust of India and China was shared by Kotelawala too but the sentiment of the people favoured good intra-Asian relations besides the time dictated the continuation of the Rubber-Rice Trade Pact with China. However, Sri Lanka's

relation with China remained confined only to trade. Self-styled as “an uncompromising opponent of communism”, Kotelawala at one time was in favour of joining SEATO, the military pact which was meant to curb communist China’s expansion in South-East Asia. Kotelawala wanted a meeting of the “Colombo Powers” at Rangoon to discuss the desirability of the same. But due to reluctance of Nehru and opposition of it by SLFP under Bandaranaike and the Marxist parties—the Communist Party and the LSSP the conference did not materialize and the idea ultimately had to be dropped. Even the members of the ruling party were divided on the issue. Dudley Senanayake was opposed to it and R.G. Senanayake resigned from the Cabinet on the issue.⁵⁰

In fact, members of Kotelawala’s government were conscious of the limitations imposed by the geography and economy of Sri Lanka and favoured strengthening of relations both with the communist and non-communist world. They were concerned more with the establishment and maintenance of peace in the world. Addressing the International Law Association (Sri Lanka Branch) on 15 December 1954, J.R. Jayewardena categorically affirmed :

“We are not concerned about favouring this bloc or that bloc. We are concerned about maintaining peace in this world. Any little action that we can take, however, small that may be, we shall take as far as Ceylon is concerned. Ceylon feels that peace cannot be established in this world by hatred or revenge or by suspicion or by keeping nations under subjection. That would only develop into greater wars and greater misery. We support these views because they mean peace for Ceylon, peace for Asia and for the world.”

In the same speech he reiterated :

“Ceylon has not considered the question of joining any power blocs because peace in the world cannot be established by abusing each other or by building up hatred or revenge against our opponents.”

Role of a Peacemaker for Sri Lanka

It was this kind of a role of a peacemaker that Sri Lanka wanted to assume. The strength of the general opinion favoured such a climate which would be conducive to world peace. Sri Lanka wanted to contribute its own share in maintaining world peace by remaining non-aligned and working incessantly to bring the two power blocs to a closer understanding of each other. It was this feeling which had coloured Kotelawala's appreciation of the Geneva Conference which had almost simultaneously met with the Colombo Conference (28 April-2 May, 1954). The Five Power Colombo Conference which gave rise to the concept of "Colombo Powers" was an "undoubted success" in as much as it drew "the attention of Asia to the necessity of her playing her part in international affairs" as also having the "salutary effect" on the negotiations at Geneva tipping "the balance in bringing about the settlement in Indo-China."⁵¹ China too was harping on the idea of Asian unity and solidarity. She did not miss the opportunity provided by the Geneva conference to voice this feeling. Addressing the Conference on April 28, 1954, the Chinese Premier Chou En-Lai had struck the note of Asian unity which touched "a vibrant cord in the hearts of people all over Asia."⁵²

In such a situation it was not possible even for an avowed opponent of Communism like Kotelawala to refuse China a place in the Afro-Asian World. Thus at the next meeting of the Colombo powers at Bogor (in Indonesia) on 28th December 1954 for the finalization of the proposed conference of Asian and African nations to be held at Bandung while refusing to shut his "eyes to the international nature of communism" and its growing influence in Sri Lanka,⁵³ Kotelawala agreed to invite communist China to the Conference to be held at Bandung. He said: "Asia is one and indivisible". Geographical barriers of oceans and mountains and rivers could no longer stand in their way of unity. As he conceded later:

"Our attitude in Bogor as regards Communist China was that any independent country is entitled to select its

own form of government. If China goes Communist, and the Communist regime is acceptable to the Chinese people, it is no concern of her neighbours so long as China respects their sovereignty."⁵⁴

The Chinese premier realising that the world was no longer divided into two opposing blocs in view of the existence of a "middle-of-the-road" force, and for its own "urgent need for diplomatic flexibility"⁵⁵ sent a message greeting to Premier Kotelawala on Sri Lanka's National Day, 2 February 1955. It was more like a thanks giving letter intended to portend a genial image of China than just a wish for "Sino-Ceylonese relations to grow increasingly in the cause of maintaining peace in Asia and the world."

Bandung Conference

The conference of twenty-nine Afro-Asian states at Bandung in Jawa (April 28-29, 1955) brought together for the "first time" the Communist and non-Communist leaders of Asia and Africa and provided an occasion for these leaders to seek ways and means of cooperation with one another. The Bandung conference was hailed as an "outstanding achievement"⁵⁶ representing a "landmark in Asia's march towards international recognition."⁵⁷ It heralded "a new spiritual unity of Asia and Africa." Though its critics dubbed it as "the last call of westernized Asians to the moral conscience of the West"⁵⁸ and "an alliance of Communists and black men against non-communist whites,"⁵⁹ Bandung was definitely an achievement in itself.

Despite overt and covert manoeuvres by imperialists to frustrate the Bandung conference it proved to be a crowning success, a "signal achievement". The imperialist agents put a time bomb inside the Indian aircraft *Kashmir Princess* carrying Chinese delegates and the ill fated plane crashed over the Indian Ocean. Fortunately, Chinese Premier Chou En-Lai was not travelling by that plane. U.S.A. also threatened to stop all aid to some of the countries who participated in the meet. When such threats failed to yield the desired results, the U.S.A. tried to torpedo the conference from within through

Pro-west delegates who raised the question of Soviet and Chinese colonialism and pleaded for the two China thesis.

Still this conference proved to be unique in various ways. This was the first rallying point of national liberation forces and movements of Asia and Africa. No such conference would ever take place again. It was from here that the idea of non-alignment began to crystallise. It was for the first time that China participated in such a gathering and showed its willingness to cooperate in furthering peace in Asia and the world. It brought "a measure of respectability" to China "throughout Asia."⁶⁰

Chou En-Lai projected himself even before his critics "to be a reasonable man who was prepared to respect the views of others. . . ."⁶¹ His performance was masterly; amiability in person, he charmed all who met him.⁶² Even Kotelawala was not spared his contagious affability. He did his best to allay the fear of China from the minds of Afro-Asian leaders and succeeded to some measure by establishing personal friendship with many of them. Kotelawala came to accept him as a "pleasant and affable neighbour."⁶³ Besides invoking such good feelings from one of his arch enemies, Chou assured Kotelawala that he was prepared to keep Ceylonese communists "out of China." Chou also informed Kotelawala that the Cominform which seemed to Kotelawala "the international symbols of subversion" was not a Chinese but a "Russian organization."⁶⁴ Besides showing peaceful intentions, the Chinese Premier showed his country's willingness "to speak with America" and to show this willingness granted the release of some of the American airmen China had held prisoners for long. The Chinese delegation had been meticulously chosen by Chou and was intended to please everybody. *The Times of India* columnist Onlooker summed up Chou's position of Bandung: "Brought in as a rakish wolf amid a flock of embarrassed and suspicious sheep, he succeeded by his lamb-like demeanour in making the rest look for more wolf-like than be."

Premier Kotelawala, however, despite his first impressions of Chou En-Lai and his show of good and peaceful intentions,

made "Communism" his main target of attack at Bandung. He seemed to have spoken as a mouthpiece of American imperialism and adopted a "different approach" than that taken up by the majority of participants. Instead of taking an uncommitted attitude over issues like communism and anti-communism and following the other host countries, he took up a pro-west attitude. His lining up with the view point of the US gave reasons to suspect that there was a "hand of Jacob" behind the "Voice of Easu."⁶⁵ As he took the stand on "Soviet colonialism" without consulting the sponsoring powers, offending China which was a friend of Soviet Union, it must have annoyed its neighbours, India, Burma and Indonesia. Nehru, however, was definitely annoyed by his behaviour. Such a view was not liked by the common man in Asia who was drunk on the heady wine of "Asian Spirit", "Asian Unity" and the "Bandung spirit." His extraordinary behaviour at Bandung added only further to his growing unpopularity in Sri Lanka. The opposition party wanted to capitalize on this anti-communist attitude of Kotelawala. Consequently, immediately after the conference John Kotelawala had to defend himself in the House of Representatives against the opposition charges contained in a non-confidence motion condemning his attitude at Bandung which had damaged the interest of Sri Lanka. *The Eastern World* (London) in its editorials of May 1956 on "Ceylon finds himself" commented :

"The cup of national frustration and humiliation was brought to overflowing by Sir John's extraordinary behaviour at the Bandung conference, where his unquestioning acceptance of US policies seemed to the other delegations as betrayal of Asian interests."

Meanwhile, China's treaty with India over Tibet, its role at Geneva conference and its magnanimity at Bandung had created an agreeable image of China⁶⁶ in the minds of the nationalist elements and the vast bulk of the uncommitted people of Sri Lanka. Kotelawala lost public sympathy because it was a time when it was "hardly possible for any statesman in South-East Asia . . . to get strong support from the West and his own people."⁶⁷ It was not surprising, therefore, that the Kotelawala

Government was rejected by the electorate in April 1956, swamped by the "Swabhasha" elites.

The UNP's foreign policy stand though tilted in favour of the West, cannot be characterised as servile following of the Western powers. Despite his ties with the Western world, her first Prime Minister, D.S. Senanayake displayed traces of independent stand on such matters as recognising China and advocating the concept of Asian solidarity and working towards its realization. However, it cannot be denied that due to his lack of experience in foreign affairs his policy lacked dynamism and strength. The other two successive Prime Ministers Dudley Senanayake and John Kotelawala, son and nephew respectively of D.S. Senanayake, inherited the same fears and active dislike of Communism. Still one good feature of younger Senanayake's tenure as Prime Minister was the Rubber-Rice Pact with China which has been characterised as a land-mark indicating a gradual movement of Sri Lanka towards a "neutralist stance." Even during Kotelawala's rule, despite his staunch anti-Communist attitude, there was a growing activism in relation to Asian regionalism and also to some extent towards non-alignment. But his pro-West stand took its own toll in the general elections of 1956.

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24. *The Times* (London), 6.9.1950.
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26. *Ibid.*, 15.7.1977.
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28. J.P. Jain, *China in World Politics : A Study of Sino-British Relations* (1959-1975), (New Delhi, 1976), p. 40.
29. John Kotelawala, *Between Two Worlds* (Colombo, 1954), p. 30.
30. John Kotelawala, *An Asian Prime Minister's Story* (London, 1956), p. 115.
31. *Ceylon Daily News*, 25.10.1953.
32. *Ibid.*, 14.12.1953.
33. *New York Times* (International Edition), 22.12.1953, p. 2 ; 4.1.1954, p. 2 ; 15.7.1954, p. 5 ; 9.12.1955, p. 10.
34. This legislation provided that US world withdraw all aid to those countries which were selling any strategic material to China in contravention of the U.N. embargo. Sri Lanka ultimately did not get any American aid due to this Act.

35. John Kotelawala (Prime Minister), *H. of R. Deb.*, Vol. 17 (7.5.1954), Col. 602.
36. R.G. Senanayake (Minister of Commerce and Trade), *H. of R. Deb.*, Vol. 13 (22.1.1957), Col. 1468.
37. *Financial Times* (London), 11.9.1951.
38. Dudley Senanayake (Prime Minister), *H. of R. Deb.*, Vol. 13 (20.1.1953), Cols. 1224-26. See also *Ceylon Treaty Series No. 1 of 1953*.
39. *H. of R. Deb.*, Vol. 12 (22.1.1953), Cols. 1467-68.
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The Bandaranaike Era (1956-59)

There was a nationalist upsurge in Sri Lanka accompanied by a Sinhalese cultural and religious revival from the vortex of which came "The People's Choice" S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike—riding a "wave of popularity such as no government before has had."¹ This Oxford educated man, whose name represented a curious admixture of "biblical, English, Portuguese and Sinhalese influences," had changed his faith from Christianity to Buddhism and had thoroughly identified himself even in dress and language with the aspirations of the Sinhalese masses. By advocating nationalism and socialism he was able to ensure the support of the urban and rural working classes. The Marxists helped him capture political power by entering into a no-contest pact with his party.² Bandaranaike, who represented the hope and aspirations of the Ceylon masses, not only succeeded in over-throwing the West oriented UNP but also brought forward "a new, emerging elite" which was markedly "less westernised, more traditionalist"³ and "essentially middle class."⁴ This electoral "revolution of 1956" was significant not only because it indicated the shift of political power from the Westernised bourgeoisie into the hands of the national bourgeoisie and petite bourgeoisie who lived in "small towns and villages" but additionally because it confirmed the direction Sri Lanka was to adopt in foreign policy affairs. The newly awakened nationalist forces in Sri Lanka supported Bandaranaike's call for "non-alignment" in foreign policy which was in keeping with the current feeling in the country and in most of newly freed Asia.

Bandaranaike brought a sharp change in the direction of Sri Lanka's foreign policy. As against the UNP which had tilted the balance actually to the West, Bandaranaike's United Front, for the most part being a Sinhalese nationalist government with its roots in Sinhalese speaking sections of the middle class, was more thoroughly Asian in outlook than the UNP. Ceylon Daily News on February 24, 1956 rightly remarked "... the new government's emphasis is on co-operation in the East rather than in the West." His odd assortment of the United Front, the MEP (Mahajana Eksath Peramuna), comprising his SLFP (Sri Lanka Freedom Party), Philip Guawardena's Marxist VLSSP (Viplavakari Lanka Sama Samaja Party), the Pro-Sinhalese Bhasa Peramuna (Language front) of W. Dahanayake, and group of independent MPs led by IMRA Iriyagolie, was deeply rooted to the soil and was congenial for pursuing "a policy of non-alignment while developing and maintaining friendly relations with all countries."⁵ Bandaranaike was of the view that for a small country of the size of Sri Lanka its foreign policy must neither be "anti-West" nor "anti-Communist" but it should be "pro-Ceylon."⁶

Commitment to Non-Alignment

With his electoral triumph Bandaranaike helped to transform political thought and action as well as the direction of its foreign policy from a colonial and western orientation to one which could claim to be national, indigenous and independent. His approach to foreign policy was determined by two important factors. First, he believed that both capitalist and the communist systems were the products of materialistic Western civilization and were therefore not suited to Asian conditions where spiritualism had remained a stronger force still deeply rooted in their culture. It would be better for them to adopt a "third way" for themselves which would enable them to discover a form of society best suited to their own needs. He was further of the opinion that given a period of peace, the turbulent streams of communism and capitalism would mingle to form a gentle rivulet of democratic socialism. It was his conviction that out of their conflict would arise a synthesis which would provide an answer to the various problems of the

under-developed countries. So the Asians would like to get some ideas and principles from both sides to construct "a coherent form of society" for themselves. Secondly, Bandaranaike believed that Sri Lanka, like other Asian countries recently independent, was faced with, a dual problem : that of converting a colonial society into a free society and of doing so in the context of a world which had itself changed.

While searching transitionally a solution to these dual problems Bandaranaike did not wish to bind his country to any particular bloc or ideology. His Oxford's liberal background made him, unlike his predecessor John Kotelawala, display no inbuilt antipathy towards communism. He was the most leading champion of the policy of non-alignment in Sri Lanka. Earlier, he had advocated a "Switzerland type policy of neutrality",⁷ but later on he felt convinced that non-alignment would be of greater advantages to Sri Lanka. It may be, interalia due to his great personal admiration for Nehru also, that he adopted the policy of "dynamic neutrality" already pursued by India. As the world was passing through "a period of transition" the old civilization yielding place to a new one, the policy of "live and let live" was the best solution to escape the cold war. The policy of non-alignment was the only policy conducive to world peace because only uncommitted nations could provide "a bridge over the gulf between the two opposing factions" of capitalism and communism. Being a Buddhist, Bandaranaike believed that what was needed was a rediscovery of the "middle way" because it was there that harmony lay. The policy of "non-alignment" or "dynamic neutrality" was in tune with the eternal law of Buddha's "Middle Way" and was best suited for Sri Lanka.

Under the leadership of Bandaranaike the government of Sri Lanka therefore boldly made the following declaration :

"In its foreign policy, my government will not align with any power blocs. The position of the bases at Katunayake and Trincomalee will be reviewed. Every endeavour will be made to establish close collaboration and cooperation with other countries. Consideration will be

given to the exchange of diplomatic representation with countries in which Ceylon is not at present represented.”⁸

As Sri Lanka was already admitted to the UN on December 14, 1955 after the withdrawal of Soviet Veto on a Package deal, Sri Lanka had given up any ill-will which was harboured during the UNP rule against the communist world. Hence, Sri Lanka apart from opening its door for trade to all nations, irrespective of their political creeds if beneficial to Sri Lanka, reviewed and considered the exchange of diplomatic representatives with Communist countries, where Sri Lanka was not represented till then. He wanted to establish diplomatic, economic and cultural contacts with all communist states whereas his predecessors had confined relations with communist states to trade alone. The UNP had established trade relations with a few socialist countries with China since 1952, Poland and Czechoslovakia since December 1965, and Rumania since March 1956, but these were negotiated and operated by *ad hoc* managements and no attempt had been made to establish even trade missions in those countries. By establishing diplomatic ties with the communist giants like USSR and China and sending representatives to other communist countries Bandaranaike wanted to “make an impact on the international scene” by establishing his policy of non-alignment on a “firmer basis.”

Opening of Diplomatic Relations with China

With S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike in power the establishment of diplomatic relations with China not only became possible but also inevitable. Though Bandaranaike had no commitment with communism he did not either treat it as a menace. To make things easier for him the Chinese Premier Chou En-Lai greeted him on his election and in his message of goodwill hoped that “through our joint effort, the friendly relations between our countries will be further developed.”⁹ Bandaranaike responded to this amiable gesture without any loss of time by declaring in his first policy statement that his government would reverse the decision of its predecessor not to allow diplomatic privileges in Sri Lanka to China and permission would be given both to Soviet Russia and China to enjoy those

privileges if they so desired. To create a still better environment Chou En-Lai invited Bandaranaike to visit China. Bandaranaike did not go¹⁰ possibly because he did not prefer to go to China first.

Bandaranaike, meanwhile, permitted exchanges of goodwill missions and cultural delegations. Among the important ones, one was the goodwill visit of teachers from Sri Lanka to China.¹¹ This was followed by an invitation to China to attend the celebrations of Sambuddha Jayanti commemorating 2,500 years of Buddhism in the Island in 1956-57. Bandaranaike permitted three top communist leaders of Sri Lanka to go to Peking and attend the Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. Another gesture of goodwill shown by Bandaranaike to Communist countries was the lifting of ban on the import of communist literature.

Chou En-Lai addressing the third session of the First National People's Congress on June 28, 1956 said that though there was still an "absence of diplomatic relations between two countries" it was "no hindrance to contacts between their governments." Mentioning the desire of the government of Sri Lanka to establish diplomatic relations with China he further said "we welcome this expression and propose that the two countries exchange diplomatic envoys."¹² On the other hand Bandaranaike at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in July 1956, pleaded for a more sympathetic attitude towards China by the Commonwealth countries. Arguing that 'China, was virtually the heart of the East', he averred that there could be no easing of tension in the Far East unless Western powers, particularly America, called off the cold war against China. He also pleaded for China's admission to the UN and his delegates at the United Nations kept on emphasising this point in so many words.

It was in this cordial environment and in conformity with his policy of regularising diplomatic relations with China that the Prime Minister Bandaranaike announced on August 1, 1956 that a mission would be sent to Moscow and Peking to hold discussions in those countries about diplomatic relations and about

general matters regarding trade, industries and agriculture. A three-men mission headed by Claude Cores, Sri Lanka's then High Commissioner in the United Kingdom, left for Moscow and then for Peking towards the end of August 1956. The delegation successfully negotiated agreements regarding exchange of diplomatic representatives, and started negotiations for a trade and payments agreement and an agreement for technical cooperation. The Mission also recommended that the Chinese delegation due to visit Sri Lanka for talks on revision of Rubber-Rice Pact, as the terms of the first pact was to end by 1967, should have its scope enlarged, and be empowered to commence such negotiations. Chou En-Lai expressed his satisfaction at the conduct of these negotiations in his message to Prime Minister Bandaranaike.¹³ In September 1956, the Sri Lanka Government formally announced its decision to establish diplomatic relations with China,¹⁴ though the missions were not exchanged until Premier Chou En-Lai's visit to Sri Lanka in January 1957 when the details about the exchange were finalised. Subsequently in March 1957, Wilmont A. Perere left for Peking as Sri Lanka's first Ambassador to People's Republic of China.¹⁵ However, the first Chinese Ambassador to Sri Lanka came not earlier than May 1957.

Before the establishment of formal diplomatic relations and exchange of Ambassadors, social and cultural delegations visited each country. An exhibition of Chinese art was opened by the Prime Minister at the Art Gallery on October 10, 1956. A Chinese trade union delegation also visited Sri Lanka for the first time in February-March 1957 which was accorded a public reception. China, henceforth, which had only enjoyed some influence on the "Ceylonese left",¹⁶ started having a "foothold", even in a section of the business community which had profited¹⁷ because of the famous Rubber-Rice Pact and the public at large infused with the spirit of Asianism. Indeed, China's export of rice to Sri Lanka won the sympathy of the general Sinhalese masses. It is still surprising how communist China managed to export rice to Sri Lanka despite her own acute economic and food problems. It is more likely that rice for Sri Lanka was taken out of China's own rice bowls or purchased from other countries for the purpose of export. People's

China carried out the Pact even with serious inconvenience and disadvantage to herself.

Chou En-Lai visits Sri Lanka

Against such cordial background of developments during 1956 and early 1957, the two countries came close to each other and the visit of Chou En-Lai to Sri Lanka gave a further "fillip" to the growing friendly Sino-Sri Lanka relations. Chou En-Lai came to Sri Lanka on the 31st January 1957 to participate in the Buddha Jayanti celebrations. He was the first head of a Communist Government to pay a visit to Sri Lanka and this event proved to be an important step in strengthening Sino-Sri Lanka relations. A "Red Carpet Welcome" awaited him and his party with large crowds greeting him everywhere with cheers and jubilations. Greeting the people with "Jaya Weba" (Victory be yours), he expressed the wish that countries having different political systems could live together. Addressing a public meeting on Sri Lanka's Independence Day, he reminded Sri Lanka of its co-operation with Red China at Bandung and further added that "Bandung spirit" has brought greater developments in relations between the two countries in a short space of time. Further, in a Press conference at the Queen's House, the Chinese Premier emphasised that the peace and prosperity of Asia must be planned and worked out by Asians themselves. He hated the idea of Asian countries obtaining foreign aid and assistance leading to military pacts.⁸ He also extended invitation to N.M. Perera, the Marxist leader and V.A. Sugathadasa, the Mayor of Colombo, to visit Peking besides inviting the Prime Minister Mr. Bandaranaike. Addressing the joint meeting of the House of Parliament, Chou En-Lai stated that the Chinese people respected and admired the independent policy of peaceful neutrality and anti-colonialism pursued by Sri Lanka. Explaining the foreign policy of his own country he elaborated :

"Countries large or small, strong or weak, are all equal and should have the right to implement their own independent and sovereign policies. They also have the obligation

- not to infringe on other countries' sovereignty not to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries."¹⁹

In a joint statement signed with Bandaranaike on February 5, 1957, these statements were reaffirmed, and the Bandung principles of international co-existence popularly known as "Panchshila" were to be further implemented by another called Afro-Asian conference at the earliest opportune moment. They further recorded their disapproval of world war, international tension, antagonistic military blocs and supported disarmament, including prohibition of nuclear weapons and tests and resolved that international disputes should be "settled by mutual understanding and peaceful negotiations." While upholding the banner of Asian solidarity they rejected the "Cold war" approach to the Egyptian and West Asian problems. On Kashmir issue they recorded their deep distress and appealed both the concerned parties to strive further for a peaceful settlement of this problem.²⁰ They pledged further to strengthen the ties of many centuries of old friendship, develop economic cooperation and cultural exchanges and foster cooperation to their mutual benefit and in the cause of Afro-Asian solidarity and world peace.

Deepening Sino-Sri Lanka Relations

After Chou En-Lai's visit to Sri Lanka there was a marked intensification of relations with China in trade, cultural, diplomatic and economic spheres. China's great rival in Asia was India,²¹ whose influence China was determined to curtail. India, belonged to Asia and spoke with a voice as authoritative as that of China to its weaker and underdeveloped neighbours. It was important for China to eliminate or prune the influence of India to assume the Asian leadership. Therefore, unlike India which was interested only in maintaining its old bond with Sri Lanka, China was determined to forge fresh links besides maintaining the old ones.

The Chinese propaganda literature translated into Sinhalese, was distributed on a very wide scale in Colombo and adjacent areas. It was reported that Chinese Embassy, its personnel

and other Chinese nationals working in Sri Lanka villages, particularly in rubber plantations, carried on an active propaganda.²² China simultaneously patronised cultural organizations like the Ceylon Peace Council and Ceylon China Friendship Association.²³

There was a revival of Chinese interest in the religious affairs of Sri Lanka. Boasting traditionally to be a Buddhist country, China did not hesitate to show that they were respectful of Buddhist religious values followed by Sri Lanka despite their own communistic ideologies. She also offered to help Sri Lanka develop its medicine industry and set up a textile mill. For the purpose it requested the Industries Minister of Sri Lanka to send a team of engineers and experts to China for discussions.

The First Rubber-Rice Trade Agreement which was to expire by the end of 1957, was renewed in the form of Second Rubber-Rice Trade Agreement for another five years beginning in 1958. According to the new agreement provision was made for the exchange of 30,000 tons of rubber for 200,000 tons of rice per year on a straight sale basis. With the lifting of the embargo on rubber by Malaya and Indonesia, the bargaining position of China had improved. So the premium and floor price on rubber was abolished and prices were to be fixed according to the prevailing rates in the international market.²⁴ Any imbalance was to be settled either in sterling or in "Chinese goods." Accordingly China began to supply textile and industrial goods to Sri Lanka besides rice. Amongst the Afro-Asian countries Sri Lanka stood second after Japan as a buyer from and seller to China and immediately after Britain and India China occupied a third position in foreign trade with Sri Lanka.²⁵ China which had failed to pay its debt to Sri Lanka under the first pact due to lack of sterling now not only began to minimize its outstanding balance in sterling by settlement, but improved its position to turn its adverse balance in a favourable one. The imports from China shot up to a phenomenal height of Rs. 151.8 million while the exports to China declined from 167.4 million in 1957 to Rs. 77.7 million during 1958 remaining constant the next year. "Chinese goods"

in the form of textiles flooded the Sri Lanka market and started posing a threat to Indian and Ceylonese textile goods. China, in order to popularise its own goods, organised a large exhibition in Colombo in the fall of 1959 where besides machinery, household and industrial products, textiles and various consumer goods were on sale at the lowest possible rates.²⁶ Naturally, China gradually came to occupy the position of the fourth largest supplier of goods to Sri Lanka : its position being next to the U.K., India and Japan.²⁷

A new dimension to the Sino-Sri Lanka relations was added with the signing of an agreement on Economic Aid on the basis of "the Resolution on Economic Cooperation and Mutual Assistance adopted at the Bandung Conference and the five principles of Pancha Sila." By this agreement China granted economic assistance for Sri Lanka's rubber replanting subsidy programme to the extent of Rs. 75 million in commodities during the next five years.²⁸ The goods were to be supplied free of cost and the Government of Sri Lanka was requested under the agreement to spend an amount equal in value to the goods supplied under the agreement by China on rubber replanting programme. Besides these economic and diplomatic relations, educational and cultural contracts were also being developed. Also an air-transport agreement based on the principle of equality and mutual benefit was signed between Sri Lanka and Communist China on March 26, 1959. They finally agreed to detailed agreements for air communication in May 1961. Through an earlier agreement concluded in 1958, Peking denoted 100,000 yuan (\$ 42,600) and 15 tons of medical supplies to Sri Lanka to aid flood victims in that country. Besides, it further extended a loan of 50 million rupees to Sri Lanka in the form of equipment and material over a four-year period at an interest of 2½ per cent to overcome problems caused by recent floods.³⁰ This loan was made at the request of the Government of Sri Lanka for rehabilitation work following the floods. This loan was to be repaid in ten years starting in 1961. Vimla Wijewardana, the then minister of Health in Sri Lanka, had made arrangements to secure the services of Chinese doctors to train the local doctors in the ancient Chinese methods of diagnosis and treatment, but her

idea could not materialise as doctors practising western system of medicine were by their own professional code of conduct debarred from associating with the medical personnel not recognised by the British Medical Association.

