The Advent of the BRITISH to CEYLON

1762 - 1803

V. L. B. Mendis

Lankapradipa-Kandy 1352/73

HENRY DUNDAS

FIRST VISCOUNT MELVILLE

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1762 - 1803

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ILLUSTRATIONS

ABBREVIATIONS

C. A.	Ceylon Antiquary
C. L. R.	Ceylon Literary Register
I. O. L.	India Office Library
J. R. A. S.	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
F. O.	Foreign Office
P. R. O.	Public Records Office
E. H. R.	English Historical Review

FOREWORD

My thanks are due first of all to my distinguished Supervisor, Dr. J. S. Bastin whose patient advice and direction it was, that put me on the right lines in the writing of this thesis. His meticulous scholarship and thoroughness have been an education to me in embarking on historical research and will be of lasting benefit to me. I am particularly indebted to him for giving me his personal attention and enabling me to complete this thesis within the limited time available to me. I wish to place on record my appreciation of the services rendered by the officials of the India Office Library, the Public Records Office, the British Museum and the Archives Nationale in Paris in making the various records which I required available to me. A special word of thanks is due in this connection to the officials of the Royal Asiatic Society in London for allowing me full use of the Society's valuable library and for the kindness and co-operation which they extended to me.

In the preparation of this thesis, I had the assistance of many whose help I appreciate but foremost among them was my wife who was responsible for typing the proofs and therefore I owe her a special debt of gratitude. I must also thank the Ceylon High Commissioner in London H. E. Dr. G. P. Malalasekera, my colleagues in the High Commission and other friends and well-wishers for their encouragement and advice. This thesis is a pure labour of love, an act of dedication which I undertook amidst the responsibilities and duties of my office, and in these circumstances it might hardly have been accomplished but for the inspiration that sustained it.

To the sacred Muse whose chaste spirit thus inspired my poor efforts, I dedicate this book "whose influence is thee and born of thee and with thy sweet graces graced be."

The pictures in this book have been reproduced with the kind permission of the following authorities whose co-operation and kindness I take this opportunity to gratefully acknowledge :

His Excellency Monsieur Albert Chambon, Ambassador for France in Ceylon, for the portraits of Emperor Napoleon, Admiral Bailli de Suffren and Joseph Bonaparte.

The National Galleries of Scotland, for the portrait of the Rt. Hon. Henry Dundas, First Viscount Melville.

The National Portrait Gallery, London, W.C. 2 for the portrait of William Pitt the younger.

The Director, National Museum Library, Colombo, for the portrait of Hugh Boyd, Esquire.

In conclusion, I must thank the publishers, MESSRS. TISARA PRAKASAKAYO and the Ceylon Historical Journal for kindly undertaking this publication. This publication as well as the others undertaken by the firm in the last few years have been invaluable to students of the history of Ceylon.

V. L. B. MENDIS.

INTRODUCTION

This study of the advent of the British to Ceylon is an attempt to fill a gap in Ceylon history. It traces the stages by which, beginning from the abortive Pybus mission of 1762 the British advanced to become the masters of the island. Such a study has not been attempted before by a Ceylon historian probably because the bulk of the source material, which is itself quite diverse in character, is not available in Ceylon and lies in different places abroad. Besides, it is a story which has to be pieced together from events which properly belong to the history of other countries and of Europe and Asia in general. It could in that sense be regarded as a branch of European and Indian history its true setting being the conflict and activities of European powers in Asia. This could also be a reason why it has been missed by Ceylon historians or dealt with inadequately in standard histories of the island. This hiatus has conveyed the impression that there was an abrupt transition from the Dutch to the British period and thus discounted the elaborate sequence of events which led up to the advent of the British and their final establishment in Ceylon.

The facts as this thesis will attempt to show were that the coming of the British was a process which took at least forty years and that until 1798 it was never in fact certain that Britain would retain Ceylon at all. There were indeed moments in the course of the power struggle when Ceylon could just as easily have become French or remained Dutch. After all, from the 17th century Ceylon had been a colony of the Netherlands which for the greater part of that period, was a staunch and traditional ally of Britain whose goodwill she tried earnestly to cultivate. Ceylon might thus have been returned to the Netherlands at the end of the Napoleonic wars, as was Java and other captured colonies. In 1796 for instance, one finds that Pitt was still considering the relative value of the Cape and Ceylon, and he probably decided in favour of the latter due to the persuasion of Dundas. Finally, it was Napoleon's Egyptian expedition that convinced Britain of the necessity of retaining

Ceylon and made her insist on this as one of the conditions of the Preliminaries of London 1801 by which she terminated hostilities with Napoleon.

A contributory factor to the neglect of this period in Ceylon's history has been the tendency in early historical writing to concentrate on purely internal affairs without paying adequate attention to their external motivation. This is true of historical writing on the Portuguese, Dutch and British periods where the subject matter was treated in isolation and the history of the island portrayed only in terms of local events.[1] This narrowness of vision was a fault not limited to Ceylon history alone but was characteristic of historical works on modern Asia as a whole as early histories of modern India would demonstrate. The appearance of Panikkar's "*Asia and Western Dominance*"[2] was a significant break from this tradition and marked a new trend in historical scholarship in which the activities of European powers in Asia came to be studied within the framework of contemporary European and Asian history. The introduction of this perspective is a new dimension in historical writing which has made possible a new interpretation of events. It enables one to see these activities as a process of historical interaction by which European developments projected themselves on the history of Asia and thereby shaped each other's destinies. This projection of events began with the Seven Years war in Europe and reached its climax with the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars and the Peace of Vienna of 1815. Its main feature was the conflict between France and Britain for mastery on the continent and overseas. The advent of the British to Ceylon was really an offshoot of this struggle and it is in this perspective that the subject should be considered.

A survey of existing historical writing on the advent of the British to Ceylon will show not only that this background has been inadequately appreciated, but that even the basic facts relating to it have not been brought out. One hardly finds a reference to the all important Anglo-Dutch negotiations between 1784 and 1792, for the lease or possession of Trincomalee which if successful might have radically altered the trend of events. The proceedings at the London Preliminaries and the Amiens talks at which Ceylon was formally ceded to Britain as part of a diplomatic bargain between Britain and Napoleon have scarcely been examined and this is an omission even in British histories. Due importance has not been given to the events of 1781 which represented the first attempt of the British to invade Ceylon and which might have advanced the British occupation by thirteen years. As regards the two early British missions of Pybus and Boyd to Ceylon, while their

1. See P. E. Peiris Ceylon,, *The Portuguese Era*, Colombo 1913, 2 Vols. and by the same author, *Ducth Powers in Ceylon*, 1602-1670.

2. K. M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance*, 1498-1945, London 1953.

individual accounts have been edited, no attempt has been made to see them in the sequence of events leading up to the 1795 invasion. Of the various stages in the advent of the British, the only one which has been studied exhaustively is the 1795 occupation and this may be due to the accident that abundant material about it is available in Ceylon. Relatively so much has been written about it to the exclusion of other equally important events, that the average student is apt to think of it as the whole story of the British advent when in fact it is only the climax of the process. In point of fact there is one book in existence which covers most of the relevant events and this is the Dutch work entitled "*Hoe Nederland Ceilon Verloor*" by G. Nypel.[1] It has not been translated into English however and this may explain the comparative ignorance about it. This book is not conspicuous for its scholarship and appears to have been prompted by patriotic motives but it deserves more attention than it has received so far particularly for its study of the Dutch side of the Amiens negotiations. The only other work which takes account of some of these events is Dr. Colvin R. De Silva's valuable "*Ceylon Under the British Occupation*"[2] where he has dealt exhaustively with the Andrews Mission to Kandy and the Lille negotiations are referred to. Among Western historians Professor Vincent Harlow's two volumes on the "*Founding of the Second British Empire*"[3] is indeed a monumental and pioneer study of the complex diplomatic and political background but the references to Ceylon are only incidental.

Another object of the present study apart from presenting these events in their sequence and as a connected whole has been to revaluate existing knowledge and opinions about them. A few instances of this are the appraisal of the Pybus and Boyd missions, the reconstruction of the 1781 invasion, a study of the clash between Lord Hobart and Sir John Shore over the Andrews mission of 1795, the critical examination of British policy in launching the 1795 invasion, the role of Hugh Cleghorn in the capitulation of Colombo and the circumstances of the fall of the Dutch settlements. Above all, this thesis has attempted to highlight the important place occupied by Ceylon in European international relations in the last quarter of the 18th century. It was one of the major issues in European diplomacy from the peace negotiations of 1784 to the Peace of Amiens of 1802. It decided the questions of war and peace in Europe during that period to the extent that the Paris and Lille negotiations failed partly because of Britain's inability to obtain cession of Ceylon while the Preliminaries of London and the Peace of Amiens which terminated the Revolutionary war were made

1. G. Nypel, *Hee Nederland Ceilon Verloor* (The Hague 1908).
2. Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, *Ceylon under the British Occupation* 1795-1833, Colombo 1953 2 Vols.
3. V. T. Harlow, The *Founding of the Second British Empire*, 1763 - 1793 London 1955 2 Vols.

possible primarily because of the cession of Ceylon by France. The role of Ceylon at that time was thus truly a part of the history of Europe and represented a state of international recognition which the island has rarely attained in her two thousand year long history.

This thesis has been based on a study of original sources available at the India Office, the Public Records Office, the British Museum in the form of official correspondence of the East India Company, Foreign Office despatches, private papers and diaries. It represents to the best of the author's knowledge the only complete survey of its kind so far available and constitutes therefore a new chapter in the history of Ceylon.

CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND IN EUROPE AND ASIA

THE advent of the British to Ceylon was the product of the colonial struggle between Britain and France during the 18th century. This conflict was really an extension of the traditional rivalry between these two powers on the continent which was one of the main currents of European history during the 17th and 18th centuries. In the 18th century, its course was also influenced by the impact of the Eastern Question in the form of the emergence of Prussia and Russia. These factors combined to produce the Seven Years war which may be described as the first major colonial war in European history. To that extent this war was a watershed in that, more than any other single event, it stimulated the projection of Europe overseas and orientated Britain and France particularly in the direction of colonial ambitions. This war laid the foundation of Britain's colonial empire at the expense of France; it established the ascendancy of Austria, Prussia and Russia in Central and Eastern Europe and it accentuated the rivalry between Britain and France in consequence of the humiliation suffered by France.

The colonial rivalry between Britain and France, while it reflected the general aspirations of the two nations for trade and maritime expansion was activated mainly by the ambitions of France, dating back to Colbert, to acquire a colonial dominion which would add to her power and prestige in Europe and turn the scale in her traditional contest with Britain. This plan was prosecuted with vigour in the first half of the 18th century, mainly by French proconsuls on the spot obliging Britain whose settlements were their main target to defend herself. This led to a state of intermittent warfare between the British and the French settlements in overseas territories which added acrimony to the rivalry between the two powers on the continent and prepared the way for the Seven Years War. In Asia, this rivalry took the form of a struggle between them for mastery in India and it is in this setting that Ceylon, because of her geographical location and strategic impor-

tance in relation to the conflict, became an object of interest to Britain. The main theatres of overseas conflict were Canada and India where organised hostilities anticipated the formal declaration of war. In Canada the westward expansion of English settlers from the eastern littoral cut across the line of the Alleghany and Ohio which was being drawn by the French. At Fort Duquesne, which commanded the vital junction of the Ohio and the Monongahela, these two expanding forces clashed in 1754 in a series of actions which were tantamount to an outbreak of war. In India the process of disintegration of the Mughal Empire obliged the foreign trading companies to fend for themselves, instead of as before, depending on the patronage and protection of the Indian native rulers. The French Company under the direction of the energetic men who were in positions of command in Asia at the time, saw in the prevailing anarchy an opportunity to oust their rivals by ingratiating themselves with the Indian rulers. Faced with this threat, the English East India Company was obliged to take defensive measures and became involved in hostilities with the French. The sequence of events in South India between Dupleix's capture of Madras in 1746 and his departure from the scene eight years later illustrates the impossibility of remaining at peace in a context of rivalry. The Seven Years War was the accumulated outcome of these conflicts.

These events overseas had their repercussions on relations between the parent states in Europe and their history during the first half of the 18th century is a barometer in which one read the stages of this rivalry.[1] At the peace of Utrecht (1714) which ended the War of the Spanish Succession, Great Britain was given sovereignty over Nova Scotia but its inland boundaries were left undefined. The grant excluded Cape Breton Island on which France was to install its key fortification at Luisberg. Britain was given Newfoundland, subject to a reservation of French fishing rights on its western shore. In Europe, England was ceded Gibraltar and Minorca which were to rankle in the minds of the Spanish and French. Spain in addition had to concede the Asiento. The treaty caused more problems than it solved. The peace of Axlia-Chappele (1748) which ended the War of the Austrian Succession was equally inconclusive. Gibraltar and Minorca remained in British hands. The limits of Nova Scotia remained undefined. Madras was returned by the French in exchange for Louisberg. The inconclusive character of these treaties really foreshadowed the looming conflict ahead.

A contributory factor to the Seven Years War was the so-called diplomatic revolution ascribed to Kaunitz,[2] which reversed the

1. *Cambridge History of the British Empire* (Cambridge 1929), Vol. 1, Chs. XII and XVI.

2. N. B. Mowat, *History of European Diplomacy*, 1471-1719 (London 1928) P. 236.

traditional system of diplomatic alliances between Britain and Austria on the one side and France and Prussia on the other. Its object was to enable Austria to revenge herself on Prussia for the seizure of Silesia. Kaunitz submitted these daring proposals in his famous State Paper to Maria Thersa in 1750. Kaunitz's argument was that from the Austrian point of view the British alliance served no purpose as Britain was too occupied with colonial matters to worry over Silesia. Prussia, fearful of Austrian revenge, was looking for security and Britain's concern over Hanover afforded a basis on which to strike a bargain. The result was the signing of the Convention of Westminster between Prussia and Britain on 16 January 1756 which came as a shock to Europe and particularly to France. Austria and France responded with the Treaty of Versailles which they concluded on 1st May, 1756. The establishment of the two power groups need not necessarily have meant war. Hostilities really began over Prussia's invasion of Saxony in anticipation of Austria's hostile designs. The real importance of these events, so far as they concern our subject, is that they represented a new factor in European history. This was the rise of Prussia and the emergence of the Eastern Question centering round the power rivalry of Prussia, Austria and Russia and their conflicting ambitions in North Europe, in Central Europe and in South Eastern Europe. These power rivalries gave rise to some of the major problems of 18th century Europe like the struggle for supremacy in the Baltic, the partition of Poland and the scramble for the partition of the Ottoman Empire. These developments will be discussed in a later chapter. They had the effect of blocking the initiative of other powers like Britain and France and ousting their influences in this area, which had been traditionally a field of interest to them. Dammed in this direction their attention was diverted to their colonial rivalry. The Seven Years War saw the convergence of these two trends that were to transform the character of European diplomacy and its pattern of its power rivalries.[1]

The Anglo-French conflict in India which was the background to Britain's interest in Ceylon need not necessarily have involved Ceylon, had it not coincided with another development of great significance in Europe at that time. This was the decline of Holland, and the power vacuum which it caused both in Europe and Asia. For strategic reasons it became the endeavour of both Britain and France to fill it. Their rivalry thus resolved itself into a struggle to gain possession of Dutch territories overseas and political influence in Holland. The process of Holland's decline therefore merits consideration in some detail as it is the key to an understanding of why the British became interested in Ceylon. It manifested itself in the period of Dutch history following the Peace of Utrecht of 1713 and was a product of a number of circumstances. Administratively, the

1. *The New cambridge Modern History*(Cambridge 1957), Vol. IX, pp. 252-278.

country was saddled by a system of government which precluded the emergence of a strong centralized authority. It was a system which fostered parochial loyalties and encouraged provinces to assert themselves at the slightest weakening of the centre. The political machinery of the country was virtually at the mercy of the individual whims and caprices of the provinces and of the influential towns. Its authority varied according to their inclinations.

Such a situation arose on the death of William III whose personal leadership and dedication had fused the country together in the face of French aggression. His heir Frisco was a minor who depended upon the support of the Orangist party. The Republican party thereupon repudiated the new Stadtholder and declared a Stadtholderless Republic. The province of Holland took the lead and four other provinces joined her. The establishment of a Stadtholderless Republic marks the zenith of decentralisation and the ascendency of the Republican party. It opened the flood gate to regionalism and even the major towns let alone the provinces began to go their own way. In economic terms the situation amounted to the hegemony of a capitalist oligarchy in which wealthy states like Holland were able through their estates to dominate the States-General and wield disproportionate influence in the country. Socially, it represented the emergence of a patrician burgher oligarchy, composed of a number of families, who through inter-marriage and influence infiltrated into the administration and entrenched themselves in key positions. Initially, they owed their rise to their commercial initiative and spirit of enterprise but in the latter half of the 18th century they had degenerated into a stagnant ruling class intent on monopolising office and perpetuating their power.[1] In the words of a historian, "Thus the United Netherlands not only ceased to be a unified State but ceased to be a free State. It consisted of a large number of semi-independent oligarchies of the narrowest description".[2]

The establishment of a Stadtholderless Republic produced serious complications in the country's foreign relations. Officially, the government favoured a policy of neutrality under the influence of the oligarchy who being interested primarily in trade, did not want war. On the other hand, this policy cut across her international obligations, apart from being a somewhat unnatural one for a country in her strategic situation to practise. In accordance with it, expenditure on the armed forces was reduced and this impaired the country's ability to discharge her treaty obligations. An illustration of this was afforded in 1744 when, on the declaration of war on Britain by France, Britain demanded twenty ships from the United Provinces under the defence treaty but she could supply only eight. This instance is typical of the

1. G. J. Renier, *The Dutch nation* (London 1944), p. 230.
2. George Edmundson, *History of Holland* (Cambridge 1922) p. 300.

international pressures that throughout this period rendered the pursuit of a policy of neutrality by her impracticable but her persistence in it caused repeated humiliations to herself and embarrassment to her allies. Unable to fend for herself the Republic became a plaything in the power conflicts of this time.

These weaknesses came to the forefront during the War of the Austrian Succession in which Holland was involved much against her wishes. In January 1746 she joined the Quadruple Alliance which had been formed to uphold the Pragmatic Sanction and in March 1746 declared war on France. Her participation in the war, however, was half-hearted and a liability to the allies. Her military helplessness almost invited invasion by Marshal Saxe's triumphant army which was storming its way through the Austrian Netherlands. She was more intent on peace overtures which she pursued through a number of envoys like Count De Larey, Wassenar, Gillet, than on the fighting. The little contribution she made to the war was also inglorious. The withdrawal of Dutch troops at crucial points was, it is believed, responsible for the setbacks to allied arms at Fontenoy and Lauffeldt. It was not until after the fall of Brussels and Saxe's invasions of Dutch Flanders that the nation woke up. In a wave of fear combined with patriotism and remorse, she restored the Stadtholder in 1747, appointing him Captain and Admiral General and making the post hereditary in both the male and female line. The situation, however, was past redemption. His efforts to raise a contingent of 70,000 for the allied armies was unsuccessful due to lack of funds and he had to admit his inability to continue the war. The restoration of the Stadtholder thus failed to arrest the deterioration, which continued even after the war during the regency of Anne. The strain of the war and the losses sustained in the overseas empire were beginning to tell on the economy. Stricter economies were enforced which reduced the army and the navy to an even worse condition than before.

In the Seven Years War, Holland attained her cherished desire of remaining neutral. This was announced in an official declaration of neutrality which the government issued on 25 May, 1756. This declaration, at the time it was made, was really intended to extricate her from the conflicting demands of the French and British Governments. On the outbreak of war, Britain demanded a contingent of 6,000 troops in fulfilment of Holland's obligation under her defence treaty with Britain. This treaty had been previously invoked in 1745 in connection with the Jacobite rebellion and the Dutch had sent 6,000 troops to Britain. At the same time the French Government demanded a declaration from Holland of what her policy would be in the event of the outbreak of war between France and Britain. The British request was refused under cover of the declaration of neutrality which was also an answer to the French demand. This desire of the Republic to remain neutral was not however, taken purely for its short terms benefits. Circumstances forced it on the Republic as the

only sensible solution to her problems. She needed it to recover from her participation in the War of the Austrian Succession, which as, one has seen, was a terms of strain on her resources.

Her involvement in that war under British insistence, and much against her wishes, had been both from Holland's point of view, and from that of the allies, militarily and financially disastrous. Even the belated restoration of the Stadtholder in 1747 was helpless to stop the rot. The premature cessation of hostilities was to some extent necessitated by the incapacity of Holland. The sorry state of the Republic's reputation was reflected in the insignificant role played by her representatives Bentinch and van Haren at the Conference of Aix-la-Chapelle. Their wishes were scarcely consulted. At this juncture Holland's traditional position in relation to the maritime powers, which had been the root cause of her international entanglements, so disastrous to her well-being, underwent a radical change, with the creation, by the treaties of Britain with Prussia and France with Austria, of the new alignment of forces known as the Diplomatic Revolution. These treaties transformed Holland's geo-political situation in one stroke, as it converted Holland's immediate neighbour into an ally of France and thereby obviated the need for the barrier fortresses. This meant that she could not afford to incur the displeasure of France with impunity and it would be in her future interest as a matter of policy to cultivate good relations with her. The French Ambassador in The Hague lost no opportunity to drive this point home. Besides, Holland in her position as a centre of trade communications could scarcely afford to become involved in a war in which she would invariably have become the battle-ground. As an economic proposition, too, Holland now had a vested interest in neutrality, because of the large increase in the size of her foreign investments. All factors, therefore, diplomatic, economic and commercial, pointed to the desirability of a policy of neutrality.[1]

Concurrent with the adoption of neutrality as the official policy of the government, it is interesting to see that there was active interest among Dutch circles in the theory of neutrality.[2] The Seven Years War coincided with the appearance of a number of important works on the subject such as Vatel's *Droit de Gens* and Martin Huber's *De la Saisie du Batimens Neutre* (1758). The very experiences of the Dutch in the exercise of neutrality became a subject on which books were written, like *The case of the Dutch ships considered* by Sir James Maryat and *A Discourse on the Conduct of Great Britain* by Charles Jenkinson. Thus the decision of the Dutch to be a neutral became a land mark in the development of international law.

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1. pp. 4 - 6 are based on Chs. XXI, XXII and XXIII of Edmundson's *History of Holland.*
2. A. C. Carter, "The Dutch as neutrals in the Seven Years War" *International and Comparative Law Quarterly,* (July 1963).

It is one thing to preach neutrality but quite another to practise it, as the Dutch were to discover to their cost during the Seven Years War.[1] For the Dutch especially it was a difficult task because of the strategic position of Holland and of her colonial possessions in relation to the combatants. A substantial part of the carrying trade of North Europe was in their hands. North European trade routes ran through Dutch ports like Amsterdam which was also an important banking centre. In overseas theatres, the interposition of Dutch interests was even more marked. On the Coromandel Coast and in Bengal, Dutch settlements like Negapatam lay alongside French and British settlements, and invariably got in the way of the combatants. Clashes were inevitable as events proved. In the Carribean the Dutch Islands of Curacao and St. Eustatius were engaged in a lucrative smuggling trade with the French West Indian Islands. The British considered this a hostile act alleging that Dutch trade with its own colonies was helping to sustain the French war effort.

The practice of neutrality in these circumstances proved hazardous in the extreme and it was even more difficult to gain the recognition of the combatants. The situation was complicated by the commercial treaties and obligations with them to which Holland was a party. A clear case in point was the defensive alliance between England and the Republic and the Marine Treaty of 1674. In the case of the defence alliance, the Dutch were able to side step their obligations on the argument that the need to give military asistance arose only in the event of an invasion of Britain. As regards the Maritime Agreement, events showed that its terms were incompatible with the observance of strict neutrality and impartiality. The main source of the difficulty was that the term contraband, as used in the treaty, excluded naval stores. The Dutch could thus, despite their neutral status, trade with belligerents in items which could be used in war. This situation gave rise to a series of naval clashes in which Dutch vessels suspected of containing such materials as were considered to be military contraband were searched and seized by the British. The legality or otherwise of the seizures was decided on appeal by the English Admiralty courts whose decisions came to be regarded as the basis for the settlement of these disputes.[2]

Until the middle of the 18th century the repercussions of European developments on relations between European powers in Asia were only marginal. Conflicts between rival foreign interests were purely local in origin and hardly affected the history of Asia as such. Even their involvement in local politics was limited to areas like the Philippines, Java, the Malabar Coast and Ceylon. However, this situation was transformed in the middle of the 18th century with the outbreak

1. *Ibid.*, P. 825.
2. Carter, "The Dutch as Neutrals in the Seven Years War," p. 820.

of the Seven Years War in Europe and the disintegration of the Mughal empire in India. These two developments in conjunction opened a new era in the history of Asia and of Europe in which European power politics projected itself on the Asian scene and determined the relationships between European powers in Asia as well as the history of Asia as a whole. To that extent, the history of European activities in Asia became from then on a reflection of the vicissitudes of European history. It is pertinent, therefore, at this stage to survey the state of relations between European powers in Asia with particular reference to Britain at the end of the Seven Years War.

In India the English East India Company emerged victorious from its struggle with the rival French Company in the Seven Years War. This conflict began when Dupleix, the energetic Governor of Pondicherry, embarked on his ambitious plans to oust the British by allying himself with native powers in the Carnatic and Deccan. His plan to install friendly rulers in these states met with initial success and things would have gone ill for the British but for the resourcefulness of Stringer Lawrence and Clive. Together they foiled his plans. Clive's defence of Aroot was the dramatic turning point which wrecked Dupleix's timetable. In 1754, Dupleix was recalled. It was an untimely end to one who was undoubtedly one of the architects of European dominion in India. It was his methods and policy that showed the way to the British to establish their own dominion. The French returned to the attack with the Seven Years War and an elaborate expedition under Lally was sent to South India. This time the British were better prepared. They had command of the sea and Lally was not the most tactful and clear headed of commanders. His recall of Bussy from the Circars is regarded as a mistake because it lost for the French the advantage both of that valuable province and the strategic value of a diversionary attack. In 1761, Coote defeated him at the decisive battle of Wandiwash.[1]

Meanwhile, since 1759, the British were achieving glory in other fields. On hearing of the Black Hole incident, Clive embarked on his expedition with Watson which led to Plassey and the deposition of the Nawab. As a result of this action, Clive found himself the real ruler in Bengal. His advent to Bengal was a turning point for the Company. It gave its Directors command of the richest province in India and brought them to the heartland of India. From a commercial organisation battling its way in the outlying southern provinces of the Mughal empire, the English Company had now become a contender for the future dominion of India itself.[2] This is a measure of what

1. Allan, Haig and Dodwell, *The Cambridge Shorter History of India* (Cambridge 1934), pp. 532-562.

2. E. J. Thompson and G. T. Garratt, *Rise ond Fulfilment of British Rule in India* (London 1934), pp. 80-115.

Clive's advent into Bengal implied. When hostilities ceased, the British had attained a position in India in which they had asserted their paramountcy over their European rivals, they had spread their dominion, they had transformed themselves from a commercial organisation into a political body, they had taken the step that was to transform the character of their enterprise in India from trade to political dominion.

While the English East India Company was on the threshold of a career of expansion, its chief rival in Asia, the V. O. C., was entering a period of decline. Dutch power in Asia during the 18th century in what has been called the "Age of the Periwigs" was centred on southern Asia, Java and eastern Indonesia. In south Asia, the Dutch Company had penetrated the Malabar Coast and the Coromandel Coast of south India, Bengal and the island of Ceylon. Their situation in each of these areas differed from one another. In Ceylon, the Company exercised de facto control over the littoral of the island, which had been under their occupation for over a century, but this hold was tempered by their recurrent conflict with the Kandyan King and varied in intensity from time to time. In India, Dutch possessions consisted of a number of scattered trading stations and comptoirs, some of which were fortified and served as their administrative centres. On the Malabar Coast these possessions corresponded to the territories which the Portuguese, whom they ousted, had held. The most important of their comptoirs here were at Quilon, Caliculan, Porca, Cochin, Chranganore, Paliport and Chettay.[1] Cochin, which was a fortified town, was the seat of the Governor. The Malabar territories were treated as a dependency of the Ceylon administration until 1663 when they were made into a separate administration under a commander who had his seat at Cochin. Earlier van Goen's ambition had been to make it part of wider Dutch empire based on Colombo. Its status was further elevated in 1768 with the upgrading of its administrative head to the rank of Governor. Dutch possessions in the Coromandel coast centred round Negapatam in the north and Pulicat with its fortress of Geldria in the south.[2] The administrative seat oscillated between Pulicat and Colombo until 1690 when Adriaan van Rheede shifted it to Negapatam. After the cession of Negapatam to the British in the Peace of Paris of 1784, the administration of the Coromandel coast reverted to Colombo.

During the 17th and the early 18th centuries, the Dutch were a formidable power on the Malabar and Coromandel coasts. Their main interest in Malabar where they had achieved a position comparable to that of the Portuguese was to control the pepper crop and deny

1. K. M. Panikkar, *Malabar and the Dutch* (Bombay 1931), pp. 132 - 148.
2. T. Ray Chaudhuri, "Jan Company in Coromandel" 1605 - 1690", *V. K. I.* XXXVIII pp. 66 - 75.

it to the British. They retained their position in this area with commendable skill and resourcefulness in spite of the opposition, they had to contend with from the formidable Martanda Varmar of Travancore and later the ambitious Hyder Ali.[1] The Coromandel coast was called the left arm of the Company's trade and was of special importance to it because of its "Kustleden" (coast cloth) which was in universal demand throughout Asia.[2] The Company in fact depended on the profits which the export of this cloth made in the East Indies, Siam, Persia and the Malay Peninsula. Coromandel was also the source of other valuable articles like saltpetre, rice, wheat, rayskins and wood which were essential for their regional trade. Coromandel products constituted a large proportion of the return cargoes from Batavia to Europe. The purchase of coast cloth required a high investment of specie by the Dutch which they obtained in China, Formosa and Japan in payment for exports from the Indies. The trade in coromandel textiles became during the 17th century the basis of the Company's policy of making Asian trade pay its way.

Further afield in Bengal, the Company had a residency in Hoogly and comptoirs dependent on it at Dacca, Patna, Chapra, Malda, Canacul, Curpur, Cassimbazar, and Regiamahol.[3] The main articles of their trade in Bengal were silks, cloth and saltpetre in which fields they had to contend with the rivalry of the English. On the west coast of India, the chief trading station of the Company was at Surat. There were branch offices at Broach, Cambay, Agra and Baroda. The west coast was the scene of a flourishing trade in spices, cloth and carpets. Dutch comptoirs situated there were regarded as the most profitable in the V.O.C. for their business turnover. The position of the Dutch stations in each of the areas where they operated varied according to the local circumstances and environment. On the west coast and in Bengal, they were mere trading stations engaged solely on this pursuit. One reason for this is that in these areas the commercial activities of foreign companies were theoretically subject to the firman of the Mughal Emperor whose suzerainty was thus tacitly accepted by them. Besides, until the advent of Clive, foreign stations in Bengal flourished in an atmosphere of peaceful competition. In South India on the other hand, the Dutch based themselves on their right of conquest from the Portuguese. It is significant that in the late 17th century, the Dutch advanced a legal claim to the territories which they occupied in Ceylon on the grounds that these territories had been captured by them from the Portuguese, in whom they had been vested, by the donation of Dharmapala. The future of the Dutch

1. J. van Lohuizen, "The Dutch East Indies Company and Mysore". V. K. I. 1961, XXI, and Panikkar, *Malabar and the Dutch*, pp. 102-112.
2. Ray Chaudhuri, "Jan Company in Coromandel, 1605 - 1690", pp. 66 - 75.
3. M. W. Jurriaanse, *Catalogue of the Archives of the Dutch Central Goverment of Coastal Ceylon*-1640-1796 (Colombo 1943), p. 104.

in the embattled area of South India which was the cradle of European rivalries depended on the vicissitudes of these power conflicts. The history of these stations was one of constant embroilment in these wars during which they were occupied or attacked by the combatant powers. Examples of this were the seizure of Tejnapatam by the British and of Sadras by the French during the Seven Years War and the capture of Negapatam by the British in 1781.

By the middle of the 18th century their star in India was setting. In Coromandel, after 1660, the Dutch had to face competition from British and Indian merchants who gradually captured their market.[1] In 1678, the British imported three million florins to the Coromandel for the purchase of textiles. Prices increased as a result of foreign competition and the Dutch hold over the producers, which had been the basis of their success, was undermined. In 1690, the capital was shifted from Pulicat to Negapatam on the orders of Adrian van Rheede who had been appointed by the Heeren XVII to investigate the state of Company affairs in Coromandel. This was an unwise move much opposed at that time as it took the capital away from the centre of the textile trade and was very costly too. The stone castle at Negapatam cost one million florins, apart from the increased expenditure on a larger garrison. This step, however, only hastened the decline, which had already set in, owing to gradual usurpation of the Company trade by the British and the Indians and the pressure of the Marathas on their borders. The Anglo-French conflict was a further strain on their position which ultimately led to their eviction from Coromandel. On the west cost they had to face the expanding power of Hyder Ali who was bent on the establishment of a southern empire at the expense of the Dutch in emulation of the aspirations of previous rulers of Cochin and Calicut. In 1759, the naval battle of Chinsura and the land action of Bederra dealt a death blow to Dutch hopes in Bengal. The naval expedition which was destroyed at Chinsura was presumably an attempt to intervene in force or at least queer the pitch for the English East India Company at the time when Clive was establishing himself as the de facto ruler of Bengal.

Thus by 1760 Dutch power in India was everywhere in disarray under the combined effects of the rivalry of foreign powers and pressures from within India. Compared to their position of slow but steady retreat in India, the situation of the V.O.C. in Ceylon was a contrast. The developments in Ceylon seemed to some extent to justify Rijkloff van Goen's belief that Ceylon should have been the headquarters of the Dutch establishments in south Asia. Their possessions embraced the littoral of the island and had been obtained from the Kandyan King by a mixture of force and diplomacy as a quid pro quo for expelling the Portuguese at the King's invitation. The King's unsuccessful attempts

1. Ray Chaudhuri, "Jan Company n Coromandel", pp. 66 - 75.

to evict them from these areas had rendered him a prisoner within his mountain kingdom, at the mercy of the Dutch, for trade outlets. One reason for the success of the Dutch is the obvious geographical advantages of their situation in the island. Being an island there were no contiguous powers to contend with. The enforcement of the monopoly had excluded other foreign settlements from the island. Dutch power was based on their command of the sea and, as Ceylon was separated by some considerable distance from the mainland, it was consequently easy for them to insulate it. In the case of Ceylon, they were thus able to apply the system of maritime control through seapower by which they secured their seaborne empire in the Indies. The situation of the Dutch in Ceylon actually improved with time because, as a result of the invasion of Kandy by Baron van Eck, the King was compelled to sign the treaty of 1766 which conferred the Dutch with sovereignty over their coastal possessions in Ceylon.

The capital of the VOC was Batavia which was the seat of the Viceroy. Dutch territories in Ceylon and in India were subject to his supreme authority. The Governor of Ceylon, however enjoyed a special position in regard to South India in that communications to Cochin were routed through him from time to time. In the second half of the 18th century Dutch power in Asia, judging by outward appearances, seemed to be at the peak of its strength, having attained by 1760 a degree of mastery never before realized.[1] The protracted wars of Javanese succession had come to an end in Java, leaving the Dutch in de facto control of its two most important and biggest states, Bantam and Mataram, which meant in effect that they had suzerainty over the whole of Java. The coastal straits of Sumatra had been brought within its sphere of influence through commercial privileges which it had extracted from them. It had gained access to the trade of Banjermassen in Borneo under a treaty concluded with its Sultan in 1756. The Company's hold was as secure as ever over the Spice Islands, Amboyna, Ternate and Tidore which had been denuded in enforcement of its policy of restricted production. The expansion of their spheres of influence in these directions enabled the Company to exercise a shadow suzerainty over a domain that was out of all proportion to the size of its actual territorial holdings. This authority was enforced by their command of the sea in an area in which there was no rival fleet to contend with and which lent itself easily to domination by a superior fleet.

These expansionist trends, however, were only the outer facade because since the turn of the 18th century the truth was that the Company was caving from within under its own weight. The V. O. C. had contributed to this process by its forward policy in certain

1. B. H. M. Vlekke, *Nusantara* (Cambridge, Mass. 1936), Ch. VII and VIII, pp. 145 - 185.

areas which had led to the establishment of territorial dominion. In their efforts to expand trade and consolidate their commercial dominion, the V. O. C., in disregard of the admonitions of the Directors, had become involved in interminable wars. The wars of Javanese Succession were an instance of such an involvement which was financially ruinous. Although, originally, the Heeren XVII had preached the doctrine that the V. O. C. should eschew war and concentrate on peaceful commerce, the latter's policy from the end of the 17th century was a progressive departure from these tenets.[1] In the hands of powerful Viceroys like Speelman, Coen, van Dieman, the V. O. C. developed into a territorial empire to sustain which its organisation or its finances were unequal. The extent of its activities made[2] it a prey to the intrepid Buginese pirates and increased its enemies thus adding to its defence commitments. These additional responsibilities also increased the opportunities for private gain by its officers who in this respect were not more enterprising than their British counterparts but the scope for damage to the Company was greater owing to its disorganised state. The inroads made by the British into well established centres of the Company's regional trade like Bengal and the Coromandel undermined the basis of its commercial system as a whole.[3]

Parallel with the expansion of the V. O. C. and its growing inability to bear the burden of its overstretched commitments in a background of shrinking markets, the home country had entered a period of political and economic decline.[4] Holland never really recovered from the strain of the war of Spanish Succession which shattered its navy and increased its national debt to one hundred and forty eight million guilders in 1714 compared with thirty million in 1688. Besides, the chronic inability of the provinces to agree on the apportionment of expenses on the army and navy prevented their rapid rehabilitation. Her efforts to avoid continental entanglements and allow herself a much needed respite for recuperation, by adopting an official policy of neutrality, were of no avail except during the Seven Years War because her strategic situation invariably caught up with her and forced her into wars. Thus, in 1745, she was involved in the War of the Austrian Succession, and in 1781 in the fourth Anglo-Dutch war with consequences that were disastrous to her finances and her trade. This situation rebounded on vital sectors of her economy like the fishing industry which was the mainstay of a substantial part of her population and her ship-building industry and caused their decline.

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1. C. R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire*, 1600 - 1800 (London 1965), p. 95.
2. *Ibid.*, p.102.
3. D. G. H. Hall, *History of South East Asia* (London 1955), Ch. 16, pp. 266-283.
4. C. H. Wilson, "The Economic decline of the Netherlands", *English Historical Review*, Vol. IX (May 1939); see also K. Glaman, *Dutch Asiatic Trade* 1620-1740 (The Hague 1958).

Besides, the maritime war with the British took a heavy toll of Dutch shipping. The success of the V. O. C. in its early days was due in large measure to the superiority of her marine technology but as a result of the setbacks to her shipping these studies were neglected, her technology stagnated and Holland lost the lead which she had enjoyed over her rivals. Under conditions such as these, which were detrimental to initiative, the supply of sea-faring folk and mariners that was needed for the navy was no longer forthcoming. The deleterious effects of this situation on a sea-borne empire such as the Dutch had perfected were recognised by van Imhoff when he complained that "everything is lacking, good ships, more officers, and thus one of the principal props of the Netherlands power is trembling in the balance".1

The economic decline also reflected the new economic picture of Europe in the late 18th century in which Holland had to contend with increased conpetition as a result of industrial developments in a number of European countries like Britain, France, and the Baltic States and the protectionist policies pursued by them. Its effects were seen in the rapid decline which overtook the Dutch textile trade, reputed until then to be the best in Europe, The development by these countries of their own merchant navies likewise deprived Holland of the monopoly of the oceangoing trade of Europe which she had enjoyed during the 17th century. The affliction of which all these were symptoms was that Holland was a dying society having exhausted her slender resources on continental commitments and the luxury of a far flung empire. She was unable to maintain the pace which she had set in the 17th century in the flush of her oceanic achievements and the 18th century found her senile and unfit to hold her own against the new societies that were growing around her under the stimulus of the industrial revolution. This was fatal to her sea-borne empire which had thriven in proportion to the drive and initiative of the home country but now, deprived of this leadership, it sank into a state of decadence and stagnation that made it an easy prey to its rivals. The contrast which one finds between a vigorously expanding English East India Company and a stagnant V. O. C. in the 18th century was really the difference between a society on the threshold of greatness and one which had past it prime. Thus the V. O. C. had become the sick man among the foreign powers in Asia during the latter half of the 18th century. At the same time that Europe was being faced with one sick man whose disposal was to produce an upheaval in the balance of forces in Europe, European powers in Asia were similarly faced with a power vacuum caused by the decline of the V. O. C.

The contrasting fortunes of the English and Dutch Companies in Asia were reflected in the state of their relations during the 18th century. The difficulties experienced by the Dutch in obtaining

1. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire*, 1600 - 1800, p. 108.

recognition of her neutral status in the western hemisphere had its parallel in Asia, but the situation in that area was even more complicated because of the ambitions entertained by the Dutch themselves and their own apprehensions in the face of the Anglo-French struggle. The issue for the Dutch was not merely their trading rights or respect for neutrality but the very existence of their trading settlements. The resultant tension was more acute here than elsewhere, precisely because the stakes were greater and as we shall see events almost led to a breach of neutrality. Relations between Britain and Holland here as much as in other areas were governed by the Treaty of Breda of 1677, confirmed by the later Treaty of Westminster, both of which enjoined the two parties to peaceful trade and co-existence in keeping with their friendly relations in Europe. In practice, however, the Companies were in a state of acute rivalry due on the Dutch side to their envy of British progress and their fear of British designs. The British likewise resented the commercial monopoly which the Dutch ruthlessly enforced in their territories. Relations between the Company's representatives throughout these scattered positions were marked by constant friction. Pinpricks and minor irritations were interminable. The factory records of this period are full of such incidents.[1] There were, however, noteworthy exceptions like the use of Trincomalee by foreign ships. Trincomalee was becoming a regular resort of British ships which came to revictual or seek shelter from storms. A notable visitor was Peyton, who came there to refit after his brush with La Bourdonnais. No hindrance was caused by the Dutch so long as the visitors minded their own business. Dutch possessions on the Coromandel coast were subject to the constant risk of embroilment in the struggle owing to the contiguity of the combat areas. This threat even materialized on one or two occasions, when as the Dutch alleged, the French temporarily occupied their trading station at Madras or one of their ships was detained by the French. Similarly, the British requisitioned one of their posts near Madras as a security measure for the defence of Madras against the French.

In Bengal, in contrast, the rival companies of Britain, France and Holland were at peace with each other during the opening years of the war. The situation turned inflammatory with Clive's arrival on the scene followed by the deposition of Suraj which made him the de facto ruler in Bengal. The rival companies became alarmed over their future, and the increased tensions trigged off the armed clashes between the British and Dutch at Chinsura in 1759. At Chinsura the pent up feeling of the two companies exploded and it brought to the surface the grievances which they harboured against each other. For the next three years both companies were engaged in negotiations to reconcile their differences and maintain good relations. These negotiations were so voluminous and tedious as to constitute a separate

1. Disputes with the Dutch, *Dutch Records A*, Vol. XIV, I. O. L.

chapter in Anglo-Dutch relations during this period. They are important for the light they throw on the true state of feelings between the two companies which underlay the facade of neutrality and friendly relations. The verbal battles, characterised by long-winded and repetitive arguments, charges and counter charges, and fervent assertions of their respective rights were to drag on for the next three years. They can be divided into two phases — the purely paper exchanges of memoranda between the two companies through the medium of their ambassadors and at times directly between the two governments, followed by a series of conferences which were held in London in the latter half of 1762 between Commissioners appointed by each side to examine their grievances and arrive at a settlement. These meetings too proved as inconclusive as the exchanges and ultimately no real solution was ever achieved.

The exchanges began with a letter of protest addressed to the States General by the British Ambassador in Holland, Joseph York, against the hostile acts committed by the Dutch against the British in Bengal.[1] A statement of facts was forwarded with the letter which referred to in the following terms : "Your High and Mightiness will find therein the relation of the train of hostilities committed by the agents of Dutch East India Companies of the provinces against the King's subjects in Bengal".[2] The Ambassador asked for exemplary punishment to be meted out against those responsible. This statement of fact was a document prepared by the President and Council of Bengal for the Directors of the Company in which the British side of the story was set out.[3]

The States General replied to York's representations by their letter of 17 September 1761, which was addressed to the Earl of Bute.[4] This reply was a complete denial of the British charges and counter charged the British with a number of acts of acts of hostility against the Dutch Company. The facts as set out in the Dutch memo were that the so-called expedition from Batavia was destined not for Chinsura but for Negapatam; its purpose was to protect Dutch settlements from attacks by combatants on the Coromandel coast. These settlements had been subjected to attacks by the combatants during the war. The object of the expedition to Chinsura, which was not the main expedition that the British mistook it for, was purely to protect the Company settlements from the extortion and malicious acts of hostility to which they were subjected by the Nawab. In June 1756 the Nawab had extorted twenty lakhs from the Dutch.[5] Dutch

1. York to States General, 14.8.1760, *Dutch Records A*, Vol. XV.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Council of Bengal to Directors, *Dutch Records A*, Vol. XV, ff. 16.
4. States General to Bute, 17.9.1761, *Ibid.*, ff. 174.
5. States General to Bute, 17.9. 1761, *Dutch Records A*. Vol. XV, ff, 174.

appeals to the British for help had fallen on deaf ears. Reduced to the last extremity, therefore, the Dutch had decided that "forced through necessity and reduced to the last extremity they would make use of the means which God and the law of nature had put into their hands ro repel force by force for the defence of the Company settlements and to maintain the acquired privilege".1 The memo denied all the provocative acts attributed to them by the British.