China, in this way, by making concessions in trade and by granting loans, aid, and free gift and collaborating in educational and cultural affairs, was pursuing its political objective very successfully. Sri Lanka by 1960 turned into a 'show window' of Chinese goods. So much so that while the total aid and loan given by U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. was Rs. 215 million and Rs. 148.8 million respectively till 1960, China's share reached Rs. 125 million mark. Long rightly observes :

"The fact that China has entered into foreign aid operations is striking in view of her own relatively low level of development and her continuing dependence on Soviet aid to carry out her industrialization. The fact demonstrates not only growing interest of China in South and South East Asia but also the capacity of the Government to allocate its resources for political objective."³¹

Anti-Chinese Activities

While Chinese scholars and diplomats propagated that in trading with friendly countries in Asia and Africa "China does not pursue a competitive policy and does not strive to capture their markets" rather endeavours to "assist them in developing their industry and achieving economic independence,"³² there is no dearth of people who like Edgar Snow believes that "Nothing the Chinese publicly do is without purpose."³³ Rightly, therefore, so much of display of zeal in granting aid, loan, etc. added to the suspicion of the rightist element in Sri Lanka politics. The UNP which had during its rule (1948-56) looked upon China with suspicion and had entertained only trade relations, avoiding cultural and political contacts, began to feel that the government was succumbing more and more to Communist subversion and interference. *The UNP Journal* in one of its editorials commented of Chinese and Russian influence thus :

“The Chinese and Russian Embassies in the country while paying international tribute to the principle of coexistence appear to be quite openly pursuing a different line in practice.”³⁴

It was also believed in some quarters that the Soviet and Chinese communist embassies provided money for key strikes in the port of Colombo, and helped spread communal riots and were also busy in propagating their views among intellectuals and peasants.³⁵

It was also complained that guns were being brought into Sri Lanka through the Russian Embassy.³⁶ Sri Lanka's independence was being threatened by the secret activities of the large-size Russian and Chinese Embassies in Sri Lanka. From the very size of their establishments one could be certain of their propagandist and other activities.³⁷

The role of politics and diplomacy in China's trade is not easy to define. Joining the world foreign aid business in the mid-1950's, it stepped up its aid efforts in late 50's and early sixties in a bid to eliminate the Indian influence on the Indian sub-continent and to keep the Russian influence in Asia at bay. Besides following “lean to all sides” policy in economic relations (as against the former, first five year plan policy of leaning to one i.e. “the Soviet Side”) it also intended, whenever practicable, to promote China's variant of “national liberation”, socialist revolution, and the Marxian-Chinese gospel. It was due to these facts that there were talks “concerning improprieties in the P.R.C.'s dealings with sympathetic Ceylonese.”³⁸ India's size, nearness, and traditional cultural dominance offended the sensibilities of some Sri Lankans and relations with China helped reduce the feeling of dependence on India. China capitalized on this feeling. It encouraged India's immediate neighbours not necessarily to ally themselves with China but to draw closer among themselves for the promotion of their common interests vis-a-vis India. But in the case of Sri Lanka, China was able to project not only a very friendly image but also to neutralise the governmental opinion. This was evident in the case of Chinese involvement in disturbances in Tibet in

1959 and the consequent rift between China and India as China employed troops to establish her authority in Tibet and along the ill-defined Indo-Tibetan border.

The Chinese intrusion in Tibet and the flight of Dalai Lama to India created apprehensions regarding Chinese intentions even in Sri Lanka. The suppression of Tibetan national uprising by Chinese forces evoked protest in Sri Lanka where fellow Buddhist organizations held public meetings to condemn Chinese action. They demanded that the question of Tibet should be raised before the United Nations³⁹ or placed before an Asian Regional Conference to be summoned for the discussion of the problem. A delegation of Bhikhus wanted to submit a document containing resolutions asking China to quit from Tibet and restore its independence, to the Chinese Ambassador in Sri Lanka but the gates of the embassy were closed for them and they had to return disappointed.⁴⁰ In June 1969 the Sri Lanka Maha Bhikhu Sangamaya organised a public meeting to arrange for the collection of funds to help Tibetan refugees in India, to invite the Dalai Lama to Sri Lanka, and to summon a conference of various religious denominations to fight the communist threat. The Sangamaya even decided to ask the Prime Minister to invite the Dalai Lama to Sri Lanka and accord him all the honour due to the head of a State.

The Government Stand : A Favourable Trend for China

However, China's incursion of Tibet in 1950-51, following Chinese insistence that Tibet remain under the sovereignty of China, though aroused great concern in countries of South and South-East Asia, particularly in Buddhist countries such as Burma, Cambodia, Thailand and Sri Lanka, no overt attempt to denunciate the Chinese action was made by any South-East Asian Government except Malaya. The government of Sri Lanka supported the viewpoint of India and held that Tibet was "a domestic affair" of China. Under the Sino-Tibetan Agreement of 1951 Tibet had agreed to be a part of China, with "the right to exercise national regional autonomy under the unified leadership of the People's Republic of China". The Chinese government set up a Preparatory Committee for the

autonomous region of Tibet in 1956. Dalai Lama was made the Chairman of this committee and a few Tibetans and Chinese were its members. The main purpose of the committee was to develop Tibet economically, politically and culturally.⁴¹ Hence for all intents and purposes Tibet was a part of China. Thus the revolt of Tibet and the consequent flight of Dalai Lama to India was, according to Premier Solomon Bandaranaike, "an internal affair of China" because Tibet was under the suzerainty of China and had no independent status.

Premier Bandaranaike claimed to have no authentic and reliable knowledge of the facts regarding the revolt. He tended to follow the Prime Minister of India who was intimately connected with the matter and expressed views more or less on the same lines. However, as Buddhists the question of Tibet was definitely a matter "that cause certain amount of feeling and a certain amount of perturbation", but all the government could do was to "hope and wish" for a speedy and "satisfactory solution of this problem" whereby, "with the continuance of the suzerainty of China over Tibet, the Tibetans are allowed to follow reasonably their own way of life."⁴² As it was an internal matter of China it could not be raised before the UN.

China had therefore no reason to be unhappy with Sri Lanka as it did not do anything to show her support to Dalai Lama and offend the Chinese government. Sri Lanka had only shown her willingness to lend her good offices in everyway to bring about a "satisfactory settlement" of this trouble. Sri Lanka did not want to displease this new found friend who could counter-balance the dead weight of India and supply, the needed trade articles and aid for its development. China, on the other hand, adjusted the balance of trade in Sri Lanka's favour extending the agreement on Economic Aid signed on 19 September 1957 for a further period of five years from January 1963 and enhancing the period of validity of the Agreement of Sri Lanka as a support in flood relief and rehabilitation works for a further period of three years.

Besides, China tried to mollify the Buddhist public opinion in Sri Lanka by presenting the famous tooth relic of Buddha to

them in 1961. However, religion which had played an important part in strengthening Sino-Sri Lanka relations declined in its intensity to influence the general masses, following Dalai Lama's bitter denunciations of Peking. But the Government remained unmoved despite the "deliberate genocide" carried out by the Chinese government in Tibet, after the suppression of the Tibetan revolt of 1959. Both the Indian and the Sri Lankan government remained silent on the issue because India did not wish to antagonise a friend and Sri Lanka did not want to lose a great benefactor. Though Bandaranaike was criticised heavily from both his supporters and opponents at home for his stand on Tibet on which local Buddhist sensibilities were highly aroused, yet he was not in a strikingly different position from a number of Afro-Asian leaders who were emerging as neutralists at this time : groping frantically for their way into establishing friendly relations with both Soviet Union and China. They were especially careful not to offend the susceptibilities of these countries.

Conclusion

Bandaranaike clearly was a trail-blazer who wanted a more affirmative role for Sri Lanka on the international stage, and in fact was able to cut out a path for Sri Lanka in the conflicting international powers situation and emerged as an Asian statesman of stature. Under his premiership Sri Lanka moved steadily towards a non-aligned position. Kotelawala's extreme anti-communism enabled Bandaranaike to emerge as a moderating influence in foreign affairs. His policy of non-alignment was acceptable to all because it was in tune with Asian nationalism and the aspirations of the "Common man". He was able to rub off the angularities of the extreme rightist forces represented by UNP and the extreme, dogmatic and doctrinaire views of the leftist parties bring about an internal balance of forces. As a result his policy of non-alignment was accepted by all sections of political opinion of Sri Lanka. One Trotskyite Party was already sharing the government. Even other political parties such as the Pro-West UNP, Pro-Soviet Communist Party, the Trotskyist LSSP and the Federal Party of the Tamils were also gradually convinced that the policy of non-alignment for Sri

Lanka was best suited for its proper role in world affairs. A broad consensus had thus evolved on the issue of non-alignment and its spirit was taken up by all political parties including the UNP without any further loss of time. The UNP abandoned its extreme pro-west position taken up by Kotelawala. The people were so much enamoured with the idea of non-alignment that when after the assassination of Bandaranaike (which took place on 25 September, 1959), W. Dahanayake became Prime Minister his deviations aroused so much resentment that he lost his seat in the general election of March 1960 and was later expelled from SLFP on December 11, 1960.

During Bandaranaike's leadership, it is claimed that non-alignment became "Pro-Ceylon" which meant that the country tried to be as central as possible from the conflicting poles. The relationship was restructured and relations were positively improved keeping in tune with the national interests. There is nothing to show that his predecessors overlooked national interest. Each of his predecessor had his vision of non-alignment and pursued it in the best interest of the country. However, we may conclude that in contrast with his predecessors S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike's foreign policy is a closer approximation to the 'ideal type' conception of non-alignment.

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Coming of Mrs. Bandaranaike to Power (1960-65)

An assassin's bullet caught SWRD Bandaranaike on 25 September 1959 imparting fatal injuries, to which he succumbed only the next day. The leader of the rightist element in his Cabinet, W. Dahanayake, was sworn in as the Prime Minister the very day Bandaranaike died. The rightist element, which had earlier been successful in precipitating the exit of Philip Gunewardena, the leader of the Trotskyite Party, from MEP, had grown stronger in SLFP. Its leader W. Dahanayake had little knowledge of foreign affairs and reportedly though not "openly pro-western" he definitely was "sympathetic towards the west."¹ As a result during his brief period in office the American lobby in Sri Lanka became active. However, at a time when the air was thick with rumours of an alleged conspiracy behind Bandaranaike's assassination and designs for a "Fascist Plot" to establish a rightist dictatorship, Dahanayake could not remain in office for long. Only after two months and a couple of days his government lost support in Parliament. The Parliament was dissolved and fresh election was fixed for 19th March 1960. Till then Dahanayake was to run the caretaker government. Still, despite alleged American backing to his leadership which enabled him to organise and finance his party in a brilliant manner, he lost his seat in the general election of March 1960. So intense was the resentment against him that he was rejected by his electorate and ultimately expelled from his own party.

However, the March 1960 general election brought forward the UNP as the single strongest party. Dudley Senanayake, as the leader of this party, took his oath of office as Prime Minister of Sri Lanka on 21st March 1960. Defeated in the House of Representatives on the address of thanks motion on 22nd April, this government could hold office for only a month. This government had announced to stick to "the principle of strict neutrality and non-alignment with power blocs" and "maintain friendship with all countries,"² yet it could not win the hearts of the people. In another general election held the same year on 20th July, the SLFP, with a new leader in Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the widow of the late SWRD Bandaranaike, was returned as the largest party in Parliament. She was sworn in as the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka on 21st July 1960.

Mrs. Bandaranaike's stand on Foreign Policy

Making the first official pronouncement on foreign policy Sirimavo Bandaranaike's government stated in Parliament :

"In External affairs, my Government will maintain its policy of non-alignment with power blocs and of neutralism and co-existence. My Government's relations with Commonwealth as well as foreign countries continue to be friendly."³

Her government made a determined bid to follow the principles of 'non-alignment' and "friendly relations with other countries", as propagated and followed by her late husband and favoured the side it believed "to be right regardless of the question who is stronger or who is weaker."⁴

Actual Trend in Foreign Relations : Disenchantment with the West

However, under Sirimavo Bandaranaike's rule Sri Lanka felt more close to the Communist countries like USSR and China than the European and American powers. The nationalisation of some of the assets of American and British oil

companies led United States government to suspend all aid to Sri Lanka. To add to Sirimavo Bandaranaike's difficulties came the World Bank decision not to provide any "accommodation" to Sri Lanka for her having expropriated foreign owned assets without payment of compensation in reasonable time.⁵ Further lack of appreciation of socialist policies was displayed by American attempt to ruin her economy by taking a decision to supply large quantities of soyabean and cotton seed oil to some of Sri Lanka's traditional coconut oil markets. American rubber stock pile disposal programme too affected Sri Lanka's economy in no less measure. Besides, the political activities of Peace Corps and Asia Foundation were not looked upon with favour by a section of the Ceylonese population. The volunteers of the Peace Corps were regarded by some as "meta-diplomats" and "a subversion unit under a scheme of 'aid' with a missionary halo" and the Asia Foundation was alleged to be engaged in financing various subversive organizations, bringing influential journalists and arranging for them trips to the United States.

Suspension of aid, therefore, which Sri Lanka was getting from the United States from 1956, was assumed to be an instrument of blackmail to lure Sri Lanka out of her socialist policies. American aid proved itself to be a "coercive weapon, a means of exerting political pressure."⁶ As many believed, not without substance, that "political motives inspired" suspension of aid.⁷ Even Sirimavo Bandaranaike had a feeling that the West intended to maintain its economic strangle hold over their economy. She talked of the "rapacious designs of the West" during her 1962 visit to China.⁸ Later on in the Parliament she had the audacity and courage to explain that the remark was made in the context of the emerging threats to the third world countries from "neo-colonialism". Such threats could only "proceed from some Western countries as recent international history has shown."⁹

Sri Lanka consistently refused to be intimidated by American suspension of aid. She placed "self-respect before Aid."¹⁰ She was not "prepared to accept aid as a condition to subordination, any political subordination of any sort and of any kind."¹¹ The

negotiations for compensation to the oil companies was immediately broken off by the Sri Lanka government. The American aid too once suspended could not be resumed till Sirimavo Bandaranaike remained in office. US-Ceylonese relations during her period were heavily strained.

Causes of anti-Western and Pro-China attitude

Behind the development of this anti-west, or to be more specific, anti-American attitude, was the fact that a resistance was developing against patronising powers and the former timidity and unquestioning acceptance of things was being replaced by self-prestige and self-esteem. Sri Lanka though a "poor" country had etched out a good image as a leader of the non-aligned government and had gained "Worldwide respect" even in the Security Council by adhering to the policy of "dynamic neutralism, peaceful coexistence and nonalignment with power blocs."¹² Besides, the general public opinion in Sri Lanka turned against America on the issue of the suspension of aid.¹³ The Chinese in their turn, encasied upon this sentiment by shrewdly basing their appeal to the Asian sentiment of the people and the government of Sri Lanka. As a result friendship and cooperation with China went on gaining strength during the regime of Sirimavo Bandaranaike. Sri Lanka associated with China in various other way apart from the rubber-rice pact. The barrier of ideology was broken down by the necessity of trade and aid which was so much needed for Sri Lanka's prosperity and China was so eager to oblige. Consequently when the Sino-Indian border conflict broke out in outright aggression by China on the Indian territory in October 1962, Sri Lanka resisted all pressures from elements within the ruling party and the opposition to brand China as aggressor.¹⁴ Particularly after the conflict China made a determined bid to draw Sri Lanka closer in her folds to use her against India. Her strategic location across India and Sirimavo Bandaranaike's diplomatic initiative suited China's purpose very well.

Sri Lanka and the Sino-Indian Border Conflicts

China's full absorption of Tibet in 1950-51, following forced

integration under its sovereignty, did not end disputes between India and China over other border territories. The Chinese leaders openly declared: "Tibet is China's palm, and Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Ladakh and north-eastern regions of Assam are its five fingers. Palm is now integrated into China, the fingers too will soon be its own."¹⁵ But temporarily with the problem of Tibet apparently eliminated as an irritant in Sino-Indian relations, Peking's "Peace offensive" launched under the slogan of "peaceful co-existence" and "Asian solidarity" succeeded in India between 1954 and 1957 which was marked by an atmosphere of friendship between the two countries. At least from 1957, in a clandestine manner and from 1959, publicly, the two governments came to odds over boundary territories involving at least 57,000 square miles, extending from the Aksai Chin area of Ladakh to territories in the north-east of India. The Indian Prime Minister acknowledged before Parliament in 1959 that there had been cases of "petty intrusion" of the border areas by Chinese troops during the last two or three years. In August and October 1959, Chinese troops attacked guard detachments on the Sino-Indian border in the Himalayas. Up to 20 October 1962 the disputes between India and China were generated by relatively minor border intrusions and incursions by Chinese forces. The real assault came on 20 October when the Chinese forces launched their full-scale offensive by taking Indian posts at different stations and moving upto a hundred kilometres into Indian territory. These offensives assumed the nature of war for which India was not prepared.

According to Indian version, Chinese forces crossed the international boundary in the eastern sector on 8 September 1962 and "While an exchange of notes on this subject was going on, made a massive attack on our Defence Forces on the morning of the 20 October all along the India-China border in the eastern sector as well as the western sector."¹⁶ The well planned Chinese offensive caught the Indian army unaware as a result they were defensive even in their own areas.

On the other side, according to the Chinese version, India was the aggressor which had deliberately provoked the war by launching massive armed attacks all along the line on the

Chinese frontier guards on October 10, 1962. The Chinese note said : "the Indian forces brazenly unleashed their massive general attacks on Chinese territory in the Sino-Indian border."¹⁷

The weeks following the war saw a hectic diplomatic activity of India and China in many capitals of Asia and Africa. Sri Lanka found itself in an uneasy position. It was the first major conflagration in the South Asian region of which Sri Lanka forms a part. Hence to Sri Lanka this violent tussle of the two giants of Asia was unfortunate an even which betokened "a tragedy for Asia and the world". The Government of Sri Lanka was "conscious of the serious economic implications even so far as our own country is concerned" if the struggle prolonged.¹⁸ However, with friendly benefactors on both sides Sri Lanka failed to take a clear stand and kept oscillating between China and India. Despite the message of Nehru of 26/27 October addressed to Heads of Government, the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka besides appreciating this gesture had only these words to say :

"India would not want to do anything to prejudice her territorial integrity or self-respect by submitting to negotiations under pressure of armed forces."¹⁹

It however did not support India's stand or brand China the aggressor. It took no side and remained strictly neutral contrary to Indian expectations. Sri Lanka's refusal to brand China as the aggressor seems to be an outcome of the policy "to equate the adversaries" which according to a noted Indian scholar on affairs of Sri Lanka, amounts to a suspension of Sri Lanka's moral judgement on Chinese aggression. Sri Lanka's stand in this case was "the most intriguing" for the neighbouring friendly India was placed on "an equal footing" with distant China. Sri Lanka's "anxious and bewildered" silence until the cease fire not only portended a gloomy shadow over non-alignment but also brought to light the failure of India to win over immediate neighbours.

Reasons for the Neutral Stand

A scholar of Sri Lanka has summed up reasons for the neutral stand of the Government of Sri Lanka on the Sino-Indian border conflict. He writes :

“Ceylon exports more than 60% of her total rubber exports to China, and receives from her more than 40% of her total rice imports under a rubber-rice barter agreement which was first negotiated for a five year period in 1952, and which has been renewed regularly since. Since 1957, China has been a generous provider of economic and technical assistance to the island; to have categorically supported India would, therefore, have gravely imperilled the Ceylonese economy in that it would have entailed a reappraisal of the rubber-rice agreement with China and possibly its abrogation. Moreover, it is clear that Ceylon’s neutrality on this issue stemmed also from the conviction that the principles of non-alignment were equally applicable to the Sino-Indian conflict as to the conflict between power blocs.”²¹

The economic thrust by China in Sri Lanka was profitable and beneficial to Sri Lanka. It had therefore high stakes in keeping China on friendly terms, China on the other hand was able to isolate India by concluding a number of border agreements with neighbouring countries : Burma (October 1960), Nepal (October 1961), Pakistan (1963) and Afghanistan (1962), and keeping Sri Lanka tied to its wheel. In the case of Burma and Afghanistan she concluded with them treaties of friendship and mutual non-aggression.²² Significantly enough, China signed the Third Five-Year Rubber Trade Agreement with Sri Lanka (1963-1967) on the eve of its armed invasion of India. To top all these, on the 9th of October 1962, the day after the Chinese forces crossed the international boundary, Sri Lankans received a gift of 202 goods wagons, 13 tanker wagons and 8 passenger coaches from China.²³ Altogether we find that China had tilted the balance in the trade sphere heavily in favour of Sri Lanka. Compared to its trade with India, Sri Lanka had a very lucrative trade with China.

Factors against India

For many good reasons like geography, history and even military strategy Sri Lanka could not go against India and "tried for a long to stay on the fence". However, due to economic compulsions it may have gone "closer to Chinese lines" still it had to think of India.²⁴ Indeed, in the sphere of trade, commerce and civil aviation India's attitude sometimes pricked Sri Lanka. The two Tobacco Agreements concluded by India with Sri Lanka after independence could not become popular in Sri Lanka. The resumption of overseas service by Air Ceylon was not particularly liked by India which was reluctant to concede her rights to carry passengers from or to Bombay. Even when these rights were conceded to Sri Lanka, Air Ceylon had to operate under some restrictions. Besides, India was unhelpful towards Sri Lanka's main items of export like coconut, rubber and tea and at times competed with her in the international market. Coconut products were the leading items of export to India from Sri Lanka. By 1956 Copra constituted 79% of Sri Lanka's total exports to India. But in April 1958 a ban was imposed on the import of coconut oil and quota restrictions was placed on the import of copra. The manufacture of synthetic rubber by India also provoked a sense of resentment among the Ceylonese who had a feeling that instead of manufacturing it India could have obliged Sri Lanka by buying rubber from her. Such small irritants, besides the major problem of persons of Indian origin in Sri Lanka went a long way in neutralising Sri Lanka during the Sino-Indian border conflicts of 1962. India had somehow taken Sri Lanka's support to be inevitable but in the circumstances prevailing then it was a wishful thinking. Sri Lanka was never a high priority factor in India's south Asian policy, except to the extent of a minor segment of trade, travel and co-operation as a nonaligned country.

Internal Opinion in Sri Lanka

The government of Sri Lanka might have taken a neutral stand or later on leaned towards China more than in favour of India, the public opinion was deeply divided on this issue. At least two of the major political parties of Sri Lanka gave

their unqualified support to India. Dudley Senanayake, the UNP leader and the leader of the opposition, in a letter addressed to the Indian Prime Minister, Nehru, condemned the Chinese aggression and expressed his and his party's support for India. The MEP led by Phillip Gunawardena also came out in open support of India, and through its journal as well as through public meetings strongly condemned Chinese aggression.²⁵ The press in Sri Lanka was in consonance with the opinion of these political parties. The strongest support, however, as was inevitable, came from the Tamil Parties in the island. The Federal Party, representing mainly the Tamil Community of Sri Lanka, and the Ceylon Workers' Congress (CWC) and Ceylon Democratic Congress (CDC) together representing the bulk of the immigrant Indian estate workers, not only came out openly in support of India but also began to organise volunteers to fight the Chinese and raised contributions for the Indian National Defence Fund. The government, however, on its part refused facilities for remittance to India of funds so collected. Besides, some of the Sinhalese Buddhist organizations also maintained that the Sangh should awaken the Buddhists to the dangers of China's aggression over India and general Sinhalese masses too were not lacking in their support to India and were even generous in donating to the Indian National Defence Fund.

On the other side, there were anti-Indian opinions vented by Jatika Vimukti Peramuna (JVP), an extreme Communalist group which condemned India as the aggressor and maintained that "China was legitimately defending its frontiers."²⁶

A third kind of opinion represented by the Communist Party of Sri Lanka was also evident. While generally siding with China, this party maintained somewhat an equivocal attitude due to the party's own internal dissensions which had cropped up out of the Sino-Soviet ideological dispute.

The consensus of neutralist opinion on India-China conflict was reflected in the government party, the SLFP which was,

however, split between pro-Indian and neutralists. Thus, while some of its influential members openly condemned China and donated manificently to the Indian National Defence Fund, others advocated that in view of Sri Lanka's national interest and her stand on foreign policy affairs and on nonalignment, it should follow a policy of cautious nonalignment instead of supporting either China or India. The LSSP, although in opposition during the Sino-Indian conflict, (joined the government in June 1964), had its pro-India lobby. Its secretary, Leslie Goonewardena was of the view that the conflict should be settled by an "agreed arbitration."²⁷

Mediation by Sri Lanka in the Sino-Indian Border Conflict

Despite such a strong public opinion in favour of India Sirimavo Bandaranaike remained "doggedly neutral" resisting all kinds of pressures from within her party and outside it.²⁸ Her representative in the UN General Assembly while speaking three days after the opening of hostilities on Sino-Indian border meticulously avoided any reference of aggression and took an opportunity to plead for the inclusion of China in the United Nations. He could not see any "differences of vital national interests involved, neither economic rivalry, nor questions of hegemony, nor ancient grudges, nor deep rooted fears; not even ideological differences, for both have varying species of socialist societies." It was a dispute generated purely by a difference of the interpretation of what is known as the "Mac Mohan line." Instead of adopting either a pro-India or pro-Chinese stand and indicating the aggressor, Sirimavo Bandaranaike found it more pragmatic to explore the possibility of ending the armed conflict. For the purpose she was in constant communication with the Prime Ministers of India and China. Sri Lanka saw in the serious situation the possibility of a world conflagration fatal to mankind and was therefore willing to take all possible steps to contribute towards a peaceful settlement of this problem. The Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike especially offered her good offices to seek an end to the

armed conflict. However, on 21st November 1962, China unilaterally declared a cease fire and as per their announcement carried out their planned withdrawal from December 1. But Sri Lanka went ahead with its plan and convened a Conference of six non-aligned countries. Representatives from Burma, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Ghana, Indonesia and U.A.R. met at Colombo from December 10 to 12 to hammer out a plan to prevent further deterioration in the serious situation between India and China and suggest measures to bring the two countries together to the negotiation table. The outcome of the conference generally known as "Colombo Proposals" were explained by Sirimavo Bandaranaike in person to Peking and New Delhi. She reached Peking on 31st December and held discussions over the proposals with Chou En-Lai the following day. The Indonesian foreign Minister Subandrio helped her in conducting the negotiations. She left Hongkong for New Delhi on the 10th January to conduct negotiations with the Indian Prime Minister and other Indian leaders. Here she was assisted by Kafi Asante Ofori Atta, Ghana's Minister for Justice and Mr. Ali Sabry, UAR's President of the Executive Council.

Sirimavo Bandaranaike came back to Colombo satisfied with the discussions held at Peking and New Delhi. She believed that "the proposals would ultimately prove to be an acceptable basis for direct negotiations."²⁹ But whereas India accepted the Colombo Proposals in their entirety, China began making efforts to wriggle out and was "peevish and angry at losing some of its diplomatic initiative and at being compelled to take the onus of rejecting the proposals of friendly countries with whom it had made such a great show of solidarity."³⁰ China while accepting "in principle" the proposals of the Colombo Conference as a preliminary basis for meetings of Chinese and Indian officials to discuss stabilization of the cease-fire and disengagement and to promote Sino-Indian boundary negotiations, was openly critical of these proposals as an obstacle in the way of direct negotiations between India and China as also contradictory, fallacious and ambiguous in some matters of detail.³¹

Sri Lanka's role as a Peace-maker

Sri Lanka's role as a peace-maker in the Sino-Indian conflict was motivated by her desire to prevent an open rupture between two countries with both of which she had deep economic and commercial ties and with neither of which she wanted a loss of existing goodwill and amicable relations. Sri Lanka therefore abstained from judging the conflict as a moral issue. Instead of taking sides and passing judgements on the merits of their dispute. She tried to bring them on the negotiating-table to enable them to patch up their own differences. Sirimavo Bandaranaike stated that these peace efforts were "perhaps the highest of Ceylon's efforts in seeking to achieve its foreign policy aims."³² A war in the neighbourhood would not have threatened only Sri Lanka's independence but it may well have meant "our total destruction."³³ So, war had to be averted and peace restored.

Global configuration and the Chinese aims and ambitions

Sri Lanka miserably failed to gauge the long-term implications of Chinese attack on the Indian territory. She did not take into account the expansionist designs of China which was spreading its tentacles far and wide as was proved subsequently. It was alleged that Peking planned "to create a kind of super-state in Asia (and later—not only in Asia) that would spread over the greater part of the mainland—from the Pacific Ocean to the Caspian Sea and from the Indian Ocean to the Bearing Sea—and be inhabited by nearly a third of the world's population."³⁴ In fact, as early as 1954 Premier Chou En-Lai, in a report to a special conference of world Communist parties held in Moscow, claimed :

"South-East Asia, India and Japan are primary targets. The next step is to reach North Africa through the Middle East and the Suez Canal. The third step is to push toward the Sahara from North Africa. Australia is included in the fourth step of the plan."³⁵

Peking strategists therefore sought influence and control

over not only South-East Asia, but South Asia, the Middle and Near East, and in due course, Eastern-Africa and Australia. In the way of these ambitions lay India, a large developing country of tremendous promise and so it was the first target. Indeed, China meant to play "the role of Asia." A large powerful state close to what was earlier the Celestial Empire could not be tolerated. Hence China sought to tarnish the image of India in the new states of Asia and Africa by making it look weak and donning the mantle of Third World leadership herself. There lies the motive of China in being included in the third world fraternity so that she can bring the countries of Asia and Africa under its influence. Nehru was right when he remarked in his letter to Veteran freedom fighter Ganesh Singh Pakhtoon dated 16 February 1963 :

"China wants other countries round about here to be in her sphere of influence. In other words, China want to be the dominant power in Asia. . . ."