In the statement of counter charges one really comes to the crux of the questions that were at issue between the two companies.2 The first is an affirmation of the trading rights of the Dutch in Bengal. The Ganges is a neutral river on which the Dutch, like the other, had navigation rights. They operated on a firman of the Mughal which the Nawab who was his subordinate could not revoke or interfere with. They had never recognised or seen the so-called treaty between the Nawab and the British. In any case article 13, which Clive stated was the basis of the aid given to the Nawab, should in the Dutch view be superseded by article 12 of the Treaty of Breda of 31 July 1667 and the Treaty of Westminster of 1674. This article stipulated that neither the Lord King and States-General nor their subjects should undertake anything against one another in any place such as may be detrimental to their interest but instead they should prevent such actions by their respective subjects. Article 21 prohibited either side from committing any hostility or violence one against the other. The separate article agreed on 8 March 1676 of the Treaty of Westminster further stipulated that there should be a firm and lasting friendship between the English and Dutch companies trading to the East Indies in which they should behave peaceably one towards the other but, in the event of any differences, they should refrain from hostilities.3

At this point a new and important factor intervened which was to change the trend of events. On 15 December 1761, Lord Bute addressed a letter to the Company Directors forwarding a copy of a States-General resolution of the grievances against the British Company and stating that the Dutch Ambassador was likely to make personal representations to the King regarding these grievances.4 He requested the Company to issue orders to their Governors to settle any differences, as the King desired the cessation of conflicts. It was suggested that with this in view Commissaries should be appointed by the two Company respectively "to negotiate and conclude under the sanctions of the King and the States-General a mutual agreement and to settle proper rules of conduct for the future".5 In the reply to Bute

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Dutch Records A*, Vol. XVII.
3. States General to Bute, 17. 9. 1761, *Ibid.*, Vol. XV.
4. Bute to Directors, 15,12.1761, *Dutch Records A*, Vol. XV, ff. 386.
5. *Ibid.*

the Company defended its saltpetre monopoly by comparing it to the spice monopoly of the Dutch. "What of the great spice monopoly they avow, the monopoly of spices throughout Asia, nay they presume to exclude us from navigating seas of many thousand miles extent because they have some settlement on those seas which are seldom seen by us and they know we never visit."[1]

On 6 March 1762 the British Government informed the Company that because of the Dutch desire to settle grievances and disputes with them by appointment of Commissioners they had agreed to it provided the points of discussion should be agreed upon. During the negotiations Voyes de Fait should be avoided and orders to this effect should be sent to the Companies.[2] This letter was accompanied by a copy of a resolution of the States General of 15 February 1762 accepting the proposal to appoint a commission. The English Company still sulked calling the appointment of commissioners premature.[3] To this Bute sent a stern rebuke informing the Company that the British Government had already accepted the proposal and the Company had no business to hesitate now.[4]

The conference was held in London. Each side appointed three Commissioners. On the Dutch side they were T. van Schoonhoven, P. D. van Campen and C. van der Hoop. On the British side they were Thomas Rous, John Donier and Lawrence Sullivan.[5] Proceedings commenced on 26 August 1762 and meetings were held intermittently until 31 May 1763. However little progress was made because both sides kept arguing interminably on the same points, that were previously thrashed out in their memoranda. The Dutch suspected the British of stalling, as the Earl of Halifax addressed a letter to the English Directors stating that the Dutch Commissioners had complained about "the backwardness of the gentlemen deputised by the board to carry on the conference."[6] Halifax admonished the Directors in the same letter in the following terms: "I am commanded by H. M. to recommend to you in his name to proceed in such a manner towards the gentlemen that no good handle for a dissatisfaction in your conduct towards the Commissioners may be given to the State."[7] This complaint justified or not suggested that the Dutch Directors were applying pressure on the British Company through the British Government, taking advantage of the latter's

1. Directors to Bute, 23.12.1761, *Ibid.*, Vol. XVI.
2. Bute to Court of Directors, 6.3.1762, *Dutch Records A*, Vol. XVI.
3. Directors to Bute, 26.2.1762, *Ibid.*
4. Bute to Directors, 28.2.1762, *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, Vol. XVII, p. 81.
6. Halifax to Directors, 12.5.1763, *Dutch Records A*, Vol. XVII, ff. 181.
7. *Ibid.*

known desire for the goodwill of the Dutch Government. This could also explain the new line of approach which Count Waldren, the Dutch Ambassador in London, proposed to the Earl of Halifax in October, 1763, that the Sovereign should employ his good offices to enjoin the Companies to send orders to their servants in India to abstain from every act of violence and under no pretext whatsoever to do any injury to one another.[1] These sentiments do not appear to have been shared or welcomed by the two Companies because concurrently they were hurling charges at each other of hostile conduct.[2] In October 1763, the Dutch Company joined issue with the English Company over the Pybus mission, the negotiations between Madras and the Kandyan King and the conduct of Cornish in towing a prize into Trincomalee.[3] In February 1764, Count Waldren protested to Halifax that the Pybus negotiations were directly contrary to the 12th and 21st articles of the Treaty of Breda 1667, confirmed by that of Westminster 1674. The action of Cornish was also contrary to article 34 of the Treaty of Breda where it was said that the fleets or vessels of one of the powers entering into the ports of the other should not undertake hostilities or anything which may do the least prejudice.[4]

In this atmosphere of polemic, with neither Company appearing to want a settlement, this phase of negotiations petered out and nothing conclusive emerged out of their efforts. The urgency for a settlement also was passing away because the Peace of Paris established the ascendancy of the English Company in India. The history of these negotations between the Dutch and the British Company shows a growing callousness on the part of the latter towards the Dutch, flushed no doubt by their success over the French. The timing of the Pybus mission itself was the most illuminating commentary on this mood because the same month that Pybus set off for Kandy the Commissioners were meeting in London to reconcile their differences with the Pybus mission the English Company took official note of Ceylon for the first time. This more tentative though it was, represented the first step in the involvement of Ceylon in the European power struggle in Asia. We shall therefor now turn for a consideration of the internal situation in Ceylon at this time to appreciate the context of the Pybus mission. In 1760 Dutch power in Ceylon was faced with the most serious challenge to its authority to arise since its establishment in the island. This took the form of a serious uprising throughout the Dutch provinces, particularly in the northern provinces near Negombo and in the south near Matara. The distinctive feature of this

1. Earl of Sandwich to Directors, 21. 10. 1763, *Dutch Records A*. Vol. XVII.
2. *Dutch Records A*. Vol. XVIII.
3. Letter from Dutch Company 10.10.1763, *Ibid*., Vol. XVII.
4. Earl of Sandwich to Directors, 6.2.1764, *Ibid*., Vol. XX.

uprising was the active intervention on behalf of the rebels of the King, who took the opportunity to embark on hostilities against the Dutch with the possible object of evicting them from the island. The events of 1760 were really the culmination of a long history of conflict between the King and the Dutch and of resentment against the iniquities of Dutch rule in their territories. It had its roots in the trade war between the King and the Company, maladministration and oppression of the inhabitants in the Dutch provinces, the power politics in the Kandyan court and the advent of the Nayakkar regime to power.

The conflict between the King and the Dutch commenced almost from the arrival of the Dutch in Ceylon.[1] It can be said to have begun with the quarrel between Rajasinghe II and Hulft over the demolition of the fort of Colombo since when it was pursued with varying vicissitudes. The conflict became a vicious circle in which the Dutch exploited their control of the sea-board, particularly of the major ports of Jaffna, Trincomalee and Colombo, to impose an embargo on the King's lucrative trade with the South Indian mainland in order to blackmail him into delivering their cinnamon supplies. The King for his part, in order to free himself, resorted to reprisals and incitements of the inhabitants in the Dutch settlements. The King's trade with the mainland was mainly in commodities like arecanut, salt and elephants, which was the most profitable. Typical of the vicissitudes of the trade war were incidents like the closure by the Dutch of the ports in 1670 and the retaliation by the King in 1701 during the time of Gerrit de Heere by the closure of the frontiers in order to stimulate trade with Puttalam which was the only port open to them. This step was so successful that Puttalam became the centre of the arecanut trade at the expense of the Dutch who thereupon ordered their officers in Coromandel, Malabar and the Madura coast not to issue passports except to Colombo, Galle and Jaffna. The Dutch also took advantage of the King's own difficulties with his subjects and pursued an expansionist policy of systematically acquiring his territories on various pretexts. In 1665, for instance, in return for assisting him to quell a rebellion, the Dutch indemnified themselves by the annexation of fifteen districts thereby bringing their frontiers alongside those which the Portuguese had held in the Four Korales and Sabaragamuwa. This exploitation of unrest which was a regular feature of this context was practised by both sides. The King did not hesitate to foment unrest within the Dutch provinces. Thus between 1732 and 1736 the uprisings of the cinnamon peelers was the signal for the King to annex the Siyane, Hapitigam and Alutkuru Korales and this led to the declaration of war on him by the Company. Within

1. Dr. S. Arasaratnam, *Dutch power in Ceylon* (Amsterdam 1958), Ch. I.

the Dutch provinces the inhabitants were smarting under the harshness of the administration. The cinnamon peelers in particular were aggrieved by the vexatious dues imposed on them by the Company and by the tyranny of their headmen. Instances of this were the increase in the Company's share in gardens which were planted with cinnamon from one third to one half and the tax called the "watu-bedde" which it imposed on certain gardens. Similarly cultivation of chena was subject to the monopoly of the headmen or it was hindered in the interests of cinnamon. The worst features of the Dutch administration was the inhuman behaviour of the headmen and the capricious tyranny which they practised on their victims and for this the Dutch system of using them as middlemen must be held responsible. These accumulated grievances of the cinnamon peelers were at the bottom of their uprisings between 1734 and 1736. Their restiveness made them a veritable fifth column in the Company's territories, and an excellent weapon in the hands of the King, which he used when it suited his designs. The cinnamon peelers, for their part, made known to their masters that their sympathies lay with the King who was their real leader and concerted their plans with him.

The main object of Company policy in Ceylon and indeed its raison d'etre was to procure an annual supply of 14,000 bales of cinnamon.1 This constituted however a major diplomatic problem to the Company in that the bulk of this supply had to be obtained from the Kandyan kingdom. This was a humiliating task because the Company was obliged to pander to the King and show deference and obsequiousness to get the King's permission, and the latter made capital of the situation. He did not hesitate to use it as a lever to obtain trade concessions from the Dutch. Despite its power and authority, the Company was, therefore, in the ironic position of a suppliant at the King's court for its total cinnamon supply because whether in order to procure it from its own territory or from the Kandyan territories, the King's goodwill was the key. The King's friendship being thus fundamental to their purpose, they solicited it by showering him with presents conveyed by a stream of embassies. In fairness it must be said of the Company that though it was actuated by material considerations, it was sincere in its desire to avert a rupture and be at peace with the King. The Company had, in fact, strict instructions to this effect from Batavia. It was ready to bear humiliation and be patient in order to secure its interest through peaceful means. Until the rupture of 1762 the Governors were faithful to this policy. Governor van Eck, the successor of Schreuder, to whose agricultural policy the rebellion can be attributed, took up the position in his dealings with the court that he had come to undo and disavow Schreuder's policy and was prepared for a fresh deal with the court.

1. Paul E. Peiris, *Ceylon and the Hollanders* 1658 - 1796 (Colombo) pp. 63-73.

At a meeting of the Secret Council of the Dutch that was held in May, 1762, the Colombo Disawa was authorised to send a message to the Disawa of Three and Four Korales who was the official liaison with the Kandyans that the Governor was ready to discuss outstanding matters through exchange of ambassadors.[1] On assuming office van Eck, as an earnest of good faith, released two Kandyan High Priests who had been taken into captivity by the Dutch. The conditions which he stipulated for a settlement were the release of European employees then in the King's domain, the restoration of 3,000 bales of cinnamon accumulated in the King's territories since 1760, the free and unhindered peeling of cinnamon in the future. In return, he would consider the grant of three Dhonies for arecanut trade between Puttalam and the South Indian coast.[2] Even at the time of the outbreak of the rebellion in 1760, when the Company's territories were seething with rebellion and marauding Kandyan forces were attacking Company installations, one finds the paradox of Governor Schreuder, the man responsible for the mischief, advocating non-resistance.

While the Company was anxious to maintain friendly relations with the King even in the face of provocation they endeavoured at the same time as a policy of reinsurance to exploit internal rivalries within the Kandyan Kingdom in order to establish their influence in the court. An opening was afforded by the factional rivalries resultant on the accession of the Nayakkar dynasty to the Kandyan throne.

In 1739 Narendra Singha died without an heir and was succeeded by his wife's brother Sri Vijaya Rajasinghe who belonged to the Nayakkar dynasty of Madura. The new King arrived surrounded by a considerable family circle of relatives who, in the course of time, accumulated into a sizeable court faction which contrasted sharply in outlook and background from the traditional Kandyan aristocracy. Their jealousies and rivalries gave rise to a power struggle for ascendancy over the monarch. The Dutch attempted to turn the situation to their advantage by allying themselves with the Kandyan faction through exploitation of their communal and religious differences with the Nayakkars and employing them as a counter-balance to the anti-Dutch Nayakkar faction. This policy inspired their subversive suggestions to the Disawa of the Three and Four Korales on 28 May, 1763, that the lords of the court who for generations had been the natural aristocracy of the court should forestall the extirpation of themselves and their children by foreigners who were not lovers of the Buddhist faith and would suppress it.[3]

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1. Paulusz, *Secret Minutes*, p. 76.
2. *Ibid.*, p.103.
3. Colombo Disawa to Disawa of the Three and Four Korales, 31.5.1762, Paulusz, *Secret Minutes*, p. 95.

The advent of the Nayakkara can be regarded as the turning point in Dutch relations with Kandy. It marked the extension to Ceylon of the power rivalries on the South Indian mainland. The district of Madura from which the Nayakkars hailed became in 1743 a province of the Nawab of the Carnatic who was an ally of the English East India Company.1 The Nawab of the Carnatic, besides, harboured hostile feelings towards the Dutch over his experience of them in the mainland, and their inroads into the pearl fisheries in the gulf of Mannar which he regarded as his own preserve. In the eyes of the Dutch the Nayakkars were a bridgehead within Ceylon from which the East India Company could possibly operate or and in that sense was a Trojan horse to the Dutch. Their chief concern was that the Nayakkar dynasty, unlike its Kandyan predecessors had access to compatriots and friends outside Ceylon to whom they could turn for assistance. Their fears were not unwarranted because they materialized with the Pybus mission of 1762. From now on the Dutch could not hope to isolate the Kandyan kingdom indefinitely as they had done in the days of Rajasinghe II by manipulation of their trade policy and by the closure of the ports. Dutch relations with the Kandyan kingdom was on the way to becoming intertwined with the wider network of power rivalry in South Asia. In a sense the advent of the Nayakkars was the first step on the road to the advent of the British.

With the accession of the Nayakkars to the Kandyan throne, the Kandyan court began to adopt a policy of almost consistent hostility to the Dutch Company. Part of the reason for this has already been given. It was implicit in the different background and experiences of the Nayakkars and the prejudices which they brought with them. Besides, the Nayakkars were no novices in dealing with foreign powers. They had learnt their statecraft in Madura during the embattled times which saw the fall of the Mughal Empire and the commercial rivalry of Europeans in India.2

It is also possible that the hostility of the Nayakkars towards the Dutch was inspired by their knowledge of the latter's machinations against them in collusion with the Kandyan faction. In pursuance of this enmity the Nayakkars entertained a plan to establish a close federation between Ceylon and the States of Tanjore and Madura based on mutual trade advantages with the union under one crown as an ultimate objective.3 There are grounds to believe that after the outbreak of the 1760 rebellion the Kandyan court contemplated an international alliance against the Dutch into which the English East India Company would have been drawn.

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1. Peiris, *Ceylon and the Hollanders* 1658 - 1796, p. 42.
2. Peiris, *Ceylon and the Hollanders* 1658 - 1796, p. 42.
3. Paulusz, *Secret Minutes*, p. 5.

It will be seen from this survey of relations between the Dutch and Kandy, that by 1760, as a result of the hostility of the Nayakkars to the Dutch, and the rebellious mood of the Dutch provinces, a highly explosive situation had been created in the island. It required two events which occurred at this time to set off the explosion. In 1759 Governor Schreuder ignited the spark of agrarian discontent by his policy of reclaiming unpaid arrears and dues on land that were payable to the Company.[1] These arrears had been allowed to accrue for a length of time owing to the laxity of the administration, and in the Siyane Korale alone the total sum outstanding was 164,000 Rix dollars. These dues were in respect of gardens planted with consent which were liable for a third of the produce, and those cutlivated without consent, which had to pay half. During the war which followed the uprising of the cinnamon peelers large tracts of cultivated land had been abandoned by villagers and re-occupied by others. Schreuder's desire to reclaim arrears raised the problem of the ownership of the land and the period of occupation, but the documents and records necessary to establish this were not available. The result was a spate of litigation at the Landreads and unjust extortion. Troops were sent to enforce the measures with orders to fell trees in case of opposition. These measures bore heavily on the propertied classes and persons of means, and antagonised the influential sections of the inhabitants against Company rule.

Another object of Schreuder's land policy was to reclaim land within the cinnamon growing areas which had been cultivated unknown to the authorities. The Company was so jealous of its cinnamon monopoly that the most uneconomic and wasteful measures had been instituted for its enforcement. Areas in the vicinity of cinnamon plants had to be abandoned and this often meant paddy fields or chenas, wherever the shrubs growing wild decided to make their appearance. Reclamation of land under this policy was carried out in a manner which paid scant regard to the interests of the cultivator. Compensation in the form of alternative land was only paid in respect of lands which though not held as grants had still been paid for. Where no payments had been made no compensation was paid and the lands were summarily seized. Lands thus reclaimed were cleared of coconut trees and other cultivated crops to reserve them exclusively for cinnamon. This wanton destruction of crops gave rise to the rumours that whole plantations of jak and coconut were being denuded to make way for cinnamon. The rapacity of rent collectors in paddy yields added fuel to the fire. Rent collection had been farmed out to renters, who vied with the headmen in their victimisation of the cultivator. The enforcement of these measures at a time when the inhabitants were already exasperated with Dutch rule forced them to rebellion.

1. Paulusz, *Secret Minutes* p. 3.

The other event was an unsuccessful plot on Kirti Sri Rajasinghe's life.[1] The plot which was attempted in July 1760 was to assassinate the King by luring him into a pit shaft and to replace him by a Siamese Prince variously called Dietsamaniel or Krompripipiet, who had come to Ceylon to become a Buddhist priest. The plot was discovered in time and foiled by Nareneyappar Chettiar, the King's father-in-law, thanks to the timely warning conveyed by a Muslim. The plotters were rounded up and executed along with the second Adigar Samarakkody Ralahamy but many innocent persons were also accused of complicity. Nareneyappar excelled in the task of stamping out the conspiracy. He persuaded the King that this was a Dutch plot arranged in collusion with pre-Dutch elements in the Kandyan faction. No evidence has been found to prove that any link with the Dutch existed. The outbreak of the rebellion at this time thus afforded him an opportunity to vent his wrath against the Dutch.

Hostilities commencned at the end of 1760 although no formal declaration of war was made by the King.[2] The fighting was concentrated in two theatres, in the northern and southern territories of the Company's domain, centering round Negombo and Matara respectively. In these areas which were the worst affected by the rebellion the strategy of the royal forces was to act in conjunction with the rebels. The rebellion, if not nipped in the bud, might at least have been reduced to more manageable proportions but for the initial inactivity of Schreuder who clung to the hope of a peaceful settlement, and the intimidating presence of a British squadron under Admiral Cornish at Trincomalee which kept a section of the Dutch forces occupied. A significant feature of the rebellion was the non-participation of the cinnamon peelers despite terrorist acts and threats to which they were subjected by royalist forces. The confusion which accompanied the outbreak of hostilities and the tardiness of the Company's preparations precluded the prompt deployment of the Dutch troops and the reinforcement of their scattered posts. The royal armies were under the command of the grand Adigar Galegoda Ralahamy. He took personal charge of the campaign in Matara, while the other theatres in Negombo and Siyane Korale were assigned to the Disawas of the Seven Korales and the Three and Four Korales respectively. The headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief were established at Mulkirigala.

Formal hostilities commenced in January 1761 with two encounters at Negombo where Dutch reinforcements were barely able to get to the fort and at Beralapanatara in the south, where a Dutch detachment was cut to pieces. It was the news of this disaster that spurred Schreuder belatedly to institute measures for the defence of

1. Paulusz, *Secret Minutes*, p. 5.
2. Paulusz, pp. 6 - 15.

Dutch possessions. The campaign which followed took the form of a series of well directed assaults by the Sinhalese on some of the key Dutch towns in the northern and southern theatres. In March 1761 Hanwella fell after a six weeks siege mainly owing to lack of water. In the southern theatre, which was the responsibility of the Commander-in-Chief, elaborate attacks were launched against Hakmana, Tangalle, Katuwana, as part of a main drive having Matara as its target. Dutch resistance collapsed everywhere despite heroic fighting. Hakmana and Tangalle were abandoned and Katuwana captured, all during February 1761. The collapse of Dutch resistance in this campaign may be ascribed to the miscalculations of the Galle Commander, Abraham Samlant, who having evacuated Tangalle for lack of water instructed Disawa Leembruggen, the Hakmana Commander, to abandon Hakmana for Tangalle. A hasty effort to undo his mistake by sending the Tangalle detachment to extricate Leembruggen from Hakmana was unsuccessful because by that time Leembruggen had left Hakmana for Tangalle in the face of heavy odds, only to be overwhelmed when he had reached the outskirts of Tangalle. Matara had a new garrison commander, Fedder, who had already distinguished himself in the first encounter in Negombo. Knowing Matara's importance and strength Galegoda Ralahamy made elaborate preparations for all absent. Batteries and trained gunners were assembled against the fortifications. The assault when delivered was more than the fort in its neglected condition could stand. The attackers showed heroism and ferocity and mastery of siege techniques. Embankments taller than the fortwalls were built and the attack directed in methodical fashion according to the best techniques of siege craft. Bombardment and assaults had reduced the town to rubble when Fedder decided that resistance was no longer possible. On 24 March 1761 the town was abandoned and the garrison ferried to Colombo. In the north Negombo held out causing heavy losses to the attackers. The other forts of Kalpitiya, Batticaloa and Trincomalee were also intact and reinforcements were being rushed from the Coromandel and the Malabar coasts. Although the south was lost, all was not lost, and the royalists had suffered heavy lossess. Their attacks were losing momentum and, devoid of military resources with which to maintain the offensive, their thoughts turned to outside assistance.

In their quest for foreign help the Nayakkar court party at first fell back on their overseas connections in the hope of using their influence in South India to form an alliance.[1] The King's uncle, Konnama Nayakkar, visited the Princes of Tanjore and Madura with unavailing pleas for assistance. The English East India Company in Madras alone remained as the obvious and most likely candidate to respond favourably in view of the bad blood recently engendered with

1. Paulusz, *Secret Minutes*, p. 16.

the Dutch over the Bengal expedition and their impatience with the monopolistic trading methods of the Dutch. The prospects of sharing in the cinnamon trade and of obtaining a harbour, possibly even Trincomalee, may have inclined them at this juncture to throw aside their normal restraints about Dutch relations and hazard into the unknown.

To handle such an undertaking Madras was the best qualified and the most disposed. Unlike the other two Presidencies of the Company, Madras was in the thick of South Indian politics. In 1762 the Company had just vanquished the French and since 1759 launched out into fresh fields and pastures new in Bengal. They were on the crest of a wave of success, and were now on the point of sending an expedition to the Philippines which was to take Manila as a punishment for Spanish participation in the Seven Years War. Madras had become an invasion bridge-head from where the successful attacks of Clive on Bengal had been launched, which were to transform the character of English enterprise in India. Understandingly the Madras Presidency must have been in an exultant mood. Moreover more than in other parts of India, Dutch policies were of immediate interest to her. The Dutch were still a substantial force in the Malabar coast and on the Coromandel coast where they held Negapatam and, further south, Trincomalee. They were not as inoffensive as they pretended to be and had shown their teeth in the 1759 Bengal expedition. Besides, Dutch affairs impinged on the immediate neighbours of the Madras Presidency which was under constant pressure from them regarding the activities of the Dutch. The South Indian States, particularly Tanjore and the Carnatic, felt strongly about them, and their rather sharp trading activities in the Malabar country. The establishment of the Nayakkars in Kandy had created a link between Madras affairs and Ceylon and drawn Ceylon into the orbit of South Indian politics. Ceylon could not as before be divorced entirely from the rest of South Asian affairs. It is true that at this moment Bengal was being enjoined to maintain goodwill and relations with the Dutch Company and they were about to enter into negotiations to settle outstanding problems between them. The two governments back home influenced by their continental interests were anxious to be on the best of terms. However, Madras did not worry much over Bengal affairs, firstly because there was still no Regulating Act and, secondly, because the Presidencies were inclined in that era of laissez faire to pursue their own interests.

The minutes of the meeting of the selcet committee of the Madras Council which preceded the Pybus mission at which presumably this matter must have been discussed are not available. It is not possible, therefore, to be certain about the exact motives and circumstances which inspired the mission. These have to be surmised, therefore, from the background circumstances and the instructions issued to Pybus. Generally speaking, one can say that the mission was prompted by a mixture of commercial, political, and diplomatic considerations

operating in the background of a general desire of the Company to explore possibilities for them in the island. The prospects of the cinnamon trade for which their appetites had been whetted by the churlish disposition of the Dutch towards the Company, a desire to teach the Dutch a lesson, stimulated this interest. The opportunity for action came with the outbreak of the war between the king and the Company and the arrival of an envoy seeking the Company's assistance. A chance for intervention had virtually been brought to the Company on a platter. The King's importunity coincided with the Company's interests and the Pybus mission was the result.

CHAPTER II

THE PYBUS MISSION

The mission of John Pybus was the first official contact of the English East India Company with Ceylon. Unofficial English visitors there had certainly been before, like the famous Robert Knox[1] and Ralph Fitch, but their presence had no official implications[2]. The Company until then eschewed contacts with Ceylon for fear of displeasing the Dutch. Pybus, however, was the accredited representative of the Company and came to Kandy in response to an invitation of the Kandyan King who had solicited the assistance of the English company thereby providing it with an opening in Ceylon. The King had transmitted his appeal to the Company through a Vakeel who has been named by Pybus as Makandar Moodia and in the Dutch records as Uduma Lebbe, son of Maula Muhandiram.[3] The emissary however bore no credentials from the King fearing no doubt interception by the Dutch. His first call after arrival in India was on the Nawab of the Carnatic who had, after, at first questioning him on his credentials and inquiring why an official had not been sent, replied unfavourably. The emissary then approached the English East India Company, which appears to have been favourably disposed because, according to the Dutch records, the Madras Council had been closeted with him on three occasions.[4] The decision to respond positively to the appeal, to the extent of sending an envoy, must have been taken by the Council around the end of March and the beginning of April as the instructions given to him are dated 6 April 1762.

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1. E. F. C. Ludowyke, (ed.), *Robert Knox in the Kandyan Kingdom* (Oxford 1948).
2. Fr. S. G. Perera, *A History of Ceylon* (Colombo 1951), Vol. II, pp. 1-3.
3. J. C. Paulusz (ed.) *Secret Minutes of the Dutch Political Council* 1762. (Colombo 1954) , p. 119.
4. J. O. Paulusz, *Secret Minutes*, p. 92.

John Pybus, who was selected as the envoy to Kandy, was a senior Company servant and a member of the Madras Council. His name, like that of Boyd, is wellknown to posterity, but this is due to the circumstance that both he and Boyd had bequeathed diaries of their respective missions. The actual biographical information available about him, unlike in Boyd's case, is very scant. About all that is known of him before his appointment as envoy is that he joined the Company's service in 1742, and that he was re-employed in 1760 in the establishment of Fort St. George.[1] He became a member of the Madras Council in 1762, a short while before he undertook this mission. His nomination to the Council within two years of re-employment must itself have been an achievement which suggests a high opinion on the part of the Company of his abilities and his previous services under it. This may also explain his being chosen for an undertaking of such delicacy as this mission to Kandy. The Company was apparently satisfied with his performance on the mission as his subsequent career, on which more information is available, would indicate. He remained on the Council till about the end of 1763, during which period he was holding five appointments at one and the same time. He was store-keeper, military store-keeper, land custom master, rental general and assay master.[2] The Court of Directors, on hearing of this, expressed the view that all these appointments were too much for one man. Possibly for this reason, or in recognition of his efficiency, Pybus was appointed chief of Masulipatam at the end of 1763. The Court of Directors' letter confirming the appointment refers to Pybus as "a very able servant".[3] We next hear of him when he wrote to the Madras Council on 22. 1. 1767 asking to be released from his appointment in Masulipatam on grounds of ill-health. The request was allowed and he returned to the Presidency on the 3rd September and was appointed Commissariat General and export warehouse-keeper.[4] His tenure in this office was destined to be very brief because on 5. 11. 1767 he requested permission to return to England on grounds of illness, his health having been impaired "by indispositions contracted at Masulipatam".[5] His resignation was accepted and he left for England on the *Hector*.

The Company's letter reporting these facts to the Court payed tribute to Pybus in stating that "his conduct in the management of your affairs has been to our satisfaction". On his resignation the two positions which he combined were given to two officers.[6] Obviously,

1. Court of Directors to Madras, 31. 1. 1760, *Letters to Madras Series*, 2,10.
2. Directors to Madras, 30. 12. 1763, *Letters to Madras*, 2.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Pybus to Madras Council, 22. 1. 1767, *Letters from Madras*, Series 2 (I.O.)
5. Pybus to Madras Council, 5, 1. 1767, *Letters from Madras*,
6. *Ibid.*

Pybus revelled in hard work and responsibility. About the time of his departure his name became linked with an episode which conceivably may have cast a shadow over him. Whether this directly occasioned his departure so shortly after his appointment in Madras or whether he left under a cloud it is difficult to say. The facts of the episode were as follows: Mr. Callard, a Company Servant, was accused by Cuddalore merchants of various malpractices including the taking of bribes, borrowing money and not paying interest, oppressing the merchants and obliging them to buy goods at high prices. The charges were so grave that an enquiry was held at Madras and Callard was found guilty and suspended from the Company's service. Callard retaliated by sending letters making allegations against Company servants and protesting his own innocence. Pybus, although no specific allegations had been made against him, made the observation that had these charges been general he might have let them pass unnoticed but since specific accusations had been made against Company servants he was prepared to defend himself if called upon to do so in England. He attributed some of Callard's allegations to a conversation he had with him regarding his misconduct at Fort St. David.[1] Another interesting sidelight on Pybus which his personal record reveals was that he had made a claim in the debts of the Nawab of the Carnatic.[2] Pybus obviously was a man of his times and, like his contemporaries in the Company's service, did not scorn an opportunity for private gain. Hence his involvement in the favourite investment of the time, which was lending money to the Nawab so as to keep him in a chronic state of indebtedness. With his departure on the *Hector*, John Pybus vanished from history.

The instructions to Bybus were contained in the letter addressed to him on 6 April 1762 by Lord Pigot, the ill-fated Governor of Madras.[3] Along with this was issued a letter for delivery to the king of Kandy but the original of this is lost and the present translation available is a corrupt one.[4] The letter to Pybus ran an follows:

> "The King of Kandy and Emperor of Ceylon having sent here Makandar Moodiar as an Ambassador to solicit and obtain our assistance to protect him and his country from the oppression and usurpation which the Dutch had long endeavoured to establish and to prevent which he has maintained wars against them these two years. We have considered the representations of his Ambassador of which you will receive a copy and resolved to send

1. Madras to Directors, 5.11.1763, *Letters from Madras*, 1A.
2. John Pybus, *Personal Records of East India Company*, Vol. XIII, ff. 297.
3. Pigot to Pybus, 6.4.1762, *Letters from Madras*, 1A and Henry D. Love, *Vestiges of old Madras* (London 1913), Vol. III, pp. 97-110.
4. Major R. Raven-Hart(ed)., *The Pybus Embassy to Kandy* National Museums of Ceylon, Historical Series, Vol. 1. (Colombo 1958), p. 83.

thither a trusting person to treat with the King on such matters as may be necessary and to make such observations of the country power and the nature of the government as may tend to promote the future advantage of that Company with regard to trade on that island. To manage these negotiations and enquiry our choice has fallen on you and we are persuaded you will discharge your commission to the best of your abilities. That you may thoroughly comprehend our intention on this occasion we think it necessary to give you the following information and instruction for the rule of your conduct."

The gist of these instructions was that profound secrecy should be maintained by him over the mission so as not to alarm the Dutch and thereby frustrate the mission. Pybus was to accompany Admiral Cornish who was proceeding with a squadron to Trincomalee and effect his landing without the knowledge of the Dutch. The King had already guaranteed protection. If possible, a message should be despatched by him on arrival. As it was not the Company's intention at that time to enter into absolute engagements with the King or to quarrel with the Dutch without knowing more particularly what grounds they (the Company) had to proceed on or receive just provocation, he was to avoid all promises or conclusive proposals. He was notwithstanding to proceed in appearance as if the Company meant heartily to enter into the King's view and was to reduce to articles what the King expected from the Company and what he would on his part engage to perform.

He had to obtain particulars of all treaties, connections and engagements between the King and the Dutch, including grants, privileges and details of whether the Dutch were empowered to protect all the ports and to usurp trade exclusive of all nations. He had to obtain copies of all such engagements. He was to take particular note of the roads, nature and produce of the country, the customs of inhabitants and of whether there were any factories, whether inhabitants lived in large towns or were scattered in villages, whether provisions might be easily procured for troops marching and whether there were plenty of sheep and cattle for draught or carriage. He had to study the nature of the government and ascertain whether the King was absolute, whether there were principalities likely to rebel, whether the present King was a man of capacity and enterprise and whether he took the field himself or delegated his administration. He was to observe the state of the armed forces, whether they were horse or foot, how armies were raised, how they were paid and armed and the nature of their artillery. Particulars had to be obtained of imports and exports, taxes and customs, articles which could be produced and commodities like pepper, iron, fruits of various kinds, timber, grain and saltpetre.

In particular he had to inform himself about the King's revenue whether it was in coin or specie, how it was collected and whether there were royal prerogatives, territories, reserved production. He had to investigate whether the inhabitants had experience of navigation, whether they could build vessels and what materials they had for this purpose. Particulars of climate, whether water is plentiful had to be noted. His instructions were summed up in the following words: "In short you are to make all such observations and enquiries as may tend to convey to us a just idea of the nature and produce of the country, the government, the forces, the revenues, the trade, the inhabitants, customs, dispositions and abilities in affairs of war, policy in commerce that we may form a clear judgment of what advantage may at present or herein be drawn from them for the benefit of the Company." If he came to know anything of consequence, he was instructed to send a packet through Admiral Cornish. If the King was prepared to surrender to the Company any place or places convenient for cinnamon trade he would grant forever, Pybus had to direct Cornish to take possession.

The reaction of the Court of Directors to the news of the Pybus mission which it received long afterwards is worth noting here for the sake of comparison. The attitude of the Court was one of caution. It hoped that, in view of the delicacy of the mission, the Company had acted with due circumspection and caution so as not to give any offence to the Dutch. The Court did not think that the Company could accept any grant of Dutch settlements given to them by the King but they could justify settling in any other part of his dominion which was not a Dutch possession. The Court agreed that trade was most desirable and to this extent approved the Company's initiative towards building a foothold so long as this would not contravene the Anglo-Dutch treaties. On the other hand, the Court was afraid that the King would insist on military assistance as the price for such concessions which the British under their treaties were prohibited from rendering. The Court was emphatic that "we should not draw upon ourselves the odium of involving the nation in a new war." The final stipulation was interesting, the more so in that it came so long after Pybus's return. It was at all events the Company "should lay hold of the opportunity to procure some cinnamon plants which are ripe in the month of September and from which the tree is cultivated. These could be sent to Bencoolen, Anjengo, Bombay where they may thrive."

The letter showed an anxiety on the part of the Court over the possibility that the mission could lead to undesirable consequences. These were that if the Company declined to give military assistance to the King, he might turn to the French who would have no scruples about obliging. If on the other hand, the Company acceded to the King's request, the Dutch would be displeased and might even go to

war with Britain thereby affording an opening for French intervention. These fears of French infiltration show that as early as 1763 long before Anglo-Dutch differences reached a climax, Britain was mindful of the danger that by antagonising the Dutch she would be pushing them into the willing arms of the French.

The main difference between the attitudes of Madras and that of the Court, was that the latter reflecting the home government's views, was more concerned about the international implications of the mission. It was this very consideration which prompted the efforts of the two governments at this time to settle differences between the two Companies for which purpose protracted negotiations were held between Commissioners appointed by them. The Court viewed the mission primarily as an opportunity to cultivate the friendship of the King and forestall him from making overtures to the French rather than to offer him help against the Dutch. The Court was also interested in the possibility of developing trade provided that this could be achieved without infringing Anglo-Dutch treaties.

From the view point of the Madras Presidency it was clear from the instructions that the Pybus mission was primarily a fact-finding operation. Essentially it was a spying assignment the object being to accumulate as much authentic intelligence as possible at first hand about the Kandyan kingdom. The stress was on political, military and security information. Out of the 15 points which were listed as his instructions, 10 related to the data that was desired. There is no evidence to suggest that this information was sought by the British with a definite plan in mind. Their interest in Ceylon at this stage must have been primarily a preparation for future eventualities. All the same it was a sign that an appreciation was dawning on the Madras authorities of the widening ramifications of European rivalries. However, the Company was still hesitant about involvement and the instructions are proof of its unwillingness to commit itself one iota to the King. The Company was more interested in knowing what the King could give rather than in how they could reciprocate. Subject to these reservations, there is room to think that the Pybus mission reflected a growing consciousness in the Company, as a result of its success in the 7 years war, of Ceylon's importance and significance in relation to the power struggle in Asia. In the new era which it saw opening ahead it recognised vaguely and as yet indistinctly the role which Ceylon could play. This appreciation runs through the Pybus instructions.

In considering the course of the mission, there are two sources of information from which it can be reconstructed. These are the accounts of Pybus himself and the proceedings of the Dutch secret Committee. The early contacts of the British with Ceylon have the advantage of being well documented events as the persons concerned like Pybus, Boyd and Andrews have left their own accounts of their missions. These constitute rich and unrivalled material for the historian. The

account by Pybus of his mission is one such document. In form the account is in two parts. The first part is a summary of the official negotiations with the Kandyan Court together with a dossier on the Kandyan kingdom in accordance with the specific instructions to Pybus that he should collect as much material as possible. The second part is a diary of his day by day experiences. The Pybus account is written primarily as an official document by a man who had the eye, temperament and training of an administrator. It is clear, concise and to the point. It is lively, even racy at times, without being ostentatious or flamboyant and free from some of the literary conceits in which Boyd later indulged. He has a mordant wit, an example of which is his obiter dicta on his first audience that "I got to bed just at sunrise never more fatigued or disgusted with any jaunt in my life."[1] The two parts of the document understandably contrast in style. The first part is primarily an official report and the other a personal narrative which allows room for flashes of personal opinion. As regards the historical value of the document this is considerable in view of the circumstances in which it was written. It is a mine of information on court protocol, the habits of the Kandyan court and the economic, political and social conditions of the time. The glimpses of life as Pybus saw them are useful sidelights on the state of the country at the time and the living conditions of the people. However, in two respects its historical value is limited. Firstly, Pybus himself admits that his information on local conditions was obtained at second hand and with much difficulty.[2] The vakeel who accompanied Pybus was replaced on the day after their arrival at Gannoruwa by his brother who was appointed his companion. The brother was obviously a trained agent appointed more to spy on Pybus than to give him information. Pybus admits that this man was his main source. It is possible that this man even fed him with misrepresentations and distortions on the King's instructions. In fact throughout his sojourn he was kept under very strict confinement. These restrictions on his movements may have been due to two reasons - an awareness that Pybus was under instructions to spy and also the desire to conceal his presence from the Dutch. The scope for Pybus to see things for himself being thus circumscribed his account, unlike the narrative of Robert Knox, suffers from not being based on personal observations collected during any length of time.[3] The information which he provides in his dossier is superficial and vague although free of any gross inaccuracies. Secondly, Pybus by temperament was not a patient man. True enough the hardship he had to bear were many but he was a difficult man to please and he was jaundiced and prejudiced from the start. By the time of his arrival at Gannaruwa he had despaired of the success of his

1. Raven-Hart, *Pybus Embassy* p. 61.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
3. Ludowyke *Robert Knox.*

mission. Pybus in fact was much better off than poor Hugh Boyd. He had provisions and guides all the way. He was never kept in suspense about his reception at the court, as was Boyd. The King extended several privileges to him and waived strict protocol for his benefit but he was never satisfied. He was a perpetual grumbler quick to find fault and bicker. That he created a bad impression was public knowledge and is corroborated by the Dutch spies who commented on his ungracious manner. To that extent his account is vitiated by personal spite. The value of the diary in relation to conditions in the countryside is of course limited by its restricted range. Most of the time Pybus was travelling through thick jungle and he had little count of distance and surroundings. It is possible that he was even taken on a circuitous route. His observations suggest that the country was in a fair state of prosperity unlike what it was twenty years later at the time of Boyd's journey when, according to the latter's diary, whole areas were desolate and food scarcity rife.

Pybus landed at Muttur off Trincomalee on 5 May, having set out from Madras in the naval squadron under the command of Admiral Cornish. He left Muttur on his journey to Kandy the same morning. His route according to the place names which he gives in his diary appears to have taken him through Minneriya, Matale district, Nikawatena, Gonawela, Nalanda, Panagama, Hulangamuwa, Katugastota and Halloluwa. He arrived at Gannoruwa on 23rd May and was accommodated at a residence situated on the Gannoruwa side of the river. On 3 June he moved his quarters to Kandy at his own request. He had his first audience with the King on 24 May. This audience was purely ceremonial in purpose and character. Greetings and courtesies were exchanged and Pybus delivered his letter. No serious official business was discussed except that the King expressed his desire to have the friendship of the Company. From the cordiality of the King's manner Pybus inferred that "he would grant me any privileges to induce us to settle on the island and assist him in driving the Dutch".1 Pybus took the opportunity to display his ungracious manner by protesting against the discomfiture of his journey and the inconvenience of having to travel so far from the residence to the palace. He was then reminded by the courtiers that this was not the proper place to make this complaint and that they could be discussed elsewhere with the General who attended to his affairs. With that the interview terminated.

Business proper was really conducted at a later meeting between Pybus and a special Council appointed by the King, in response to Pybus' own request for quick despatch. On 4 June an officer called on Pybus in his Kandyan house and informed him that "His Majesty to show his desire to make everything as easy as possible had appointed a Council consisting of a General and other headmen to meet and enter

1. Raven-Hart, *Pybus Embassy*, p. 59.

into business with me, who would acquaint him with what I might propose." The first meeting with the Council was held that evening after 9 p.m. The spokesman on the Kandyan side was a person whom Pybus referred to as a Principal General. The General got to the heart of the problem whem he asked Pybus what particular matter of business the Governor and Council of Madras had empowered him to communicate to them.[1] To this Pybus replied that "the Governor and Council of Madras upon representations made to them by the vakeel had sent me to hear what proposals the King had to make to the English nation and what his expectations from them were. But they declined alleging that their directions were to hear from me what I had to propose.[2] In this confrontation of positions was summed up the central issue in the negotiations. The talks really became a deadlock with each side wanting to know first what the other had to offer and with neither willing or able to disclose its hand. Some headway was made when Pybus inquired if the King was willing to grant the English liberty to settle upon the island and upon what footing and with what privileges, to which the Kandyans when pressed for an answer replied by pouring out their grievances against the Dutch and pointedly stating that the King "wanted to know in what manner and how far the English could assist both by sea and land in his enterprise against them".[3] To this Pybus gave his stock answer: "I was not empowered to make any promise of aid of engagements besides proposing an alliance of friendship with the King". He was then requested by the Kandyans to furnish details of his proposal which he did but after making a clear reservation "that I shall not enter upon this subject with a view that anything I might propose should be considered a decision. Upon these conditions he would communicate the substance of such intelligence as I concluded the Governor would expect His Majesty to grant."[4] Such a reservation was of course perfectly understandable because Pybus was being faithful to his instructions which clearly prohibited him from entering into any engagements. But the hesitation and vacillation with which he submitted this proposal must have created a very unfavourable impression on the Kandyans about the bona fides of the Company. The Kandyans had already made their position clear in declaring their desire for British assistance and they expected if not an unequivocal reply at least some basis for negotiation. But Pybus's instructions inhibited him from engaging in any concrete discussions. He had to be tentative and evasive in his reply.

The articles which Pybus proposed for the draft treaty can be summarised as follows:[5] "The English East India Company would

1. Raven-Hart, *Pybus Mission*, p. 65.
2. *Ibid*, p. 65.
3. Raven-Hart, *Pybus Mission*, p. 65.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Raven-Hart, *Pybus Embassy*, p. 9.

have permission to establish "a settlement or settlements in the Bay of Cottiarum, in the river of Mattu Cullapay or Batacal, or in the river Chilaun in the districts of Annawolandane", or at any other place on the sea coast of the island of Ceylon in the possession of the King as they find most convenient for carrying on their trade having given notice to the King of their intentions of establishing such a settlement. The Company would have liberty to procure cinnamon and the King would issue orders to his subjects to furnish them with it on the same conditions they provided it to the Dutch. The King was further requested to issue orders for collecting with as much despatch as possible a quantity of cinnamon at Matucullapay in readiness for a ship which may be sent for it in September or October. No pepper or betel nut should be sold to any other but the English Company to whom these articles should be delivered on the same terms as they were sold to the Dutch. The inhabitants would be free to bring their goods from any part of the King's dominion to English settlements unmolested. They were prohibited from trading with any other settlements than those of the English Company. The King on application being made to him should order his subjects to furnish at reasonable rates building materials for erection of forts, warehouses to any other buildings at such places as the English may find convenient and have the King's permission to settle at and to supply such labour as may be necessary. In case the English find it necessary to remove any building that may be near the spot on which they may be erecting their establishments, the inhabitants of such buildings should pull them down and remove the materials at their own expense, having first received the grant of another spot of ground of equal dimension.

Any European belonging to an English settlement ship or vessel, any person guilty of a crime, any servant or slave who has deserted an English settlement into the King's territories would on application made to the King by the Governor of the settlement be delivered to the latter. The English could apply their own laws to all persons living within their settlements and under their jurisdiction. At any time when it is necessary for the English to assist the King with troops the latter should furnish the necessary draft and carriage bullocks for transporting the artillery, stores and baggage of the army and to provide the troops with provisions at his own charge so long as they would be employed in the field upon his service. Such officers as would be employed with the troops in the field upon His Majesty's service would have the liberty of travelling either on palanquins or on horseback to or in any part of his territories when they would be employed upon such service. The same allowance of batta would be paid by His Majesty to the officers of the troops while in the field as was allowed them on the coast of Coromandel. Military stores which were expended, broken or lost on the King's service would be paid for by His Majesty. The King would make over to the English East India Company for their sole use and benefit and as their property forever, certain countries

or districts from whence they may be enabled to reimburse themselves charges incurred by them on fortifications and military establishments. The articles are self-explanatory. The demands on the King were so severe that it would have been very difficult for him to accept them. Acceding to these conditions was tantamount to giving the Company a territorial foothold, a commercial stranglehold and access to the King's resources if the need arose. Such conditions, hard as they seemed, might have been worth considering if the scale of British assistance was proportionately as great but on this Pybus would not commit himself and the King was thus placed in a difficult position. It should be noted that Article I gave a choice of several places — Trincomalee, Batticaloa, Chilaw or any other convenient place on the coast. This disproves the view that the mission had in mind the acquisition of Trincomalee because of its strategic importance.[1] It does not appear as if at this time the full strategic value of Trincomalee which Suffren was to demonstrate later had quite dawned on the Company. According to the draft treaty, its immediate interest was in a seaport for commercial rather than logistical reasons.

Pybus mentions in his report that he had deliberately underplayed the request for possession of a port or place upon the island for fear that the King might seize upon this as a quid pro quo for pinning the Company down to a concrete undertaking.[2] In fact the instructions put Pybus in a curious position of having to make various demands without having anything to offer in return except vague promises. As a result Pybus was constantly in a dilemma. This was the case at the next round of discussions on 7 June. Pybus went to the meeting expecting to hear the King's reply but the Kandyans persisted with their original request. In his own words "instead of communicating to me the King's answer to the proposal they several times pressed for a positive answer whether if every thing I had proposed was complied with, the English would assist them." The perplexity of the Kandyans throughout these meetings can be described in Pybus' own words. "That as the Governor and Council of Madras, in consequence of representations made to them by His Majesty's Vakeel of the situation his affairs were in with the Dutch and that he wanted our assistance, had thought proper to send me a member of their Council to treat with him it appeared somewhat surprising that I was not empowered to enter into any agreement and give my positive assurance whether he might depend upon our assistance or not."[3] The only reply which Pybus could give to all these expressions of surprise and bewilderment was that even the proposals which he had made were entirely tentative and were subject to the wishes of the Council. No blame can be

1. L. A. Mills, *Ceylon Under British Rule*, 1795-1932 (London 1933), P. 2.
2. Raven-Hart, *Pybus Mission*, p. 8.
3. Raven-Hart, *Pybus Embassy*, p. 12.

attached to Pybus for this predicament. It was his inflexible instructions that put him in this dilemma. The final meeting was held on the 19th at which the Kandyans discussed Pybus's proposals. Objections were raised to a number of them, such as those relating to the cinnamon trade and the King's payment of expenses in time of war. Pybus was not anxious to discuss these objections and said that this would be for the Madras Council to decide. On this unsatisfactory and inconclusive note,the meeting ended. On 24 June Pybus, who had been impatient to leave, was given official permission to do so. On 2 July he was at Trincomalee and sailed on the Falmouth. He had originally asked to return via Batticaloa but this was not possible. This request was made, one thinks, in pursuance of his instructions to report on the country.

From the account, as given by Pybus, the unsatisfactory outcome of the mission must be attributed primarily to the contradictory nature of his instructions. He was virtually expected to get something for nothing. Pybus himself was aware that he was practising a deception because he admits that the instructions precluded any definite commitment and that he was obliged to maintain appearances, in the following paragraph of his diary, viz: "and though I saw the very little probability there was of entering into a treaty with them on such a footing and your honour had furnished me with no discretion on that subject, I had no alternative left but of declaring my real sentiments and of making some proposals that might carry with them the appearance of an intention on our part to cultivate an alliance which last I rather chose as seeming the most consistent with the designs of my expedition".[1] This amounted to a confession by Pybus himself of the true nature of his mission which was to acquire information for the Company about Ceylon and if it was possible to deceive the King into giving concessions in return for a pretence of interest in his affairs. The Company hoped that the plight of the King would be so desperate as to make him an easy victim of their chicanery.

The personal conduct of the envoy Pybus was a blot on the Company's name. The references to his conduct made so far would have shown that Pybus was no model diplomat. But for the fact that there were other fundamental reasons for the breakdown of the talks Pybus's conduct tempts one to think that he was personally responsible. To Pybus nothing was right from the moment he entered Ceylon. The palanquin bearers did not know their job, the wayside resthouses were filthy and the weather foul. Having arrived in Kandy he had a fresh lot of grievances. He resented protocol, it being not customary for an envoy of the British Company to be treated this way. He found the journey to the palace from Gannoruwa too tiring for his feet. The

1. Raven-Hart, *Pybus Mission*, p. 9.

obeisance to the King was rather humiliating and he even said that "had I been acquainted with this before I left Madras they would not have seen me here".[1] One can certainly understand if not condone the pique of an arrogant representative of the Company at the start of its glory feeling resentful of the protocol of an oriental court. Such feelings were to be experienced throughout the 19th century by other European envoys whose fate it was to undergo the grim ordeal of kowtowing. However in the case of Pybus the King was gracious enough to go out of his way to accommodate him. The courtiers made a point of mentioning this. When he complained about the distance, he was given a house in Kandy. When he complained of weary feet and bemired stockings, he was allowed a palanquin on the Kandyan side, which was a rare privilege. A special Council was appointed for him to spare him the ritual of a Court audience, but Pybus was unmoved. And his manner remained ungracious to the end. One cannot say whether his manner prejudiced the mission but it certainly did not help it.