By attacking India and later on declaring unilateral cease-fire she was able to create an image of China as the most powerful state in Asia. In her efforts to humiliate India, she adopted the policy of presenting herself as the "genuine friend and protector of small neighbours" of India from what it called Indian expansionism and also drawing these countries away from India. Naturally Sri Lanka including Pakistan, Burma, Cambodia and Indonesia began to cling to China because India was no longer a counterweight against China. The Chinese notion that "petty nations must occupy subordinate positions"³⁶ and that "in international relations respect is only gained by inspiring fear,"³⁷ proved to be true as far as these nations were concerned. Moreover, as a part of its new tactics, it began talks with small bordering states aimed at settling by negotiation long-standing boundary disputes. An important reasons behind this move of Peking and its particular timing of them was to isolate India from its neighbours and portray it as the only neighbouring country unwilling to negotiate its differences. China was successful in its efforts to a great extent.

The Sino-Soviet Rift and its impact over Sri Lanka

The spill over of the Sino-Indian border conflict had its own toll on the Communist Party of Sri Lanka. Soviet Russia which initially tried to maintain a balance between a potential friend that was India and a close recalcitrant comrade, that was China, finally came out in favour of India by July 1963 after being estranged by China. The Sino-Indian conflict above a wedge between the growing Chasm of Sino-Soviet rift. The Sino-Soviet rift led to a split in the Communist Party of Sri Lanka and the Moscow wing which was in majority never agreed to the position of the Chinese leaders on opening the border hostilities with India. The position adopted by the two groups however were ideological. The main controversy centred around the concept of "peaceful co-existence." The Pro-Chinese Communists were opposed to the Pro-Soviet view that there could be peaceful coexistence without total elimination of imperialism. The "splitters" as the Pro-Chinese group was called was expelled from the Communist Party in 1963. Both groups claimed to have their own Communist Party and held their separate Seventh Congress—the Pro-Chinese in January 1964 and Pro-Soviet in April 1964. Though the Pro-Peking group had no representation in Parliament it had a good hold on the Trade Union Fronts. The Pro-Soviet Group continued to support the Government but the Pro-Peking wing condemned their policies.

The Trotskyite Parties LSSP and MEP also were not spared. The Fourth International Party established by Trotsky had opposed the policies of Stalin's Russia and showed an attitude more akin to China. Thus Trotskyite Parties affiliated to the Fourth International displayed clear indications of standing by the side of Chinese leaders. But in Ceylon this was not so. The MEP leader Philip Gunawardena was clearly opposed to China and adopted policies which were Pro-Moscow; and the LSSP led by N.M. Perera did not take sides and was not committed to either camp. However, reports from Soviet Union indicated that "Samara Koddy group" in LSSP had Chinese collaborations. Later on, when this party joined the coalition government with SLFP under Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the International Commit-

tee of the Fourth International sacked all its important leaders. Edmund Samara Koddy left the party along with his group and formed a group called the Lanka Sama Samaj Party, which gravitated ultimately towards the Pro-Peking Communist Party.

The Government of Sri Lanka, however, was cautious to adjust its policy of nonalignment to the facts of the "new cold war" between Peking and Moscow. It refused to take sides on matters of conflicting interests. When there were allegations of the existence of a strong Pro-China lobby in the Ceylonese Cabinet which opposed the signing of Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty by the Government, the Government emphasised that it signed the treaty after cool deliberations for which it claimed some time and there were about twenty nations who signed the treaty after Sri Lanka. The government categorically denied that the three week delay in signing the treaty was due to any influence of China. The signing of the treaty was a clear indication that Sri Lanka was acting independently of any power as it was a step against the well known Chinese view of opposing the treaty.

The Ceylon Government was cautious not to offend the generous China by including the Pro-Moscow Communist Party in the coalition government despite the fact that they had usually supported the Governments of both S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike and Sirimavo Bandaranaike to a great extent.

Despite her attitude of neutrality which coloured all policies of Sirimavo Bandaranaike, her government's stand towards international politics was closer to Soviet Russia especially on such questions as peaceful coexistence, nonalignment, and peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism, then to China. As against the Chinese view point the government of Sri Lanka believed that the "new rapprochement" between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. did not constitute a threat to world peace.⁸⁸ But due to her own pressing needs Sri Lanka was not in a position to antagonise China and therefore tried to maintain a balance between the contending international forces and refused to identify itself with either China, India or Russia. The Policy paid off well because it was able to earn the confidence and

friendship of all the parties. Even the UNP the main opposition party in Sri Lanka appreciated the stand adopted by Sirimavo Bandaranaike on the Sino-Soviet Rift, J.R. Jayewardena, the U.N.P. leader said: "There is trouble between Russia and China. I am glad that this government is not entering into the dispute."⁹

Sino-Sri Lanka Relations from 1962 to 1965

Despite neutral postures of Sri Lanka in matters of international conflict, the Sino-Ceylonese relations kept growing. They reached the peak after the Sino-Indian border conflicts, the phase ending only with the fall of Sirimavo government at the March 1965 hustings. Collaborations in political and economic spheres were intensified. When Sirimavo Bandaranaike went to Peking with the Colombo proposals and its explanations she was warmly received. Her neutralist stand in the Sino-Indian dispute was greatly appreciated and the joint communique signed by the Prime Ministers of Sri Lanka and China in Peking on January 8, 1963 affirmed that :

"China and Ceylon are bound by many ties of friendship, economic cooperation and cultural and religious exchanges. The two Prime Ministers are determined to strengthen these ties, further develop economic cooperation between the two countries and to work together in international relations in the cause of Asian-African solidarity and world peace."¹⁰

Vice-Premier Po-I-po speaking on the occasion of Ceylonese National Day reception in Peking on 4th February 1963 reiterated in the same vein :

"There is a long standing traditional friendship between China and Ceylon, and our two peoples have lived together amicably for generations. . . .our two countries have established good relations of mutual assistance and cooperation in the economic, trade and cultural spheres."¹¹

Keeping up the spirit of the joint communique of 8th January 1963, Sri Lanka and China entered into a Maritime Agreement on 25th July 1963, which gave most favoured nation

treatment to the contracting parties in respect of commercial vessels engaged in cargo and passenger services to and from the two countries or a third country. This agreement came in for a lot of criticism from the opposition bench because it was favourable to China alone as Sri Lanka had no shipping line and neither had she any ship of her own. This agreement was taken as an instance of the increasing Chinese influence in Sri Lanka under Sirimavo Bandaranaike's government. These charges were refuted by the government spokesmen who pointed out that a similar agreement existed between Sri Lanka and the Soviet Union since February 1962 and that Sri Lanka was prepared to sign similar agreements with any other willing government. The government categorically denied the charges against them that the country had signed a Naval Pact with China which gave the Chinese a base in Sri Lanka as "absolutely false and without any foundation."⁴² The charge could be made because of the concentration of the island's trade with China on the strategic port of Trincomalee. The UNP and its leader Dudley Senanayake made a good political capital out of this charge but when it subsequently came into power in 1965 it did not take any steps to abrogate the agreement despite its earlier criticisms of it.

On November 16, 1963 the China National Machinery Import Export Corporation and the Government of Sri Lanka signed an agreement under the Economic Aid Agreement of 1962 at Colombo in which China agreed to install three textile mills and 1200 power looms in Sri Lanka. The machinery of an estimated value of Rs. 5,000,000 was a free gift to the Department of Rural Development and Small Industries of Sri Lanka.⁴³ Earlier this year at the invitation of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, Comrade Sanmugathan, General Secretary of the Ceylonese Trade Union Federation made a friendly visit to China from May 24 to 30, 1963 and in a Joint Statement agreed to exchange delegations, material, publication, experience and information besides strengthening mutual contacts.⁴⁴

The China-Sri Lanka joint communique on trade talks revealed that the protocol relating to the exchange of commodi-

ties for 1964 was to be a total value of 100,000,000 rupees for each side.⁴⁵ In an interview to Hsinhua, S.D. Bandaranaike, Head of the Ceylonese Parliamentary Group stated that China was the “guiding star to the oppressed countries”, and that the strength of China was the strength of the oppressed countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America because China helped these countries in their struggle against imperialism, colonialism and in building up their country.⁴⁶ This statement by S.D. Bandaranaike was made in the light of the deep economic relations existing between Sri Lanka and China.

On the nationalisation of two American and one British Oil Companies Caltex and Esso and Shell respectively, and 106 foreign insurance firms there was a great furore in the American press and America even went to the extent to stopping all economic aid to Sri Lanka. But these measures were highly appreciated in China as no small achievement because all sort of pressure were brought to bear upon the government to call these measures off. These measures were also appreciated by Chou En-Lai on his second visit to Sri Lanka in February 1964. The withdrawal of foreign military bases from Sri Lanka taking over of foreign educational institutions and foreign enterprises, including insurance business and the distribution of petrol were termed as “proper measures” significant to the consolidation of national independence, and the development national economy and culture. Referring to foreign aid, Chou En-Lai expressed appreciation that Sri Lanka was not ready to barter away the independence and honour of the people for it. This comment perhaps was made with reference to the suspension of U.S. aid on nationalization issue. It seems, in order to compensate the loss incurred by Sri Lanka for her socialistic policies, Chinese Premier agreed on further expansion of trade in processed and semi-processed materials for the promotion of industrialization and consented to enhance economic aid for building up Sri Lanka's economy. Besides conceding to provide 25 million Yards of Chinese textiles worth approximately Rupces 20 million in the form of aid, the Chinese Premier reiterated the offer made some time earlier to give Sri Lanka a gift of 30,000 tons of rice Chou En-Lai also agreed to construct an international conference hall combined with a national theatre in Colombo in memory of

the late Mr. Bandaranaike.⁴⁷ China was willing to supply more rail coaches under a Rs. 15 million aid scheme and agreed to consider a request for light tractors.⁴⁸

Keeping in view Sri Lanka's economic difficulties accruing from the stoppage of American and World Bank aids, Chinese government decided in May 1964 to waive the interest on all loans given to Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka was till then paying an interest of 2½ per cent on all loans granted by China and had paid more than Rupees one million on a Rupees 50 million loan which too was treated as part of the loan instalments. China was even willing to provide further interest free loan to Sri Lanka for her economic development and it agreed to give an interest free loan of Rs. 20 million to Sri Lanka besides extending for one year the period of the payment of Rupees 27 million due to China in March 1964 under the Rubber-Rice Pact. China also relaxed for one year its rule that Ceylonese air service personnel should only be Ceylonese in order to provide Sri Lanka time to train its own personnel.⁴⁹

The trade Delegation coming from China in 1964 held discussions with the Government of Sri Lanka regarding further expansion of Sino-Sri Lanka trade. Besides the traditional item of export, i.e. rubber, Sri Lanka was to export footwear, rubber goods, batteries, and dried fruit to China. They agreed to expand trade between the two countries to an approximate value of Rupees 110 million either way. The trade balance in favour of China had reached Rupees 37 million still China was anxious to oblige Sri Lanka.⁵⁰

The foundation stone of the Bandaranaike Memorial Hall was laid down on 17th March 1965.⁵¹ On November 25, 1964, contracts were signed between the China National Complete Plant Export Corporation and the Government of Sri Lanka for the supply of equipment and machinery for the proposed textile factory at Pugoda. The contracts detailed about construction materials for the building of the factory and about technical personnel to install and commission the machinery. The total machinery, equipment and construction material valued at rupees 15,563,347 f.o.b. were to be supplied as a gift

under the Ceylon-China Economic Agreement and the whole thing was to be completed in about 3-4 years.⁵² By February 1965 China had displaced Japan and India to become the largest supplier of cloth to Sri Lanka.⁵³

Dependence on China

Sri Lanka's leaning towards China during the latter part of Sirimavo Bandaranaike's Premiership may be adduced to various reasons arising out of growing economic dependence on China as well as her own internal political conditions. China meticulously adhered to a pattern of aid and trade quite favourable to Sri Lanka. Despite her own economic difficulties arising out of Sino-Soviet rift and natural calamities, economic and political collaborations with Sri Lanka were intense. Serious drought in China during 1960-61 forced her to import large amount of food grains even at the expense of machineries. Agricultural imports in China jumped from 10 million dollars (0.5%) in 1959 to 575 millions in 1962 constituting 50% of total imports. Of this food grains alone account for about 40%. Still the trade balance of China in favour of Sri Lanka had reached Rupees thirty-seven million in 1963. Thus Sri Lanka's relation with China in this period may be characterised as one of "dependence", though it is "objective dependence" because there is absence of any threat in that dependence. Even if as professed their relations were of "interdependence" i.e. one of reciprocal dependence, where each had something to contribute to the other, China definitely had the "upper hand". Foreign aid in China's case is "not a science but an art". Its basic purpose has been bribery given to ensure Sri Lanka's neutral attitude during Sino-Indian border conflict and thereafter.

Internal Political conditions favoured Sri Lanka's Leaning towards China

Internal political conditions of Sri Lanka were also responsible for her leaning towards China. The Tamil dominated Federal Party had supported SLFP to come into power in July 1960. Soon after, the Tamils launched a "Satyagraha" against the government during March-April 1961. The Catholics too

were agitated on the issue of the nationalisation of Catholic mission schools. Besides the abortive military coup against the government followed by strikes of workers, technicians, and civil servants had given a thorough shake up to the government. The UNP was eager to take advantage of the chaotic situation. The Marxist parties, the MEP, the CP and the LSSP had formed a United Left Front (ULF) in August 1963. Meanwhile cracks had appeared in the SLFP. With defections and by-election defeats the government's majority was reduced to three. In such a situation it was necessary for the SLFP to enter into coalition for its own survival. This arrangement was possible only with the Leftist parties because an alliance with the UNP was not feasible. The government was not willing to align with ULF, which had expelled the Pro-Peking wing of the Communist Party, because that would have annoyed the Chinese government. The MEP leader refused to align with SLFP. The only choice before the government was to affiliate with the LSSP, some of whose members were against its joining the coalition. As a result a section of the party led by Samarakkody walked out and LSSP under the leadership of N.M. Perera joined the SLFP. This coalition government formed by the alliance of the SLFP of Sirimavo Bandaranaike with the Trotskyite LSSP was likely to be ideologically closer to communist China than to India because LSSP was "Pro-Khrushchev and his anti-Stalinism and Pro-China for its revolutionary purity."⁵⁴ It was safer also for SLFP to enter into coalition with the LSSP because it had to rely on the support of the Marxist parties to win the coming general election.⁵⁵ But "India-China conflict" had "damaged the left in Ceylon."⁵⁶

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UNP Coalition Government (1965-1970)

Under grave internal economic and political problems, the government of Sirimavo Bandaranaike had begun to show signs of collapse by June 1964. To remedy this, the Prime Minister entered into a coalition with the Trotskyist LSSP. The UNP, the major opposition group feared an impending marxist inspired dictatorship, and as if to furnish a proof, the new coalition government announced its intention to nationalise the press. The right wing of the SLFP, led by Mrs. Bandaranaike's own deputy, C.P. de Silva, then Minister for Land Irrigation and Power, and twelve other parliamentary members, apprehensive of LSSP's presence in the government, decided to cross the floor during a key debate in Parliament on 3rd December 1964. This resulted in the defeat of the government. The Communist Party, including the Pro-Peking element, voted with the opposition. The Parliament was dissolved on December 17.

In the general election of March 1965, the UNP, under the leadership of Dudley Senanayake, was returned as the largest party having won 66 seats in a House of 151 as against the SLFP's 41, LSSP's 10 and CP's 4. But as it failed to obtain an absolute majority, its leader, Dudley Senanayake formed a coalition with the support of his electoral ally, Sri Lanka Freedom Socialist Party (SLFSP), and other such diverse elements as the Mahajana Eksath Peramune (MEP) and the two Tamil Parties—the Federal Party (FP) and Tamil Congress and JVP of KMP Rajratna. For a little more than three

years, the Prime Minister was able to keep such disparate and opposing elements in coalition together in his 'national government', but in September 1968 the FP of the Tamils made its exit following a disagreement with the Prime Minister on the Konneswaram temple issue.

Foreign Policy Stand of Dudley Senanayake

As early as March 1960 the Staff Writer of *Ceylon Daily News* running the "Foreign Affairs" column noted :

"In the past few years, there has been a narrowing down of party differences in this sphere (of foreign policy) and although emphasis may shift, the area of agreement is wide enough for foreign policy to become a non-partisan field of activity."

Broad consensus had emerged with respect to foreign policy decisions. Whenever, the government learned too far to any bloc despite its professedly non-aligned policy, the electorate acted as a restraining influence by giving a balancing judgement. When the Sirimavo Bandaranaike government shifted its emphasis of cordiality too much to the Chinese, the people gave a verdict against her in the March 1965 election. Incidentally the two candidates put up by the Pro-Peking Communist Party were not only defeated but also lost their deposits in the election.¹ This may provide a glimpse of the resentment against China. Though her government had remained strictly non-aligned or rather thoroughly neutral with respect to international conflicts and boundary disputes, she committed the mistake of leaning too heavily to the Chinese prop. The coming of the Pro-West UNP was a protest against too much Chinese infiltration. *Ceylon Daily News*, writing in an editorial in February 1965 complained of the lengthening "Peking's Shadow over Ceylon" and commented :

"More encouraged by the failure of the authorities to keep them in their places, the Chinese are throwing their weight about the acting as if this country is already a Chinese satellite."

The new 'national government', therefore, when came into power tried to bring Sri Lanka into a genuinely nonaligned position. Mr. Dudley Senanayake described his government's policy as being "thoroughly non-aligned", quite unlike the one pursued by Sirimavo Bandaranaike's government which was, according to him, leaning heavily towards one bloc.²

What exactly he meant by "real non-alignment" can be understood in the light of the various policy statements and government's attitudes towards international issues. The Governor General in his speech from the throne stated on the 9th April 1965 that his government "reaffirms the principle of nonalignment as enunciated at the Bandung Conference of 1955." In pursuance of this policy, he declared, the government would maintain friendly relations with all countries and ensure that the independence and security of the nation was not jeopardised in any manner.

The Prime Minister, Dudley Senanayake, explaining his concept of "real non-alignment" in Parliament stated that he had condemned aggression on Suez. He also had equally condemned the Chinese aggression on Tibet and India. A non-aligned country must be able to say who was right and who was wrong. He concluded :

"It is not non-alignment to condemn the actions of one block when they do something wrong and to refrain from condemning the actions of the other bloc when they do likewise. If you do that you are not non-aligned; you are well and truly aligned."³

Replying to a question on Vietnam, he said if they were to condemn actions there, they had to condemn both the USA and the North Vietnam.⁴

When Dudley Senanayake took over the reins of office as the Prime Minister, he went to the extent of reviewing the Maritime Agreements with China and USSR as they seemed out of tune with his concept of "real non-alignment" policy. His party had criticised the Sirimavo Bandaranaike

government for entering into such agreements with only the two big communist powers. The implications of the agreement was advantageous only to China because Sri Lanka had no shipping port was it going to have ships in substantial number in the near future. Thus in Parliament, Dudley expressed his doubt about the needs for such a treaty. The original draft of the agreement, he said, spoke only of mercantile ships, but in the draft which was signed, the word 'mercantile' has been deleted. This significant change in the final drafts raised suspicions as to the real intention of the treaty. "If it is a matter of trade" further said Dudley Senanayake, "surely you must confine it to mercantile ships" otherwise all ships can come in. He, therefore, made it clear that he would discuss with the government of China to "find out the need for this pact before I tear it up."

Factors in Sino-Sri Lanka Relations During 1965-1970

The trends which had begun under Sirimavo Bandaranaike continued to some extent during the premiership of her successor, Dudley Senanayake, but the pattern of Sino-Sri Lanka relations underwent a definite change. The emphasis shifted from pro-east, especially pro-China policy of Sirimavo Bandaranaike to pro-west particularly pro-American and pro-Indian policy. This change in emphasis may be ascribed to certain changes in the regional environment.

Improvement in Relations with India

Sri Lanka's relations with India began to take a favourable trend with the succession of Lal Bahadur Shastri as the Prime Minister of India. He was also to give a new orientation to India's foreign policy. Whereas Sri Lanka occupied only a "marginal place" in Nehru's foreign policy,⁶ Shastri took upon himself to improve relations with the neighbours including Sri Lanka. An editorial in *The Times* (London) rightly noted on the 9th September, 1964 :

"Under Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri's charge India has taken some welcome initiative in the unspectacular but

necessary task of improving relations with her neighbours :
Indeed, it is a reminder of India's changed outlook that the first travels of India's new Foreign Minister, Mr. Swaran Singh, should be not to some important international gathering but on a tour of Nepal, Afghanistan, Ceylon and Burma."

Besides India made specific gestures to improve trade relations with Sri Lanka and made an attempt to fill up the trade gap with her. The most important endeavour, however, to improve relations, was an attempt by Indian government to solve the most thorny "Indo-Ceylon Problem" on the status of persons of Indian origin in Sri Lanka. Sirimavo-Shastri Pact of October 1964 went a long way in improving relations by amicably trying to settle the most prickly issue between the two countries. The improved understanding between the two countries was not only carried forward by Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake, rather the bond was strengthened by his visit to India in 1968.

Reaction to China's atomic explosion

In the background was China's first atomic explosion in 1964, which had brought China to the forefront of the Asian nations and had also infused a kind of fear in her Asian neighbours. Before its first nuclear test on 16 October 1964, China had never indicated that it intended to break the monopoly of nuclear weapons by the superpowers i.e. the United States and the Soviet Union. China had attacked their monopoly of nuclear weapons only indirectly by criticising the Partial Test-Ban Treaty they had just signed. However, after its first nuclear test in 1964, China began to argue that the test was intended to "oppose the U.S. imperialist policy of nuclear blackmail and nuclear threat. . . (and) to break the nuclear monopoly of the nuclear powers."⁷ Whatever may have been the reasons of China's nuclear weapons development, it caused a lot of fear among other Asian countries.⁸ It had brought a "sense of insecurity and offensive threat, not only to India but to many neighbouring countries."⁹ A Sri Lanka newspaper asked, "has the performance of the Chinese lately in crossing the Himalayan passes already become a dim

memory?"¹⁰ An expression to such fear was given by Japan, Cambodia and others too. The Asian countries' fear of nuclear China could entail many consequences. First, these countries could become afraid to resist Chinese sponsored revolutionary wars in their own countries. Secondly, they could join hands with China and follow the Chinese line of policy. Thirdly, they could accept Chinese demands without resistance in incidents such as border disputes. Citing an example of India, Sisir Gupta pointed out :

"China may subject a non-nuclear India to periodic blackmail, weaken its people's spirit of resistance and self confidence and thus achieve without a war its major political objectives in Asia. India's experience with China suggests that such a course of action is not only possible but probable."¹¹

Once Communist China becomes an operational nuclear power, there was always the possibility of her using its threat as a blackmail to become effective in Asia. Further, it could also attempt limited military actions in Asia, as it did in Aksai Chin at the time of the Sino-Indian war. There was always the possibility of its sending regular troops across its borders into countries like Thailand and Burma, either in support of revolutionary wars or to occupy their territory.

This image of China was in contradiction to China's accepted posture as a peace loving country and sincere friend by China's small neighbours. China however still claimed that the possession of nuclear weapons by socialist countries like her was desirable because :

"The nuclear weapons in the hands of China and those in the hands of United States imperialism are, of course, fundamentally different in nature. China is a socialist country. . . Having possessed nuclear weapons, we shall continue to pursue, as we did in the past, the foreign policy of peace."¹²

But now there were hardly any important neighbours who

believed the Chinese words. The political game of betrayal with Burma and India had opened the eyes of most of China's neighbours. Sri Lanka during Sirimavo Bandaranaike's rule still believed in the genuineness of China's peaceful intentions because it was a distant neighbour and danger from China seemed remote. But now it was not so. The progressive development of nuclear and then thermo-nuclear weapons was an eye opener for Sri Lanka too.¹³

China's interference in the general election of 1965

These regional developments, apart from China's complicity in the general elections of Sri Lanka in 1965 in which China threw her weight considerably in favour of SLFP,¹⁴ also determined the foreign policy stand of Dudley Senanayake, the UNP leader and later the leader of the national government. During the 1965 general relations with China was the main point of debate. Sirimavo Bandaranaike's government was accused of abandoning nonalignment and of leaning more and more towards China. It was alleged by the UNP and other opposition parties that re-elected Sirimavo would open the country to Peking. There were further reports of Chinese intervention in this election in Sri Lanka. It was alleged that Chinese residents in Sri Lanka were involved in electioneering for the ruling parties. Some of them spoke Sinhala and mixed with the students. They took photographs of the police buildings, the offices of the Ministry of Defence and External Affairs.¹⁵ They had purchased 400 Survey maps including road maps showing electorates and scale maps. The Chinese embassy had increased its staff, its personnel being the highest in number employed by any foreign mission and they reportedly indulged in propaganda activities. Five thousand sets of *Atapirikara*, which is a Buddhist garb and includes other essentials of a Buddhist monk, arrived in Sri Lanka from China a few days after the dissolution of Parliament. Besides, there was a marked increase of Chinese immigrants in recent years. Some of them come in connection with the work going on in the Chinese pavilion in the Industrial Exhibition or the building of the Bandaranaike Memorial Hall. As there were no restrictions on their movements, they could go anywhere. It was alleged that they harassed some candi-

dates by bursting flash bulbs on their faces. Growing Chinese activities in Sri Lanka had become a threat to Indian security too. A huge amount of Chinese literature was being pumped to India through Ceylonese Channels¹⁶ in the communist strongholds of India like Kerala and Andhra. When Dudley Senanayake, therefore, came to power in 1965, he tried to follow a policy of genuine nonalignment and confining Sri Lanka's relations with China upto trade and aid alone. In conformity with this policy, the new government requested the Chinese Embassy to reduce their staff to the minimum. It also refused to renew the visas of two officials of the Chinese Embassy.¹⁷ It imposed a ban on the import of Communist literature in Sri Lanka. However, as it did not wish to antagonise China the government did not take up the revision of the Maritime Agreement with China seriously. Perhaps, "independence and security" considerations must have been the dictating reasons for not pursuing the matter seriously. Nevertheless, the question of China's membership of the UN was as thoroughly pursued and advocated as by the earlier governments. Ponnambalam, the representative of Sri Lanka in the UN General Assembly strongly recommended the admission of China on two occasions in 1965.¹⁸ Shirley Amersinghe, the leader of Sri Lanka's delegation to the 22nd session of the UN General Assembly in 1969 too pleaded the seating of Communist China in the UN as it was the true representative of the Chinese people. Not only that, the Prime Minister on his tour from Canada and through Tokyo had said that he wished that the People's Republic of China were in the United Nations. He said that "time and again"¹⁹ during his tenure.

Cultural Revolution and its impact

Sri Lanka's relations with China suffered a further pressure due to the "Cultural Revolution" in China. China during this phase passed through not only ideological and political chaos, economic dislocations but also became inward looking and got increasingly isolated from the mainstream of world affairs. The cultural revolution was a triangular fight against the threat of "revisionists", "imperialists" and "reactionaries" which the dominant Communist leadership in China believed to be sharply

accentuated by the Vietnam war. It was the Maoist fashion of girding China's loins to face possible armed struggle with the United States: "The great proletarian cultural revolution now under way in China is the biggest and best method of preparing against war" declared Jen-min-Jih-pao, a very popular Chinese daily, on September 17, 1966.

Response to the Increased inflow of Western Aid

Besides, during the tenure of Dudley Senanayake (1965-70) apart from the aid normally channelled by the donor countries like the USA and Britain and the borrowing privileges extended by lending institutions like the IMF, IBRD and the Asian Development Bank, an Aid Sri Lanka Consortium was set up. Senanayake strove further to create a favourable climate for the inflow of assistance from the western countries. The vexed and long deferred question of compensation for the nationalised petroleum companies was settled by his government by a specially constituted compensation tribunal soon after coming into power.²⁰ The settlement of this problem opened the doors for much needed foreign aid particularly from America which had suspended all aid in 1963 on this dispute. As a result of his gesture towards the Western countries, these countries took upon themselves to help Sri Lanka tide over her economic difficulties. An Aid Ceylon Consortium comprised of Australia, Canada, France, Japan, West Germany, the U.K. and the U.S.A. was organised by the World Bank to provide aid to Sri Lanka. The consortium through five aid programmes committed aid in a sum of Rs. 2,100 million between 1965 and 1969.²¹ United Kingdom was quite generous with aid to Sri Lanka. Unlike the entire UNP governments, the 'national government', was able to maintain economic cooperation with socialist countries too and welcomed economic assistance from them. According to foreign aid figures released by the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs in Colombo in October 1969, the USSR commitments amounted to Rs. 142.8 million in grants and credit to Sri Lanka.²² But no fresh aid came from China because of the cultural revolution and the strained relationships which had developed in the political field between the two countries during this period.

Return to Pro-West Outlooks

As expected, with the UNP's return to power there was a perceptible shift of the pendulum to the West and relations with the United States and the countries of Western Europe again became closer. In consonance with this shift, once again there was a fundamental change in Sri Lanka's relations with Communist countries. There was a new interpretation of nonalignment—away from pro-China, anti-Western stress of Sirimavo Bandaranaike's regime, and much less activist in expression. Indeed, Dudley Senanayake regarded as "active foreign policy" as an "expensive luxury" for a small island country like Sri Lanka, and that too one which was faced with severe economic pressures. However, keeping in view its avowed policy of furthering its "ties of friendship and cooperation with all countries" while following "strict non-alignment", the government did not intend to weaken its links with the Communist regimes of the USSR, China and Eastern European stress. There was though an added amount of caution while seeking to retain economic advantages, particularly the rubber-rice agreement with China and aid agreements with the Soviet Union, German Democratic Republic and other socialist countries. On the other hand, the government accorded high priority to the normalization of relations with the United States particularly for the resumption of economic assistance from the country. It hoped that its anti-marxist character and its pro-western bias would bring in substantial foreign aid from western countries. Indeed, the hope was belied but it was too late.

The UNP and its allies had won the election on the promise that there would be a massive inflow of western aid. It was in this hope that the long-pending question of compensation for the nationalised companies was rushed through. A specially constituted compensation tribunal finalised the deal in 1965. Once this was done the United States government resumed its economic assistance programme in Sri Lanka under an agreement signed in 1966. The Aid Sri Lanka Consortium organised by the World Bank also came to help Sri Lanka meet its stringent and immediate economic needs. As a result Sri Lanka obtained a total credit of Rs. 723.4 million

from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) between 1965 and 1970 of which Rs. 301.7 million was paid back, leaving a balance of Rs. 421.7 million as on May 20, 1970.²³ During the same period the World Bank organised five meetings of donor countries at which a total of Rs. 1,568.42 million of Commodity and project aid was pledged. Up to June 30, 1969 commodity aid amounting to Rs. 724.17 million had arrived.²⁴ Besides, the government had to borrow from commercial banks and credit institutions in Europe and America in 1969 and 1970. At the end of its term of office in May 1970, these borrowings totalled of 350 million. The end result was drastic. The net foreign debt more than doubled itself between 1964 and 1968. On December 31, 1969 the country's external debt stood at all time high i.e. Rs. 1,718 million. Debt servicing became an intolerable burden, consuming all the 14 per cent of export earnings for 1969.²⁵

Consequently, the living index which had stood at 112.5 when the Government came in, zoomed to an all time high—122.9 in 1968. The food index which was 107.3 in March 1965 rose to 122.3 by October 1968. The massive aid from the west never came and what was given were “only dribblets” from Aid Sri Lanka Consortium. These aids were coupled with demands that Sri Lanka should cut the rice ration and also devalue her currency.²⁶

Prime Minister Senanayake not only visited several Western countries including the United States, but also showed his eagerness to join the Western sponsored newly formed Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967. Though this didn't happen, his pro-West leaning was made clear. This softness towards the west was also visible when he refused to declare Israel as the aggressor during the West Asian crisis of 1967 despite the pressure of his own Muslim colleagues.

It was also alleged that during this period an American General fresh from commanding troops in Vietnam visited Trincomalee along with another American Vice-Admiral of US Navy. His visit was kept a secret. Allegedly it was in connection with providing base facilities to United States. During

May 1968 an American hospital ship "Hope" arrived to provide hospital and medical facilities to the people of Sri Lanka. But this ship was not looked upon with favour. *Tribune* commented in one of its May 1968 issue under the headline "Hope-Hospital Ship, above or an American Spy Ship Below" :

"Sooner or later people come to know that American gifts to the underdeveloped countries are part and parcel of some sinister agency which is always on the prowl to subvert a country's independence and sovereignty, to topple constitutionally elected governments and to liquidate political leaders not to its liking."

Thus people had begun to see some sinister designs behind every move they made. Even when they granted loans or aids, people felt that loans carried heavy interests and aids were tied-aids.

The same Western sponsored agencies which came forward to help the national government out of the economic quagmire it was in and doled out millions of Rupees aid, had provided a mere Rs. 107 million loans during the entire period MEP-SLFP rule (1956-65). But a remarkable fact which projects itself is that the loans from the communist block countries are at a lower rate of interest than those from the west, and in some instances interest free.

Nature of Western Aid

The western loan was not, therefore, very helpful in toning up the economy of the country. *Tribune* (Colombo) quoting a local communist weekly *Forward* reported that Sri Lanka admitted to the United Nations that the large scale foreign aid obtained in recent years has been unfavourable to Sri Lanka and that there was no substantial increase in foreign investment despite the various guarantees offered by the Government under its new policy of attracting foreign capital. Dr. Koneshalingam—a member of Ceylonese delegation to the UN General Assembly admitted that of the total official aid received by Sri Lanka during 1967 as much as 83 per cent comprised loans while

grants were a bare 17 per cent. Some of these loans carried quite heavy rate of interest.²⁷

Hence during the last years of its office the UNP was under pressure to reconsider more trade with socialist countries. It was said that the policy of the nationalist government to woo the capitalist west and ignore the socialist east, instead of improving economic matters made the situation worse. It took the national government more than two years to realise that it was against the national interest of the country to be lopsided in international trade. As a result the government "edged more and more towards achieving a greater balance." The trade with the east has always helped Sri Lanka get better terms of trade and credit.

Relations with USSR and India

During 1965-70 relations with China became strained as a result of the 'national government's' confiscation and imposition of ban on Communist literature and Mao badges and protests by Ceylonese Muslims and Buddhists about the alleged ill-treatment of Muslims and Buddhist in China. This we would take up later. The two countries in particular which viewed this anti-China turn in Sri Lanka's foreign policy with satisfaction were Soviet Union and India. Until friendship with China took special overtones during Sirimavo Bandaranaike's premiership, the Soviet Union had loomed large among Sri Lanka's socialist friends, and its eclipse by China, particularly with China's emergence as the leading aid donor to Sri Lanka among non-western countries, was not viewed favourably by the Russians especially due to the new cold war between Peking and Moscow. Though it was not elevated to the status of a special friend of Sri Lanka, it was able to contend and re-assert its position vis-a-vis China and other western powers in the external relations of Sri Lanka. *Tribune* rightly pointed out :

"Whatever government is in power in Ceylon, or whoever is in power in the Soviet Union, it is in the interest of Ceylon to maintain the closest and friendliest relations with the second biggest power in the world."²⁸

The Soviet-Ceylonese Cooperation covers the construction of enterprises which can radically change the economic pattern of the country.²⁹ Such cooperation was intended to breakdown the colonial nature of the economy and corresponds to Sri Lanka's plan directed to the country's development.³⁰

According to foreign aid figures released by the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs in Colombo in October 1969, the Soviet Commitments tallied Rs. 142.8 million in grants and credits to Sri Lanka. According to an agreement signed in 1969, Soviet Union extended credit for ten agreed projects including a steel rolling mill, tyre and tube factory and a flour mill. Sri Lanka which is one of the major producers of natural rubber had to import tyres. A factory to manufacture 360,000 tyres annually was commissioned in Sri Lanka in 1967. It had been built with Soviet assistance to fully satisfy the country's demand in tyres. Soviet trade with Sri Lanka during 1969 amounted to Rs. 180 million. Soviet supplies met 60 to 70 per cent of Sri Lanka's requirements for oil, cement and ply wood.³¹

A Soviet government delegation visited Sri Lanka from March 19 to March 27, 1967 and participated in the ceremonies connected with the official opening of the Steel Plant and the Tyre factory. The Soviet Union had given assistance in training personnel required for the operation of these plants. The Sri Lanka government expressed its deep appreciation for this "significant contribution to Ceylon's economic development". There were exchange of views on questions of further promotion of friendly relations between these two countries.³²

In the pre-1965 phase the growing influence of China in Sri Lanka was seen with growing concern by India. The defeat of the SLFP led coalition in 1965 was, in a sense, a relief to India. Viewed in the context of the strain and tension between India and China and the strategic importance of the island in India's defence, it is not surprising that a special treatment of China by Sri Lanka be viewed with apprehension by India. Thus a cooling off of the relations of China and Sri Lanka were in the Indian interest and India did not want to miss this opportunity of winning over Sri Lanka. It came forward to assist its close

neighbour in bolstering the basic structure of its economy. The Indian Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri in his congratulatory message to Dudley Senanayake said :

“I greatly look forward to a widening of the area of cooperation and further strengthening of the close and abiding friendship that already exists between our two countries.”³³

In 1967 India agreed to provide a credit of Rs. 20 crores over the next five years to enable Sri Lanka to plan its imports from India. Under an agreement for further credit of Rs. 5 crores India came forward to help Sri Lanka finance the purchase of capital goods from India.³⁴ This paved way for closer relations between India and Sri Lanka in the economic and commercial fields. The break-through came with the first meeting of the Indo-Sri Lanka Joint Committee for Economic Cooperation held in Colombo in January 1969.

Despite improved relations, when Indo-Pak war broke out in 1965, the UNP government found itself faced with the same dilemma which the SLFP had to face at the opening of Sino-Indian border conflict. As Dudley Senanayake had advocated that “he will not be afraid to condemn any country that has committed an error or that is in the wrong,”³⁵ the opposition kept on pressuring him to name the aggressor. However, the Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake was in communication with both the Indian and Pakistani leaders, and appealed to both the government to settle the Rann of Kutch dispute in a peaceful manner. Sri Lanka indicated her desire to be helpful to both parties.³⁶ He showed his deep distress and concern at “the present dispute” between India and Pakistan over the issue of the India-West Pakistan border. He was further concerned on such developments as had taken place “between two countries in our region of the world, and with both of whom we maintain the closest ties of friendship.” As such the attitude of Sri Lanka remained the same, despite the change of government, as on Sino-Indian border dispute. The government not only seemed reluctant to discuss the situation in the Parliament but took an equivocal or ambivalent attitude despite the promise to

indict the wrong-doer.

Relations with China

The "Great Proletarian Socialist Cultural Revolution" swept China like a torrent for more than three years between 1966 and 1969. In the broadest sense, the Cultural Revolution was less cultural than social, economic and political. It became a conflict over the ideology by which China should be governed and a personal power struggle as well, besides being the Maoist fashion of girding China's loins to face possible armed struggle with "revisionist" USSR and "imperialist" USA or the combined forces of both. The Cultural Revolution has been hailed by its adherents as a unique and glorious achievement. It has been called "the most profound class struggle history has ever witnessed"³⁷ and likened to "a roaring swift current that has swept across thousands of miles . . . ; judging from its extensive scale and great power, the broad masses it has mobilized, and its profundity, it is unparalleled in history."³⁸

The events of China during the Cultural Revolution were extraordinary. There were armed clashes, riots, economic disruption and widespread dismissals of party government officials and there were sustained attacks on one of China's major political figures, Liu-Shao-ch'i who was branded as "Chinese Khrushchev." As a result the whole internal structure of the society was in a flux and uncertainty ruled the roost. China during this period became inward looking and isolated from the mainstream of world affairs. This was a result in part of "Peking's rigid and indiscriminate application of 'revolutionary' criteria in its relations with foreign countries, including those with which previously it had enjoyed friendly, even cordial, relations."³⁹

The cultural Revolution which was a Messianic crusade against "imperialists", "revisionists" and "reactionaries" had its own toll on China's foreign relations. On the first signs of change in the internal environment in 1966, Chinese diplomats began a mass movement back to Peking from posts abroad. A year later, ambassador Huang Hua in the UAR was the only

ambassador of mainland China abroad, although some lower level officials had returned or been replaced. Besides no high level Chinese official travelled abroad during this period. Some intellectuals have a "temptation to consider Chinese foreign policy under the cultural revolution as a form of dementia" because China had become garrulous and showed its anger against one country after the other adding to the list of nations in disfavour of Peking.⁴⁰

This was the period when seemingly heedless of the sensitivities of host countries, Chinese personnel aggressively disseminated Maoist propaganda literature and distributed Mao badges and indulged in propaganda against third countries notably the US, USSR and India despite the disapproval of local authorities. They at times complained long and loudly about real or imagined infringements of their diplomatic privileges or violations of the norms of international practices.

Meanwhile the return of the UNP in Sri Lanka with its right-wing policies saw a cooling of relations with China. It did not look with favour the growing activities of the Chinese in Sri Lanka and their involvement in March 1965 elections had lowered further their image in the UNP circles. As a result, soon after coming into office the Senanayake government requested the Chinese Embassy to reduce their staff to the minimum. It also refused to renew the visas of the two officials of the Chinese Embassy. The external Affairs Ministry of Sri Lanka also refused to renew the expired residence visas of two Indonesian communist party members who desired to attend the Communist sponsored Sri Lanka plantation Workers Union Conference during the second week of April 1965. Besides the earlier ban on the import of Communist literature which was lifted by SWRD Bandaranaike in 1956 was reimposed. The Prime Minister's indication that he would review the controversial Maritime Agreement with China had also its adverse effects.

There was further deterioration of relations between China and Sri Lanka as a result of the persecution of Buddhists and Muslims by the Red Guards. *Ceylon Daily News* reported on

November 12, 1966 that the Red Guards had formed a new organization called the "Revolutionary Struggle Group for the Abolition of Islam." Buddhists too were high on the list of victims. As a result of Sri Lanka high priest of Buddhism gave a call to the "Buddhists to campaign against the persecution in China of Chinese Buddhists by communists."⁴¹ Meanwhile an UNP Government's Labour and Housing Minister M.H. Mohamed protested against the alleged ill-treatment of Muslims in China during the cultural revolution. Acting in his capacity as president of the "Anti-Marxist Muslim world Brotherhood"⁴² he led a delegation to handover a protest note to the Chinese Embassy and on their refusal to entertain any protests, he subsequently issued a statement condemning alleged atrocities against Chinese Muslims.

This protest by a UNP Minister, in whatever capacity, elicited a strong Chinese protest note to the Ministry of External affairs, which declared that "the government of Sri Lanka should bear an unshirkable responsibility for Mr. Mohamed's statement because he is a minister."⁴³ Rejecting the Chinese protest the government took the position that the Minister had made a public statement deploring alleged atrocities against Chinese Muslims, both in his individual capacity and as one of the leaders of the Muslim community in Sri Lanka. The matter did not end there. The cue was taken up by another prominent UNP Muslim member of the Parliament, A.C.S. Hameed. He called at the Chinese Embassy in Colombo to deliver a protest note against "Persecution of and genocide against the Muslims of China" by Red Guards, but the first Secretary of the Embassy refused to accept the note. The whole dramatic event explains the irritability of China during this period. The Ministers concerned were admonished by their own party-men. Shelton Jayasinghe said on the floor of the House :

"If there has been a default, if there has been any mischief, it has been created by lunatics outside and a couple of them inside this House. They are responsible for this mischief and it has nothing to do directly between the two Governments which have been on very friendly terms."⁴⁴

Still there were a number of controversies of a diplomatic nature between Sri Lanka and China. A number of protest notes were sent to the government at Colombo by the Chinese Embassy. These protest notes were couched in angry and threatening words.

In February 1967 China lodged a protest note over the alleged "diparaging reference" to Mao in a broadcast by Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation and objected to it as an unfriendly act which would strain diplomatic relations between the two countries. The Chinese Embassy on the other hand joined hands with the New China News Agency in attacking the "Soviet revisionism" and in a letter addressed to Soviet Embassy in Colombo branded the Soviet Premier and the Soviet Communist Party as "filthy swine."⁴⁵ A protest note from the local Soviet Embassy provoked the government of Sri Lanka to warn the Chinese Embassy against offending a country with which Sri Lanka had friendly relations.

The Chinese annoyance reached its peak when the customs authorities seized Pro-China literature from a chartered ship of China National Chartering Corporation, S.S. Ioannis, harboured at Colombo on August 2, 1967. The local Chinese Embassy in a severely strong protest note on 15 August called it an "open robbery" of export goods and diplomatic articles of the Chinese Embassy. The note alleged that the "vicious elements" looted the goods and supplies on the ship creating a serious situation. When the Captain of the ship demanded protection of the Colombo Port Police, the police failed to stop the robbery and the situation became worse. They destroyed a great number of works, quotations and pictures of Chairman Mao. The protest note further charged that this incident was by no means "accidental", it was perpetuated with the "connivance" and "instruction" of the Ceylonese government. It further complained that in the last two years and more the Ceylonese Ministry of External Affairs had disregarded repeated representations made by China, with regard to harassment by customs authorities. This was a serious provocation against the Chinese people and was absolutely intolerable. It threat-

ened the anti-Chinese elements in the government in such strong words as :

“the Chinese Embassy warns a small handful of anti-Chinese elements in the Ceylon Government that 700 million Chinese people are not to be trifled with. All plots of intrigues to undermine the friendship between Chinese and Ceylonese people and to carry out anti-Chinese provocations will be severely knocked on the head by the Chinese people and completely smashed.”⁴⁶

A commentary in *Peking Review*, captioned “Ceylon must stop anti-China provocations” summed up the threat in the Chinese protest notes : “it would be impossible in these circumstances to ensure normal trade between China and Ceylon, and the Ceylonese Government must be held responsible for all the consequences arising therefrom.”

Sri Lanka's reply was as terse as the Chinese note of protest. However, it was not as blattant but couched in diplomatic language. Sri Lanka's External Affairs Ministry rejected these allegations by the Chinese charge d' Affaires in Colombo as “frivolous and absurd” that pilferage of some goods including 300 Mao badges was made with “active connivance of the Ceylon Government.” Sri Lanka described the allegation that anti-China elements in the government were trying to undermine the friendship between the peoples of China and Sri Lanka, as unwarranted interference in its sovereignty and internal affairs. The government of Sri Lanka considered the import of 300 Mao badges as a “contravention of the rules and privileges accorded to foreign mission,” because while the foreign missions may import articles in reasonable quantities for their personal and official use, they are not permitted to dispose of or distribute the same within the host country. But the Chinese Embassy maintained that “it was entirely a normal function for promoting the friendship between two peoples and is in full accord with international practice.” Sri Lanka's reply to the Chinese Charge d' Affaires stated that the “Ministry of Foreign Affairs is prepared to release a reasonable quantity of the badges” but cannot give a clearance for the entire lot

since the bulk of it would go to the residents of Ceylon.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the Chinese Embassy at Dharmapala Mawtha in the heart of Colombo put up huge banners proclaiming the greatness of China and the People's Liberation Army besides displaying the slogans and thoughts of Mao. On August 17, according to a report by Sri Lanka's Charge d'Affaires in Peking, the Red Guards put up a small demonstration outside Sri Lanka's Embassy in Peking expressing their resentment against the Ceylonese action. According to the report, some stones were thrown at the Embassy, and demonstrators attempted to gate crash the compound but they were prevented by Chinese soldiers. The demonstration started at about 10.15 in the morning and lasted till 2 p.m. They left after putting up posters denouncing "Ceylon reactionaries." On August 21, when this news was made public in October, a strong armed police was posted outside the Chinese Embassy in Colombo as a precaution against similar retaliatory demonstrations by the Sri Lankans.⁴⁸ These petty controversies persisted till the end of the year 1967. But ended soon after Sri Lanka negotiated a package deal with China.

Another event of significance which touched the raw-nerve of China and greatly incensed her was the visit to Sri Lanka of some unofficial commercial and sports delegation from Taiwan,⁴⁹ and the reciprocal visit to Taiwan of an unofficial Sri Lanka trade team. The Chinese Embassy in Sri Lanka lodged a very strong protest to the Sri Lankan Ministry of Defence and External Affairs on 22 August 1967 against its grave step in following U.S. imperialism in creating "two Chinas" by continuously maintaining "clandestine connections" with what they called "the Chiang Kai Shek bandit gang." The Chinese Embassy note stressed that this was a serious incident showing hostility towards the Chinese people and was also a crude interference in the internal affairs of China. It accused the Senanayake government of :

"opposing China by toeing the U.S. imperialist line of keeping close clandestine connections with the Chiang bandit gang elements and in playing the role of a clown in the anti-China farce staged by the imperialists, modern, revision-

ists and reactionaries of all countries.”⁵⁰

The Government of Sri Lanka reiterated its stand by declaring that it recognised only the People’s Republic of China. The government took strong exception to the “intemperate language” in which the note was couched. Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake told the House of Representatives on August 22, 1967 that Sri Lanka could not be bullied by China or any other country. To quote him :

“As far as we are concerned we want to be on the best of terms with China, USA, USSR and any other power. We will not be bullied or badgered by anyone.”⁵¹

Mr. Sananayake further added that Sri Lanka did not accept any passports from Taiwan for entry into Sri Lanka. But the first Chinese protest note on the alleged Sri Lanka’s “two China” policy was followed by another protest on 12 September 1967. It complained that the Ceylonese government hurriedly issued a communique stating its position that “it recognizes only the People’s Republic of China”, but in fact, it has continued to maintain clandestine connections with the Chiang Bandit.⁵² This protest note, probably the fifteenth in the first two years of UNP government, was brushed aside by the government.

These protest events are indicative of the fact that there was a cooling, may be some straining of relations between China and Sri Lanka in the initial phase of the cultural Revolution. But these were temporary or “short lived deviations”⁵³ rather than permanent features. Dudley Senanayake did not intend to disturb the balance of relations with China which is amply evident from the dropping of the matter of Maritime Agreement, Sri Lanka’s constant pleading for China’s admission in the United Nations, and the continuation of the rubber-rice trade pact. The last factor indeed was the most important because it had become the lifeline of Sri Lanka.

The thaw in the relations between the two countries too was an outcome of the trade pact. A four member trade team of

Sri Lanka visited Peking in October 1967 to negotiate the renewal of the five-year rice-rubber pact. The Chinese Minister of Trade refused to begin the talks with the Ceylonese team unless the government of Sri Lanka took necessary steps to meet the moot protest points of the Chinese government. The talks were assumed only after the Senanayake government assured clearance of the conflicted Communist literature, Mao badges and lifting of ban on import of such materials from China. This led to a package deal which went a long way in normalizing relations between the two countries.⁵⁴

Nothing, however, could be done against approximately 1000 Chinese who were permanent residents of Sri Lanka. Most of them hold British passports and pass as merchants or businessmen from Hong Kong. Some of them run restaurants or were engaged in small enterprises. The Chinese are notorious for using their own residents in different countries as agents. In the case of Sri Lanka too the business in some cases is said to be only a cover for subversive or spying activities. An existence of a spy ring set up by Peking in Colombo was suspended to gather information about the neighbouring Asian countries.⁵⁵

Press Comments on China's Cultural Revolution in Sri Lanka

Apart from denouncing persecutions of Buddhists and Muslims by the Red Guards, the Ceylon Press also denounced the whole drama of Cultural Revolution.

The Ceylon Daily News, the most widely circulated newspaper of Sri Lanka, called the "Cultural Revolution" a farce bordering on lunacy, if it weren't so tragic.⁵⁶ Reporting on January 19, 1967 the same daily said :

"Behind the cacophony of Red China's current cultural clashes lie the explosive undertainties of a personal struggle for power in Peking. . . The power struggle tears away the last veil from the spectre of a personality cult and of dictatorship that passes for statehood in totalitarian countries."

The weekly *Tribune* (Colombo) on January 1, 1967 carried an article by "Ariel" stating that :

"The latest developments inside China continue to puzzle the world and concluded that present indications are that Mao and his group are likely to come out on top in the current power struggle."

Forward (Colombo) on October 20, 1966, reprinted comment from foreign Communist parties criticising the Cultural Revolution.

Indeed there were not very favourable reactions to the developments of the cultural revolution in Sri Lanka. The frequent strong notes by China to popular and press reactions added further acid to their voice.

On the issue of alleged persecution of Muslims, the Embassy of China in Sri Lanka issued a statement in which they refuted as "sheer fabrications and libels" by imperialists and revisionists, the "stories slandering the Red Guards" by alleging that they have persecuted Muslims.⁵⁷ Such strong addresses did not improve relations.

Economic Relations

The political relations with China during the first two years of the national government remained quite strained, but economic relations were not badly affected and they remained fairly normal. In October 1965 protocol on exchange of commodities in 1966 providing for trade of approximately Rs. 120 million on each side including purchase of 41,000 metric tons of rubber of an approximate value of Rs. 96 million by China and purchase of 200,000 metric tons of rice of like value by Sri Lanka was signed. There was to be a further exchange of commodities amounting to Rs. 24 million on either way. There were negotiations with the Chinese government also for the purchase of such commodities as Chillis, textiles and cement. Though the trade negotiations were difficult and protracted as the price of rubber had fallen from Rs. 1.68 in 1960 to

Rs. 1.02 in 1965 and rice prices had gone up from £ 12 per metric ton in 1960 to £ 37.96 in 1965, Sri Lanka was able to negotiate a good terms for rice.⁵⁸ On the 3rd August 1966 China under an agreement agreed to purchase an additional 10,000 tons of sheet rubber from Sri Lanka. Another protocol envisaging trade of Rs. 140 million either way, providing *inter-alia* for the purchase 46,000 metric tons of sheet rubber by China valued approximately at Rs. 116 million and purchase of 200,000 tons of rice of like value by Sri Lanka was signed in late November 1966.

About a year later, the Rubber-Rice Pact was renewed for another five years. This Fourth-five year trade agreement was signed on November 7, 1967 in Peking together with a trade protocol for 1968. China agreed under the pact to continue to provide 200,000 tonnes of rice annually during the next five years. Sri Lanka's rubber commitments were left open with the Chinese purchases of rubber being dependent on world market price. The Minister of Commerce and Trade Dr. M V P Peiris, who headed the trade delegation team to Peking, described the terms of this agreement as "favourable" because Sri Lanka would pay £ 56 per ton for Chinese rice against the world market price of between £ 60 and £ 70.⁵⁹

The world price for rice was showing a sharp ascent because of a decline in overall production of rice whereas rubber price dipped to very low levels. The year 1967 was a boom year in the rubber production in Sri Lanka but she could not benefit from the crop increase because of the sharp decline in rubber prices in world market. The relative price of rice paid by Sri Lanka to China during the UNP rule remained slightly lower than the world market price for it. Senanayake government had hardly any alternative but to accept the Chinese offer.⁶⁰ The discontinuation of Chinese economic aid and no such future commitments from China had already given a jolt to Sri Lanka's economy. The government, therefore, lost no time in accepting the slightly favourable terms offered by China because the price of rubber had become undependable despite the fact that China's rubber commitments with Sri Lanka were open, China continued to be the principal buyer of

her rubber during the UNP period. Even the quantity of rubber bought by China kept gradually increasing.

Sri Lanka's export to China increased from 6.62 per cent of the total export trade in 1964 to 21.8 per cent in 1969. However, there was no corresponding increase in imports from China which was 11.1 per cent in 1969 as against 10.24 per cent in 1964. This might have been due to the fact that the value and volume of trade between the two declined outside the traditional rubber-rice trade agreement.

After the devaluation of Sri Lankan rupee, the People's Republic of China agreed to pay an increased rubber cargo handling charge of one and a quarter cents per pound. The increased handling charges were estimated to bring in about a sum of Rs. 2.8 million to Sri Lanka. The Sri Lanka Minister of Commerce observed that the "pact had worked to mutual advantage of both countries". He remarked that Sri Lanka intended to continue and increase her friendship and trade with China. On his remark that Sri Lanka looked forward to the arrival of Chinese trade delegation, the Chinese charge d' Affaires emphasised that as much as Sri Lanka looked forward to the arrival of the Chinese delegation, the Chinese government also looked forward to the visit of the Sri Lanka trade delegation at the end of 1969.⁴¹ Despite complaints from the Chinese trade authorities regarding the deterioration in the quality of a number of bates of rubber shipped to China, the trade continued uninterrupted.

On the whole we see that notwithstanding the Pro-West leaning of the 'national government' under Dudley Senanayake, Sri Lanka's policy of nonalignment had not undergone drastic revision. Sri Lanka was busy in retaining and improving its trade relations with China and did not follow the U.S. desire to stop trading with China. A cordial relation with China seems to have become the mainstay of Sri Lanka's foreign policy.

This phase (1965-70) thus can be broadly divided into the earlier phase of cooling off of relations with China and better relations with the United States, in particular, in the name of

real nonalignment. The second phase is characterised by improvement in relations with China in particular. This may lead us to conclude that it is misleading to equate nonalignment in operational terms with the theory of equi-distance. A certain tilt towards one pole or the other is a general condition rather than an exception, even though the country might be supposed to be nonaligned in the general sense.

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Sirimavo Bandaranaike's United Front (UF) Government (1970-1977)

A prominent development in Sri Lanka during 1968 was the decision of the two Marxist parties, the LSSP and the CP (Moscow) to form a 'United Front' with the SLFP under the leadership of Sirimavo Bandaranaike. They agreed to a twenty five point common programme of action for a future 'United Front Government'. This common programme made provisions for the inclusion of socialist policies of the left but was mainly social democratic with an indigenous bias that was markedly Sinhalese Buddhist-oriented. "Its main objective was a socialist state to be brought into being through democratic processes." This United Front led by Sirimavo Bandaranaike secured a massive victory at the general elections held in Sri Lanka on May 27, 1970. In a House of 151 elected members SLFP itself won an absolute majority of 90 seats, while its two United Front partners LSSP and CP won 19 and 6 seats respectively, chalking up the overwhelming total of 115 seats. The UNP suffered a crushing defeat obtaining only 17 seats. Eleven Minister of Dudley Senanayake's government lost their seats.