Seen from the Dutch side the Pybus mission is a cloak and dagger story. It occupied a prominent place in the proceedings of the Dutch Secret Council in 1762 and is therefore well authenticated. The Pybus mission filled the Dutch authorities with alarm for the prospect it opened out of possible British intervention in Ceylon. More than anything else, it was the timing of the mission that caused consternation because the civil war which had been raging in the country made this a singularly unpropitious moment for the Dutch and a favourable one for the British. Besides the initial reports which reached them were grossly exaggarated and made it out that Pybus was really the advance party of an invasion and that an invasion fleet was on the way. The authorities naturally became panic-stricken. However, as no invasion transpired and as the reports both from the Coromandel coast and from the spies in the Kandyan territories started pouring in, the true situation was revealed and the fears subsided. When the truth was known in fact that the mission was a bluff, the attitude towards the King became tougher. The records are ample proof that during the months of June, July and August the Pybus mission gave the Dutch Council many an anxious moment.

The Dutch authorities in Ceylon received their first intimation of the Pybus mission in a letter to them from Christian van Teglingen, Chief of the Dutch station in Negapatam dated 30 April 1762. The letter was tabled and discussed in a Council meeting held on the 28th May 1762.[2] It stated that Teglingen had received news from Jacobus Dormieux, Chief of Pulicat, to the effect that an envoy from the Kandyan Court had arrived at Madras and complained against Dutch

1. Raven-Hart, *Pybus Mission*, p. 60.
2. Paulusz, *Secret Minutes*, p. 88.

rule in Ceylon and was received by the Madras Council with whom he had three meetings. The Council had instructed the envoy to set sail with Admiral Cornish who had accordingly left Madras with four warships under his command to an unknown destination. It was rumoured in English circles that there was a highland regiment on board these ships and that it would spend six months in Ceylon. Among other persons on board was a head servant of Mr. Dupre, described as a crafty knave who had at one time lived in Ceylon and who was now serving on the expedition as an interpreter. In explanation of the length of the stay, the English had stated that it would be to enable the ships to undergo repairs. The report further stated that the English were acquainted with the current situation in Ceylon and beyond all doubt they would seek to make a settlement in Ceylon. The letter confirmed that it was learnt for certain that Pybus, member of the Council, had sailed with the five warships as envoy to the Kandyan court. A copy of this letter was sent instantly by the Council to Martin Rein, senior merchant and Chief of Trincomalee with instructions that he should ascertain the veracity of these reports regarding Pybus and the head servant of Mr. Dupre and should prevent correspondence between the envoy and the Kandyan Court without coming into collision with the English. From a consideration of Teglingen's letter the Council concluded that, in spite of the conciliatory attitude of the Dutch, the Kandyan Court was not disposed to be friendly and still insisted on their claims to the Siyane, Hewagam, Hapitigam and Aluthkuru Korale and Matara Province which they had re-annexed in the recent war and persisted in their request for the right to send two dhonis to the mainland with arecanuts, that the English were intriguing with the Kandyans and fostering the war with the intention of establishing a settlement in the island. The report that there were four Englishmen already at the Court of Kandy and that Cornish's fleet was lying at anchor and that an English infantry major and a captain were on the point of sailing to Madras on a two-masted vessel lent colour to this possibility. The Council decided accordingly that the activities of the British in Ceylon should be opposed and action be taken to impress on the Kandyan King that the Dutch would preserve inviolate their lawfully acquired lands, forts and prerogatives. Accordingly it was resolved by the Council that they should await the reports of the three spies who had been sent to Kandy to decide what further action was necessary. Teglingen was to be instructed to spare no effort to ascertain the designs of the British against Ceylon.

Along with the counter-measures against the Pybus mission, the Dutch adopted a new line of approach in their relations with the Kandyan Court. The Dutch authorities were well informed, through their network of spies, of the state of affairs in the Kandyan Court, of the factional strife prevailing there which had come to a climax with a plot against the King and of how this plot had been virtually drowned in blood by the stern repressive measures of Narenayappar Chettiar.

Even Dumbara Ralahamy the trusted Disawa of the Three and Four Korales had been on the suspect list. Understandably the rebellion had left a legacy of bitterness among the Kandyan chieftains which the Dutch now attempted to exploit. Whether the Kandyan chiefs were in principle opposed to dealings with the British it is difficult to say but to the extent that they were resentful of the King and his Court faction they might have been hostile to policies initiated by the latter and more receptive to the Dutch. That opposition to the King's pro-British policy existed can be seen in retrospect from Dumbara Ralahamy's letter written six months later which the Council discussed at their meeting of 16 January 1763. In that letter Dumbara Ralahamy has quoted a parable to imply that the King was abandoning an old love in favour of a new mistress. This shows that the trusted Disawa himself was unhappy over the King's pro-British policy. However, at the time of the Pybus mission, the Dutch attempted to exploit the disaffection of the Kandyan chieftains through a letter which they addressed to Dumbara Ralahamy inviting the "natural aristocracy of Ceylon to try by every conceivable means to forestall the consequences referred to above".1 They hoped by this means to engineer a court revolution in which the Kandyan faction would overthrow the Nayakkars and gain control of the King, thereby frustrating his pro-British policy and enabling the Dutch to dominate the court. To this end they resorted to communal propaganda in which they taunted the Kandyan chiefs by reminding them of their aristocratic lineage and suggesting that it was an insult for them to be ruled by an alien stock.2

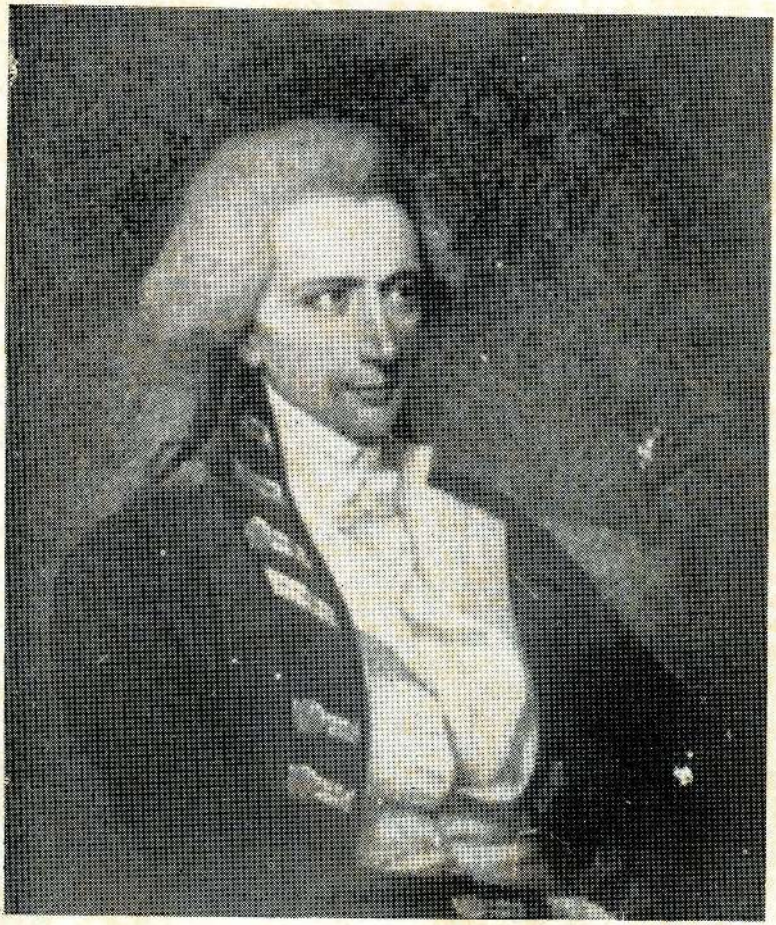
However, simultaneously with these efforts to incite the Kandyan faction against the Nayakkars, the Dutch were also attempting to appease the King. At the Secret Council Meeting held on 16 June it was resolved that "every claim put forward by the Court shall as it were be conceded and the Council shall then not only follow the policy and advice given by the Disawa but shall also conform to the terms of the Ola last received. It was the only experience which would tend towards diverting the Court if possible from all negotiations with the English".3 By acceding to the request of the King which the Disawa of the Three and Four Korales had recommended the Dutch were pursuing an alternative means to strengthen the pro-Dutch Kandyan elements and to win over the King and in the process neutralize the Nayakkar faction. This policy however of having two strings to their bow, of inciting and enticing the Kandyan faction on the one hand in order to use them against the Nayakkars and of placating the monarch on the other, was a diplomatic manoeuvre intended to counteract the British threat. The Dutch themselves

1. Paulusz, *Secret Minutes*, p. 95.
2. Paulusz, *Secret Minutes*, p. 95.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

were doubtful of its success because at the Council Meeting of 16 June 1762 they concluded that whatever had happened His Imperial Majesty would try to promote and strengthen his relations with the English.[1] Accordingly the Council decided to call for reinforcements from Batavia to strengthen the Company's military position in order to oppose the English undertaking and teach a lesson to the Kandyan King.

The reports of the spies, who were despatched on receipt of Teglingen's signal to see the situation in Kandy at first hand, did not help straighten out the confusion that prevailed among the Dutch authorities at this time. The first spy, a Moor Meera Pulle Marikkar Lebbe, reported that he entered Kandy dressed as a Kandyan Moor and had learnt that at the request of the Kandyan King twelve English ships had arrived at a point between Trincomalee and Batticaloa.[2] The report stated that the Commander of the ships had been conducted to the Court on a palanquin but had failed to get an audience with the King because of his refusal to comply with court protocol. He further claimed to have actually seen the Englishman whom he described as a man of tolerable stature and with a very red complexion, who was in the company of two white servants and an islander as cook. They were residing at the house of the lately beheaded Adigar. This reference was to Samarakkody Ralahamy who was executed for being ringleader in the assassination plot. The report of the second spy was brief and confirmed the information in the first report about the place of residence but differed regarding the audience. He stated that Pybus had gained an audience but had been sent back to his lodgings because he had not behaved with becoming respect. The report of the third spy had very little to add, except that he claimed to have got a good look at the Ambassador.[3] This spy had taken up temporary residence in Kandy having entered the Kandyan Kingdom on the pretext of wanting to settle down there to be free of the oppression in the Dutch provinces. He claimed to have seen the Ambassador at his residence on Nagaha Vidiya street, watching and being amused by the tricks performed by some elephants which had been specially brought by two royal keepers to entertain him. One could judge from this story that Pybus had the instincts of a modern tourist visiting Kandy and that the Kandyan authorities, even at that time, were alive to the tourist potential in elephants. The report stated that there were bundles of cinnamon at Pybus's door and this was corroborated by subsequent reports. A later report submitted on 19 July by two Moors sent as spies to Kandy by the Colombo Disawa elaborated on these details in stating that the English Ambassador was "a man of tolerable

1. Paulusz, *Secret Minutes*, p.102.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
3. Paulusz, *Secret, Minutes* p. 109.



HUGH BOYD

Courtesy Director National Museums, Colombo

stature and very reddish complexion, and very brisk in his movements". They had seen him watching a display arranged for his benefit of fighting between elephants, bulls, buffaloes and a certain kind of bird.[1] As regards his dealings with the King this report strikes a fresh note. It stated that by the King's command the Ambassador was publicly presented with seven silver broad swords, a gold ring set with a ruby and four caskets covered over with white linen. Furthermore they had heard that the Ambassador had given the King a notable gift. On the occasion of the presentation of the gift the Ambassador was wearing a plumed hat and a red coat heavily embroidered with lace. Their report on the transaction between the Ambassador and the King was that the King had promised the Ambassador a firm place in the island as well as help and support. The English would in return come to the island after three months with an armada of ships and vessels and the King would support them from the land side with troops and provisions. They further stated that the bulk of the King's common subjects were very much against the King's aforesaid dealings with the British, saying that there was no better nation under the sun to guard the King's shores than the Hollanders. The last report thus differs fundamentally from the earlier one on the crucial point that the negotiations were a success, while the others reported that they had failed. It must have been difficult for the Dutch authorities in view of these conflicting reports to decide exactly what was happening and to know whether their fears were justified. However their anxiety was to be shortlived. At the end of July more information was available which enabled them to see the picture in its correct perspective. In the meantime, while labouring under these fears, the Dutch authorities had taken a series of measures to combat the menace of possible English intervention with Kandyan collusion. One of the first messages to originate locally from within Ceylon appears to have reached the Dutch authorities about 20 June in the form of a report from Chief Officer Rein of Trincomalee to the effect that there was a strong rumour that Moula Mohandiram had been put ashore by the English at Kottiyar along with an Englishman and that Rein himself could not find out anything for certain about them. In these circumstances the Governor decided to send a written protest to the Madras Council and to Admiral Cornish lying at anchor at Trincomalee. At the Council meeting held on 27 June it was resolved that instructions should be sent to Rein to remain thoroughly on the alert during the presence of the English fleet and to the utmost of his power to spy on their undertaking and concentrate especially on intercepting letters that may be exchanged between the Envoy and the Admiral.[2] If means were available the intercepted letter was to be skillfully opened, copied and resealed and failing that they should be forwarded to the Governor.

1. Paulusz, *Secret Minutes*, p. 115.
2. Paulusz, *Secret Minutes*, p. 108.

At this time of suspense and anxiety due to ignorance of what was really taking place and the wild rumours that were rampant, the conduct of Admiral Cornish who was lying off Trincomalee was a source of additional concern. Long boats were being sent by the English fleet to Kottiyar beach to obtain provisions and they had towed into the inner bay a French prize which had been captured during their voyage from Madagascar. Chief Officer Rein protested against this act but the Admiral replied that the boats were sent to obtain provisions and he would only desist if the Dutch authorities undertook to send him supplies; as regards the prize, that he had to bring it into the inner bay and accepted the full consequence of his action. Not having arguments with which to meet the superior logic of force Chief Officer Rein had to remain a helpless observer. However, to save face and gain time until the Trincomalee defences were put in shape the Council instructed Rein to lodge a protest with the Admiral drawing attention to the relevant articles of the Anglo-Dutch Treaties regarding the rights of the English and to courteously intimate to Admiral Cornish that as he had remained long enough to effect whatever repairs might be needed to his ships he might now consider betaking himself elsewhere. If necessary Rein could even specify a limit and, if it was not complied with, he should submit a fresh protest. The instructions regarding quotations from the Treaty cautioned Rein against mis-quotation lest this might prejudice the Dutch case. The articles quoted were as follows:[1]

1. Article 26 from the Articles of Peace, Union and Eternal Confederation concluded on 28 April 1654 between Oliver Lord Protector of the Commonwealth and the States General.
2. Article 25 from the Treaty of Confederation and Friendship concluded on 4 September 1662 between the King of Great Britain and the States General.
3. Article 34 from Articles of Peace and Alliance between Charles II and States General concluded on 31 July 1667.

All these circumstances made the period up to the end of July 1762 an anxious one for the Dutch. It was not one fear alone but many. Admiral Cornish was getting out of hand at Trincomalee, Pybus's whereabouts and intentions were not known, there was the rumour of a big company armada on the way of which Pybus might be a herald. He could presumably be negotiating at that very moment for concerted action between the British and the Kandyans against them. The background of civil war in the island lent credence to this possibility and made the situation urgent. The state of near-panic among the Dutch authorities of which the proceedings of the Secret Council afford glimpses was therefore understandable.

1. Paulusz, *Secret Minutes*, p. 112.

These fears however were imaginary as events were to prove in a short time. The first intimation of the truth came in a letter from Teglingen, the vigilant Chief of Negapatam, in which he stated that the British appeared to have changed their plans about an expedition against Ceylon.[1] The expedition it would appear had been planned on the strength of a report emanating from the Madras Council through Aleppo that an uprising had occurred in Ceylon in which the Dutch had been murdered and the cinnamon uprooted. In the belief that the Company could profit from this situation, instructions had been sent to Brigadier Draper to lead an expeditionary force. On arrival in Madras Draper had realized that the report was false and decided to call off the expedition. The plan according to the report had been that Draper should proceed with five warships and a land force of two thousand troops. Teglingen was not explicit on the status of the plan at that time but he thought that the expedition would in any case proceed to Trincomalee and if on arrival there they found the situation contrary to expectations they would proceed to Manila. The letter from Teglingen is dated 6 July 1762 and it was discussed at a Council meeting held on 31 July 1762. This information was to be the turning point in the situation. The response of the Council to Teglingen's letter was tentative. Not being absolutely sure of the position they ordered maintenance of their vigil all the same to deprive the English of opportunities of contact with the Kandyan Kingdom. They had recourse to the further step of refusing admission to any more British ships to ports and bays in the island. When the Council met on 13 August however the truth was known and they had before them a full picture of the situation from which they could see how baseless was their fear.[2] At the meeting, the Governor announced that positive information had been received through Aleppo that the King of Spain had declared war on British and that Britain was seeking Dutch help under the Treaty. He confirmed that the expedition under Admiral Cornish was on the point of being despatched against Manila. In the light of these developments, the Council reviewed the situation and took the following decisions regarding their future policy:[3]

(a) That for the time being nothing further need be feared from the English.

(b) That the ban against British shipping should be continued in order to convince the King of his abandonment by the British, and to prevent the shipment of cinnamon which had been peeled for the British in the Matara and Sabaragamuwa districts under the King's orders.

1. Paulusz, *Secret Minutes*, p. 118.
2. Paulusz, *Secret Minutes*, p. 125.
3. *Ibid.*

(c) That it should be made clear to the Kandyan Court that the Dutch had no intention of ceding the Siyane, Hewagam, Hapitigam and Aluthkuru Korale and the Matara provinces as requested by the King as they occupied them by right of conquest from the Portuguese.

(d) That they would renew their request for a despatch of an Embassy to the Court of Kandy bearing gifts and a letter from the Governor General of Batavia which would negotiate for a complete settlement of existing differences. That a copy of the letter proposing the Embassy should be sent to the Disawa of the Three and Four Korales. This letter would advise him of the new diplomatic situation in which owing to the Spanish Declaration of war against Britain the latter would be seeking Dutch assistance.

(e) Recommendations should be sent to the Supreme Council at Batavia for firmness over the disputed territories in as much as there was nothing to be feared now from the English. If the Kandyan Court persisted in their claims on these territories the Dutch should refrain from sending the Embassy. They should put it to the King as to whether peaceful methods should be employed or recourse had to war.

The decisions of the meeting and the developments which occasioned it marked the turning point in the situation. The fear of British intervention had proved to be groundless and the initiative was now restored to the Dutch. In fact the declaration of war against Britain by Spain which obliged Britain to be dependant on Dutch goodwill and assistance further ensured that Britain would not pursue any intention she might earlier have entertained of following up the contacts established by the Pybus mission or exploiting the King's difficulties with the Dutch. The Dutch were now free to deal with the King. The change in their policy and demeanour was instantaneous. Only a short time ago under the shadow of this fear their policy had been conciliatory. They had offered to consider the grant of two to three dhonis to the King for mainland trade. This offer was accompanied by gestures like the withdrawal of troops along the Kelani River and of watch-posts from the disputed territories but now with the elimination of the British fear and Britain's engagement in the Spanish War the Dutch were determined to be tough. Their determination was hardened by a desire to punish the King for his dealings with the British. From now on the Dutch appeared set on the course that was to lead to the invasion of Kandy in 1765. The Pybus mission brought home to the Dutch the insecurity of their position in Ceylon in the face of the rise of British power in India.

What one may describe as the *obiter dicta* on the Pybus mission is contained in the minutes of the meeting of 27 November in the Course of which the contents of a letter from Mr. Teglingen to the

Governor were discussed.[1] Teglingen had obtained information directly from Madras that Pybus had been very unhappy over his Kandyan expedition. He had complained bitterly about his privations about being carried blindfolded through forests and mountains and being detained for three days in a closed room before receiving an audience with the King. The reports stated that Pybus had returned from the mission empty-handed achieving nothing besides a present worth thirty pagodas and spices to the value of three hundred to four hundred pagodas. The Council felt ashamed about the episode, of having been duped by a Pagon Prince who had never been in the habit of keeping his word. The letter incorporates a report from Mr. Dormieux, the Chief of Pulicat, who had met Pybus during his visit to Madras to deliver the protest from Colombo. His description of Mr. Pybus was that "he looks so broken in appearance as to be hardly recognisable."[2] These reports were certainly very comforting to the Dutch but they can hardly be squared with the facts as stated by Pybus himself in his account. The usually accurate Teglingen had on this occasion been either misled or indulged in wishful thinking.

The repercussions of the Pybus mission on Kandyan affairs can be seen in a report on Kandyan affairs which was considered by the Council at the same time as the Teglingen Report. This report stated that the King was contemplating a march on Matara in personal command of his armies when he suddenly changed his mind on learning of a setback to Kandyan arms and also presumably on realising that he had been duped by the British. The King had learnt that the British had thrown in their lot with the Dutch and that the English Company had to eat humble pie. The report stated "the English had made a promise under oath that they would never thwart the Hollanders in any way". It further stated that the son of Maula Muhandiram who had been sent by the King to Madras and had returned with Pybus as his companion and interpreter had been clapped in jail by the disappointed King.[3] The King's fortunes were now at a low ebb. He had been cheated by the British in expectation of whose help he had resorted to more hostile measures than he would have normally taken. His offensive too was flagging. The effects of the destruction and the loss of life were being felt in the country. The Dutch, aware of the King's predicament, were preparing their counter-offensive.

From this consideration of the Pybus story seen through the Dutch records and other sources we have now to shift the focus to the position of the Pybus mission Vis-a-vis the Company and the home authorities. It has been seen when discussing the origin of the Pybus mission that it was undertaken on the initiative of the Madras presidency. The

1. Paulusz, *Secret Minutes*, p. 163.
2. Paulusz, *Secret Minutes*, p. 164.
3. Paulusz, *Secret Minutes*, p. 165.

prior authority of the Court of Directors had not been sought or obtained and the first intimation of the mission was conveyed to the secret committee in the Madras Presidency's letter dated 6.4.1762[1] In that letter the mission was justified on the grounds that it was in retaliation against the selfish, monopolistic policy of the Dutch. Its next letter on the same subject was addressed to the Court of Directors on 9. 11. 1762.[2] The letter was apologetic, conscious that the mission had failed and sought to justify the Council's actions. The explanation is that Madras was hoping that, without entering into offensive engagements with the King against the Dutch, it could obtain a footing on the island. Accordingly it had bound Pybus not to conclude anything definite. The Madras Council's attitude towards the Dutch however was less apologetic. In August 1762 the Chief of Pulicat came with a protest from van Eck and the Colombo Council which accused the Company of laying the foundation of a war between the two nations. The Company's reply was to assert its desire for friendship and on the matter of exclusive rights claimed by the Dutch to ask for more proof of the basis of this claim.

The reaction of the Directors became known almost a year later from their reply to the Council's letter of April 1762 which was sent on 9. 3. 1763.[3] This letter which is examined elsewhere urged circumspection but gave tacit approval. The next letter on the subject is dated 30.12.1763, and is in reply to the Company's letter of November 1762.[4] It heartily approves of the Council's action, of the circumspection shown and the latter's relpy to the Chief of Pulicat. The Court proposed to refer the larger question of the monoploy to the conference which was at that time in session to resolve outstanding differences between the Dutch and English Companies. The British Government however took a different view of the Pybus episode. The Foreign Secretary Lord Bute, made it the subject of a sharp reprimand to the Court when it was brought to his notice in representations made by the Dutch Ambassador in London. The British Government at that time was eager to conciliate the Dutch because of the importance of the Dutch alliance to Britain in its continental policy. In this case the Company's actions were prejudicial to the national interest.

The history of the Pybus mission has thus been considered in relation to the parties that were principally concerned with it. These were the Madras Presidency, Pybus himself, the Dutch authorities in Colombo, the Kandyan Court, the Court of Directors and the British Government. In the light of the comparative information thus obtained,

1. Madras to Court, 6. 4. 1742, *Letters from Madras*, 1A.
2. Madras to Court, 9. 11. 1762, *Letters from Madras*, 1A.
3. Court to Madras, 9. 3. 1763, *Letters to Madras*, 2.
4. Same to same, 30. 12. 1763, *Ibid.*

it is possible to place it in its proper perspective and identify its true character. This can be stated very briefly. The Pybus mission was essentially a private enterprise of the Madras Presidency. Its purpose was to obtain information on Ceylon and on the off chance to obtain commercial advantages by exploiting the conflict between the Dutch and the King. It was in the nature of a test case to challenge the Dutch commercial monopoly in Ceylon and reflected the consciousness by the English Company of its growing power. The Dutch authorities initially took panic, fearful that the British were intending either an invasion or to exploit their war with the King to establish a foothold. Pybus for his part had nothing to offer and his instructions were mainly to sound the King. Dutch fears thus proved groundless and besides extraneous events played into their hands. Spain declared war on Britain and Britain had to fall back on her alliance with the Dutch. The English Company had to lose face on account of its rashness and the Court of Directors was rebuked by the English Government. The Company had to abandon its contacts with the King established through the mission and leave him to face the revenge of the Dutch.