Foreign Policy Stand

This change of government was of a "momentous importance for Sri Lanka's non-alignment policy." It was quite expected that there would be a change in emphasis if not in

direction with the return of Sirimavo Bandaranaike to power. Her foreign policy was one of avowed 'neutralism' opposed to imperialism and neo-imperialism of the west, seeking friendship with developing countries and all other countries assisting these countries in their struggle for political and economic freedom. This directly indicated that the coalition was to seek the friendship of the socialist bloc. Indeed, never "before had there been so many officially committed Marxists in Parliament."¹ The programme of this government was outlined as usual in the Throne Speech delivered by the Governor-General William Gopallawa on 14 June 1970. In the domain of foreign affairs, the new government's policy was as usual, essentially a continuation of the late Prime Minister SWRD Bandaranaike's non-alignment, support for the Bandung principles, opposition to imperialism, colonialism and racism, support for all measures in furtherance of world peace and disarmament and support for national liberation struggles. Besides, the government intended to extend diplomatic recognition to the German Democratic Republic, the Democratic Republic of North Vietnam, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam. Equally, diplomatic relations with Israel were to be suspended until such time as Israel conformed to the UN Security Council resolutions. This was broadly the new government's "Package deal" which disillusioned none.

The programme of the UF government was a direct "reversal" of the policies followed by the UNP which pursued a form of "neutralism" worthy of appreciation by the United States. During the UNP period Washington felt that it was having Sri Lanka on its "outer orbit" as one of the "neutralist" states which could discharge a particular role in the US global policies. Though the UNP government made great efforts to help the "neutralist" appearance of Sri Lanka in the diplomatic world, it proved to be a smoke screen which was easily penetrated. Contrarily the UF government, soon after coming into power, gave diplomatic recognition to the German Democratic Republic, North Korea, North Vietnam, the South Vietnamese Revolutionary Government, and the Sihanouk Government in-exile² and as per its election promise severed diplomatic relations

with Israel.³ The socialist overtone of the government's policy was all the more reflected in the reception of its first state guest which was Nguyen Thi Binh Foreign Minister of the Revolutionary Government of Vietnam.⁴ The traditional Bandaranaike policy of close friendship with China was resumed or rather brought to the fore once again by Sirimavo Bandaranaike's government.

The contradiction in the foreign policy emphasis of these two dominant parties are so great that while pursuing 'non-alignment' or 'neutralist' foreign policies, the UNP dominated coalition leans too far to the West while the SLFP dominated coalition tilts considerably to the Chinese side. The return of Sirimavo Bandaranaike to power at the head of left oriented coalition government having more officially committed Marxists than ever before, made it possible for her to announce a radical economic policy for Sri Lanka. It had on its agenda, nationalization of the banking system, of import trade in essential commodities and the control of the agency house through which "imperialism dominates the plantation economy." In accord with this policy, the government in the first few months of power went through a series of nationalisation measures. It nationalised the subsidiary companies of Shell, Caltex and Esso, manufacturing chemicals and pesticides, and took over marine banking services from the companies on January 1, 1971.⁵ The State Trading Corporation Bill of December 1970 was intended to regulate internal and external trade by partly nationalising and partly Ceylonizing trade because import, export and the wholesale trade were largely in foreign hands. The Business Acquisition Act of May 1971 gave the government wide powers. Under this Act the government took over the British-Sri Lanka Corporation Ltd., to break the monopoly of the company in the export of coconut oil and thereby also improve the price of copra—a major foreign exchange earner. Under the five-year development plan 1972-1976, the Agriculture Minister, Hector Kobbekaduwe declared on July 22, 1971 the UF government's decision to take over 18 tea and rubber estates in Kandy district owned by the British, Indian and Ceylone interests covering about 15,000 acres to uplift the local peasantry.⁶ However, the government did not go ahead with its declared policy of nation-

alisation of the banking system for the fear of alienating the west. Commenting on the modified policy of the government, the *East African Standard* (Nairobi) wrote on August 11, 1972, under the caption "Sri Lanka veers over a little to the right", "the Government has now gone so far as to assure the private sector 'complete security'..." Hard economic realities made the government modify its strategy.

Despite the fact that Sri Lanka became less "dependent" on its former colonial power throughout the decade leading up to 1977 elections, the dependence of the Island on tea industry, world Bank loans and foreign aid cannot be denied.⁷ The UF government faced acute economic problems of food production, infrastructural development, industrialisation and most of all increased opportunities for employment. According to official figures over 6,50,000 were then unemployed, including some 30,000 university graduates. The economy had been stagnant, production had decreased and prices were up. This economic situation was very much reflected in the statement of the Trade Minister, T.B. Illangaratne on the government's trade policy on February 3, 1971: "Ceylon is facing an economic crisis of the greatest magnitude. Its existence is ship-to-mouth one."⁸

With drastic changes in foreign policy, oriented more in the direction of the communist bloc and the middle east countries, the UF government hoped there would be adequate appreciation of nonalignment from these quarters. But this was not to be. In October 1970, the minister of internal and external trade complained about this:

"We are fighting neo-colonialism and imperialism. Our foreign policy is very clear and that policy has been effectively implemented. Consequently we are beginning to suffer from retaliatory measures particularly in trade and aid."⁹

The attitude of Sirimavo Bandaranaike's UF government therefore after the initial few months, towards the west, became progressively more moderate and restrained. The policy of Sirimavo Bandaranaike to reduce Sri Lanka's dependence on the west for direct economic assistance as well as for commer-

cial borrowings was not realised and apart from China no other non-Western state markedly increased its scale of assistance to Sri Lanka. Despite the alleged Chinese complicity in the Janata Vimukti Peramuna (People's Liberation Front) movement otherwise called the Che Guevarist movement, which rocked the country soon after UF take over of administration, relations were not impaired with China. Rather Sirimavo Bandaranaike's foreign policy was highly vindicated with the rushing of help from such diverse quarters as Britain, United States and India in substantial measures, Soviet Union, Egypt, Yugoslavia and Pakistan on somewhat smaller scale. Help also came from China, which though did not respond immediately granted generous loan to assist in the recovery of damages made by the movement. However, an examination of the movement may throw more light on the alleged role of China in the movement.

The Guevarist movement of 1971 and China

Commenting on the power structure in South Asia, an Indian scholar observed in early 1970 that though under Sirimavo Bandaranaike the SLFP moved closer to some leftist parties, "it is very unlikely that Ceylon will become a Cuba of the region."¹⁰ As if to contradict this statement a "Che Guevarist Movement" broke out in the island disrupting normal life and threatening to overthrow the government. Itself progressive and leftist in its orientation, the UF government under Sirimavo Bandaranaike, was "shaken seriously by blows from a quarter from which they were least expected."¹¹

The seeds of the revolt were visible soon after new government's coming to power with the unearthing of a foreign trained revolutionary group with anarchist ideas. It was composed of a band of young Sinhalese, mostly Buddhists, which called itself variously, the Janata Vimukti Peramuna (JVP) and the Che Guevara group. Thirty-three members of this organization were arrested in May 1970 on charges of illegal activity but were released subsequently. Again on March 6, 1971 a mob of about 150 youngmen claiming to be members of Mao Youth Front during a course of demonstration against American action in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, threw bombs at the US embassy

damaging cars inside its premises and killing a police Inspector.¹² Only a month earlier there had been an unruly demonstration before that embassy ostensibly on the US decision to establish a military base at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. Both these events were suspected to be the work of JVP group. The widespread violence, loot and arson begun on March 6 took such a turn that the government was forced to deploy troops to assist the police in law and order.¹³ Towards the second half of March there were widespread attacks on political leaders and public buildings.¹⁴ Consequently on March 16, 1971, a state of emergency was declared in the whole of Sri Lanka. Some 390 persons including Rohan Wijeweera, the self-styled leader of the JVP were arrested and a countrywide sweep by security forces led to the discovery of bombs, grenades, rifles and ammunitions and other weapons.¹⁵ Rohan Wijeweera had warned earlier that the 'revolution will commence the very day our group is banned.'

Soon after, on April 4, 1971, a revolt broke out in Sri Lanka by lightning attack mounted by the insurgents on police posts and government centres. It went on till May 8, when it was officially declared to have been crushed. The insurgents, officially described as "terrorists", virtually ransacked the island and the government was at the verge of being overthrown.¹⁶ The government was unprepared to face the situation precipitated by the attack mounted by the insurgents. Such a situation arose because the previous government had cut down defence expenditure drastically to divert resources towards agriculture and other development plans.

The Ideological Background of the Movement

The primary aim of this Che Guevara movement was to usher in a socialist state according to the principles of Marxism, Leninism and those of Mao. Corresponding to the principles of revolutionary marxism their programme epitomised the overthrow of the present government and its replacement by a new classless ultra-left communist society. The JVP had demanded immediate nationalization and solutions to the economic and unemployment problems and when it was not forthcoming it took upon itself to ridicule the traditional left within the govern-

ment.¹⁷ Criticising the kind of socialism the UF government wanted to inaugurate "through the World Bank and International Monetary Fund", Rohan Wijeweera, the JVP leader insisted that his party has "the only genuine and dedicated revolutionary party in the country."¹⁸

Their programme of action contained in "the five lectures" insisted that the solution to "economic crisis" lay in the establishment of "the dictatorship of the proletariat" accompanied by "socialist industrialisation" and the "collectivisation of agriculture." Indicating "The Path to Socialism in Ceylon", referred by some of its leaders as "the Path the Ceylonese Revolution should take" elaborated that socialist revolutions did not have to follow a "uniform path" but would vary according to "the time, the place and the conditions peculiar to each occasion."¹⁹

This uprising was not Maoist in so far as it did not believe in protracted war, the "war of annihilation" but the insurgents were "wedded to Marxist and, in fact Maoist analysis of the Ceylonese environment and their ideology and organisation reflected the Maoist outlook."²⁰ It has also been alleged that Rohan Wijeweera, the leader of the "rebels" was connected with China.²¹ The fact that the thematic approaches of the young revolutionaries (because most of them belonged to 16-25 age group) were built around opposition to Anglo-American imperialism and Indian expansionism and Peking wing Communist Party of Sri Lanka's denouncement of the fraud of bourgeois parliamentary elections and the call to the people "to reject the theory of peaceful transition to socialism through parliamentary system," point an accusing finger towards Maoists and China.

In Colombo, in the aftermath of the revolt, several officials and other individuals friendly with the Chinese and North Korean embassies were taken into custody for questioning. The North Korean embassy was asked to close down and withdraw its personnel from Sri Lanka within seventy two hours.²² Colombo was also rife with reports that a Chinese ship on its way to Dar-es-Salaam had been sighted at Colombo on 4 April. It

was also said to be laden with explosives and other materials. It was also suspected that Chinese arms were smuggled in crates and was delivered at the construction sight of the Bandaranaike Memorial Hall.²³

Before the revolt broke out and even after it JVP was alleged to be serving the interests of the CIA and the UNP. In August 1970 the United Front Parties jointly dubbed the JVP as “an agency of reactionary forces.” At one time Sirimavo Bandaranaike seemed to be holding these allegations.²⁴ Even the Young Socialist, which had translated Guevara’s *Guerilla Warfare* into Sinhalese made the claim of CIA support as early as April 1970. The Ceylonese *Tribune* made the same claim. The Pro-Moscow CP too linked the reactionaries with the JVP. Till the eve of the revolt, coalition Marxists were linking JVP with the CIA, the UNP, and the very same people “who were responsible for the assassination of the late SWRD Bandaranaike, the coup of 1962 and the bringing down of Sirimavo Bandaranaike’s government in 1964.”²⁵ Even after the breakout of the revolt some people alleged UNP connections with it.²⁶ These rumours were dispelled with the prompt American help coming in the form of plane loads of military aid and helicopters for the security forces of Sri Lanka to combat the rebellion. In a broadcast on April 24, 1971, Premier Sirimavo Bandaranaike expressed her gratitude to the government of the US and other countries for their speedy assistance in quelling the rebellion. Acting wisely she absolved the complicity of any foreign power in the revolt.

However, it cannot be denied that the ideological overtone of the revolt was Maoist and the delay in Chinese response to Sri Lanka’s call for help from all quarters portended gloomy shadows on Chinese image. China, however, refuted having anything to do with the revolt in such strong words as :

“Chinese people have all along opposed ultra ‘left’ and right opportunism in their protracted revolutionary struggles”, and are “firmly opposed to any country interfering in other countries’ internal affairs, and particularly to foreign reactionaries taking advantage of the opportunity to carry

out armed intervention."²⁷

Sirimavo Bandaranaike's broadcast to the nation that foreign powers were not involved in the insurrection helped China escape unscathed. Thus Peking's image was only momentarily tarnished. It was wiped clean by an extension of an interest free loan of 150 million rupees in convertible foreign exchange. However, it cannot be denied that the revolutionaries were Maoist-inspired and their leader an expelled student of Lumumba University might have had Chinese backings. Had they succeeded, they would have in all likelihood aligned with China rather than with Soviet Union.

The government from the very beginning was faced with an unprecedented economic crisis. Inflation, unemployment, serious balance of payments difficulties and the heavy burden of foreign debts was already weighing heavy on an 'export economy.' Besides, heavy expenditure on the social services which had increased tremendously since independence was putting, further pressure on the depleting economy. Sri Lanka already owed the World Bank more than \$ 50,000,000 and was unable to pay the interest on it and yet it desperately needed more hard currency to pay for even the most essential imports. In such a situation it needed aid both from the East and the West, from China and the Soviet Union. This time it was not in a position to bank upon China alone. It had to maintain a balanced relation between China and US. It was possible in view of the changed international environment.

Even the undercurrent of distrust and suspicion which might have arisen between Sri Lanka and China was not given undue emphasis and was ignored in the background of fast-changing political panorama of the South Asian region.

The answer to China's increased assistance to Sri Lanka may be found in the international environment, regional developments and internal problems of Sri Lanka. Seen in an interconnected-system framework, a significant correlation between, for example, the Sino-American thaw, Sino-Soviet rift, Indo-Soviet treaty, the birth pangs of Bangladesh, may be found

in close Sri Lanka-China friendship in this period.

In January 1969 the Nixon administration took office in Washington and was geared to usher in an "era of negotiations." Two months later armed clashes between China and Soviet Union broke out twice on the River Ussuri over the island of Damanasky²⁸ (Zhen Bao). In April 1969 the 19th Congress of the Communist Party of China adopted a constitution that embodied an explicit call for the overthrow of the "Soviet revisionist renegade clique". The "peace offensives" of Brezhnev and the "era of negotiations" called on by Nixon finally got off the ground at Helsinki with the beginning of SALT talks on November 17. Meanwhile political problems cropped up between the two wings of Pakistan after general elections of December 1970 on which the regional and international political forces began to work thoroughly. The left oriented United Front government which had emerged in Sri Lanka seemed to be faced with the loss of a traditional "balancer" against India. Her own internal economic and political problems including the JVP movement of April 1971 sponsored by ultra leftist forces had made it dependent of foreign powers for their solution. And then came the Indo-Soviet treaty of friendship, peace and cooperation in August 1971 tilting the balance of power in favour of India in the South Asian region. Sri Lanka became cautious and adopted a policy which could please both USA and China. In view of the new alignments it was not only fraught with possibilities but was also pragmatic.

CONVERGENCE OF WORLD FORCES IN SOUTH ASIA

The omnipresence of superpowers has truly turned world politics into a global system, and as a result action initiated in a subsystem at one end affects components at the other end. Naturally, the interrelations of the global policies of major powers—the US, the USSR and China—and regional tensions in the area significantly affected the emerging pattern of alignment in South Asia.²⁹ New alignments had been particularly important in view of the Sino-Japanese friendship treaty, Sino-American diplomatic relations, Indo-Soviet friendship and above all the growing Sino-Soviet chasm. It was the phase when the

two communist giants both the USSR and China appeared to have concentrated their contests in Asia as the key in their dispute. Charges of attempted "encirclement" by the other side becomes a commonplace in the verbal exchanges of the two sides. Foreign aid became a major weapon in the competition. One Soviet analyst, commenting on Chinese and Soviet foreign aid, noted: "Aid is a kind of lever on which two antagonistic forces are pressing." Robert Horn has aptly noted "The USSR's policy in Asia over at least the last decade has been primarily motivated by the competition with China." Barnett, explaining the Chinese viewpoints has also remarked, "The Chinese place the highest priority on the need to compete against, and check, the growth of Soviet influence in every possible way." Their conflict is most strongly reflected in their aid competition in Asia, especially South Asia. As a result in 1970 China negotiated aid worth over \$ 1.1 billion, or more than two and one-half times any previous year including the high points in its aid giving in 1961.³⁰ The Soviet Union, in response, in 1970 increased its military aid to Third world countries to \$ 800 million exceeded in value during only two previous years. But from 1971 to the middle of the decade whereas Moscow increased its total aid extensions, Peking reduced its aid steadily from 1970 when for the first and only time its aid exceeded that promised by the Soviet Union.³¹ In South Asia the Soviet Union continued to make India a favoured recipient of both military and economic aid, China, on the other side, kept aiding Nepal, Pakistan and even Sri Lanka. Though Sri Lanka remained very dependent upon western aid and Chinese assistance made up only a small part of its total receipts, Chinese aid continued to be well received. Despite the presence of CP (Moscow) in the SLFP coalition United Front Government China managed to persuade the government of Sri Lanka not to allow foreign warships into its ports³² and to continue its campaign to keep the Indian Ocean weapons free zone.

In Asia, therefore, the aid battle resulted in the drawing of fairly permanent dividing lines. Chinese aids usually accrued to countries on India's periphery and the Soviet Union gave the bulk of its aid to India. Meanwhile, China's new ties with the U.S. after 1970 and its efforts to capitalize on its new

position in the UN prompted her to cooperate with the west at least in aid giving. This became more visible as the decade of the seventies wore off.

Indo-Soviet Treaty

In such a situation, when Sino-Soviet relations were strained and none-too-happy with the US, when there were high apprehensions of a possible American-Chinese axis to dominate South and South-East Asia, and when China was pumping arms to Pakistan threatening Indian security, came the Indo-Soviet Treaty of friendship, peace and cooperation on 9th August 1971. This treaty was concluded at a time when an India-Pakistan confrontation on the issue of Bangladesh seemed imminent, obviously because Pakistani military junta, well armed by China, was about to come out in a last desperate bid to rescue its eastern wing as also to fight for its own life. Besides a Pindi-Peking-Washington axis was in process of formation and both Moscow and Delhi could not simply watch and wait till the power situation was completely altered. In the event of a combined Sino-Pak attack, India was not prepared to remain isolated more so when the US had already taken India as a country lost to the democratic world.³³ Even had Washington not been friendly toward Pakistan, any American attempt to establish a new relationship with China would have convinced India that it could no longer expect active US support in the event of Chinese intervention in a new war on the sub-continent.

Sri Lanka and Indo-Soviet Treaty

The treaty of peace and friendship signed between India and the Soviet Union on August 9, 1971 not only "annoyed" the Chinese leaders but also raised misgivings in the governmental circles in Colombo regarding India's nonaligned status. The official view was that although the known clauses in the treaty did not offend India's nonaligned status, the unpublished protocol accompanying such agreements make it impossible for India to maintain its nonalignment. It was also felt that the treaty was in reality a defence agreement and that India had almost gone within the direct influence sphere of Soviet Union.³⁴

However, the Moscow-aligned CP, a constituent of Sirimavo Bandaranaike's UF government, had hailed the treaty as a pact which would further consolidate good relations between India and the Soviet Union and "make a positive contribution to the maintenance of peace in South-East Asia."³⁵

India's Overtures

Indian government felt rather worried when it realised that the treaty was received in Colombo with considerable apprehension as a threat to the security to the Indian Ocean. The Government of India sent its External Affairs Minister, Swaran Singh to reassure Sri Lanka of India's good intentions and also to put forward the point that by signing this treaty India had not bartered away or diluted its nonaligned policy in international relations. He went to the extent of assuring Sri Lanka that India would not misunderstand Sri Lanka if it signed a similar treaty with the Soviet Union. He also stated that India did not have the slightest concern over the close Sino-Ceylonese relations. Assuring his hosts Swaran Singh said "we wish this type of relations be a general pattern with other countries." As regards the security of the Indian Ocean he categorically denied that the treaty gave the Soviet Union any base or troop presence in any part of India; as India was totally opposed to foreign bases in any part of the world. This treaty was rather intended to improve stability in the region.³⁶

The other two important topics which Swaran Singh dilated upon with the government of Sri Lanka were Bangladesh and Sino-American thaw. He explained how India viewed the Bangladesh problem and why India could not respond to Sirimavo Bandaranaike's move for a mediation between India and Pakistan. New Delhi was firmly of the view that it was matter to be settled between the Islamabad army junta and the elected representatives of the people. However, on the Sino-US detente India and Sri Lanka could not have identical views.³⁷

Bangladesh : China's sordid deeds

Meanwhile, the results of December 1970 general elections in Pakistan were not acceptable to the ruling junta there. The military regime of Yahya Khan resisted the process of transferring political power to the rightful civilian government of the Awami League and instead, in March 1971 let loose a holocaust on East Pakistan. The patrons of the ruling junta in Peking and Washington instead of calling a halt to the undemocratic step of the rulers prompted it to go ahead with their plans as news of an impending Peking-Washington collusion through Islamabad was in the air. During the height of East Pakistan crisis, while millions of refugees were pouring in India from the Eastern wing of Pakistan, Pakistan was arranging a secret trip by Henry Kissinger to Peking which presaged the Nixon-Mao meeting.

People all over the world felt deeply concerned at the happenings in Pakistan and favoured a peaceful settlement of the issue with due considerations to the legitimate demands of the people of East Pakistan. The Soviet Union took a stand which was similar to the one taken during Indo-Pak war of 1965 and which culminated in the successful conclusion of the Tashkent declaration. In a message of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR to Yahya Khan on April 2, 1971, concern was expressed at the "numerous casualties, suffering and privations" and the view was also expressed that they were "convinced that the complex problems that have arisen in Pakistan of late can and must be solved politically, without use of force. Continuation of repressive measures and bloodshed in East Pakistan will, undoubtedly, only make the solution of the problem more difficult and may do great harm to the vital interests of the entire people of Pakistan."⁹⁸

The Chinese reaction to these events was astounding in the sense that instead of asking Pakistan to peacefully settle its own house, they appreciated the forceful measures taken by the military junta of Pakistan to prevent partition and preserve its integrity. The Chinese message made unwarranted accusations that the Government of India was carrying out gross inter-

ference in the internal affairs of Pakistan. And the Soviet Union and the United States were doing the same one after the other. The message threatened that should Indian expansionists start aggressive invasion on Pakistan, the Chinese government would render strong support to the government and People of Pakistan.³⁹ The same feeling had been voiced in an article in *People's Daily* on 11 April 1971.

Given the international situation China was happy over the influx of 10 million people to India from Bangladesh which was straining sharply the country's economy. For China, it was an opportune moment when Pakistan could be egged on to launch an attack against India. It was in such a condition that India entered the treaty of friendship, peace and cooperation with Soviet Union on August 9, 1971. This treaty was signed as a safeguard against the Pindi-Peking-Washington axis. China had always considered Pakistan an instrument of its great-power Chauvinistic policy in Asia.⁴⁰ Swaran Singh was right when he observed at National Press Club, Washington DC, that any support Pakistan military rulers might get from any quarter, which gives a pat on their back, will encourage them in their intransigence. The support Pakistan is getting from China would encourage them in their path of repression which would be a negative factor in the entire situation. China, on the other hand kept on harping that Pakistan government had adhered to its foreign policy of independence and contributed to the defence of peace in Asia and promotion of Afro-Asian solidarity. They believed that East Pakistan question was an internal matter of Pakistan and India had crudely interfered in its internal matter. China also saw with suspicion the signing of Indo-Soviet treaty. In an interview to Neville Maxwell of the *Sunday Times* (London) Chou En-Lai described the treaty as a means of realising Brezhnev's Asian collective security system which was directed against the countries to which Russia was hostile. China's representatives in UN had earlier said that the treaty in fact was the basis of 'bare-faced armed aggression against Pakistan.'⁴¹ Meanwhile China kept pumping arms to Pakistan as never before, the sole aim being, to provoke an armed conflict between Pakistan and India. The arms supplied by China since 1965 had not to be paid for because China declined

to accept any price for such armaments.

Incensed by the rapid advance of Mukti Vahini in Bangladesh and worried over the serious, internal problems in the country, Pakistan in a bid to divert the attention of its people from the governmental failures, bombed several Indian air fields simultaneously on December 3, 1971 and followed it up by declaration of war against India. India had to fight back. It accorded recognition to the Provisional Bangladesh government on December 6 and ordered its troops to march into Bangladesh. Peking and Washington came out in full support of West Pakistan. Soviet Union and its allied countries supported India throughout the war.

Sri Lanka and Bangladesh

In the initial phase of difficulties between India and Pakistan over Bangladesh it was difficult to find any consistency in the stand of the Ceylonese government on the Bangladesh issue. On the one hand the Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike talked of human problem demanding immediate resolution of the political crisis; on the other, she added her share to the complexity of the situation by providing fuel and transit facilities to Pakistani aircrafts carrying armed personnel to Bangladesh. By helping the Pakistani army of occupation to continue its strangle-hold on Bangladesh, Sri Lanka was contributing to the delay in the implementation of her Prime Minister's agreed proposition with the Indian External Affairs Minister, Swaran Singh, that "accelerated political and constitutional procedure in Pakistan would facilitate the return of the refugees to their homeland."¹² She deliberately stressed that her country's policy was one of "non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries."¹³ An English writer called it the 'polite comedy of non-intervention.' Helping genocide in Bangladesh with arms, ammunitions and refuelling facilities could be nothing less than a "polite comedy."¹⁴ *Ceylon Daily News* carried a full page advertisement indirectly attacking India over East Bengal crisis. The advertisement, inserted by the 'Ceylonese Foreign Affairs Circle', under the name of several leading government and opposition politicians, including two parliamentarians, doctors

and lawyers deprecated 'overt or covert' interference in the internal affairs of any country by another and encouragement to separatist movements that threatened the 'territorial integrity of any country.'⁴⁵

The inconsistency of Sirimavo Bandaranaike on Bangladesh issue can be explained on three counts: First Sirimavo Bandaranaike was reluctant to appear ungrateful to Pakistan which supplied helicopters to her government during the uprising in April 1971. Though India was the first country to go to her rescue with military and economic aid, siding with India would have meant not only displeasing China which was helping Pakistan but also losing a traditional 'balancer' to Indian power in the region. A disintegrated Pakistan would have meant disturbance in the power balance between India and Pakistan which would have meant loss of leverage in the bargaining position of small countries like Sri Lanka vis-a-vis India with US and China. Second, perhaps in her estimate the quarrel between the Sinhalese and the Tamil population could be compared to the clash between the West Pakistan's and East Bengalis. Condemning Pakistan for quelling the East Bengal crisis would in a way support 'two nation' theory in Sri Lanka too. Might be it was this consideration which made the Ceylonese delegate in the UN dub the liberation war in Bangladesh as "fratricidal" and "secessionist" movement. It seems Sri Lanka had in mind the possible repercussions of such a movement of the minority Tamil Community in the island the major political organisation of which, the Tamil Federal Party, had been demanding provincial autonomy through a federal constitutional structure. Third, Chinese influence on Sirimavo Bandaranaike too was working on her stand on this issue. She could afford to displease New Delhi but was not prepared to defy the wishes of Colombo's 'best friend', Peking.⁴⁶ A Ceylonese commentator has rightly pointed out:

"Every government in power in Ceylon since independence has had a nightmarish fear of 'big brother', India and its potential for 'expansionism'. . . In her geopolitical calculations Ceylon has sought to maintain extra-friendly relations with Pakistan and with China as a check on possible

Indian 'expansionism'. It was a right wing UNP government which first entered into the Ceylon-China Rubber-Rice Agreement in 1953. This fear of Indian 'expansionism' has been the unspoken bedrock of the thinking of both major parties in the island, the SLFP as well as the UNP.⁴⁷

This fear psychosis was decried by Sri Lanka's ex-diplomat in the United Nations, Senerath Gunawardena who denounced the bogey of Indian expansionism as mischievous. He stated :

"If India wanted to take us over they could have done it a hundred times over during the last 2500 years and not a single nation would have lifted a finger to save us. But we have chosen to be hostile to our closest neighbour. This is the logic of current foreign policy."⁴⁸

Considerably, therefore, it was not on account of displeasing Pakistan or the fear of aggravating its own problems at home, but for preserving her ties with China, that Sri Lanka failed to take a positive stand on the Bangladesh issue. China for her was the principal convenient counterweight and Pakistan with limited potentials a second counterweight to India in this part of the world. W.A. Wiswa Warnapala rightly points out that besides maintaining a "special relationship with China", Sri Lanka retained an "extra friendly atmosphere with Pakistan" which had an "embarrassing effect on Sri Lanka's relation with India."⁴⁹ Thus while during the whole course of Indo-Pak war, the United States and China supported Pakistan, Sri Lanka kept harping the tune that the East Pakistan crisis was an "internal affair" of Pakistan. It tried to observe "strict neutrality"⁵⁰ despite granting Pakistan air transit and refuelling facilities at Colombo. Sirimavo Bandaranaike declared in December 1971 Sri Lanka's strict neutrality and urged the Secretary General of the United Nations to use his good offices to end the conflict. Sri Lanka was also prepared to be associated with initiatives accepted by the United Nations towards achieving a settlement. Earlier in August 1971, Sirimavo Bandaranaike wrote to President Yahya Khan offering her services to ease the Bangladesh crisis. The same neutral stand was shown when at the height of Indo-Pak war Sirimavo Bandaranaike received

the Commander in Chief of the US forces in the Pacific, John S. Mc. Cain and then later welcomed the Chief of the Soviet Pacific Fleet, Admiral Nikolai Smirnov, on a good will mission. The reception accorded to Mc Cain is understandable in view of "a quiet but strategically important thaw" in US-Sri Lanka relations which had given way to "the verbal abuse that only a year ago rained down on American 'imperialism'." But according to reception to a Soviet naval commandar, fails to make sense except in the light of strict nonalignment.⁵¹ Another point which indicates the complicity of Sri Lanka in the overall plan of United States and China was her deep silence on the visit of American Nuclear warship Enterprise in the Bay of Bengal. Sri Lanka had been raising a lot of dust on the issue of Indian Ocean as a zone of peace. But the arrival of this war ship failed to elicit even a small protest. Some scholars have therefore doubts about Sri Lanka's neutrality during the 1971 Indo-Pak war. The aim of Sri Lanka was only to 'contain' India the way China and the US wanted her to do without showing her alignments explicitly.⁵²

While relationship with China remained a "special feature" of Sri Lanka's foreign policy under Sirimavo Bandaranaike, cordial relations with the West was also developed. Both the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance strove hard to project Sri Lanka's image as a nonaligned State and correct the image created in the US and in other Western countries that Sri Lanka was leaning towards the communist countries. It was apparent therefore that the government was keen for continuance of aid from Western countries. As a result US assured to give various kinds of aids, loans besides continuing, PL-480 programme. Besides Sri Lanka received aid from western countries like Britain, Netherlands and Canada and international institutions like World Bank to finance the second stage of the Mahaveli project.