CHAPTER III

THE BOYD MISSION

After the Pybus mission of 1762 another twenty years elapsed before the British turned their attention to Ceylon again. Their second venture however was more positive in nature and took the form of a plan to invade the island and despatch a second envoy to the Kandyan court. These actions marked a significant change in British policy towards Ceylon and reflected the changing picture in Europe and Asia during the intervening period. They were the sequel to the War of American Independence and the consequent threat which British had to face from French revanchist designs against her Indian empire. To some extent these events were a reaction to the increasing influence of the Central and Eastern powers in European affairs.[1]

Ever since French ambitions of establishing a colonial empire had been shattered by the British in the Seven years War and in the Peace of Paris which ended it, France which as a result had suffered severe loss of prestige both on the continent and overseas had been awaiting a chance to revenge herself on Britian. This policy of revanche as it has been called was one of the main objectives of the Duc du Choisuel, French Foreign Minister from 1763 to 1777. His policy, the precise objectives of which are still being debated by scholars, appears to have been directed primarily towards strengthening the French economy[2] and her armed forces in readiness for war if one became necessary rather than deliberately seeking one. He embarked on a comprehensive programme for the re-organisation and reform of the French navy which he rightly understood held the key to success over Britain, and for the expansion of trade. Thanks to his efforts the French navy was able, when the test came in 1780, to redeem its disastrous record in the Seven Years War. The emphasis on the navy in prosecuting this

1. *The New Cambridge Modern History*, (Cambridge 1957), Vol. VIII, p. 252.
2. J. F. Ramsey, *Anglo-French Relations* 1765 - 1770 (Berkely 1939), Ch. III.

policy of revenge was based on the strategic consideration that as a result of the Seven Years War, Britain's economy and security had become interdependent on her far flung overseas empire, and rendered her vulnerable to an opponent having superior naval resources who could gain control of the sea-lanes and sever her Communications.

In accordance with these strategic concepts, Choiseul's plan for the French Navy in the event of a war seems to have envisaged a dual operation in which part of it would have remained in home waters and kept the British Navy bottled-up in its ports while another part would venture to America or another overseas theatre and create a diversion. This diversionary operation would oblige the British Navy to rush to the defence of the endangered area, leaving British thereby open to a French invasion[1]. These ideas were put into practice in the War of American Independence with results which were a tribute to Choiseul's uncanny strategic sense.

In the diplomatic field Choiseul renewed interest in the Family Compact, which the Franco Austrian alliance forged by Kaunitz had overshadowed, as a means of promoting French trade and with a view to drawing from Spain's ample colonial territories if the need arose at a future peace treaty His ideas on the subject of this alliance are contained in his paper entitled "Reflections on a war with Britain."[2]

In analysing the origin of the Seven Years war it has been shown how the political situation in Central and Eastern Europe was transformed in the mid-eighteenth century by the emergence of Prussia and Russia. Their advent opened a new era in European history because the rival ambitions of these powers and the problems which these rivalries caused were increasingly to dominate the Eurpoean stage. Diplomatically Europe divided itself into an east and west.[3] In a general way this had a disruptive effect on the traditional patter of European diplomacy based as it was on London, Paris and Vienna and necessitated its readjustment. The advent of new - comers widened the diplomatic circle and complicated relations within it because of the new centres of power and alignments which they created. They introduced fresh horizons and gave an extra European character to European diplomacy and thereby stimulated an expansion in the diplomatic range of Europe which was to result at the end of the 19th century in the spread of its tentacles over the globe.

During this period the rivalry of Austria, Prussia and Russia gave rise to problems like the First partition of Poland, the War of Bavarian Succession, the Russo-Turkish War, all of which were to have

1. Ramsey, *Anglo-French Relations*, Ch. III.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Cambridge Modern History*, p. 253.

a decisive influence on subsequent European history and the interests of the western powers. The Russo-Turkish War, for instance, led to the Treaty of Kutchuk Kainardji in 1776 out of which spring the hydra headed monster of the Eastern Question.[1] In each of these problems the Central and Eastern powers acted in collusion for the furtherance of their ambitions and to the detriment both of the Western powers, which suffered a series of rebuffs, and of the balance of power in Europe as a whole. Their initiative acted as a stimulant to the colonial rivalry between the Western powers. This was at least true of France which was prompted by her adverse experiences on the continent, to focus her attention on her overseas interests, and the prosecution of her revanche against Britain.

The opportunity which France had awaited came with the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1775. The idea of striking a blow at Britain through the American colonies enjoyed popular support in France, because of the enthusiasm which their revolt had created among the French public. In their eyes it was inspired by the ideas of rationalism, of equality and fraternity which the French Encyclopaedists had preached and which were creating an intellectual ferment in France during that period. Besides, the Foreign minister of France at the time was the Comte de Vergennes, who apart from being her ablest diplomat was also well known as a disciple of Choiseul. He shared the latter's antipathy against Britain, which he once described as the "natural enemy of France, greedy, ambitious, unjust and false and always aiming at her ruin."[2] He regarded the revolution as "a singular and unexpected piece of fortune for France."[3] The American revolt in fact should have specially appealed to Vertennes because it created the very situation in anticipation of which Choiseul had laid his strategic plans in pursuance of his revanche against Britain. On the other hand neither Vergennes nor the government wished to intervene openly on behalf of the colonists. Louis XVI was a peace loving monarch only too conscious of the country's financial predicament which the efforts of Maurepas or Turot had been unable to resolve.[4]

Initially France followed a policy of actively conniving with the rebels in apparent disregard of the ideological implications of a despotic state championing a struggle for freedom. This assistance which took the form of supplying the rebel colonists with arms, money and stores in defiance of the British blockade proved invaluable because without it the rebel cause might not have been able to sustain itself during the opening years. In 1777 when the American victory at Saratoga had made it clear which way the tide was turning, France

1. J. A. R. Mariott, *The Eastern Question* (Oxford 1940) pp 128-164.
2. W. F. Reddaway, *The History of Europe*, 1715 - 1814 (Methuen), p. 286.
3. *Cambridge History*, p. 496.
4. *Cambridge History*, p. 496.

formally entered the war on the side of the colonists. Her intervention proved decisive. It was the action of the French fleet at Chesapeake Bay that obliged Yorktown to surrender. French participation in the American war was, however, only a part of an overall design to launch a concerted attack against Britain's overseas empire. The other part of the attack was to be delivered in Asia in the form of a joint military and naval offensive against British possessions in India.

In the meantime the maritime war which Britain was waging against neutral shipping in an effort to enforce her embargo against supplies to the rebel colonists made her the target of hostility of almost every country in Europe. These nations banded themselves together in 1780 under the initiative of Catherine the Great to form the Armed Neutrality which pledged itself to defend the right of neutral shipping. They included Denmark, Sweden, Holland, Prussia, Austria, Naples, Portugal and Russia. It became a case of British against the rest of Europe because although these countries had not taken up arms, their disposition towards her was hostile. This situation led to the declaration of war by Britain on Holland in 1780 which was to prove itself to be the most important of all the circumstances, both European and Asian, responsible for the advent of the British to Ceylon. The events which preceded it, therefore, merit consideration. Following the Peace of Paris of 1763 there was a steady deterioration in Britain's relations with Holland.[1] Even during the Seven Years War had blood had been engendered by Britain's maritime war against Dutch shipping and Holland's insistence on the right of neutral shipping. This created an anti-British climate within Holland which was conducive to French influence and which France took advantage of to ingratiate herself in Dutch favour. They did so by a policy of alternately bullying and bribing the Dutch, holding out prospects of commerical gains on the one hand and threats of trade reprisals on the other. Holland was thus on the horns of a dilemma. The root cause of her predicament really was the diplomatic revolution of Kaunitz which had brought France and Austria together. This had placed Holland in the delicate situation of being precluded from taking sides, most of all against France. The only refuge open to her was a policy of neutrality. No Policy of neutrality can be effective unless it is either recognised by the belligerent parties or the neutral country concerned has the military means to enforce recognition. Holland had neither. On the one hand she had to suffer British depredations on her shipping, and other pinpricks hurtful to her pride, and on the other hand she was becoming increasingly destitute of the means to defend herself.

The organisation of the Country's defences was the responsibility of the Stadtholder, who should have afforded effective leadership in spite of these difficulties but after the restoration of the Stadthol-

1. Edmundson, *History of Holland*, Ch. 24.

derate in 1747 its successive occupants were unequal to the tasks expected of them.

The outbreak of the American Revolution had the same effect on the Dutch which it had on the French. It evoked a wave of sympathy among them for the colonists. It reminded them of their old struggle for independence against the Hapsburgs. The intellectual climate in the country was also receptive to the ideas on which the revolution was based.[1] The ideas of the French Encyclopaedists were in vogue in Holland at the time. The practical effect of the Revolution was that it renewed the maritime war with Britain, with an even greater bitterness and severity than before. St. Eustatious and Curacoa became the centres of a flourishing trade in contraband with the rebel colonists. In addition to the usual seizure of Dutch shipping, which bore particularly hard on Amsterdam, the British Government brought pressure through York its Ambassador whose overbearing nature well suited him to the task. The increasing trade reprisals and other provocative acts committed by Britain combined with the influence exerted by France which had entered the war in 1778 pushed the Dutch into joining the armed neutrality against her. War between Holland and Britain was now inevitable and the formal declaration of war was made by Britain in 1780. The immediate casus belli however was the interception by Britain of papers relating to secret negotiations conducted between the Amsterdam Regents and the American representatives in Paris. Franklin and Lee in 1778. The disruption in Anglo-Dutch relations in Europe produced repercussions on their relations in Asia which will be considered in detail later. Its effect in short was that the Dutch territorial possessions became in the eyes of Britain potential bases for use by the French in the prosecution of their designs against her overseas empire. The considerable strategic importance of these bases to Britain's security in India made their acquisition by the British and their denial to the French a matter of utmost importance.

At this time when Britain was fighting a losing battle for her American colonies and was pitted against a European coalition and when the European war itself was spreading into Asia and threatening her Indian empire with a French invasion, the British East India Company was in the throes of a serious crisis. The complicated events in India during this period can be summed up by saying that they represented the stages by which Britain became the paramount power in India. This process happened by an inevitable logic of its own rather than by any deliberate design for conquests on the part of the East India Company. One event led to another to thrust power at times on unwilling hands. The steps by which Britain became the ruler of Bengal is an epitome of the process as a whole. The period

1. R. R. Palmer, *Age of the Democratic Revolution* (Oxford 1964), Vol. 1, Ch. VII.

between 1763 and 1784 witnessed two stages in this process—namely the assertion of the British East India Company as the paramount European power in India, and the gradual assertion of the Company as the paramount political power in India. The peace of Paris of 1763 had established the paramountcy of the British Company over its European rivals in India. For the time being French power had been shattered and the influence of the Dutch had been virtually eliminated in Bengal. However, the French were still a power to be reckoned with.[1] Within India itself they still controlled a network of stations, but their potential strength lay in the large number of adventurers, traders, soldiers of fortune and advisers throughout India engaged in various activities working towards and looking forward to the return of French power. As will be seen in a later chapter, the French Government was under a constant barrage of ideas and projects from these expatriates who, by their pressures, kept the idea of an Indian Empire alive in the minds of the Government. The presence of these Frenchmen in large numbers, and holding key positions, was a subversive threat to the British Company, in that they were engaged in intrigues with a view to setting up native rulers against the British when not against each other. What is more they were ready material that could be used in the event of a resumed offensive by the French.

Outside India the French had a strong position which was in some respects even superior to that of the British.[2] Their headquarters at Mauritius had been transformed by the labours of La Bourdonnais and a succession of energetic Governors into one of the best naval bases in that region. The only comparable base on the British side was Bombay, but being on the western side of India it was not in a position to cope with problems on the eastern side where the real concentration of the British Company was located. There was one other naval base in this area, namely Trincomalee but that was in the neutral hands of the Dutch. The French base in Mauritius was a standing threat to Britain's security to meet which there was as yet no corresponding means at Britain's disposal. This threat materialized in 1782 when the great expeditionary force under Bussy assembled at Mauritius and when the assault force under Suffren that would give it naval cover was launched from there. The possibility that this armada would connect with Ceylon was the main consideration that prompted Macartney to give priority to the campaign against the French and Dutch, and to send Boyd to forestall any diplomatic approaches by the French to the Kandyan King. The failure of Bussy's expedition and the dogged resistance offered by Hughes to Suffren's onslaught saved the day and foiled the second major effort of the French to pursue imperial ambitions in India.

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1. S. P. Sen, *The French in India*, 1763 - 1816 (Calcutta 1958), Chs. V - VII.
2. C. N. Parkinson, *War in the Eastern Seas*, (London 1964), pp. 14-20.

The Peace of Paris of 1763 and the Peace of Paris of 1784 terminated the purely European part of the struggle. They decided the question of supremacy as between the European powers on the Indian scene. The real struggle however was still to come and this was the contest between the British Company and the native powers in India. The end of the European struggle merely paved the way for the local struggle. This was to last for several decades. It began as a struggle for survival but it ended as a struggle for domination. The background to the struggle was that, until the middle of the 18th century, India was under the sway of the Mughal Empire.[1] The foreign stations, which had been established in various parts of India during the 17th century were theoretically guests, occasionally unwelcome guests, residing in India and conducting their trading activities under official firmans issued by the great Mughal. With the dissolution of the Mughal Empire, during the first part of the 18th century, the political system was reduced to a state in which each unit had to fend for itself to survive. The more adventurous exploited the situation to expand. With the breakdown of Mughal authority, local rulers declared themselves independent of their suzerain and others carved out kingdoms for themselves. In the first phase the European and native power struggle became merged with each other. The French set the example of exploiting it to further their own ambition and the British retaliated in self-defence by copying the same technique. The upshot of this was the destruction of the French. That left the stage free for the final round between the British and the native powers.

The struggle during this period occurred in three theatres—in western India against the Marathas, in southern India against Hyder Ali and in Bengal against the Nawab of Bengal, the shadow Mughal Emperor and the Nawab of Oudh.[2] In each case Britain was pitted against one of the foremost and most formidable native powers of the day in India. The Marathas were the great Maratha confederation that had defied the Mughals and contributed to their downfall. But for their defeat by Abdali at Panipat and if not for setbacks in their own fortunes they might have been the supreme rulers of India. Hyder Ali was one of the great adventurers of history who had made himself a formidable power in the south. In Bengal there were the vestiges of the Mughal power to contend with. It was an arduous, protracted and exhausting struggle and one which was fought on many fronts and against more than one adversary at the same time. The theatre that was of immediate interest for its important bearing on Ceylon was the struggle in south India and in Bengal which since the Regulating Act of 1774 had become the headquarters of the Company's power in India. In South India, Britain was surrounded and con-

1. Vide Allan, Haig & Dodwell, *Cambridge Shorter History of India*, pp. 532-562, and *Cambridge History of India* (Cambridge 1929), Vol v. Ch. vi.

2. Nilakanti Sastri, *History of India*, Part III (Madras 1952), pp. 171-181.

fronted by a welter of states each nominally independent and resentful of each other and of the British. These were the Nawab Mohamed Ali of the Carnatic, the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Rajahs of Tanjore and Travancore, who were the suzerains of the Polygar, the Zamorin of Calicut and of course the redoubtable Hyder Ali of Mysore. Hyder Ali was an illiterate parvenu who usurped the throne of Mysore and by his energy and resourcefulness rose to be the terror of South India and the chief antagonist of the British. To defend itself the Company had to play off one ruler against the other and as is inevitable with such a policy it drew the Company deeper into entanglements. The Company's position was not helped by the bad reputation it had earned both for its shifty diplomatic dealings with the native powers and the conduct of the internal administration in Madras which had besmirched itself with scandals like the affair of the Nawab of Arcot's debts, the activities of Paul Benfield and the personal conduct of the Governors, two of whom were dismissed by the Directors.[1]

The war with Hyder Ali started in 1767 but peace was concluded in 1768. The second eruption of Hyder was more serious and occurred in 1780 when his horsemen poured into the Carnatic Plains through the pass of Changama cutting to pieces the detachment of Baillie and sending Munro the hero of Buxar scampering for shelter behind the walls of Madras. Arcot beseiged by Tipu fell in October 1780. Hyder's forces were to ravage the Carnatic Plains for four years. Madras was in a dither but fortunately for it Warren Hastings came to the rescue and sent the great General Coote. His arrival arrested the deterioration but not entirely, as his performance was inconsistent.[2] He raised the seige of Wandiwash but was repulsed with heavy loss at Chidambram. He was victorious at Porto Novo but the next engagement at Polillur was indecisive. His only decisive victory was at Shollingar in July 1781. However, Hyder Ali proved himself an elusive adversary whose slippery tactics exhausted Coote and tied up in knots his long baggage trains, floundering in the thirsty Carnatic Plains. Madras, at the instance of Macartney, planned to use the respite after Sholingar for an expedition against the Dutch in Ceylon. The delay to capture Negapatam, Hyder Ali's reappearance in Tanjore and the clash between Macartney and Coote over strategy upset plans for this expedition on the scale which Macartney had intended. Hyder Ali died in December 1782 and was succeeded by his son Tipu who extended operations into the West, while Bussy landed at Cuddalore. Mangalore fell to Tipu in January 1784 but peace was concluded shortly after with the Treaty of Mangalore.

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1. Thompson and Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British power in India* pps. 98-115.

2. See Col. H. C. Wylly, *Life of Sir Eyre Coots*. (Oxford 1922) Chs. XIII, XIV & XVI & E. W. Sheppard, *Coote Bahadur*, (London 1956).

The outbreak of war between Britain and Holland in 1781 naturally brought Ceylon within the ambit of the conflict which Britain was waging on the Indian mainland. Until then Ceylon had been comparatively unaffected by these events, which were to ultimately shape her own destiny. In fact parallel with these events in the neighbouring subcontinents, Ceylon had an internal conflict of her own namely, that between the Kandyan King and the Dutch. In 1760 this became a full scale war, when the King took advantage of uprisings in the Dutch provinces to invade the latter. His armies were initially victorious but the strain proved too great and the King had to appeal to the East India Company for help. The latter responded with the Pybus mission. After the Pybus mission the fortunes of the Kandyan King deteriorated. In order to punish the King for his dealings with the British, the Dutch in 1765 launched an expedition against Kandy which sacked and occupied the city. Disaster however struck the expeditionary force after this initial success, as it became beleagured in Kandy owing to the guerilla attacks of the Kandyans and van Eck returned to Colombo disappointed, to die a few days later. The Kandyans however were too exhausted to press home their attacks as they were wont to in the past, and the King sued for peace. The result was the treaty of everlasting friendship between the King and the Dutch, which was signed on 14 February 1766. The terms of this treaty are important for its subsequent bearing on the position of the British in Ceylon. The treaty confirmed the sovereignty of the Dutch over their existing positions and the coastal territories of the island which comprised the disawanis of Matara, Galle, Colombo, Jaffna, the districts of Kalpitiya, Mannar, Trincomalee and Batticaloa. In addition, to link up the coastal territories and round off their control of the seaboard, the Dutch were allowed a coastal strip "the breadth of one Sinhalese mile inland more or less as a situation of the hills and rivers permit". In return the Company undertook to pay a sum equivalent to the revenue that these territories would have yielded. Commissioners from the two parties were to delimit the new boundaries and make the necessary financial arrangements. The Dutch recognised the sovereignty of the King over the rest of Ceylon and agreed to restore to him territories captured in the recent war. The Kandyans were allowed unhindered access to the salt pans of Hambantota and Puttalam and the right of free collection. The Dutch were permitted to peel cinnamon without hindrance in the regions below the mountains while in the areas east of Balana the Kandyans had to deliver cinnamon solely to the Company at five pagadas per bale of eighty eight rounds. The Kandyan export trade in ivory, pepper and cardamoms, coffee, arecanuts and wax was absorbed by the Company to whom these commodities were to be delivered at agreed prices. Subjects from either side would enjoy freedom of trade in each other's territories. The Company was made the sole supplier of foreign goods needed by the King, who would supply the Company's requirements of timber from Batticaloa and

Trincomalee. Runaway slaves and fugitive criminals were to be extradited to the respective governments. The Company engaged to protect Kandy against foreign invasions for which purpose the King would afford men and supplies. In return for this protection the King was debarred from making treaties and from having correspondence with other European nations. Deserters or other European nationals entering Kandyan territory had to be surrendered to the Dutch. Contracts with native princes prejudicial to the Dutch were disallowed. The Dutch on their side would not conclude any agreements prejudicial to the Kandyans. There were to be mutual embassies to make arrangements regarding salt, dried fish and cinnamon. The King was to waive the humiliating frustrations required of Dutch Ambassadors.

The Colombo Disawa was sent to Hangurankete to obtain the King's signature but up to the last moment the chiefs tried to assert their power. In deference to their pressures and in acknowledgement of their help, Falck had suggested that a clause against the Nayakkars should be put in the treaty but the chiefs thought this unwise. Falck then gave an alternative instruction that the Disawas could be co-signatories to the treaty but the King would not agree to this. The history of this humiliating treaty is a glaring instance of the machinations of the chiefs and their efforts to undermine the King.[1]

The significance of the 1766 treaty is that it gave legal recognition to the position of the Company in Ceylon. In reality it merely acknowledged a fait accompli as the Dutch already enjoyed de facto control of the territories ceded to them. In fact the political and economic pressure which they had applied on the King through their hold on these territories had been the cause of the recurring tensions between the Dutch and the King. The unique feature of the treaty is that for the first time the King formally acknowledged the Dutch as co-ruler in the island. To that extent it represents the high water mark of Dutch power in Ceylon. The Company received as a matter of right everything they had claimed during their occupation in the island. The enforcement of the treaty, however, proved a practical impossibility owing to the non-compliance of the King with its provisions and his resort to the same evasive methods that were practised by his predecessors to circumvent their obligations. Within a few years of the treaty tension between the two was resumed but with a difference. The Dutch were no longer beholden to the King or at his mercy for the supply of their trade commodities. On the contrary it was the King who was their prisoner, dependent on the Company for supplies and for export trade. He was cut off from communications with the outside world and hence unable to solicit foreign intervention. However, the King in a desperate bid to break through his confinement attempted to communicate with the French, but his letter was inter-

1. Perera, *History of Ceylon*, I, pp. 175 - 176.

cepted by Pilima Talauwa who informed the Dutch. Van de Graff contemplated the despatch of an expedition to Kandy to punish the King for these dealings but Batavia recoiled from the idea.

It was at this stage of resumed tension between the King and the Dutch that the Anglo-Dutch war intervened which extended the European war in Asia into Ceylon. The acquisition of Ceylon became a strategic necessity to Britain in the context of the danger of a French invasion in India. In view of his strained relations with the Dutch it was natural for the British to think that the King would automatically become their ally. They were justified in this belief by the precedent of the overtures which Kirti Sri had made to them in 1762 for help against the Dutch. The Company now hoped that as Kirti Sri was still the King, he might yet be of the same mind. In this background the idea of sending a mission to the King suggested itself to the Company. It appears to have originated in the mind of Sir Edward Hughes who suggested to Macartney that, as there was trouble subsisting between the Dutch and the King of Kandy, he should send an able negotiator to the Prince.[1] Macartney accepted the proposal saying that he agreed with Hughes "on the propriety of sending a gentleman of ability to negotiate and shall take care to appoint one for that service who will be perfectly agreeable to you".[2] Macartney followed up by announcing the appointment of the envoy in a communication in which he revealed his plan in full.[3]

> "As Edward Hughes intends to attack Trincomalee and as the arrival of troops under Medows may enable us to take further enterprise against the Dutch in the island of Ceylon, the President had judged it proper that a gentleman of ability should be sent on the part of the Company to negotiate with the King of Kandy and conciliate him to our interest. We accordingly appointed Mr. Boyd a gentleman whose knowledge and capacity renders him well qualified for such a commission and furnished him with instructions for guidance and a letter and presents for the King of Kandy."

The contents of this communication and timing of the mission thus makes it clear that the Boyd mission was intended to be auxiliary to a major plan of Macartney for the reduction of the Dutch territories in South India and Ceylon.[4] The details and history of this plan shall therefore be considered as it provides the setting to the Boyd

1. Hughes to Macartney 6. 10. 1761, *Proceedings of the Select Committee of Fort St. George* 1781 - 1785, British Museum add Mss 22416.
2. Macartney to Hughes, 10, 10, 1781, *Select Com.* 22416.
3. Macartney to Court of Directors 16. 10. 1761, *Letters from Madras*, and love, *Old Madras*, Vol. III, p. 237.
4. *Home Miscellaneous*, Vol. 161, 1.0.

mission. The plan to capture the Dutch settlements, originated from the home government because Lord Macartney brought with him, instructions to this effect when he arrived as Governor of the Madras Presidency.[1] The first move in this direction was made by Hughes when on hearing of the outbreak of war between Britain and Holland he instituted a naval blockade of Negapatam and Trincomalee. Simultaneously Company forces were sent against Sadras and Pulicat which surrendered. Macartney, however, had a plan of his own to implement his orders, which was ambitious in scope and reflected his flamboyant and imperious disposition. As a first step he wanted to make peace with Hyder Ali in order that Madras could concentrate on the reduction of the Dutch settlements.[2] Since peace overtures were being made at that moment to the Marathas, Macartney hoped that if these negotiations were successful the Bombay forces would be available to attack Dutch possessions on the Western coast. Macartney does not appear to have ascribed such importance to the war against the native states. His views on this subject were that "the overthrow of the Indian princes was a lesser object of national policy than advantages over European enemies".[3] Pursuant to his peace plans, Macartney addressed a letter to Hyder Ali offering an honourable termination of the war which the latter rejected with the words "Whatever you may judge most proper and best that you will do. I depend upon the favour of God for my succours."[4]

Macartney's plan of operation against the Dutch was originally limited in its objective, to the capture of their possessions on the Coromandel coast and Trincomalee. However in October he amplified this into a grandiose project for the capture of all the Dutch settlements in Ceylon. This change was prompted by intelligence which he received from Commander Johnstone through a packet despatched from the Cape on board the *Active* to the effect that having desisted from an attack on the Cape, part of the expedition under the command of General Medows was on its way east.[5] Hughes on receipt of this information sought instructions from the Council regarding the disposal of these troops. He inquired whether they were to be employed on the Malabar or the Coromandel coast. Hughes' own suggestion was that a part of it under Captain Alms should be instructed to join him with three ships of the line. When the matter was discussed in the Council opinion was divided, several members being of the view that the proper use of the reinforcements should be for a diversionary attack against Dutch settlements along the Malabar coast. They

1. Love, *Old Madras*, Vol. 111 p. 237.
2. Wylly *Coote*, p. 256.
3. Macartney to Court, 29. 10. 1781, *Home Misc.* Vol. 246, ff. 403.
4. Wylly, *Coote*, p. 257.
5. Report of the Select Committee, 30. 10. 1781, para 50, *Letters from Madras* 10.

thought that this would serve the double purpose of preventing collusion between Hyder Ali and the Dutch who had concluded a mutual defence treaty and oblige Hyder's withdrawal from the South to defend his western territories.[1] They really voiced the opinion of the military authorities who regarded Hyder Ali as their principal enemy in South India and feared that any diversion of the Company forces against the Dutch settlements in Ceylon would expose the Coromandel coast to Hyder Ali and tempt him to cross the Coleroon. This fear was well founded because the army knew from bitter experience how elusive and redoubtable a foe Hyder Ali had proved himself to be. Even Hughes subscribed to the view that the object of the diversionary attack should be Mangalore.[2] The Council however finally decided in favour of Macartney's amplified project believing that it also accorded with the wishes of the court in terms of their instructions to Macartney.[3] In conveying this decision to Sir Edward and to the Court of Directors Macartney unfolded his plan in the following erms which should be quoted in full because of their importance.[4]

> "All our instructions imply a hope in the Court of Directors that we should scarcely leave the Dutch a footing in the East. The effort to have a peace with the Marathas give hope of relief from that theatre. It may enable Goddard to make diversions in other theatres in Hyder's country on the Malabar coast and draw him away from the Coromandel coast. Treaties with Poona and with Hyderabad will eventually curb Hyder's action. These considerations lead one to think that the great reinforcements now on the way should be employed to some great and paramount purpose for the Company. Nothing offers so certain to effectuate or so solid on its advantage or indeed so essential in its possessions in Bengal or Coromandel as well as necessary for His Majesty's fleet in India as the possession of the whole coast of Ceylon. After the conquest of that most useful and desirable island to be undertaken before it will receive and formidable reinforcements, there will still be time next session to proceed against Mangalore. And if we shall be at peace with India powers, a part of your squadron with a few land forces might soon go from Ceylon to Batavia where the easy destruction of the island of Onroost and the capture of the chief navy and trade of the Dutch Company would give that nation a fatal blow and secure to us the promise of power in this part of the world."

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1. *Home Misc.*, Vol. 161. f. 313.
2. Hughes to Macartney, 4. 10. 1781, *Select Com.*, 22417.
3. Select Com. to Court, 30. 10. 1781, para 50, *Letters from Madras* 10.
4. Madras to Court, 22.10.1781, *Select Com.*, 22417.

In accordance with this decision the Council took the further step by authorising a division in the military command between Sir Eyre Coote who was charged with the conduct of the war in the Carnatic, and Lord Macartney, who was entrusted with the operations south of the Coleroon, which included any other plans to be carried in its execution in concert with sea forces.[1] Macartney thus became virtually Commander-in-Chief in the field of operations against the Dutch possessions. This decision of the Council when conveyed to the Court of Directors met with their strong disapproval on the grounds that it was an indignity to the Commander-in-Chief and that in principle such power ought seldom to be entrusted to the hands of an individual.[2]

The success of Macartney's plan against Ceylon whether as restricted in its original form to the capture of Trincomalee only or after its amplification depended on the earliest possible capture of Negapatam. The responsibility for this important task fell on Colonel Braithwaite who commanded the forces in Tanjore. The necessity for the early capture of Negapatam, had been impressed upon Braithwaite by the Council at the beginning of August, when Hughes drew the latter's attention to its importance.[3] However as no action was taken by Braithwaite, the Council repeated its instructions at the end of August, and again at the end of September exhorting him to proceed against Negapatam in preference to any other enterprise.[4] Braithwaite however was occupied with other diversionary operations, and at the end of September he horrified the Council with the announcement that he had engaged Hyder Ali's army in Tanjore as he thought that Negapatam could not be taken. Hughes' reaction on hearing the news shows the dismay which it caused,[5] viz:

> "Our views had been so invariably aimed at the reduction of Negapatam as an event of last importance to an officer that no advantage to be obtained over the enemy could compare with our disappointment to find that Braithwaite has been diverted from it by any other pursuit."

The Council immediately relieved Braithwaite of his command and replaced him with General Munro, but by then the damage was done.[6]

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1. *Home Misc.*, Vol. 246. f. 403.
2. Court to Select Com. 28.8.1872. para 3, *Letters to Madras*. 10.
3. Hughes to Select Com., 3. 7. 1781, *Letters from Madras* 10.
4. Select Com. to Braithwaite, 20.8.1781, *Ibid.*
5. Hughes to Select Committee 20. 8. 1781, *Letters from Madras* 10.
6. Select Com. to Court, 30.11. 1781, *Letters from Madras* 10. and Love, *Old Madras*, Vol. III, p. 241.

Two vital months had been wasted which could have made all the difference to Macartney's plans. Ironically enough Munro himself was no hero in the eyes of the Court of Directors, who had at that very moment sent an order dismissing him.

Munro's appointment as the new Commander coincided with the moment when Macartney had finally decided to include all the Dutch settlements in Ceylon within the scope of his operations. It is curious to find that even Coote, who was later to become Macartney's bitter foe, originally gave Macartney's plan his guarded approval, stating that he fully endorsed the decision to employ troops on the Coromandel coast and that he considered the Malabar coast had been overestimated "viewing the island of Ceylon as an object of utmost national importance".[1]

Macartney's instructions to Munro when he assumed his command emphasised that the reduction of Negapatam should be his main objective which should be achieved with the assistance of Admiral Hughes before the onset of the monsoons.[2] After the reduction of Negapatam he was to assist Hughes in the capture of Trincomalee and of any other places in the island that he may judge it prudent to attack. All places thus procured should be adequately provided with garrisons for their defence. In this connection he apprized Munro of the Boyd mission stating that its object was to negotiate with the King of Kandy and "conciliate him to our interest".[3] Macartney expressed the hope that "he will consent to furnish provisions for troops that may remain in any place that may fall to our arms or fortifications should be demolished". Munro unlike his predecessor was quick to respond to his instructions. He made an auspicious start with a successful opening action at Nagore. He then assaulted Negapatam which fell in November after a defence which in the words of Macartney "was more spirited than we expected". This proved that Braithwaite's caution was not unjustified. Announcing this victory to Holland who was the resident at Hyderabad, Macartney stated that the fall of Negapatam would oblige Hyder Ali to leave the south as his situation there had become untenable.[4] Besides, he added, it effectively blocked the hope of naval assistance from France, and it would further enable troops to be spared for the assault on Trincomalee and other Dutch possessions in the island. Macartney anticipated that the assault on the coastal territories would be followed "by the conquest of the whole island with the assistance of part of the large reinforcements which are expected from Europe".

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1. Coote to Macartney 11. 10. 1781, *Select Com.* 22416.
2. Macartney to Munro., 11. 10. 1781, *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. Macartney to Holland 23, 11. 1781, *Select Com.*, 22471.

The fall of Negapatam was the signal for Macartney to launch his major operations against Ceylon. He confirmed this in a letter to President Hornby in which he stated that "the Admiral's intention is to proceed immediately to the reduction of Trincomalee and after that we are not without hope of his making a very considerable impression upon the coast of Ceylon especially if the squadron from England should join us here in time".1 According to this letter it would be seen that Macartney had planned the invasion as a joint action in which Hughes would lead an assault on Trincomalee while an expeditionary force under Munro would attempt the conquest of the rest of the Dutch possessions. This force was to consist of Munro's southern army, now released after the fall of Negapatam from its vigil against Hyder Ali, and the troops under Medows that were expected. By the middle of November, preparations were under way for Hughes' departure but so were the difficulties. At first there was bad weather; heavy rain and winds prevented Hughes from even embarking his seamen. Next there was a shortage of troops which was the subject and continuous complaints by Hughes. He was assigned the tenth battalion under Captain Scott, consisting of 733 men, but it was without any European officers at all and in Sir Edward's words they would be very unequal to its defence when the squadron leaves. He made an immediate request for officers for the battalion and for half a Company of European artillery men with gunpowder and muskets.2 In January 1782 even this battalion deserted on receipt of orders to sail and was replaced by a small detachment under Captain Bonneveaux which consisted of one lieutenant, one ensign, four hundred and twenty sepoys, and comprising a total of five hundred and six men. It was drawn from the rabble of all the companies that had fought in Negapatam and included two hundred coolies. Sir Edward's estimate of his fighting material was that very little service could at first be expected from such a rabble, however useful they may be made by discipline.3

In the meantime, the plan to despatch a supporting expedition which was expected to act in conjunction with Sir Edward failed to materialise. This was due to a number of unforeseen factors, the most important of which was the unexpected return of Hyder Ali to Tanjore. This was fatal to the proposed Southern expedition under Munro in that it made it impossible for him as the officer responsible for the Southern Command to leave Tanjore or even to spare troops for it. As a result the expedition had to be abandoned. In fact at the time of Hyder Ali's appearance, Munro was in the midst of preparations for the expedition and was about to send a force to occupy Jaffna

1. Macartney to Hornby, 24.11.1781, *Ibid.*
2. Hughes to Macartney, 19. 11. 1781, *Select Com.*, 22417.
3. Hughes to Macartney, 1. 1. 1782, *Select Com.*, 22418.

as a prelude to Sir Edward's attack on Trincomalee and to forestall any attempt on it by the French. Another equally crippling setback was that the expected reinforcements under Meadows failed to arrive. The fleet in which they were being transported was scattered by bad weather and unable as a result to reach India in time.

Macartney's invasion thus came to naught, deprived as he was of the forces required for its execution. The abandonment of this of project meant, among other things, that Sir Edward's capture of Trincomalee became an isolated operation and Boyd's mission a futile exercise in that he had no "brief" in the sense that the purpose of his mission was to conclude a defensive alliance with the King in return for the latter's assistance to the British force.

The failure of this invasion plan was of course due to factors outside Macartney's control but he himself should bear part of the blame for conceiving of so ambitious an enterprise without having the necessary resources at his disposal. The military authorities as we have seen were opposed to the Ceylon invasion as it would distract them from the war in the Carnatic against Hyder Ali whom they regarded as their chief enemy. Even Sir Edward was not in favour of extending military operations beyond Trincomalee for fear that it would strain his resources and limit his freedom of manoeuvre. Macartney however persisted with his plans even to the extent of sacrificing the Trincomalee expedition in that but for his preoccupation with them he might have ensured that Sir Edward was provided with better troops. Trincomalee in that case could have held out against the French and might conceivably have remained British in the peace treaties. Macartney however thought that it was his mission to destroy the Dutch empire in Asia, that being in fact his particular charge according to the division of the command but in attempting a task for which he lacked the ready resources, he had to forego the things which he might have achieved with success.

The question of whether if the invasion was launched it would have been successful is itself a matter of doubt. It would have been difficult for Sir Edward to afford it naval cover, and were it successful, to continue to protect the English conquests in the face of the imminent conflict with Suffren. Sir Edward would then have been obliged to divide his attention between Madras and Ceylon. One cannot also speak with any certainty about the degree of resistance of which the Dutch would have been capable and if their performance at Trincomalee was a guide it would have been trifling. On the other hand the Dutch Governor Falck was not a man to be underrated, as the preparations which he made on the landside to retrieve Trincomalee and his correspondence with Suffren indicated. It is not likely that the King could have afforded much help because of the anti-British temper

of the Court and the losses which he himself had sustained in the recent war. When all these circumstances are considered one cannot think that the expedition would have had an easy time or that the prevailing circumstances were favourable to it.

The expedition against Trincomalee in the meantime disembarked on the 4th and 5th of January and on the 5th evening the fort was taken by surprise. Ostenberg was taken by assault on the 11th. Meanwhile the Company's envoy, Boyd, had arrived on the scene and disembarked in Trincomalee on 8th January, 1782. He was, therefore, ashore when Ostenberg was captured. His instructions were contained in a letter addressed to him by Macartney and may be summarised as follows.1 He was to negotiate with the King and "conciliate him to our interest". He was to observe every form of ceremony enjoined on an envoy, and impress on the King the Company's good faith and sincere desire to cultivate his friendship. He had to convey the Company's desire to enter into a specific treaty of alliance having for its basis the general interest of all parties. Under that treaty the Company would assist the King to vindicate his rights and guard him against attacks. If the King was well disposed, Boyd had to ascertain his terms and transmit them to Madras for approval. Should Trincomalee or any other place fall, the King's assistance should be sought to supply the troops with provisions. Harmony between the Company and the inhabitants was to be promoted and the latter won over by tender treatment.

The burden of the instructions was that a defence treaty should be concluded between the Company and the King in which in return for military assistance against the Dutch, the King would furnish the British troops left behind in the island with provisions. Of particular interest was the admonition regarding conformity to local customs and treatment of the inhabitants. The memory of Pybus's behaviour and his arrogance must have inspired these words of caution. The Company did not want the mission jeopardized by the personal prejudices of the emissary. The reference to tender treatment presumably applied to Boyd in his capacity as the Company's agent for Trincomalee to which he was appointed by Macartney.2 The tenor of the instructions shows that the Company was intent on inveigling the King into their confidence by playing up his grievances against the Dutch and by the promise of British assistance to vindicate his rights. The stress was on a psychological approach to the King. This was to take the form of flattering his vanity through compliance with customs and ceremonies, of impressing the good faith of the Company and of giving assurances of its readiness to redress his grievances and protect him. It was the very opposite of the approach adopted by Pybus

1. Macartney to Boyd, 12.10.1781, *Select Com.*, 22418.

2. Macartney to Boyd, 13.10.1781, *Select Com.*, 12241.

whose business it was to probe the King's mind to keep him guessing and to lure him with false promises. In contrast, the Boyd mission was a straight forward one. Its terms of reference were clear cut and easy to execute provided of course that the King was of the same mind as he had been in the time of Pybus. The instructions indeed had been especially designed for Kirti Sri who was King at the time they were drafted. To that extent it was unfortunate for the mission that Kirti Sri was not there to receive it. Perhaps if they were drafted for Rajadi Rajasinghe a different line of approach might have been adopted. Besides the instructions were intended to suit the particular situation which faced Kirti Sri in 1781. He was then literally at the mercy of the Dutch as a result of the 1766 treaty and to him in particular as the one ruler who had defied the Dutch with some measure of success, this must have been a humiliating situation. He might have been disposed therefore to clutch at the British offer depending of course on whether or not the Pybus mission still rankled in his mind. His death in a riding accident was therefore most untimely for the British. It would be useful at this juncture to acquaint oneself with the background of the person selected for the mission. Hugh Boyd came to India in 1781 along with Lord Macartney in the capacity of an Official Secretary.[1] His appointment in this capacity was the climax of an interesting if somewhat inglorious career. In fact among the personalities associated with Ceylon during the beginnings of Britain's advent, Boyd can be classed with Hugh Cleghorn and Frederick North for colourfulness of character and antecedents. Hugh Boyd was a scion of aristocratic Irish lineage, being the second son of a distinguished Irish judge who later became a member of Parliament. On the death intestate of his father Boyd prepared himself for the legal profession but forsook it for a literary career in the course of which he acquired many influential friends, cultivated celebrities like Goldsmith and Sheridan, patronized literary salons and became quite a popular figure in Augustan society and was even suspected of being the notorious Junius. Chronic financial want however drove him to gambling and dissipation, robbed his talented life of its rich promise and forced him to accept a sinecure in India which was arranged by a friend, Macleane, who was the agent of the Nawab of the Carnatic and had influence with Lawrence Sullivan. It was thus that India and Ceylon came to have the pleasure of the acquaintance of Hugh Boyd and a taste of Augustan manners. Boyd's choice as secretary was by no means a bad one. In spite of his personal failings he had outstanding abilities certainly above those of his Company colleagues. He had breeding, learning and manners. In a brilliant society he was able to hold his own and perhaps even excel over his contemporaries. That he was no fraud but a true exemplar of Augustan culture is authenticated by the style and elegance of his diction. His literary conceits may look a trifle

1. Lawrence Dundas Campbell (ed.), *Miscellaneous Works of Hugh Boyd* Vol. 1 (London 1800), and Love, Old Madras, pp. 44-441.

affected but he was a child of his age. In personality he was tall, striking and stately. He was gracious in manner and of pleasant mien. He was truly an extraordinary envoy compared to whom Pybus was a pompous bureaucrat. The forbearance and patience which he displayed in his mission under exasperating circumstances was a measure of his diplomatic calibre. The Court of Directors when notified of Boyd's appointment took exception to it on the grounds that one of the Company's servants having sufficient qualifications might have been found for such an embassy. The Court enjoined the Company "on no account or under no pretence whatsoever to suffer any European to hold any post or exersice any office who was not admitted to the Company's service under the authority of the Court of Directors".[1]

Boyd's letter of appointment was handed to him on 12 October which means that he had taken as long as three months to get to the starting point of his mission. This delay could to a large extent be held responsible for its failure. He had to wait a further three weeks for a reply from the King to his letter which the latter however returned unopened. This was Boyd's first intimation of the temper of the Court and the trials that lay ahead.[2] Boyd left Trincomalee on 5 February 1782 accompained by an imposing entourage of 173 persons which could have passed for a private army. He followed almost the same route as Pybus except for the diversion from Nalanda to Gannoruwa at the end.

His experiences on this journey however were a contrast as it became a nightmare owing to a scarcity of provisions, boycott by the local inhabitants acting presumably on orders, evasiveness of officials and the deliberate policy of the authorities to throw obstacles in his way.[3] Boyd's main anxiety was that the resultant delays might prevent the "effectual conclusion of his business in time for the expected public service".[4] In a footnote to his diary Boyd explained that this public service was the attack on Colombo and the other Dutch settlements in Ceylon. This foot-note confirmed what we have reconstructed earlier, that originally the plan had been to send a southern expedition immediately after the capture of Negapatam. However, the delay of two months which ensued after that event prevented its execution. It had now been changed to one in which Sir Edward would resume the expedition provided that as a result of Boyd's mission "the requisite measures might be effected for assisting and securing the important objects intended". These requisite measures must presumably have been the supply of provisions for troops that would be used

1. Court to Select Com. 28.8.1782, *Letters to Madras* 10.
2. Boyd to Macartney, 23. 1. 1782 *Select Com.*, 22418
3. Campbell, *Misc. Works*, Vol. 11, pp. 109 - 167.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 192.

in the operations. The thought that the fate of the second expedition depended on his success made Boyd writhe with anxiety. The official journey ended with his arrival at Gannoruwa on 4 March 1782 where he was installed in the residence meant for Ambassadors. During his sojourn in Kandy, Boyd had two audiences with the King and three business meetings with the Ministers. The first audience with the King was confined to platitudes and disappointed Boyd as he had expected to do business with him and circumvent the obstructionist tactics of the Ministers, who he felt were in the pay of the Dutch. At the second audience the King was more communicative and informed Boyd that the Governor's letter had given him the greatest satisfaction.[1] He wanted Boyd to convey to the Governor in the strongest manner his friendly disposition towards the English and his approval of the overtures now made to him. The discussions with the Ministers were frustrating and inconclusive because the Ministers kept harping on their disappointment over the Pybus mission and were more intent to extract information from him about the strength of the British, their intentions, the state of their relations with other European powers than to enter into constructive negotiations with Boyd on his proposal of an alliance.[2] In spite of several attempts on his part Boyd was unable to pin them down to business as they persisted in their evasive tactics. The mission concluded much to Boyd's chagrin and indignation with a request by the King that the proposal for a treaty should emanate direct from the King of England.[3] This was obviously a pretext to get rid of Boyd because the King was obviously aware of the status of the Governor with whom in fact his predecessor had been prepared to negotiate. Although the King's reply did not imply outright rejection of Boyd's proposal, from the latter's point of view it was tantamount to the failure of his mission, because time was of the essence to him and deferment meant the abandonment of the British expedition. Boyd left Gannoruwa on 17 March and reached Trincomalee on 26 March to discover that the British fleet had left on the approach of Suffren's fleet. Setting out in a hired vessel he was intercepted and captured by a French frigate, *La Fine*. Boyd was taken to Mauritius at first and kept in captivity there and later transferred to Reunion. On his return to Madras he remained for a short while with the Company and then took to literary pursuits. His health now gave way and he died of a fever on 19 October 1794 in his forty-eighth year.

Of the three early diplomatic missions that were sent by the Madras East India Company to the Kandyan Court the Boyd mission was the only one to return empty handed. In contrast Pybus secured

1. Campbell, *Misc. Works*, p. 239.
2. Campbell, *Misc. Works*, p. 174.
3. *Ibid. p.* 246.

the King's provisional consent to a draft treaty and Andrews returned with a draft treaty for ratification by the Company. That his mission should have met this fate is indeed an irony because Boyd was the most accomplished and personable envoy of the three and historically speaking his mission was the most important in the series. The causes of the failure of the mission therefor merits examinaton in some detail. The popular explanation given is that Boyd was the victim of ill luck in that Kirti Sri who was favourably disposed to the British had died sixteen days before Boyd's arrival in Trincomalee and that the new King was prejudiced against the British because he felt slighted over their capture of Trincomalee without his prior permission. There can be no doubt that these circumstances were an inauspicious influence on the mission but one can hardly accept them as either the sole or even the main reason for its failure. If the King was so outraged and opposed to the mission from the start one fails to see why he received it at all, let alone give Boyd two audiences and express himself to be in favour of an alliance with the British.[1] It could not have been mere politeness because the Kandyan Kings were past masters in the art of fobbing off unwelcome Ambassadors as the experience of the Dutch embassies to Kandy had demonstrated. True enough that unlike in the case of Pybus no special concessions were accorded to Boyd. On the other hand Boyd was accorded the normal courtesies which were extended to a foreign Ambassador in that period. If there were no marks of favour there was no discrimination either. The formalities which Boyd had to comply with such as the diversion of his route to Gannoruwa or the reduction of the escort were quite normal for foreign Ambassadors according to the usage at the time. In point of fact Boyd was allowed two concessions. Besides Pybus was a very special case, in that he was an invitee of the King who accordingly went out of the way to please him. It will be wrong therefore to treat the reception given to Pybus as a standard by which to judge the case of Boyd and to conclude from the difference that the King was hostile to Boyd. The notion therefore that the King was hostile to the mission to the point of wanting to wreck it cannot be reconciled with the facts.