The JVP movement and the economic crisis made the UF government veer to a rightist posture in order to attract more financial aid from the countries of the world. This became one of the reasons for the bickerings in the UF government. Some of Sirimavo's Marxist partners began to accuse her of turning

to the 'right'. The LSSP Finance Minister, N.M. Perera, resigned from the cabinet. The Pro-Moscow CP also ended its coalition with the government. The LSSP even charged the government that it was "on the brink of selling the country to the US and the Western capitalists."⁵³ Perera said that Premier Sirimavo Bandaranaike assisted by FRD Bandaranaike (nephew of SWRD Bandaranaike and a Minister in the UF government) had been won over by the US, PL-480 manipulators, the CIA and the money bags of the IMF and IBRD.⁵⁴ He wanted fresh elections immediately because Sirimavo Bandaranaike government had broken the mandate on which it was elected. The demand was, however, similar to the one put up by the UNP which wanted elections in 1975. The government refuted these charges and US also shared in rebutting the allegations. The matter was later shelved. Sirimavo Bandaranaike reiterated her stand that leaving the government by LSSP did not mean that the government was going rightist.

These allegations, however, seem baseless in view of the substantial Soviet aid and huge Chinese aid Sri Lanka was able to attract. It was due to the successful manocuvring of Sri Lanka's foreign policy that even during the height of the Sino-Soviet rivalry, it was able to attract aid and loans from both the socialist giants. It was for the first time in the history of independence Sri Lanka that both USA and USSR came forward to aid this little island country. FRD Bandaranaike stated in the House of Representatives :

"This is probably the first time in history after the Second World War when the United States of America and the Soviet Union have both given aid to a country, not for the purpose of fighting a third country but for the purpose of assisting it to deal with its own internal affairs."⁵⁵

The help extended by USSR during the insurgency continued even after it.

Closer Economic Cooperation

Trade and aid policy of China remained very lucrative to-

wards Sri Lanka during the second phase of premiership of Sirimavo Bandaranaike. Soon after coming into power an agreement on Chinese loan of US \$ 9.3 million was signed in September 1970 with Sri Lanka. Within nine months of this agreement another agreement on Chinese convertible currency loan of Rs. 150 million, i.e., US \$ 31.5 million payable in three instalments during 1971 was signed,⁵⁶ besides the endorsement of trade protocol for 1971 which was signed in January that year. The first part of the loan of \$ 25 million was given by China in May 1971. This loan was given for the purpose of building up the economy which was badly shattered after the Che Guavarist movement. This loan was the highest ever given by any country to Sri Lanka at one time. Even while signing the 1971 trade protocol under the Rubber-Rice Agreement, China had cut the agreed price of rice by five shillings per metric ton, keeping in view the economic difficulties of the new government. This resulted in a gain of Rs. 50,000 for Sri Lanka. The Chinese Trade Minister on the occasion declared that China was willing to provide its "fullest cooperation to speed up the socialist march of Ceylon by helping it economically and in every other way possible because we love this country."⁵⁷ As we have seen, this pledge was redeemed after the insurgency by the grant of long term interest free loan of Rs. 150 million payable in three instalments during 1971. Besides, China offered to present five highspeed naval patrol boats as an outright grant to help Sri Lanka guard its coasts against any external assistance to the JVP. The first two of these were delivered in February 1972 and two more in July 1972 and the last one coming later in October 1971.

China entered another agreement to provide an interest free loan of Rs. 40 million, i.e. \$ 13 million, for the purchase of 100,000 tonnes of Chinese rice. Not only the work of Bandaranaike Memorial Hall which was stopped during the UNP rule was resumed but also technical assistance was granted to train Ceylonese armed forces personnel on the use of some new weapons provided by China. China also presented some agricultural implements. Agreements on parcel and post services were also signed in December 1971. On the whole the total aid receipts from China were highest ever in the history of Sri

Lanka. It was more than the combined assistance of all other countries during 1971. This fact is an indication of the priority China gives to Sri Lanka in the region after Pakistan. Both Sri Lanka and Nepal are almost of the same size and Nepal is an immediate neighbour, still China's aid and trade with Sri Lanka far exceeds that with Nepal.

In view of Sri Lanka's foreign exchange crisis and the increasing freight rates which foreign ship-owners demanded causing heavy pressure on foreign exchange reserves, China offered to help Sri Lanka launch a joint liner services. The agreement for a Sri Lanka-China liner service was signed in April 1972 and was launched in operation in November the same year. China had agreed to provide two suitable cargo ships costing 370,000 rupees on an interest free basis and it provided the first cargo ship in September which enabled the inauguration of the liner service in November. The controversial Maritime Agreement entered by Sirimavo Bandaranaike during her previous regime ensured her the 'most favoured nation' treatment at China ports.

Sirimavo Bandaranaike's government which had assumed the helm of the state with \$ 120 million foreign debt and a \$ 200 budgetary deficit compounded by growing inflation was placed virtually in an economic morass after the JVP destructions. She needed aid from all quarters to build up the national economy. This was possible only with the maximum cooperation of China, USSR, US and the world Bank. Because there had been some irritants in US-Sri Lanka relations, and World Bank had conditions attached, Sri Lanka leaders looked to the East; Sirimavo Bandaranaike visiting China and her Industries Minister paying a visit to USSR. The very fact that China was given priority in preference to India and USSR, reflects Sri Lanka's foreign policy priorities. China became the first country to be visited by the Prime Minister of the 'Republican' Sri Lanka.⁵⁸

Sirimavo Bandaranaike's China visit in June 1972 marked the "high-water mark in Sino-Sri Lanka relations." In Shanghai on her way to Peking she was accorded "highest honours"

and the reception accorded to her in Peking was "unprecedented". *Tribune* (Colombo) noted on June 30, 1972 :

"she was given a 'reception' far greater than any other leader from any other country who had visited China in recent times."

Commenting on the causes of the special friendship it further said :

"at the present juncture with the Indo-Soviet Treaty and the aftermath of the Indo-Pak war, Ceylon has a special significance for the geopolitical calculations of China."

Sirimavo Bandaranaike's visit to China thus proved to be an extremely successful one both economically and politically.

In his speech at the banquet given in honour of Sirimavo Bandaranaike on 25 June 1972, Chou En-Lai praised Sri Lanka for having achieved considerable success in eliminating colonial forces, safeguarding and consolidating independence, opposing foreign control and interference and developing the national economy. Referring to their traditional friendship Chou praised Sri Lanka for having bravely broken the blockade and embargo imposed by imperialism and concluding the rubber-rice trade providing valuable support to China at the time of need. Their relations in political, economic and cultural fields "were examples of friendly cooperation and a model of interstate relations."⁵⁹ Sirimavo Bandaranaike with equal eloquence praised China for the "generous volume of economic assistance given on the more liberal terms which are outstanding in the annals of aid to developing countries." Praising their own relationship as "unique" she cited it as an instance of friendship and cooperation between two countries of very unequal size and power.⁶⁰ The joint communique issued on this occasion announced that in order to support Sri Lanka in developing her national economy China had agreed to provide Sri Lanka with a long term loan free of interest besides referring to similar views on international problems.

During Sirimavo Bandaranaike's visit to China Agreements on economic and technical cooperation and on construction of a cotton spinning, weaving, printing and dyeing mill providing for Chinese loan of Rs. 307 million i.e. \$ 33.26 million were signed. Out of this Rs. 250 million interest-free long-term loan was to be paid in hard currency and Rs. 47 million was for the textile mill and flood control projects. China also agreed to send a team of experts to Sri Lanka to formulate a scheme of flood control for the Mahaveli, Gin and Kelaviganga. In response to Sri Lanka's request a delegation from China headed by the Chinese Minister of Water Conservancy and Electricity, Madame Chein Cheng-Ying, visited Sri Lanka along with a technical survey team which investigated Gin Ganga Basin for about a year and gave its proposal in November 1975. The work on it commenced within a year by September 1976. Another sum of Rs. 6.23 million, i.e. \$ 2.0 million and about Rs. 6 million was extended for two cargo ships Lanka Kalyani and Lanka Kanthi for the implementation of the joint shipping service. In December 1971 China extended cash loan of Rs. 13.44 million in convertible currency repayable in 20 years with a 10 year grace period. China also agreed to purchase 10,000 tons of Ceylonese sheet rubber apart from the usual purchases under the rubber-rice barter agreement.

In May 1973 the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall was completed by Chinese technicians and workers. This Hall became the living testimony of growing and abiding Sino-Sri Lanka friendship. It was not only a "symbolic gift" of China to Sri Lanka but became a "glittering showpiece of Chinese goodwill" in the heart of Colombo. Marshall Hsu Hsiang-Chien, Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, came together with 24 top ranking Chinese officials for the inaugural ceremony on 17 May 1973 and made special mention of Sri Lanka's opposition to "hegemonism and power policies in the Indian ocean."⁶¹ During the visit of Illangaratne, the Ceylonese Minister of Internal and External trade to Peking in December 1973 China donated an additional \$ 1.25 million for the maintenance and upkeep of the Bandaranaike Memorial Hall.

China offered a long-term loan of Rs. 50 million to Sri Lanka to meet immediate exchange difficulties. The loan was finalised when in October 1973 the Trade Minister, T.B. Illangaratne visited Peking on his way back from GATT talks in Tokyo disappointed at the harsh conditions stipulated by IMF on a Rs. 25 million standing agreement. The government decided not to accept the IMF assistance. China also agreed to provide Sri Lanka an advance supply of 40,000 tons of rice. The shipment of this rice began in November 1973 and ended in December even before price negotiations had started. This was later converted into a gift to Sri Lanka without any conditions attached to help Sri Lanka combat draught and ensuring economic difficulties due to it.

During the December visit to review trade agreements for 1974, Illangaratne urged China to diversify its trade with Sri Lanka and purchase a wide range of products in addition to rubber. It was expected that China would be able to provide Sri Lanka with such requirements as fertilizer, tractors, etc., which are needed for her production programme. China had agreed earlier that year to purchase Rs. 6 million worth of blue sapphires and cat's eyes which are plentiful in Sri Lanka.

As expected China gifted 100 tractors worth Rs. 2 millions to Sri Lanka in July 1974. An agreement on Rs. 100 million interest free loan repayable in 30 years was also signed to help build a flood protection project in the Gin Ganga river basin studies on which had already been conducted by Chinese experts and final report submitted in 1975. The Minister of Irrigation, Power and Highways, Maithripal Senanayake had requested the Chinese authorities to expedite work on that project stating that Sri Lanka's need in this connection was "a very urgent one and would like the Chinese Government to treat it as such."⁶² It was in response to this request of the Ceylonese Minister that this agreement was signed immediately. Agreement for the establishment of another textile mill at Minneriya, with a capacity of 3.5 million pounds of yarn per year besides a finishing plant with an annual capacity of 6.5 million yards (1.45 million metres) at Pugoda were signed. The textile mill at Pugoda, work on which commenced in October

1971, went into commission in March 1975. Protocols relating to this mill were signed in June 1959, November 1964, June 1972 and lastly in July 1974. Work on the Rs. 70 million Minneriya Textile mill commenced in April 1976 and it could go into production only after the Bandaranaike government had bowed out of power, i.e. as late as the May 1978.

During the UF rule of Sirimavo Bandaranaike China besides agreeing on Sino-Sri Lanka shipping services to Europe and usual trade protocols, entered agreements for the establishment of three sheet glass factories at Dankotuwa, Negombo and Nattindiya. Loan agreement for these were signed in 1975 and 1976.

However, China did not delay in sending a military delegation to Sri Lanka. *Hsinhua* reported on February 22, 1977 that a friendship military delegation of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) headed by Ho Cheng Wen, deputy Chief of the PLA, left for Sri Lanka at the invitation of the army commander of Sri Lanka. At the airport Sri Lanka's ambassador to China was present to give them a hearty send off.⁶³ William Gopallawa, President of the Republic of Sri Lanka received the military delegation at the President House. They held "cordial and friendly conversation" with Sirimavo Bandaranaike too. At a dinner at the state Guest House, Lieutenant General Attygalle of Sri Lanka and Cheng Wen both wished for the ever increasing friendship between the two countries and two armies.⁶⁴

Cultural and Social Contact

This close and cordial relations between a communist giant and a small island country on the road to socialism but far from it, was bound to evoke suspicion on the part of India and USSR, China's main rival in Asia and its "enemy No. 1" respectively. Soviet commentators criticised the Chinese presentation of the Bandaranaike Hall before the completion of the promised textile mill and alleged that China is trying to establish Sri Lanka as a Chinese bridgehead in the Indian Ocean.⁶⁵ Even after the death of Mao in 1976, Sino-Sri Lanka relations did not show

any change. A year after his death, a photo and book exhibition on Mao was held in Colombo from January 3 to 7 under the sponsorship of the Sri Lanka-China friendship Association. A seminar was also sponsored by the Association where Mao was highly praised by friends of China.⁶⁶

Sri Lanka is strategically so important that undue interest by foreign powers attracted immediate Indian attention. Growing Chinese presence and interest in Sri Lanka was bound to have repercussions. Indian government made positive gestures to improve its relations with Sri Lanka by trying to solve the question of persons of Indian origin in Sri Lanka by implementing the 1964 agreement and resolving the problem of 150,000 persons left over in the 1964 agreement besides ending the question of Kachchativu island in Sri Lanka's favour. Still the 'phobia' of the 'Colossus' looming over Sri Lanka could not be alleviated. Sri Lanka kept leaning towards China more so after the emergence of Bangladesh as a new factor in the South Asian region as also of India as a powerful force on the sub-continent. Sri Lanka, kept looking towards China as the only counterweight to balance India. Pakistan being cut to size could not balance Indian strength in the region despite Chinese support. The Sino-American detente, made it easy for Sri Lanka to be on friendly terms with both. In fact one of the more important reasons for Sri Lanka's special relationship with China had been economic aid.

South Asia being a "target area" for China she has always tried to checkmate USSR and USA to prevent the superpowers, from getting the kind of foothold in the subcontinent or from developing the kind of 'collusion' in the area that would pose a serious threat to her.⁶⁷ China, has for the purpose, used aid as a weapon to ensure her sources of needed supplies and also as a challenge directed especially at the Soviet revisionists⁶⁸ and somewhat against American imperialists and Indian reactionaries. Thus whenever she was faced with economic difficulties and western powers began to test her nonalignment, China always came forward to help Sri Lanka. Praising the mode of Chinese aid Ratne Deshpriya Senanayake, Deputy Minister of Planning and Economic Affairs and President of the Sri Lanka

China Friendship Association, confessed on 24 November 1975 that Chinese assistance had always been free from obligations and of interests. The same sense is reflected in Sirimavo Bandaranaike's speech at the banquet given in honour of Mrs. Chou En-Lai, the Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress in April 1977 when she said :

“The relations between China and Sri Lanka have been tested by time and circumstances. Ours is a friendship which is firmly rooted in mutual goodwill, understanding and support.”⁶⁹

Speaking at a public rally to honour the wife of late Chou-En-Lai, Maithripala Senanayake too said that the selfless nature of Chinese aid programmes are evident from the fact that the loan arrangements have always been without interest and spread over long periods of time for repayment. Loans coming from other countries including USSR are not usually free of interest and are most of the times with strings attached.

Attitude of Sri Lanka and China on Indian Ocean, NIEO and disarmament

The demilitarization and declaration of Indian Ocean as a zone of peace the establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO) and to some extent disarmament were other matters of mutual agreement between Sri Lanka and China. Sri Lanka has been in the forefront in using the methods of conference diplomacy to deal with the Indian Ocean problem. Being an island country in the “middle of the Indian Ocean”, it believes itself to be a “part and parcel of the ocean” rather than the land mass of the South Asia. Its geographical position in the mid-ocean and a non-controversial personality makes it believe itself ideal for peace keeping responsibilities. Mr Hameed said in 1975 when he was in opposition :

“You find India against Pakistan, Pakistan against Bangladesh, and Thailand against Indonesia. In the whole of Asia you find that there is so much of political intrigue that Sri Lanka is well placed to provide the leadership be-

cause of the political position that we enjoy.”⁷⁰

Till 1971 the main object of the western powers in the Indian Ocean was to secure the area for their new strategic nuclear weapon system. However after 1971 and especially after the Arab-Israel war of October 1973, which coincided with the use of oil weapon by Arab countries creating oil crisis in the west; the western powers began to develop their conventional-interventionist capabilities in the area. The USA increased its presence in the Indian Ocean and began to send its task forces more frequently in the area. It also started expanding its base facilities in Diego Garcia. France and Great Britain too increased their interest. This was bound to lead to a corresponding response from the Soviet side.

The Ocean is of vital importance for major industrial countries of the world who not only depended for their raw material on this region, but also on their markets as well. Thus, not only the west, the Soviet Union too is dependent on this ocean, for 80% of Soviet sea-borne trade passes through the Indian Ocean.⁷¹ China and Japan too are highly dependent on this Ocean. Rightly, therefore, when it was announced in Washington and London in December 1970 that Diego Garcia would be set up as a base, the littoral states saw in it “yet another direct threat to their peace and stability,” apart from the increase in power-rivalry in the region.

Sri Lanka could perceive the growing rivalry between developed nations as early as 1964, when Sirimavo Bandaranaike during her first tenure of office called upon members of the nonaligned world at Cairo to see that the oceans especially the Indian and the South Atlantic were made nuclear free zones. This was widely welcomed by the nonaligned countries because this could save the littoral countries of the Indian Ocean from interference and military pressure from the imperialist powers. This idea was endorsed at the third conference of Non-Aligned Heads of State of Government in Lusaka in September 1970. Due to growing power rivalries in the Indian Ocean Sirimavo Bandaranaike pursued this proposal at the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference in Singapore in 1971, and per-

sonally presented it before the United Nations General Assembly at its 26th session in October 1971. Her proposal was that the Indian Ocean should be made a Zone of Peace. "It should be free of the presence of Big powers in a state of rivalry and competition; that military installations established by these powers should be dismantled and removed; and that it should be secured for lawful commercial and other peaceful uses and pursuits."⁷²

From 1971 onwards the proposal has made speedy progress and the 27th UN General Assembly session approved a new resolution in 1972 on proclaiming the Indian Ocean a Zone of peace, which was supported by 95 member countries including China. China voted with Sri Lanka on six related resolutions between 1971 and 1976 on the "Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace" while the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and France abstained on all of them. It was also decided to set up an ad hoc committee of representatives from 15 nations including China and Sri Lanka to study the implications of the resolution and its implementation. The president of the political committee was a Ceylonese by the name of Radhakrishna Mamphul. The Committee held several sessions and was enlarged several times to its present membership of 23 nations but failed to produce information other than the questions it had discussed and offered no significant conclusions or recommendations.

The Indian Ocean again figured in the 29th session and another resolution was passed which requested the ad hoc committee to continue its work, called upon great powers to enter into consultations immediately with a view to eliminating foreign bases and asked the littoral states to convene a conference on the Indian Ocean. The 30th session passed another resolution requesting all states to attend the conference and the Secretary General to extend all help to the committee. The ritual was repeated in 1976, 1977 and 1978. This conference was ultimately decided to be held in Colombo in 1981. The western powers were trying to impede its progress.

China supported the resolution in the General Assembly

26th Session in 1971 mainly in order to explit the term "great power rivalry" which was liberally used during the debate, for its anti-Soviet tirade. Moreover as China had not developed much stakes in the Indian Ocean it was safer if the zone became a zone of peace. Submarines operating in the sea immediately South of Sri Lanka would be ideally placed for the launching of nuclear attacks on both the Soviet Union and China.⁷³ As a thaw was developing between US and China, Soviet Union could be expected to take advantage of it because Chinese naval power is far behind theirs. The ad hoc committee's report on Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean was thus :

Para 70 : China has no bases in the Indian Ocean nor does it deploy any of its naval units there. China has transferred naval equipment to Tanzania, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and has assisted Tanzania in constructing a dockyard at Kigamboie.

Para 71 : There have been speculative reports about Chinese satellite tracking facilities in Tanzania and about Chinese missile tracking ship and a missile recovery ship in the Indian Ocean. China part from having port facilities at Dar-es-Salam in Tanzania is also reported to have a tracking station in Zanzibar.⁷⁴

The main entry route for a major Chinese naval force in the Indian Ocean lies through the straits of Malacca. Other possible openings for China to the warm waters of the Indian Ocean are over land through Pakistan and through Burma. China has invested a huge amount on the construction of 401 mile long Karakoram highway, known also as the "Friendship Highway" linking Pakistan with China through the northern area of Gilgit and Baltistan.⁷⁵ The fact that China accelerated the construction of the Highway at the top priority basis after the Indo-Pak war of 1965 and again after the 1971 war makes it apparent that apart from spreading a net around Kashmir, its purpose is to have an easy access to the Indian Ocean. The distance from that place to any of the Chinese ports. The Chinese interest in the Indian Ocean, therefore, seems to be a

long-term interest and aims at exploiting the facilities granted by friends.

Sri Lanka, without implicating any ulterior motives behind China's support to peace zone proposal, is greatly appreciative of China's stand. During her visit to China in June-July 1972 Sirimavo Bandaranaike conveyed thanks of her government in particular for the assistance provided by China in ensuring the successful adoption of the peace zone declaration at the UN General Assembly in December 1971. The Chinese Government on the other hand, expressed its resolute support for this proposition. This gesture was again exchanged during Madame Teng Ying-Chao's (Mrs Chou-En-Lai's) April 1977 visit to Sri Lanka.

However, the United States' intelligence sources say that China is trying to gain base facilities in Sri Lanka, which would give Peking a strategic hold in the Indian Ocean. China wants an access to the port of Trincomalee in order to ensure the free movement of her naval and merchantships in the Indian Ocean.⁷⁶ The American warships have also been visiting Sri Lanka's ports. Dr. Golvin R. De Silva, deputy leader of the opposition Trotskyite Lanka Samaj Party, complained before the National State Assembly on November 5, 1975, that three missile carrying warships of the US—a part of the US Seventh Fleet—had come to the port of Colombo on a four day routine visit. He added that the visits of the American naval vessels to the Ports of Colombo over the last several years were an evidence of the increasing American pressure on Sri Lanka.⁷⁷

In a world fragmented and still increasingly inter-dependent, the Indian Ocean like any other ocean cannot remain isolated from major world issues. Now that there is a convergence of Sino-American interests in the South Asian region, their presence is on the increase. As a result Soviet presence had also escalated.

The New International Economic Order

By 1977 a new cold war with an entirely new focus was

underway. This change was an outcome of a number of developments that took place in the previous decade or so. Decolonisation had moved fast and the control of the UN General Assembly had passed into the hands of the third world nations. The awareness of the increasing dependence of the industrial world on energy resources and raw materials from the third world gave birth to a new cold war between the developed and the developing world. This cold war has been termed as the "North-South Conflict" and has resulted in "North-South dialogues". This group of countries, which includes almost all of Asia, Africa and Latin America, does not consider the process of decolonisation complete by the achievement of political independence because of 'neocolonialism' in the form of economic dominance and exploitation by the developed countries. As a result a determined campaign is being waged by the Third World through a variety of overlapping groupings, for the establishment of a "New International Economic Order". This Third World movement is in many ways similar to the growth of trade unionism in the West in the nineteenth century. The struggle of Afro-Asian and Latin American countries for re-shaping the system of world economic relations represents an important aspect of the world revolutionary process at the present stage. The third world has coalesced together "as never before in support of demands for more favourable arrangements in the international economic system."

In fact, the Bandung conference in which both Sri Lanka and China participated was the first to voice the feeling of the NIEO in the seed form. An Indian scholar rightly points out that Bandung :

"struck a spark which was latter to kindle the flame of struggle to restructure the pattern of world economic relations in favour of the Third World."⁷⁸

To the newly independent nations gathered at Bandung the question of economic liberation assumed a great significance. At Bandung the "whole of the first section of their Declaration concerned itself with economic issues." The nonaligned movement has discussed and dilated these issues "each time its heads

of state or Government met.” Hameed, Sri Lanka’s present foreign Minister, rightly observes :

“Our declarations are replete with prescriptions both for securing cooperation among ourselves and for restoring a balance in the economic relations between the world’s advantaged and disadvantaged.”

At the first conference of 25 nonaligned countries held at Belgrade in September 1961 the member states stated that efforts should be made to bridge the gap between the few economically advanced countries, and the numerous economically less developed countries. Nonaligned meets kept voicing this feeling in almost all the subsequent conferences, viz. Cairo in 1964, Lusaka 1970, Lima 1971, Algiers 1973, etc. The declaration adopted at the Belgrade was the first document of the non-aligned movement which recognised the need to convene a broad-based international conference on economic problems. China for years had been pressing for just such a conference calling it the Second African-Asian Conference on the pattern of Bandung.

In a press conference on 29 September 1965, China’s Foreign Minister, Chen Yi, while giving a call to convene the Second Asian-African conference referred to the exploitative nature of Western aid. He spoke in the favour of abrogating all loans from developed countries, thus siding totally with the developing world and the establishment of a new economic order. In his own words :

“Since many Afro-Asian countries are receiving aid and loans from the United States and other countries, thus incurring ever increasing burdens, it may be advisable to adopt a resolution at the African-Asian conference declaring the cancellation of all debts which Afro-Asian countries owe to the United States” (and other developed countries).

The demand of the nonaligned states, which was also the demand of Sri Lanka, for a new international economic order kept gathering momentum from conference to conference and

was officially accepted at the Sixth UN General Assembly Special Session in May 1974 and important resolutions were adopted here and the seventh special sessions.

As NIEO is not merely a charter of the Third World's economic demands and aspirations, but also tends to serve the third world in specific political ways, China has extended her support to the search for NIEO in order to win the support of the third world countries. India in its capacity as Chairman of the 'Group of 77' (now having 117 members) and Sri Lanka as one of its dynamic members, have taken an active part in the North-South dialogue "in spite of its being still a dialogue of the deaf." This Group includes China also. However, China and Soviet Union have confined their actions with regard to NIEO "to the offer of moral and diplomatic support to the cause of the third world." China under the post-Mao leadership and its modernization programmes has shown deep interest in some of the NIEO issues such as transfer of technology and resources. China has also been critical of Soviet apathy on real and substantive aspects of NIEO.

Disarmament

As far the views of Sri Lanka and China on disarmament are concerned, they are diametrically opposed. Whereas Sri Lanka is resolutely in favour of "all measures in furtherance of world peace and disarmament",²⁹ China supports continued development of weapons. This is demonstrated by the fact of China's refusal to sign the Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty of 1963 which was signed by Sri Lanka after three month's deliberations. She also refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on June 12, 1968 and came into force on March 5, 1970.

China's strong protest against the Test-Ban Treaty made it evident that China proposed to develop a nuclear capability, though its paper-tiger thesis dissuaded such an assessment. However, China exploded its first nuclear device on 16 October 1964. A *Renmin Ribao* editorial on October 22 expressed satisfaction on China having broken the nuclear monopoly of the

United States. Another editorial in *Jen-min Jin-pao* on November 22 discussed some of the proposals regarding arms control. It rejected the proposal for a partial Test-Ban Treaty on the ground that such a treaty would not prevent the United States from continuing to use, manufacture, or stockpile nuclear weapons or from conducting underground tests. It felt that even a complete Test Ban Treaty would make no difference because US would be able to retain its nuclear monopoly. Second, a total ban would only spread a false sense of security. Regarding the third proposal, the proposal for destruction of delivery vehicles, the editorial conceded that though the proposal was attractive, there were doubts as to how they could be rendered ineffective because ordinary aircrafts could serve as delivery vehicles. It, therefore, called for a no-first-use agreement among all nuclear powers. It argued that the United States in such a case would be unable to intimidate others with nuclear weapons. The article definitely showed some amount of sophistication as regards armament proposals. But for all practical purposes disarmament is "out of the question"⁸⁰ for China because "it is silly to talk of general disarmament."⁸¹ To the Chinese leaders disarmament is an "unrealistic dream."⁸²

As a result while Sri Lanka has openly pleaded for making the Indian Ocean a nuclear free zone, disarmament and establishment of NIEO—China has paid only lip service to the cause of disarmament and NIEO while supporting zone of peace proposal. Since 1971, when China's rights were restored in the United Nations, the Chinese delegation has not advanced a single constructive proposal or taken a single positive initiative to strengthen world peace. *Pravda* (Moscow) on May 14, 1977 rightly remarked: "There is not one international agreement aimed at curbing the arms race or stopping nuclear weapon tests to which China is signatory." China has consistently refused to assume any international commitments that might tie her hands. At the 26th Session of the UN General Assembly the Chinese delegation opposed the proposal to convene a world Disarmament Conference, at the 27th Session her delegates opposed to idea of the non-use of force in international relations and a ban on nuclear weapons for all time. At the 28th session, in contradiction to the spirit of the NIEO, China oppo-

sed a reduction of the military budgets of permanent member states in the security council by 10 per cent and allocation of a part of the resources thus saved for aid to developing countries. Thus China is opposed to the principle of disarmament which is so popular among the nonaligned states including Sri Lanka.

As against this view point of China Sri Lanka holds, in the words of one of her foreign Ministers :

“disarmament is not only a political question, but also an integral element in the new international order and its correlation with development is an extremely close and critical one. We are firmly convinced that the pursuit of disarmament is at the same time the pursuit of development by all nations. This is an aspect of disarmament that should not be minimised, misinterpreted or misunderstood. It is an integral part of the process of creating a new international order. The interaction between disarmament and development will be to the benefit of all nations.”⁸³

However, the Chinese have displayed considerable cunning in their opposition to proposals for disarmament. While trying to torpedo constructive proposals on disarmament by proposing various kinds of amendments, they at the same time pose as “active supporters” of disarmament and the Third World nations on the basis of their constructive amendment proposals. Thus superficially there is a meeting of minds on the issues of Indian Ocean, NIEG and disarmament between Sri Lanka and China despite differences on long-term interests.

Conclusion

The second term of Sirimavo Bandaranaike was a difficult one. The economy was severely strained. The internal situation was worse. The JVP movement was only a reflection of it. The subcontinent was a witness to a severed Pakistan and birth of the new state of Bangladesh. The alignment of world forces was changing and changing fast. Sri Lanka was required to keep pace with these kaleidoscopic changes as well as to strengthen her economy. Probable Chinese hand behind the JVP movement

dissuaded her this time to lean too heavily on China. However China coming closer to the United States was a welcome feature for Sri Lanka. As a result Sri Lanka was able to maintain very close relations with China without offending the United States. Her nonaligned policy enabled her to attract favourable responses from India and USSR too. China still was able to project herself as the best trading partner as well as the best aid giver to Sri Lanka. China was able to replace Britain as the best aid giver to Sri Lanka. China was able to replace Britain as the best trading partner of Sri Lanka. Even on such issues as Indian Ocean, disarmament and New International Economic Order China displayed a mutuality of interest not only with Sri Lanka but with the whole of the Third World in order to project herself as the leader of the underdeveloped world. Thus again Sri Lanka went close to China despite her nonaligned position.

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154 *India and Sri Lanka—China Relations*

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Coming of the UNP under Jayewardene (1977—to the present)

On 21 July 1977 'a silent revolution' took place in Sri Lanka. The decision the people of Sri Lanka took that day was decisive and the mandate they gave was unprecedented in the electoral history of the island. 71 year old Tunius Richard Jayewardene and his United National Party, in a landslide victory, ended the seven-year rule of Mrs. Bandaranaike. The Marxists had been routed and very few MPs from the previous ruling party were returned to parliament. The SLFP had 90 seats earlier was reduced to a meagre seven of which only two belonged to the previous group. A similarity can be drawn between the fate of the UNP in 1956 elections and the fate of the SLFP in 1977 elections. In 1956 only eight members of the UNP survived the hustings and only two members in both instances were returned from the former cabinets, one being the prime minister.

The people's disenchantment with the SLFP and her Marxist allies is evident from the fact that the LSSP leader N.M. Perera who was never defeated at any previous election lost to a new comer and the General Secretary of the Communist Party, Colvin R.de Silva, could not come even fourth in the three-member constituency of Colombo Central which returned the present Prime Minister R. Premadasa of the UNP with a

staggering majority of 35,156 votes. The UNP bagged 50.9 per cent of the registered votes in an election where voter participation reached the world mark of 86.7 per cent.¹ The final result was UNP 139 seats, TULF 17, SLFP 7, Independents 1—a massive mandate for the UNP to take over the leadership of the country. The emergence of the TULF² (Tamil United Liberation Front) as the major opposition party was significant in as far as it supported the idea of a separate state—the Tamil Eelam and in the longrun determined the relations of Sri Lanka with her immediate neighbour of the North.

Foreign Policy Stand

Jayewardene has usually been dubbed by his communist compeers as “Yankee Dick” or “Darling of America” and the party he headed has generally been characterised right wing “Pro-West” in its foreign policy relations. Soon after coming into power he switched over from a parliamentary form of government to a presidential one based on American and Gaullist models² the country with a strong executive rule improving the chances of solving the country’s major problems besides imparting stability to the political system.³ Stating the directive principles of the state policy in new republican constitution added :

“The state shall promote international peace security and cooperation, and the establishment of a just and equitable international and economic and social order, and shall endeavour to foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in dealings among nations.”⁴

Following largely the foreign policy objectives of the previous government, which have now become the permissible limits within which a government in Sri Lanka must operate, in a foreign policy statement issued on August 4, 1977, the Jayewardene government defined its objectives in the following terms :

“My government will follow an independent foreign policy which will be opposed to imperialism and colonialism

in all their manifestations and which will seek to preserve and protect the sovereignty, integrity and freedom of Sri Lanka. The government will not permit any interference by foreign countries in internal or external affairs or allow the independence or security of the country to be threatened in any way.”

While pursuing ‘independent and strictly nonaligned’ foreign policy the government continued its unqualified support to the principles and objectives embodied in the U N charter; preservation of peace throughout the world ; complete eradication of colonialism, neocolonialism, apartheid and big power hegemonism ; an introduction of a new world economic order, disarmament ; Indian Ocean as a nuclear free zone and all third world efforts to eliminate poverty and backwardness. It was increasingly realised that political freedom must be buttressed by economic freedom ensuring freedom from exploitation, poverty and dependence. National efforts alone could not help to achieve these goals. As a result Sri Lankan leaders extended their friendship and cooperation to all countries and looked forward to working at regional and international levels, bilaterally and multilaterally, for the common benefit of mankind. A.C.S. Hameed, the foreign Minister of Sri Lanka wanted, therefore, to make the foreign policy of Sri Lanka “an effective instrument for economic advancement.”

Relations with China

One remarkable feature of this UNP regime was that closer relations with the west did not mean strained relations with China. The ‘dramatic’ improvement in Sino-American relations since 1971 and especially since 1978 brought them in closer alignment on a number of issues. The two countries began to consult on a wide range of regional and global question of common concern and to devise parallel or coordinated policies on such issues as Indo-China, Afghanistan and South Asia. Sino-American relations by the end of seventies—amounted if not to an alliance, at least to a reasonably close alignment between Beijing and Washington. Though in the word of the Carter Administration, “they were friends, rather than allies,”⁵

it is not illogical to say according to General A. Haigs, the NATO Supreme Commander in Europe that "China is a 16th member of the North Atlantic alliance". In this favourable environment Sri Lanka had no difficulty in maintaining cordial relations both with China and America.

On his assumption of office of Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, J.P. Jayewardene was greeted by the Chinese Premier Hua kuo Feng. Besides other formalities Hua expressed his confidence that under the leadership of Jayewardene the traditional friendship between the peoples of China and Sri Lanka and the friendly relations and cooperation between their two countries would keep on growing.⁶ Soon after coming into office the UNP government renewed the rice-rubber agreement of 1952 for the sixth time on 27 October, 1977. Minister of Trade and Jayewardene's special envoy, L. Athulathmudali, signed the trade and payments agreement in China besides the rubber-rice agreement providing for the exchange of 49,000 tons of Sri Lankan rubber for 200,000 tons of Chinese rice in 1978. The trade protocol signed by the two countries envisaged a trade turnover of US \$ 55 million each way in 1978. For 1979 too, the trade protocol for which was signed in December 1978 the trade turnover was to be of the same amount each way. Chinese Vice-Premier, Geng Biao, visited Sri Lanka in June 1978 and declared that "the positive role played by Sri Lanka in international affairs has won the appreciation of the people of China and of the world" and that "your country has made useful contribution to the nonaligned movement in upholding its unity and correct orientation." He was of the opinion that South Asian people ardently loved peace and they needed a peaceful and stable environment to develop their economies. Expressing his wish to see the South Asian countries without outside interference, treating each other as equals, he extended the Chinese government's firm support for Sri Lanka's proposal of making the Indian ocean a zone of peace.⁷ Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka A.C.S. Hameed visited China in July 1979, and in August 1979 after assuming the office of the Prime Minister, Ranasinghe Premadasa, preferred to visit China first in his new official capacity. It definitely shows the weight China assumed in Sri Lanka's foreign policy

perspective. Extending him a warm welcome the Chinese Premier Lixiannian in the banquet toasted in his honour paid glowing tributes to China-Sri Lanka friendship and spoke effusively of the UNP government. In the State Council banquet he said :

“Under President Jayewardene’s leadership, the government and people of Sri Lanka have, in the last two years, scored gratifying successes in upholding the unity of the country and developing the national economy. Sri Lanka has worked positively to uphold the principles of the non-aligned movement and keep to its orientation.”

Talking of the mutual friendship of the two countries he further added that the Chinese people knew a great deal about Sri Lanka because of the “Profound friendship between our two people forged in the course of amicable contacts dating back to ancient times and subsequently strengthened by their mutual sympathy and support in the long years of struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism.”⁸

Peoples’ Daily welcoming the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka wrote in its editorial on 13th August 1979 :

“The Government of Sri Lanka has all along followed an external policy of peace, neutrality and nonalignment, opposed the imperialists’ policy of aggression and war and made valuable contribution to the Afro-Asian people’s cause of unity against imperialism. As a result, its role and status in international affairs is rising steadily.”

The visit of Prime Minister Premadasa to China, it was hoped, would be “a new contribution to the further consolidation and expansion of the friendly relations and cooperation between the two countries.” Whereas foreign Minister Hameed responded by declaring that “the ties between Sri Lanka and China are as old as the hills,” Prime Minister Premadasa stated that the government and the people of Sri Lanka firmly believed that a strong China was a necessary stabilizing force in Asia. Premadasa further admitted that in bilateral relations China and Sri

Lanka had no differences and problems. Their relations "have always been based on mutual advantage and mutual respect flowing from the five principles of peaceful coexistence."

In appreciation of Sri Lanka's strict commitment to the principles of non-alignment and also because she was one of the countries that came to China's assistance when powerful factors had placed an embargo against her, China agreed to grant an interest free loan of approximately Rs. 500 million (equivalent to 50 million Yuans in Chinese currency) to Sri Lanka, repayable in 20 years. In another agreement concluded on 18 January, 1980 China agreed to provide approximately the same amount for technical and economic cooperation. The Chinese loan was to be extended within a period of seven years and it was provided to assist Sri Lanka in building complete projects providing her with individual equipment and conducting technical co-operation.

Sri Lanka, however, besides trade and aid was gravely concerned about the security of the island country. Trade and shipping Minister Lalith Athulathmudali showing his concern about security said that "foreign policy must first consider Lanka's security."⁹ As a matter of fact steady improvement in Sino-American relations till 70's had provided immense security to Sri Lanka, but the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and its repercussions in South Asia besides growing Sinhala-Tamil conflicts alarmed the island republic. The South Asian balance of power had drastically changed with the disintegration of Pakistan in the beginning of the 70's and India had ostensibly moved in the Soviet Orbit. America had the "China and. . ."¹⁰ up its sleeve to contain the Soviet influence from further growing in South Asia. China supported the American move to furnish Diego Garcia with the latest weapons and increase its influence in the Indian Ocean. Besides China kept up its vituperative attacks against Soviet Union and rejected all offers to bridge up its differences. During the high tide of its friendship with USA China kept up its tirade against Soviet Union and India. But with Soviet adventurism in Afghanistan, its possible incursions in Pakistan and Vietnam's alliance with Russia made China realise the gravity of the situation. China in the eighties began to

mend its fences with Russia and India. It has the longest open borders with India and Soviet Union. In the past couple of years, the propaganda about India's brotherly attitude towards its neighbours on the ground of which China sought to maintain close relations with them has been shut off. India's position of dominance in South Asia has been accepted by them and therefore normalisation of relations and possibly establishment of friendly relations seems to have acquired priority as it contributes to China's overall foreign policy considerations vis-a-vis the superpowers. China as a result wishes to leave the Soviet Asian countries to settle their outstanding issues bilaterally. India's stand on Afghanistan and Kampuchea has made it clear to the Chinese that in a more relaxed and in a more secured environment India is a potential force to counter superpower domination in the region that is not a subservient collaboration of one or the other superpower.

Recently policy of China in South Asia has witnessed a degree of withdrawal from its South Asian involvement in contrast to the situation a decade back when China acted almost as a South Asian power. It has not only attempted to normalise its relations with India but has also supported the nonaligned movement and attempts at regional cooperation among South Asian countries. The fourth meeting of foreign secretaries which took place in Dhaka in March 1983 was hailed by Chinese media as a positive trend in regional cooperation in South Asia. Likewise the first meeting of South Asian foreign ministers in New Delhi in August 1983 was described by a People's Daily commentary as "a contribution to regional stability and economic development in the seven South Asian nations." The commentary further added that it was "completely in the interest of the people of the seven countries to develop friendly cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual benefit" and this was the correct approach toward "Collective self-reliance and common prosperity."

China had developed closer political relations with Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) which has stabilised as a regional formation with western especially American support and had taken an united stand on several issues, China

had, during the period under review, looked more towards countries for support on international issues which has been usually diverse. Sri Lanka too in her attempt to keep all kinds of contacts with India to the necessary minimum especially since 1979 tried to develop closer relationship, mainly economic, with Buddhist societies in southeast Asia.¹¹ Sri Lanka even applied for membership of ASEAN, though her application was rejected in June 1982 on the ground that Sri Lanka was outside the Association's geographical limits. This event is an example of Sri Lanka's feeling of insecurity and search for a balanced Policy to India. The one traditional balance to Indian power, Pakistan, was cut to size and was no match to India, the other, China, was attempting to move closer to India while pursuing a policy of non-intervention in South Asian Affairs as a whole.

Thus in the wake of July 1983 ethnic riots between Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka when she attempted to bolster her defence in anticipation of a possible invasion by India, she invited United States, Britain, Pakistan and Bangladesh and not China. Though the news of inviting foreign assistance was denied categorically, the expulsion of Stewart Slarice the UPI correspondent who had flashed the news merely for the violation of the censorship rule, left no doubt about the authenticity of the news. China in this case blamed the colonial legacies as the cause of such problems and wished speedy peaceful solution in the problem by patient negotiations and disfavoured any outside interference. When President Jayewardene's brother visited Beijing after visiting New Delhi as his special envoy, the Chinese reiterated this stand and indirectly disapproved Indian mediation attempts. But when the actual mediation process began through the efforts of G. Parthasarthy and showed some progress, they did not repeat their apprehensions.

However, though China ostensibly maintained that the ethnic trouble in Sri Lanka was an internal matter, the racial trouble it seems, has the hidden hand of both China and the US. Rohan Wijeweera, the Pro-China extremist left wing JVP leader, and the hero of the 1971 JVP movement was said to be

involved in Tamil massacre. The die hard racists in the UNP found in this 40-years old self-styled professional revolutionary politician a Marxist-Leninist, a modern Bolshevik and a Proletarian revolutionary all rolled into one, a useful ally in making the country unsafe for non-Sinhalese.¹² His preference for the Chinese form of communism is well known and he had the sympathy of the UNP leaders. Though in the aftermath of the riots the party was banned but till now he has not been apprehended. It has also been alleged that communist party aligned too Moscow which was subsequently banned, had instigated and trained the liberation Tigers. Russia is accused of having actively encouraged the liberation Tigers and also the rioters in order to topple the Jayewardene government and bring Sirimavo Bandaranaike back with whom they had cordial relations.¹³ Similar accusations from different quarters have been made against US. It is alleged that US has supported the Tamil separatist movement both in India and Sri Lanka. In 1980 the Senate of the Massa-Chusettes sent the US President a demand for help to the movement of Sri Lanka's Tamils. The Governor of the state Edward King, proclaimed May 22 the day of Tamil Eelam on the day "state" flags of the non-existent state of Tamil Eelam were hoisted, several propaganda measures were taken and collections of money for the separatists were organised. Thus, both the friends and benefactors of Sri Lanka may have a hidden hand behind the July 1983,¹⁴ and subsequent Tamil-Sinhalese conflict. Might be it was because of this reason that China tried to underplay the significance of the worst ever Tamil-Sinhalese riot and ascribed it to colonial legacies of the past.

The UNP definitely in this phase drifted close to US-China axis which has been amply demonstrated by the various stands Sri Lanka has taken during this phase on international issues.

Sri Lanka was one of the few non-aligned countries that openly denounced the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. This is quite uncharacteristic of Sri Lanka which usually takes a cautious line.¹⁵ The same kind of an attitude is discernible in Jayewardene's stand on Diego Garcia during the nonaligned summit in New Delhi. It was at line insistence that Diego

Garcia has not mentioned in the declaration of nonaligned countries, though it was mentioned in a separate chapter in a different context. In these years China had openly supported US move to arm Diego Garcia with Rapid Deployment force and latest sophisticated weapons to counter Soviet expansionism. Even on the issue of Kampuchean representation in a ministerial meeting of the coordinating bureau of the non-aligned countries which was hosted by Sri Lanka in June 1979, the drift was visible. Because of lack of consensus the matter was kept pending for a long time. Eventually, however, Sri Lanka allowed the China and U.S. backed Pol Pot delegation to participate in the conference while the foreign Minister of the Heng Samrin government was kept waiting in a nearby hotel. The Pol Pot regime was supported by Sri Lanka again in the debate at the UN in September 1979.

Again, Sri Lanka which severed diplomatic relations with Israel 14 years back has agreed in May 1984 to allow Israel a limited presence in Colombo so it can use Israeli experts to train anti-guerilla military units designed to fight the Tamil Tigers. It is significant here to note that this invitation to Israel to set up an "interests section in Colombo to handle bilateral matters while the United States would act as a protecting power,"¹⁶ has come at a time when China has assumed a position which is definitely pro-Israel. In discussions held by the Arab League delegation with the Chinese leaders in December 1982, China wanted the Arabs to recognise "the Israeli People's right to peaceful existence."¹⁷

Sri Lanka which had been one of the pioneering champions of Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, threw open the Colombo and Trincomalle ports for visits by warships after a 12 year ban. Referring to the visits of ships from the USA and USSR to Sri Lanka ports Prime Minister Premadasa stated in the Sri Lanka Parliament in December 1981 that between the years 1975-81 53 Soviet and 37 US ships had visited Sri Lanka.¹⁸ China too has sought access to the Indian Ocean via the back-door Karakoram Highway connected with Pakistan's forward positions along the line of their actual control in Kashmir. Sino-US interest in Sri Lanka was indicated in a State Department

document issued in the spring of 1978 on American security assistance to more than 80 countries: "An independent Sri Lanka, economically stable and secure, is important to overall peace and stability of the South Asian region". The importance of the island and its link up in the geo-strategic considerations of the US and China is demonstrated US defence minister Casper Weinberger's dramatic stopover at Colombo from his visit from Beijing in 1983. General Vernon Walters, at one time the number two man in the CIA too visited Colombo in somewhat mysterious circumstances. Weinberger's Beijing-Colombo-Diego Garcia-Islamabad visit might have something to do with the Coordination for the use of Rapid Deployment force in this region. It has been reported that Jayewardene and Weinberger discussed the regional situation. It is significant to note here that on Sri Lanka the views of US and China are convergent. G. W. Choadhuary writes :

"In South Asia, the United States and the People's Republic of China share common though not identical interests. The interacting South Asian interests of the United States and China can be seen as functions of each power's perceptions of Soviet aims in the subcontinent and the Indian Ocean-Persian Gulf areas."¹⁹

The Chinese leaders never fire of warming the United States and the smaller South Asian nations including Sri Lanka about the expansionist designs of the Soviet Union in the Indian Ocean—Persian Gulf areas and in the subcontinent lying in what Zbigniew Brzezinski calls the "arc of crisis."²⁰

During his May 1984 visit to China President J.R. Jayewardene was appreciative of China's policy in world affairs and confessed that his country and China consult each other on many international developments and "see eye to eye on many of them". He was convinced that the relationship between the two countries would grow further in the years to come and he "a shining example of how a small country and a big power could arrange their relations to mutual benefit", speaking at a Press conference he said he had "friendly and cordial discussion" with the Chinese leaders and once again confirmed that

“we have no disagreement on issues we have talked.” Commending the foreign policy stand of China on the internal affairs of Sri Lanka he added that the Chinese “policy will have a positive influence in world affairs.”

China and Sri Lanka also signed two agreements in Beijing in the presence of President, Li Xiannian and Jayewardene. One was on the establishment of a joint committee for economic and trade cooperation and the other on scientific and technical cooperation. The main task of the joint committee under the first agreement is to study and explore possibilities of broadening cooperation in the trade and economic fields and to make suggestions for strengthening and promoting such cooperation. Under the second agreement the contracting parties on principles of equality and mutual benefit in the spirit of friendly cooperation would exchange visits by specialised personnel to study scientific and technical achievements and experiences in various fields of national economy and for professional training. Both sides agreed to provide each other with seeds, saplings, specimens and fungi in small quantities for experiments.

Indeed, India has not particularly been happy with Sri Lanka's policy especially when her relations with China have been too close. Since 1960's there has been a feeling of mistrust with any country China has patronised in India's neighbourhood. Sri Lanka, guarding the ramparts of the exposed and open coromandal coast, as long as remains nonaligned there is nothing to worry about her in Indian strategic considerations. As soon as it moves closer to China a feeling of mistrust grows in the political circles here. The hard line Sri Lanka has assumed, challenging India to intervene in the recent racial riots in Sri Lanka, can be ascribed to her close relations with China and United States. However, Chinese move for betterment of relations with India in 1980's and its policy of non-intervention in Sri Lanka's recent ethnic riots augurs well for peace in South Asia.

There has been, no doubt, a substantial degree of continuity in the foreign policy of Sri Lanka towards China despite periodic changes in the party that controls the government. Begin-

ning with the rubber-rice trade pact concluded out of necessity, the relations between China and Sri Lanka have expanded in all spheres: economic, political, cultural and scientific, and co-operation between them seems to be growing in other fields.

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Conclusion

A history of Sino-Sri Lanka relations in recent times provides a fascinating study in the patronization of a small island country by a big power to counter-balance the growing power of her chief rival in Asia, that is, India and by putting and wooing her it smothered her own path to the fold of the Afro-Asian world with the ultimate purpose of dominating Asia. Vast inequality in their size, natural resources and manpower and even larger distance were in no way a hindrance on way to their comradeship.

Everything about China is vast and colossal-population, land area, land forms, resource base, economic production as compared to Sri Lanka which is one of the smallest countries of South Asia. Sri Lanka is a pigmy in the face of a giant like China. The deep interest China has been taking in this island, therefore, does not stem from a sense of being friends on equal terms. It is a striking example of unequal friendship and such a friendship, under the garb of generous aid and philanthropic trade, is likely to serve selfish motives and ulterior purposes. China's long term objectives of patronising Sri Lanka could be to keep Sri Lanka free not only from Indian but also from western and Soviet influence and making it subserve ultimately its own ambitious designs.

Born at a time when the world was lined up in two conflicting ideological groups with both of which she expected to maintain good relations while furthering her own interests, Sri Lanka

found herself in an uneasy position. Conscious of her importance as a strategic island, she was not willing to barter her newly gained freedom to any ideological group. She chose to tread, therefore, the difficult path of nonalignment. During the first phase of the UNP rule (1948-56), while she ostensibly maintained a nonaligned posture, she leaned positively to west, particularly towards Britain and America. However, under adverse economic conditions she had to enter rubber-rice trade pact with China which has remained, ever since, the golden link of their friendly Chain. Dudley Senanayake was forced by sheer economic compulsions, to enter the pact with China.

Even his successor Kotelawala who would have liked very much to exchange this pact for a generous American aid, had to by force of circumstances, carry forward the pact. The Chinese terms were indeed so lucrative, Americans could not offer parallel terms.

China, from the very early times, took a patronising attitude towards Sri Lanka and was eager to establish diplomatic relations with her. But the UNP leaders were averse to communists and communism. It was mainly due to this reason that diplomatic relations with China could not be established during their rule. Still China adopted a patronising attitude towards this island country set on the doorsteps of the Indian Ocean. It was China's patronising attitude towards Sri Lanka which prevented Chou En-Lai at Bandung to chastise a self-confessed "inveterate opponent" of communism—Kotelawala—who raised there many an unpleasant issues like those of Soviet colonialism and "1st Formosa belong to Formosans." China, instead of getting angry, invited Kotelawala to visit China and ultimately made him confess that Chou-En-Lai was a pleasant and affable leader. During MEP rule of SWRD Bandaranaike diplomatic relations with China were established and China projected herself as a firm trading partner of Sri Lanka. By the first phase of Mrs. Bandaranaike's SLFP rule (1960-65) China had established herself as a reliable trade partner and a munificent aid giver. China was such a patron that Sri Lanka refused to take sides, with a nonaligned India, her closest neighbour, or even

indict China as the aggressor when the Sino-Indian border clashes occurred in 1962. Besides other reasons for such a neutral attitude, or according to some Indian scholars a Pro-China attitude, the important one seems to be the feat of losing an economic patron. Steadily Sri Lanka adopted this posture in all other disputes in the continent as well as elsewhere. The same attitude of ambivalence was discernible during the Indo-Pak hostilities in 1965, Sino-Soviet rift and Indo-Pak war of 1971 during Bangladesh crisis seems to have stemmed from the fact that both the benefactors and friends China and the United States were supporting Pakistan hence Sri Lanka too had to provide some facilities to Pakistan.

Another factor which prompted Sri Lanka to lean steadily towards China was the fear of India. Being fifty times bigger than Sri Lanka, India has always provoked fear despite deep historical links and cultural affinity. The fact that many an invasions in the past emanated from South India creates a lurking threat and alarm that it may also happen in the future, makes the more enervated look to India with distrust and suspicion. The defence agreement with Britain after independence was indeed more an insurance against India than the rising forces of communism. Later on when the defence agreement was abrogated in favour of nonalignment Sri Lanka looked generally to Pakistan and particularly to China to act as a counterweight against India. As a result when in 1971 the division of Pakistan seemed imminent, Sri Lanka feared a loss of a traditional balancer to India, and, to maintain the status quo, came forward indirectly in favour of Pakistan. Therefore when India emerged as the "largest and strongest power in the region" from the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971, Sri Lanka tried still more to befriend China. Generally after 1971 and especially since 1977 Sri Lanka has found no trouble in maintaining friendly relations with both the United States and China whose interests though not identical have been common in South Asia. The immediate interest of both these giant countries is to contain increasing Soviet influence in South Asia. The Pro-West Jayewardene government has been able to counter-balance Indian influence, which is generally deemed Pro-Soviet by these powers, by keeping friendly relations with

US and China simultaneously.

However, Sri Lanka has, due to her nonaligned policy, no difficulty in maintaining cordial relations with India too. Their relations can be characterised as paradoxical in the sense that there is a deep bond of attachment between the two despite the realisation of the threat-potential of India by Sri Lanka. While their cultural affinity, common traditions and geographical proximity help strengthen their friendly ties, the tiny size of the island and the presence of a huge number of Tamils is a constant reminder to the decision-makers of Sri Lanka of their relative weakness vis-a-vis India. The Tamils in Sri Lanka are equated to Sudetan Germans in Czechoslovakia and are looked upon as India's "fifth column". Repeated assurances of Indian Prime Ministers that India has no evil designs in Sri Lanka and that it would not interfere in the affairs of the island in favour of the Tamil population, has hardly any appeasing influence on the majority Sinhalese population. The Sinhalese-Tamil conflict has rather deepened since independence and has assumed worst ever proportions during the rule of the UNP under Jayewardene. The July 1983 and subsequent savage mass killings of Tamils in Sri Lanka and the reported involvement of the country's armed forces has shocked India. The leaders of the country have not charged India of supporting Tamils tigers along but have, through their speeches, challenged India to interfere in the island country. Jayewardene reportedly even summoned outside forces to preclude Indian interference. Outside forces, describing it to be an internal matter, have so far not made it a hotbed of politics. India has on her part used a lot of discretion despite adverse internal public opinion and detracted from interfering. India's concern at the plight of Indian settlers in Sri Lanka is usually subordinated to the need for promoting good relations with Sri Lanka. However, the developments in Sri Lanka affect this country too. There are fifty-five million Tamils in Tamil Nadu province of India and if they agitate on developments in Sri Lanka, it would be difficult for the government of India to long ignore their sentiments.

Sri Lanka, therefore, like Pakistan, has attempted to create a favourable regional environment by inducting external powers

into the region without, of course unlike Pakistan, displeasing India. As a matter of fact it is not possible for her to annoy India. An inimical India would be a greater threat to Sri Lanka's security than any other power in the world. Her security if threatened by any other power would be protected by India but if threatened by India herself it may be difficult even for the world powers to defend her. Thus Sri Lanka cannot afford to antagonise India. However, no such questions arise because of the deep mutual appreciation and understanding of their problems by the leaders of the respective countries. It was this sense that prompted Sri Lanka to adopt the policy of nonalignment in foreign affairs and dissuaded Dudley Senanayake from joining SEATO. It was this appreciation of India that made Sri Lanka adopt a neutral posture and not a totally Pro-China posture during the Sino-Indian conflict in 1962 despite many outstanding problems with India. The same factors prevented Sri Lanka from adopting a totally Pro-Pakistan policy during the Bangladesh crisis.

Indeed, for a small island like Sri Lanka situated at a vulnerable point in the strategic location of the Indian Ocean region, independence means little if it is not well protected. In an ever changing era of coalitions Sri Lanka leaders deemed it wise to travel the "Middle Path" of Buddha even in the international sphere. Sri Lanka's lack of well organized national army navy or air force makes it vulnerable even to internal insurgency which was amply proved during the JVP movement in 1971. Hence Sri Lanka is susceptible to external attacks and is almost powerless to defend herself. But initially the middle path for her meant close cooperation with Britain. The first leaders of the UNP who took over from the British represented a thin layer of conservative and highly westernised elite and thus while following the Middle Path they sought closer cooperation with Britain.

After 1956, however, Sri Lanka under the premiership of SWRD Bandaranaike, moved steadily towards a nonaligned

position in international politics. As long as he had not taken over the reigns of power, a long drawn debate raged over the ultimate choice in alignment with the west or adopting a neutral stand. Solomon Bandaranaike emerged as the most leading champion of nonalignment in Sri Lanka. Earlier he favoured a "Switzerland" type policy of neutrality for Sri Lanka, but later he came to accept the policy of nonalignment as practised by the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Kotelawala's extreme-anti-communism enabled Bandaranaike to emerge as a moderating influence in foreign affairs. The success of his policy can be judged by the wide expansion of trade and the amount of aid Sri Lanka received from such diverse countries as UK, USA, USSR, India and China.

The foreign policy of Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the widow of SWRD Bandaranaike, who came to power in 1960, though largely based on the principles of nonalignment as laid down by her late husband, perceptibly saw a marked strengthening of relations with China and a pronounced straining of relations with the west particularly with the United States. However, she envisaged for Sri Lanka the role of a mediator in international and regional disputes. Though her stand during Sino-Indian border war in 1962 indicated a vacillation more towards China than towards India, it occurred more due to Sri Lanka's economic compulsions than due to the failure of her nonaligned position.

The trends which began under Sirimavo Bandaranaike continued to some extent during the second phase of Dudley Senanayake's rule. Just as there was an evidence of a shift towards an anti-west and Pro-China position within the existing framework of nonalignment during Sirimavo Bandaranaike's rule likewise under Senanayake's rule there was a shift move in the direction of the west particularly towards the United States, but by now a consensus had evolved on foreign policy matters. Permissible limits had been set. One could move within the confines set during SWRD Bandaranaike's rule, but could not

go further. Hence beginning with a pro-west stance during the first phase of the national government's rule of Dudley Senanayake, Sri Lanka tried to maintain a balanced relationship with China too in the later days of its rule. In regional conflicts Sri Lanka adopted the same posture as Sirimavo did not refused to take sides. On the opening of Indo-Pak war in 1965 Sri Lanka adopted an unequivocal stand and beyond a vacuous call to both the parties "to seek every measure and opportunity available for the early and peaceful settlement of this dispute" and offering her services for mediation did little.

Thus while the UNP leaders remained pro-west while following the policy of nonalignment SLFP leaders followed a pro-east especially a pro-China policy. As a result when Sirimavo returned to power for the second time in 1970, there was an inevitable change of emphasis in the foreign policy of Sri Lanka. Incorporating the highest ever number of committed Marxists, the UF government's foreign policy had a definite bearing towards socialist countries. The relationship with China reached all time high despite the rumours of Chinese had behind the JVP movement. After the initial tight-lipped behaviour of China on the JVP movement, there was a massive inflow of Chinese aid and grants. Chinese patronisation reached all time high by repeated grants of interest free loans, both for development and consumption purposes as well as there were many gifts of industrial machinery and armament. China also showed her willingness to cooperate with Sri Lanka in the world body the UN—on such issues as declaration of Indian Ocean as a zone of peace. NIEO and disarmament, though Chinese had differences of view on some of them.

The coming of Jayewardene in 1977 did change the emphasis but with a difference. The "Yankee Dick" or "Darling of America" that he is called by his communist friends, Jayewardene has been able to maintain a balanced relationship with both China and the US. Thus close relations with the west, especially the US, did not mean strained relations with China.

This has been possible mainly due to the 'dramatic' improvement in Sino-American relations since 1971 and especially since 1978. US and China as well as the island republic have been able to see eye to eye on a number of international issues and have increased cooperation in various spheres.

In the broad framework of nonalignment, therefore, Sri Lanka's political relationship have fluctuated between Pro-America and Pro-China stances according to the views of her Prime Ministers and the political parties in power. The public, on the other hand, has sat in judgement trying to bring about a moderation in their foreign policy. Whenever the pendulum has swung too far in favour of one country, the people have replaced the government. Kotelawala's extreme pro-west posture led to the defeat of his party in 1956. After the death of Bandaranaike where Dhanayake brought about a rightist interlude he was defeated at the polls. The defeat of Sirimavo Bandaranaike in 1956 may be ascribed to her tilting more to the side of China. Likewise Dudley Senanayake and his party's defeat in 1970 may be attributed to his failure to implement genuine nonalignment in foreign affairs and leaning perceptibly towards the US. Again during the second term in office when Sirimavo Bandaranaike failed to keep a nonaligned posture vis-a-vis India, China, Pakistan and America she had to suffer a setback at the hustings.

However notwithstanding the fact that Sri Lanka has been highest recipient of Chinese aid after Pakistan in South Asia she has consistently refused to be a pawn in China's great chauvinistic and hegemonistic policies in South Asia. China has patronised Sri Lanka in the hope that like Pakistan she would become the other end of the nut-cracker to crush India. China's moves to sever or crush India in a pincer movement between the two edges of Pakistan and Sri Lanka has not paid much dividends. Instead her ally Pakistan got severed. Sri Lanka has not even granted base facilities to China. China has also failed to channel arms and ammunitions to South Indian

states through Sri Lanka because after the JVP movement Sri Lanka has become cautious on this account for her own safety. Still, it cannot be denied that though Sri Lanka has refused to serve Chinese designs in Asia, even her neutrality on issues affecting India and her consistent refusal to grant military bases to great powers is a favour China would like to buy at any cost. Hence keeping in view their national interest, which is undoubtedly the "one guiding star, one standard of thought, one rule of action", the Sri Lanka leaders have moved from a Pro-US to Pro-China foreign policy within the broad spectrum of nonalignment.

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Index

- Ad-Hoc Committee on Indian Ocean, 142-143
- Afghanistan, 61
- Afghanistan problem, 162-163
- Afro-Asian Conference, Pandung, 26-28
- Chinese call for, second, 146
- Agricultural imports, in China, 74
- Aid See Foreign aid
- Aid Sri Lanka Consortium, 89-91
- Air Ceylon, 62
- Air-transport agreement, Sino-Sri Lankan, 44
- Aksai Chin, 59, 86
- Alakesvara, Vira, *King*, 4
- Ali Sabry, 65
- Alliances, 122
- Amersinghe, Shirley, 88
- Arab-Israel War of 1973, 141
- ASEAN, 91, 163-164
- Asian countries, Chinese nuclear test and, 85-86
- foreign aid policy and Super Powers', 123
- Asian Foundation, 57
- Asian Relations Conference, first, 1947, 23
- Asian solidarity, 23, 25, 42, 59
- Atapirikara, 87
- Atulathmudali, L., 160, 162
- Atomic explosion, Chinese, Sri-Lanka reaction, 85-87
- Atta, Kafi Asante Ofori, 65
- Attygalle, *Lieutenant General*, 138
- Awami League, 126
- Balance of power, 162-164
- Bandaranaike, F.R.D., 132
- Bandaranaike Memorial Hall, 73, 136
- Bandaranaike, S.D., 72
- Bandaranaike, Sirimavo, *Mrs.*, 56-75, 176-178
- Bangladesh issue and, 128-131
- foreign policy of, 113-150
- Sino-Soviet rift and, 68-70
- visit to China by, 104-135
- joint communique, 70-71
- Bandaranaike, SWRD, 35-50, 97, 175-176
- assassination of, 55
- non-aligned policy of, 36-38
- Bandung Conference, 1955, 26-28
- NIEO and, 145-146
- US attitude towards, 26-28
- Bangladesh crisis, 175
- Chinese attitude towards, 126-128
- Sri Lankan attitude, 128-131
- Bangladesh refugees, 127
- Battle Act, 17
- Bogor Conference, Colombo Powers', 25-26
- Border disputes, Sino-Indian, 58-65
- Bowles, Chester, 19
- British-Sri Lanka Corporation, 115
- Brezewinski, Zbiniew, 167
- Buddhism, 2-3
- Buddhist countries, Tibet problem and, 47
- Buddhists persecution, Sino-Sri Lanka relations and, 97-98
- Burma, 61, 86-87
- Business Acquisition Act of 1971, 115

- Capitalism, 36
 Catholic mission schools,
 nationalisation of, 75
 Ceylon China Friendship Association, 43
 Ceylon National Congress,
 decline of, 8
 emergence of, 7
 Ceylon Peace Council, 43
 Ceylonese Association of London,
 8
 Che Guevarist movement, 117-
 122
 ideological background of, 118-
 122
 Chein Cheng-Ying, 136
 Chen Yi, 146
 Cheng-Ho, 4-5
 "Chiang Kai Shek bandit gang",
 131-102
 China,
 ASEAN and, 163-164
 Asian solidarity and, 25
 atomic explosion of,
 Sri Lankan reaction, 85-87
 Bangladesh crisis and, 126-128
 border agreement of,
 with neighbouring countries,
 61
 border dispute,
 India with, 58-65
 conflict, with Soviet Union,
 68-70
 cultural Revolution in,
 foreign policy and, 96-103
 Sri Lanka and, 88-89, 96
 disarmament and, 147-149
 economic aid by,
 to Sri Lanka, 104-107, 132-
 138
 expansionist designs of, 66-67
 foodgrains imports in, 74
 foreign aid of, 123
 politics of, 46
 to Sri Lanka, 44-45
 foreign relations of,
 with Sri Lanka, 70-74, 96-107,
 159-169
 with South Asian countries,
 162-164
 with USA, 159-160
 Guevarist movement and, 117-
 122
 Indian Ocean and, 140-144
 Ad-hoc Committee's report
 on, 143
 Indo-Soviet treaty and, 127
 loans from,
 to Sri Lanka, 133, 136-137
 NIEO and, 145-147
 NPT and, 147-148
 recognition to, 100
 Tamil problem and, 164-165
 Tibetan national uprising and,
 46-49
 Chinese Communist Party, 39
 Chinese propaganda literature,
 42-43, 88, 97, 99-101
 Chinese rice,
 loans for,
 to Sri Lanka, 133, 137
 Chinese trade union delegation,
 visit to Sri Lanka, 40
 Chinese traders, 2
 Chinese travellers, 2-3
 Chou-En-Lai, 5, 11, 25, 38-40, 66,
 72 135, 140, 172
 Bandung Conference and, 27-28
 on Indo-Soviet treaty, 127
 visit to Sri Lanka, 41-42
 Choudhuary, G.W., 167
 Chua Ju Kua, 3
 CIA, 120
 Coconut export, 62
 Coelho, Vincent, 2
 Co-existence, 42
 Colombo port strikes,
 Communists and, 46
 Colombo Powers, 25
 Colombo proposals, 65
 Colonialism,
 Asian consciousness against,
 22-23
 Cominform, 27
 Commodity aid,
 Sri Lanka to, 91

- Commonwealth, 56
 Commonwealth Conference, 1956, 39
 Communism, 9-14, 36-37
 influence of, 3
 UNP and, 45-46
 Communist countries,
 Sri Lanka and, 90
 Communist literature, 42-43, 88
 ban over, 97
 seizer of, 99-101
 Communist Party of Sri Lanka,
 Indo-China conflict and, 63
 split in, 68
 Cores, Claude, 40
 Cosmas, 3
 Credits,
 to Sri Lanka, 90-91
 IMF's, 90-91
 from India, 95
 from Soviet Union, 94
 Cultural revolution,
 Chinese, 88-89, 96
 foreign policy and, 96-103
 Sri Lankan press comments
 on, 103-104
 Czechoslovakia, 38

 Dahanayake, W., 36, 50, 55, 178
Dalada, 4
 Dalai Lama, 47-49
 Damanasky, 122
 De Silva, C.P., 81
 De Silva, Golvin R., 144, 157
 Defence agreement,
 Sri Lanka-UK., 9-10
 Democracy, 11
 Demonstration,
 before US embassy, 117-118
 Diego Garcia, 141, 165-166
 Diplomatic relations,
 Sino-Sri Lankan, 38-41
 history of, 4
 UNP and, 11-12, 14
 Disarmament, 147-149
 Dudley. Senanayake, 29
 Dunawardena, D.P.R.,
 or Sino-Indian conflict, 77-78n

 East Pakistan problem, 126-128
 See also Bangladesh crisis
 Economic aid, 116-117
 to Sri Lanka, 132-138
 by China, 132-138
 USA's, 90
 Sino-Sri Lankan,
 agreement of, 44, 71-74
 Economic problems,
 UF government's, 116, 121
 Economic relations,
 Sri Lankan,
 with China, 104-107
 with USA, 6-17
 Economy,
 Sri-Lankan, 15
 Elites, 8
 Emergency,
 declaration of, 118
 Exports,
 Chinese rice, 40
 rubber, 15
 Sri Lankan,
 to China, 106
 to India, 62

 Fa Hien, 3, 5
 Federal Party, 81-82
 Flood control,
 Chinese assistance for, 44, 136-137
 Food index, 91
 Foreign aid,
 Chinese, 44-45, 123
 politics of, 46
 from Soviet Union, 94
 super powers',
 Asia and, 123
 USA from, 17, 31n, 89
 suspension of, 57-58
 Western countries', 89-93, 131
 Foreign assets,
 nationalisation of, 56-57, 72
 See also Oil Companies
 Foreign debt, 91, 134
 See also credit ; Loans
 Foreign exchange crisis, 134
 Chinese loans for, 137

- Foreign insurance firms,
nationalisation of, 72
- Foreign missions, 39-40
- Foreign policy,
objectives of, 158-159
- Foreign relations,
Chinese,
with South Asia, 162-164
with Soviet Union, 68-70
with USA, 159-160
- Sri Lankan,
with Bangladesh, 128-131
with China, 2-6, 10-29, 70-74,
96-107, 159-169
with India, 84-85, 93-96, 139,
170-179
with Soviet Union, 93-96, 138
with Western countries, 131-
132
- Foreign trade,
relations of, 38
- Sino-Sri Lankan, 43-44
- Fourth International Party,
Sino-Soviet rift and, 68-69
- Friendship Highway, 143
- General election of 1956, 81
- General election of 1965,
Chinese interference in, 87-88
- General election of 1970, 113
- General election of 1977, 157-158
- Geneva Conference 1954, 25
- Geng Biao, 160
- Geography, 1-2
- Gin Ganga river basin project,
137
- Goodwill missions, 39
- Goonewardena, Leslie,
Indo-China conflict and, 64
- Gopallawa, William, 114, 138
- Great Britain,
aid to Sri Lanka, 89
defence pact with,
Sri Lankan, 9-10
- Growther, J.G., 13
- Guevarist movement, 117-122
aims of, 118
ideological background, 118-122
- Gunewardena, Philip, 55
- Indo-China war and, 63
- Sino-Soviet rift and, 68
- Gunawardena, Senerath, 130
- Haigs, A., *General*, 160
- Hancock, A.C.S., 98, 146, 159,
161
visit to China, 160
- Ho Cheng Wen, 138
- Horn, Robert, 123
- Hsu Hsiang-Chien, 136
- Hua Kuo Feng, 160
- Huang Hua, 96
- I-Tsing, 4
- Illangaratne, T.B., 116, 137
- Imports,
Sri Lankan,
from China, 106
- India,
border dispute with China, 58-
85, 173
Sri Lanka's role, 58-65
foreign relations of, 162-163
with Sri Lanka, 84-85, 93-96,
139, 173-179
Sino-Sri Lanka relations and,
168
Tibet problem and, 48-49
treaty with Soviet Union, 124,
127
Sri Lanka's reaction, 124-125
- Indian expansionism,
bogey of 129-130
- Indian National Defence Fund,
63-64
- Indian Ocean, 131, 140-144, 165-
167
importance of, 141
security of,
Indo-Soviet treaty and, 125
- Indo-China border conflict, 173
- Sri Lanka and, 58-65
mediation by, 64-65
- Indo-China war of 1962, 59-60
- Indo-Pak war of 1965,
Sri Lankan attitude, 95

- Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971, 124-125, 127
- Indo-Sri Lanka Joint Committee for Economic Cooperation, 95
- Industry, 17
- Insurgency, 118-120
- International Law Association 1954, 24
- International Monetary Fund, credit to Sri Lanka, 90-91, 137
- Ioannis, S.S., 99
- Israel, 166
- JVP movement, 117-122, 149-150, 177, 179
- Jayasinghe, Shelton, 98
- Jayewardene, J.R., 24, 177
foreign policy of, 158-169
- Jayewardene, Tunius Richard, 157-169
- Joint Committee for Economic and Trade Corporation, 168
- July riots, 164
- Kacchativu island, 139
- Kampuchean problem, 166
- Kashmir issue, 42
- Kissinger, Henry, 126
- Kobbekaduwe, Hector, 115
- Koddy, Edmund Samara, 69
- Koneshalingam, Dr., 92
- Korean war, 15-16
- Kotelawala, John, Sir, 13-14, 17, 21-24, 172
- SEATO and, 23-24
- Sino-Indian trade pact and, 21-23
- Kublai Khan, 4
- Lanka Sama Samaj Party, 69
- Li Xiannian, 161, 168
- 'Liberation Tigers', 165
- Liner Service,
Sino-Sri Lanka agreement for, 134
- Liu-Shao-Chi, 96
- Living index, 91
- Loans, 73, 90-93, 121, 133, 126-137, 162
- Maha Bhikhu Sangamaya, 47
- Mahajana Eksath Permutae (MEP), 81
- Malaysian rubber, 16
- Mamphul, Radhakrishna, 142
- Mao Youth Front, 117
- Mao's exhibition, 138-139
- Mao's literature, 97, 99-100
- Maritime Agreements, 70-71, 97
Dudley Senanayake and, 83-84
- Marxists, 35, 157
- McCain, John S., 151
- Military aid,
Soviet Union's,
to Third World, 123
Sri Lanka to,
USA by, 120
- Military base,
USA's, 91-92
- Military delegations, 138
- Minneriya textile mill, 137-138
- Mohamed, M.H., 98
- Mukti Vahini*, 128
- Muslims persecution,
Sino-Sri Lanka relations and, 97-98
- National movement, 7-8
- Nationalisation,
policy of, 115-116
- Nationalist upsurge, 35
- NATO,
China and, 160
- Naval expedition,
Chinese, 4
- Nehru, Jawaharlal, 28, 67, 176
Sri Lankan national movement and, 7
- Nepal, 61
China's aid, 134
- Neutralism, 37, 56, 68-69, 114
- New International Economic Order, 144-147
- Non-Aligned Conferences,
Indian Ocean question and, 141
NIEO and, 145-146

- Non-Alignment,
policy of, 36-38, 56, 83, 171-172
• *See also* Neutralism
- North Korea,
Guevarist movement and, 119
- North South dialogues, 145
- Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, 147-148
- Oil Companies,
nationalisation of, 56-57, 72, 115
- Pakhoon, Ganesh Singh, 67
- Pakistan, 61, 122, 173-175
- Parakramabahu VI,
visit to China, 4-5
- Parthasarathy, G., 164
- Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty,
69
Chinese reaction to, 85
- Peace corps, 57
- Peaceful coexistence, 59
conflict over, 68
- Peiris, M.V.P., *Dr.*, 105
- Perera, N.M., 41, 132, 157
Sino-Soviet rift and, 68
- Petroleum companies,
nationalisation of, 56-57, 72,
115
- Po-I-Po, 70
- Poland, 38
- Politt, Henry, 14
- Ponnambalam, 88
- Postal services,
Sino-Sri Lankan agreement,
132
- Power bloc,
Sri Lanka and, 24
- Premadasa, R., 157
visit to China, 160-162
- Press comments,
Sri Lankan,
on China's cultural revolution,
103-104
- Projects assistance,
Soviet Union's, 94
- Pugoda textile mill, 73-74, 137-
138
- Public opinion,
Sri Lankan,
Sino-India war and, 62-64
- Rapid Deployment Force, 166-
167
- Recognitions,
diplomatic, 114-115
- Red Guards, 97-98, 101, 104
- Religious missions,
Sino-Sri Lankan, 4
- Rice,
Chinese gift of,
Sri Lanka to, 72
- Rice imports, 40
- Rice prices, 17, 105
- Rubber price, 43, 104-105
- Rubber replanting,
subsidy programme, 44
- Rubber-Rice Trade Agreements,
Sino-Sri Lankan, 5, 14, 18, 43,
61, 105-106, 160, 172
terms of, 18-21
US reaction, 21
- Rumania, 38
- SALT talks, 122
- Sarachandra, Ediraweera R., 3
- Sea routes, 2
- SEATO, 23-24, 175
- Senanayake, D.S., 8-13, 29
- Senanayake, Dudley, 13-14, 24,
56, 81, 172, 175, 177-178
foreign policy of, 82, 107
- Indo-China war and, 63
- Maritime Agreement of 1963
and, 71, 83-84
'real non-alignment' concept
and, 83
- Western aid and, 89-93
- Senanayake, Maithripal, 137, 140
- Senanayake, Ratne Deshpriya,
on Chinese aid, 139-140
- Senanayake, R.G., 18-19
resignation of, 24
- Shastri, Lal Bahadur, 84, 95
- Sheet glass factories,
Chinese aid for, 138
- Sino-Soviet armed clashes, 22

- Sino-Tibetan Agreement of 1951, 47
- Sino-US detente, 125, 139, 165
- Sirimavo-Shastri Pact of 1964, 85
- Smirnov, Nikolai, 131
- Snow, Edgar, 45
- South Asian countries
 balance of power and, 162
 Chinese attitude towards, 162-164
 super powers and, 122-150
- South Asian Regional Cooperation, 163
- Soviet Union, 11-12, 14, 38
 aid to Sri Lanka, 89
 Bangladesh crisis and, 126-127
 Colombo post strike and, 46
 foreign aid policy of, 123
 foreign relations of,
 China with, 68-70
 with Sri Lanka, 93-96
 Indian Ocean and, 141
 military aid of,
 to third world countries, 123
- NIEO and, 147
 revisionism, 99
- Sri Lankan mission to, 40
- Tamil problem and, 165
- treaty with India, 124, 127
 Sri Lanka's reaction, 124-125
- Sri Lanka,
 Afghanistan problem and, 165
 anti-China opinions of, 93, 99-100
 anti-western attitude of, 56-58
 causes of, 58
 China's atomic explosion and, 85-87
 Chinese loans to, 162
 Chinese residents in,
 general election of 1965 and, 87
 defence pact of,
 with Great Britain, 9-10
 disarmament and, 147-149
 foreign relations of,
 with India, 84-85
 economic relations of,
 with China, 104-107, 132-138
 foreign aid to,
 Chinese, 44-45
 USA and, 90
 western countries, 89-93
 foreign relations of,
 with China, 70-74, 96-107, 159-169
 with Bangladesh, 128-131
 with India, 93-96, 139, 173-179
 with Soviet Union, 93-96
 with Western countries, 131-132
- Guevarist movement in,
 Chinese role in, 117-122
- Indian Ocean and, 140-144, 165-167
- Independence of, 8
- Indo-Pak war of 1965 and, 95
- Indo-Soviet treaty and, 124-125
- Kampuchean problem and, 166
- national movement of, 7-8
- NIEO and, 145-147
- Sino-Soviet rift and, 68-70
- UN membership and, 9, 12, 38
- US aid suspension,
 political parties' reaction, 76n
- US military aid to, 120
- Sri Lanka Freedom Socialist Party (SLFSP), 81
- Sri Lankan plantation Workers Union Conference, 97
- State Trading Corporation Bill, 115
- Subandrio, 65
- Sugathadasa, V.A., 41
- Sulphur, 17
- Super powers,
 South Asian countries and, 122-150
 aid competition of,
 in Asia, 123
- Swaran Singh, 85, 125, 127-128
- Taiwan, 10, 101-102
- Tamil Congress, 81

- Tamil Parties, 81
 Tamil problem, 164-165, 174
 Tamils 'satyagraha', 74
 Teng Ying-Chao, *Madame*, 144
 Textile,
 Chinese exports of, 43-44
 Textile mills,
 Chinese loans for,
 to Sri Lanka, 71, 136-138
 Third World Countries,
 military aid to,
 Soviet Unions, 123
 NIEO and, 145-147
 Tibet,
 Indo-China treaty over, 28
 Tibet problem, 46-49
 Tibetan Refugees, 47
 Tobacco Agreements,
 Indo Sri Lankan, 62
 Tractors,
 China's gift of, 137
 Trade commodities, 15
 Trade pact,
 Sino-Sri Lankan, 15-21
 Trade policy,
 UF governments, 115-116
 Trade relations,
 Sino-Sri Lankan, 71-73, 104-107,
 133, 137, 160, 162
 history of, 2-3, 5
 Travellers, 2-3
 Trotskyite Parties,
 Sino-Soviet rift and, 68
 Unemployment, 116
 United Front,
 formation of, 113
 United Front government, 113-
 150
 United National Party, 56, 157-
 169
 anti-communist attitude of, 9-14,
 45-46
 coalition government of, 81-107
 foreign policy of, 158-169
 formation of, 8
 Guevara movement and, 120
 rule of, 7-29
 United Nations,
 Chinese membership,
 Sri Lanka and, 88
 Sri-Lankan membership and, 9,
 12, 38
 Soviet veto, 30n
 Indian Ocean question in, 142-
 143
 NIEO and, 147
 United States of America,
 attitude towards Bandung Con-
 ference, 26-28
 demonstration against,
 by Mao Youth Front, 117-118
 disarmament and, 148
 foreign relations of,
 with China, 159-160
 Indian Ocean and, 141, 144
 South Asian interests of, 166-
 167
 Sri Lankan rubber and, 15-16
 Tamil problem and, 165
 Walters, Vernon, *General*, 167
 Weinberger, Casper, 167
 West Asian crisis, 91
 Western aid,
 Sri Lanka to, 89-93, 123
 JVP movement and, 131-132
 nature of, 92-92
 Western countries,
 foreign relations of,
 with Sri Lanka, 131-132
 Indian Ocean and, 141
 Sri Lankan policy towards, 56-
 58
 Wijewecra, Rohan, 118-119, 164-
 165
 Wiswa Warnapala, W.A., 130
 World Bank, 56, 89
 loans from, 121
 World Peace, 24-26
 Jayewardena and, 24
 Yabha Khan, 126
 Young Socialist, 120

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