On the contrary there are facts which show that the King was even interested in the mission. Firstly he gave Boyd two audiences, secondly, he agreed to dispense with the prostration and he allowed the use of a Dooly. He received Boyd with civility almost cordiality. If it was not so, the observant Boyd would have felt it. Boyd himself seems to have been favourably impressed with the King to judge by his description of him as "of a grand majestic appearance and of an open intelligent countenance as I found afterwards on a nearer approach".[2] Besides, the King revealed unmistakable enthusiasm by

1. Campbell, *Misc. Works*, Vol. 11, p. 239.
2. Campbell, *Misc. Works*, p. 213.

word of mouth over the prospects of an alliance. At the first audience he expressed the highest satisfaction at the testimony of a friendly disposition in the Governor of Madras which Boyd reported as follows: "He desired besides that I would have it from his own mouth and communicate to the Governor and Council of Madras in the strongest manner his friendly disposition towards the English, his happiness in the overtures now made to him with some compliments to the manner our business had been conducted in and his wishes to cultivate the most friendly correspondence".1 These are hardly sentiments of one who viewed the English with hostility. Nor could they be dismissed as diplomatic platitudes being far too precise and committal in nature as to the King's inclination. They give room to think that instead of any hostility there was even a degree of partiality on the part of the King towards the English.

Another feature of the mission which has been considered as a sign of hostility towards it was the inability to procure its food supplies on the journey. It is conceivable that supplies might have been deliberately withheld during the onward journey. If this was so one cannot still establish that it was done on the King's instigation. One notices that the scarcity of supplies was really acute on the first part of the journey because the situation inproved after the first encounter with the officials at Nalanda. Boyd also observed at this point that "it was some confort in our starvation to find that it was rather from scarcity than neglect. Rice had not been plentiful and quantities had been collected higher up."2 It should be remembered that Boyd's entourage was more like a private army as it consisted of 173 persons. It would have been no easy task to feed this assembly. Besides some of the areas through which he travelled appear to have been laid waste. This must have been either the result of ravages during the last Dutch war or of the policy attributed to the King of creating a no-man's land between his territories and those of the Dutch on the eastern coast, with a view to isolating the garrison at Trincomalee from supplies. The inhabitants might have made themselves scarce through fear that this was a hostile army. This suspicion may also have been the reason why the belongings of the party were examined and the members serutinized by the Sinhalese officials who greeted them in the earlier part of their journey. In the light of these circumstances it seems more likely that the scarcity of supplies was due to an acute food shortage in the country and that if they were deliberately withheld it was done on the orders of the Ministers rather than of the King. It should be noted that the Matale district which Boyd had to traverse for the greater part of his journey was under a Disawa who was a member of the pro-Dutch faction.

1. Campbell, *Misc. Works*. p. 239.
2. *Ibid*. p. 182.

Boyd's testimony suggests that those ill-disposed towards him were the Ministers & Generals. A close examination of their conduct and statements show a number of suspicious features. Boyd observed at the first audience after he had stressed to the King the urgency of the time factors and the need to expedite his business that "the latter part of what I said lost something in the Sinhalese channel it passed through for His Highness without taking the least notice of it proceeded to ask me whether I wish to retire".[1] During the business talks which followed the first audience, Boyd wished to discuss the letter from the King but the Minister replied that the letter had not been read. Boyd's comment was that this was "a political fib certainly for it must have been read and considered in that long interval that he left me."[2] At the second business meeting after the second audience Boyd insisted that the Governor was competent to conclude a treaty and seemed to have gained his point because the Ministers retired.[3] However, when they returned they changed the subject and embarked on a harangue on the misdeeds of the Pybus mission. These actions suggest obstructionist tactics on the part of the chiefs. The business talks with the Minister were in the nature of an inquisition. They had few comments to offer on Boyd's proposal but a battery of questions to ask covering aspects of British policy in India, their relations with the Dutch, with the French, their continental relations. Searching and pointed questions were put about their military plans in India, the size of the armed forces in Trincomalee and their military activities. The object seemed to be to extract information on British objectives in Asia and their ability to execute them. The chiefs seemed to be weighing the relative strength and position of the British vis-a-vis their European rivals.[4] Presumably they were trying to size up how good an investment the British were. Curiosity was evinced over the reasons for their war with the Dutch and how serious their enmity was, the Kandyans being no doubt aware from bitter personal experience of the Pybus mission of the fickleness of European diplomacy.[5] The impression given by the Ministers in that they deliberately avoided entering into concrete business with Boyd on the basis of his offer. Whether they did so wilfully or on the King's instructions it is difficult to say, but if the latter was the case one cannot reconcile this with the enthusiasm expressed by the King for friendship with the British. It seemed more likely that the chiefs acting either under instructions from the Dutch or through fear of them wanted to prejudice the King against the British on the grounds that they were unreliable for which purpose they made capital of the abortive Pybus mission.

1. Campbell, *Misc. Works*. Vol. 11, p. 218.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 221.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 247.
4. Campbell, *Misc. Works*. Vol. 11. p. 230.
5. *Ibid.* p. 229.

The King himself was in a dilemma as he was unable to decide whether or not to accept the offer and the Ministers presumably exploited those doubts to prevent an effective decision.[1] To understand the reasons for the King's hesitancy one has to appreciate the problem as he saw it and contrast his position with that of his predecessor vis-a-vis Pybus. Pybus came to Kandy at the request of Kirti Sri who had solicited British assistance in his rebellion against the Dutch. Kirti Sri was impelled by the same motives which prompted Rajasinghe II to summon the Dutch to oust the Portuguese. The circumstances in which both Rajasinghe II and Kirti Sri sought foreign help were also very similar. At the time when Rajasinghe II requested Dutch assistance the latter had just made their formal entry into South Asia and were systematically assaulting Portuguese territories in India. Similarly Kirti Sri turned to the British when the latter was becoming the paramount European power in India consequent on Clive's victories over the French in the Seven Years War. He was flattering himself that he could get the British to do for him what the Dutch had done for Rajasinghe II. Internally too there was a parallel between the situations of the two Kings. Rajasinghe on his accession in 1635 wanted to repudiate the treaty imposed on him by de Almeida in 1633 and sought Dutch assistance with the offer of a port at Kottiyar. Kirti Sri likewise had appealed to the British Company because he was afraid that the Dutch, under their new Governor van Eck, would retaliate for his support of the 1761 uprising against the Dutch. By the time Rajadi Rajasinghe ascended the throne in 1782 the Dutch had gained the upper hand, following van Eck's punitive expedition and compelled him to accept the humiliating treaty of 1766 which placed them in a position of political and territorial ascendancy such as they had never enjoyed in Ceylon before. The success of the Dutch and the death of Kirti Sri swung the balance in the Kandyan-Nayakkar factions strife in the Court in favour of the Kandyans who thus came to the forefront and ousted their rivals. The new King on his accession thus found himself surrounded by pro-Dutch Ministers and Dutch influence preponderant in the Court. In this predicament he could not dare to antagonise the Dutch without being absolutely sure of the British.

At this moment, however, his faith in the British must have been shaken from reports which he would have received from his contacts in South India about the declining fortunes of the British Company under the onslaught of Suffren and Hyder Ali. The position was almost the opposite of what it had been in 1762 when the Company was on the crest of a wave of success. The choice facing the King was thus a difficult one. Unsure of the British he did not wish to repeat Kirti Sri's mistakes and antagonise the Dutch. On the other hand he did not want to turn his back on the British entirely. He therefore

1. Mitchell to select Com., 12. 7. 1782, *Select Com.*, 22421.

adopted a middle line of neither accepting Boyd's proposal nor rejecting it altogether. His request that the overtures should emanate directly from the King was a device to gain time. In point of fact as subsequent events demonstrated this was the wisest decision he could have taken. A few months later British power in South India was shaken to its foundations, with reverberations that were felt even in Ceylon, when Suffren captured Trincomalee in August 1782. Had Rajadi concluded an agreement with Boyd these events would have left him stranded and seriously compromised his position in relation to the Dutch and perhaps earned for him the same fate as that of his predecessor at the latter's hand.

The above conclusions accord with the reasons attributed by the Company for the failure of the mission in their report on this subject to the Court of Directors. In the Company's opinion the change in the policy of the Court towards the British was simultaneous with the death of the old King and the establishment of the new administration. The preparations to receive Boyd had been discontinued instantly. The real cause according to them was not so much their indignation over the capture of Trincomalee as the "irresolute and wavering Councillors of the new administration and their fears of the Dutch together with some suspicion of our intending to possess ourselves of the island". The Company acknowledges that the envoy was received with great civility and that the "letter was graciously received, many promises and general assurances of friendship were made". The Company's report concluded that "the Kandyan Ministry stood too much in awe of the Dutch to join with us against them. Until we shall have such a force in the island as will afford us a certainty of of success."[1]

Despite its failure the Boyd mission is significant historically as it is associated with the first attempt at direct political and military intervention by the British in Ceylon. The Boyd mission in fact was meant to have been the auxiliary to an invasion force which would if properly organised have anticipated the conquest of the territorial possessions of the Dutch in Ceylon by thirteen years. Without this invasion force his mission became meaningless but that does not detract from its importance. Besides, the Boyd mission coincided with the acquisition by the British of territory in Ceylon for the first time. The inhibitions which had deterred the British all this while from taking the initiative in Ceylon ended with the outbreak of war between them and the Dutch, and their capture of Trincomalee was the first sign that a new era had begun. Out of this event sprang the movement which led to the British conquest of Ceylon. Boyd therefore, not Pybus, was the real pioneer of British power in Ceylon. The Company thought so too because their verdict on the mission was

1. Madras to Court 5. 9. 1782, para 97, *Letters from Madras* 11.

that "we have made the first step towards the connection with that Ministry which we trust we should soon have an opportunity of improving."[1]

High praise must be accorded to Boyd for his conduct of a difficult mission. What made it a creditable achievement is that it was the most difficult of the three missions. Compared to how Pybus reacted to his experiences one can see that Boyd was a model of patience. Rarely did he take offence or give vent to his feeling however provoked he was. Reading his diary one does not think that he was particularly resentful of his experiences as his strictures are confined to an occasional sarcasm like the classic "this is the land flowing neither with milk or honey". As an Ambassador he set a standard which was rare for European envoys to non-European countries. If his mission failed it was not for lack of diplomacy. It was due to factors outside his control.

1. Madras to Court 5. 9. 1782, para 97, *Letters from Madras* 11.

CHAPTER IV

THE STRUGGLE FOR TRINCOMALEE

CEYLON'S image to the outside world and its appeal to foreigners appears to have changed with every age. In ancient times the island appears to have enjoyed a reputation for precious stones and exotic goods, which excited the imagination of travellers and mariners. Echoes of this reputation are to be found in the travel literature of the time. From the 16th century it was her cinnamon which grew in large profusion in the island and which was rated the best of its kind that attracted the foreigner and made her a coveted object of foreign powers. This reputation for spices led to the establishment of foreign rule on her soil. During the 19th century the place of cinnamon was taken by tea and since then right up to now Ceylon tea is internationally famous. In this chapter we will consider the history of yet another of those attractions which has shaped the destiny of the country: Trincomalee. The contribution made by his port to Ceylon's history is not less decisive than that exerted by the other attractions. One can go so far as to say that if there was one single factor which impelled British interest in Ceylon it was the harbour of Trincomalee.

The physical site which was to become famous as the great harbour of Trincomalee is located on the north east coast of the island at a north latitude 8° 22' and an east longitude of 81° 28'[1] The basic facts about Trincomalee are that it is situated on the noth east coast of Ceylon at a distance of 320 miles from Madras and 270 miles from Galle. Trincomalee harbour is really a small section of the much larger Trincomalee or Kottiyar Bay, the entrance to which is four miles wide. The Bay is five miles across from East to West and is twice the width of the entrance. Trincomalee harbour and the inner harbour occupy an area to the north of the Bay which is formed by rocky

1. H. A. Colgate, *Trincomalee and the East Indies Squadron*, 1746-1844 (M. A. Thesis, University of London 1959), Chap. I, pp. 5-14.

headlands approximately three miles form north to south and four miles from east to west. This inner harbour is the fifth largest in the world. Several rivers, including the Mahaveli Ganga, empty into Kottiar Bay. On the northern side of the Bay, facing Bengal, there is a rocky peninsular, protecting it from the sea which rises in parallel ridges from 100 ft. to 300 ft. The area encloses 12 square miles of harbour which is called Back Bay. It is estimated that 500 ships could anchor at Back Bay. The main advantage which Trincomalee had over other harbours was that it could shelter a fleet during the fury of the N. E. Monsoon which normally made havoc of shipping in the Bay of Bengal. Trincomalee was unique in being the only protected roadstead on the eastern side of India and a fleet sheltering within it could dominate the eastern sea at a time when no other fleet could operate in this area from October to March. Thus the power that possessed Trincomalee had a tremendous advantage over its rivals in this particular region.

Records of the island do not suggest that much importance was attached to Trincomalee or that it played a prominent role in ancient times. The centre of gravity of early trade was on the western and north western coasts of the island in relation to trade routes with the south Indian coast or the Middle East which was conducted by Arab traders.[1] The paucity of references to Trincomalee in early times confirms the important fact that it was a comparative newcomer to the stage of Ceylon history. It was in fact a European invention which came in the train of European activities in Asia. Trincomalee attained prominence because of its relevance in a particular context in Asiatic history.

Even the Portuguese and Dutch who were first on the scene do not appear to have shown much interest in the strategic importance or the commerical value of Trincomalee as a base. This may appear unusual because both these were maritime empires, which were established on the control of strategic bases throughout the areas in which they operated. One would therefore have expected them to be more appreciative of its strategic potential. The explanation for this indifference of the Dutch and Portuguese seems to be the comparative inhospitality of Trincomalee as a place for permanent habitation. All the early writers on Trincomalee elaborate on the theme that it was virtually unfit for occupation in spite of its attractive surroundings. This point will be discussed at a later stage. Another reason was the difficulty of procuring supplies and food for a garrison resident there.[2] The immediate surroundings appear to have been devoid of inhabitants who could have produced supplies. Another difficulty in procuring supplies was that the hinterland was the territory of the king of

1. *History of Ceylon*, Vol. I, Part I (University of Ceylon, Colombo), p. 16.
2. Colgate, *Trincomalee*, p.86.

Kandy who was not always well disposed towards foreign powers established at Trincomalee and actually withheld supplies as a measure of intimidation. Garrisons had therefore to be supplied by sea and this made them vulnerable to a naval blockade. These limitations in the use of Trincomalee were to be experienced time and again in its early history.

It is useful in this connection to consider a description of Trincomalee written in the year 1800 by the Rev. James Cordiner to show the impression which it created at that time.[1] This report of course was composed after the events which will be considered in this chapter because by that time Trincomalee was a British possession, but Cordiner brings out both the advantages and the weaknesses of Trincomalee as it struck a foreigner at that time, not too long after the struggle for Trincomalee had been conducted. Cordiner's observations were that Trincomalee was "the most important station on the coast of Ceylon possessing that noble and commanding harbour which alone renders the island so valuable as a protection to our Indian commerce and a security to the British Empire in the east".[2] Commenting on its advantages over other parts he said that at Bombay the Navy are out of the way from the area, where it matters for six months in the year. At Calcutta and in the river Hooghly they are similarly placed. He thought that the total want of shelter on the coast of Coromandel and Malabar rendered "a free access to the Port of Trincomalee a most momentous object".[3] He concluded that "the naval power that commands this harbour may keep all Asia in awe and easily intercept the trade of other nations to and from every corner of Hindoostan". He observed that Trincomalee had been neglected more than any other station by the Dutch. The reasons for this were that the soil is arid, the air noxious and the Dutch never bothered to study ways of adapting themselves to these conditions. The jealous policy of its Government kept out strangers and deliberately made Trincomalee inhospitable so as to deter foreigners. The soil, he said, was not infertile. He even hinted that thoughts had been entertained of making Trincomalee the seat of the Government in preference to Colombo. He was struck by the scenic beauty of the Bay, particularly the view from Back Bay, which is beautiful and sublime. Viz — "The Harbour the safest and most spacious on the confines of the eastern ocean resembles a beautiful and extensive lake".[4] He stated that 500 ships may enter it with ease but one half of the year mariners prefer Back Bay in which forty men of war can find safe anchorage. On its military potential his opinion is that "Trincomalee is not only the

1. Rev. James Cordiner, *A Description of Ceylon* (London 1807), Vol. I, Ch. IX, pp. 266-310.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, p.267.
4. Cordiner, *Ceylon*, p. 270.

place of greatest value and the first where an attack may be expected but is also capable of being made a place of greater strength than any other military port in Ceylon and it holds an admitted claim to the best attention of the British Cabinet".1 Now for the adverse side of Trincomalee, Cordiner's view was that "notwithstanding what has been said Trincomalee is still the least healthful of the stations which we now occupy in Ceylon and continues subject to seasons of extraordinary sickness and mortality".2 As proof of this he cited the experience of the 80th Regiment which in 1797 had suffered severely from an epidemic.

Identical views have been expressed by Percival who wrote at this very time on its strategic importance and unhealthiness.3 This contrast is conveyed in the following quotation. "'This harbour from its nature and situation is that which stamps Ceylon as one of the most valuable acquisitions in the East Indies. These circumstances point out Trincomalee as an object of particular attention to our Government and of far more consequence to retain than the whole of the rest of the island". And against this, he said that "the climate has also been looked upon as the hottest and the most unhealthy of the whole island". His explanation for this was that "these noxious qualities of the climate were owing in a great measure to the wood and marshes which camp up to the very fort and which the Dutch had never sufficient policy or public spirit to remove".4 Both Cordiner and Percival, however, struck a confident note and concluded that given care and attention which involved rendering it liveable "it is capable of becoming the richest emporium in the East".

It was the French who first discerned the importance of Trincomalee and then occupied it, in the course of Admiral de La Haye's grandiose expedition of 1672 which was inspired by Colbert's vision of establishing a French maritime empire based like the Estado da India on the acquisition of strategically situated naval bases.5 The expedition interested itself in Ceylon on the advice probably of Caron, the head of the Surat factory, who had personal knowledge of it, because of its commanding position vis-a-vis East West trade, and its suitability as a central base for the proposed maritime empire. Besides, the king's differences with the Dutch provided an opening to exploit which Caron sent Capuchin missionaries in advance to the court of Kandy. The expedition, however, was a failure owing to the unwillingness of the French to respond in spite of the King's desire to accom-

1. *Ibid.*, p. 273.
2. Cordiner, *Ceylon*, p 275.
3. Robert Percival, *An Account of the Island of Ceylon* (London 1803), pp. 42-44.
4. *Ibid.*
5. S. P. Sen, *French in India: First Establishment and struggle*, (Calcutta 1947), pp. 115-149.

modate them, the latter going as far as even giving Trincomalee Bay to them in return for their help against the Dutch. After a brief sojourn, in the Bay of Trincomalee, where they occupied and fortified a small island situated near the entrance to the Bay, the squadron left in disgust with the Admiral alleging treachery on the part of the King in not furnishing it with provisions and workmen. They were not to return till 1782.

That was the end of the French expedition. The detailed causes of its failure do not concern us here but what is relevant is the significance of the expedition which was really the official introduction to Trincomalee. The importance which the French attached to Trincomalee for the execution of their plan brought out its importance and the role it could play in the establishment of European dominion in India. The lesson was not lost although it took another century for it to be remembered.

This slow recognition was due to a number of factors. The Dutch had down-graded it in importance and diverted attention away from it. Cordiner's remark suggests that the Dutch had deliberately fostered the conditions which rendered it odious. Besides, Trincomalee did not play an important role in the Dutch scheme of things. The main interest of the Dutch in Ceylon was in their cinnamon trade. Cinnamon grew on the western side of the country and its main outlet was the port of Colombo. Trincomalee was too far away from the immediate scene of Dutch activities in Ceylon. It was remote from the battle lines of the conflict between the King and the Company. The Dutch did not want to keep a garrison there or colonise it because of the inability to obtain supplies from the hinterland. It was believed that this area was being deliberately left uncultivated on the king's orders to prevent it becoming a source of supply to a garrison at Trincomalee. Perhaps the most important reason for the neglect of Trincomalee by both the Portuguese and the Dutch was strategic. In the case of both these powers the enemies they had to fear came from the western side.[1] The Portuguese were concerned with the Malabar coast and the Arab traders who were allied with the Zamorin of Cailcut. There was no rival to them on the eastern side. Thus the emphasis in their strategy was on the western side and accordingly they held Goa, Surat, Ormuz, Colombo, the essential points in fact through which to seal off the western ocean. The situation was very similar with the Dutch. They had no rival on the eastern side because the Indies was the centre of their own power. A threat could only materialize from the western side in the form of rival western powers operating either from the southern mainland or coming from Europe round the Cape. Hence their concentration was on the west, which they controlled through their

1. Allen, Haig & Dodwell, *The Cambridge Shorter History of India* (Cambridge 1934), p. 505.

possession of the Cape of Good Hope and Colombo. Thus the real value of Trincomalee could only become apparent to a power that was based on Bengal and the Coromandel coast. This explains why the recognition of its importance only dawned with the establishment of the British East India Company's paramountcy in the Coromandel coast and Bengal. The British were the first European power to attain this position and hence to them Trincomalee became vital. The French were anxious to gain control of Trincomalee mainly in order to use it as a weapon against the British Company's possessions. Thus to see the emergence of the importance of Trincomalee we have to trace the stages of the European conflict in Asia which made the British Company the paramount power.

Another important reason for the comparative obscurity of Trincomalee was that during the Seven Years War Holland adopted an official policy of neutrality. This meant that during the early phases of the Anglo French struggle in the Carnatic, the port of Trincomalee was available for use by either side. The Dutch too maintained a kind of "free port" policy in Trincomalee.[1] They gave shelter to outside fleets provided the latter did not try to contact that local inhabitants or establish any links with the hinterland. The facilities accorded were limited to anchorage refitting, repairing, but procurement of supplies from the shore, and despatch of foraging parties, cutting of timber, were frowned upon.

A close watch was generally kept on the activities of the guests to ensure that there was no misconduct. Having the reasonably free use of the port, therefore, neither side felt the need to consider military action to possess it for themselves. Instances can be quoted in plenty to show that in this period before 1763 ample use was made of the facilities and hospitality of Trincomalee's harbour by the British fleet. They used it for a variety of purposes, to refit, to recoup, to take shelter, to break journey. The following are a few such instances to illustrate the frequency and scope of their operations.[2] Statistics show that between 1746 and 1795 the fleet spent fifteen winters at Trincomalee. During the petty monsoons in April, Trincomalee was used eleven times. The first important instance of the use of Trincomalee by the British fleet occurred in July 1746 during the War of Austrian Succession, when Peyton on his way with the fleet to Trincomalee had to return to it for repairs after a half hearted engagement in which he had suffered damage to two of his ships. In December 1747 Rear Admiral Griffin made a protracted stay in Trincomalee to refit his squadron. It was a most complicated and extensive refit operation including the scrubbing and a caulking, the drying and sifting of gunpowder ashore, topmasts and yards being sent down for

1. Colgate, *Trincomalee*, pp. 15-73.
2. Colgate, *Trincomalee*, pp. 15-73.

repairs. Firewood and fresh water were obtained and trees cut for spares and timber. In October 1748 Boscawen was beseiging Pondicherry but he had to abandon the seige because of the onset of the north east monsoon and the bulk of his squadron retired to Trincomalee to refit. In October 1760 when the struggle between the British and the French was over, Stevens who had succeeded Pocock went to Trincomalee and stayed there seven weeks for a major refit. These instances show that during this period the need to possess Trincomalee was not felt because the British had the full use of it. Still their experience of the use of Trincomalee made them aware of several of its limitations. They were dependent to an overwhelming degree on the goodwill of the Dutch. Provisions were unobtainable owing to the Dutch policy of discouraging contacts. Artificers were not available. The type of repairs which could be done was limited by the nature of the available facilities. These difficulties were realized by the British but did not worry them unduly, so long as it was in neutral hands and its use was available. It has been suggested that one of the objects of the Pybus mission was to obtain possession of Trincomalee.[1] This is not borne out, however, in the instructions or in his draft treaty. Article 1 of the draft treaty gives a choice of Trincomalee, Batticaloa, and Chilaw.[2] Pybus's instructions were to obtain land for a settlement but there is no evidence to prove that this had to be Trincomalee. At the time of the Pybus mission the Company's eyes were on trade and the strategic value of Trincomalee was as yet not of immediate importance.

In 1780 the position of Trincomalee in relation to Britain underwent a dramatic change with the declaration of war by Britain on Holland, which made the latter an ally of France, in the war against Britain.[3] As a result of this change Trincomalee, which so far had been a neutral port, became converted overnight into a potential base for French attacks against India. This was not merely a possibility but an imminent threat in the context of the great expedition, which was being planned by Bussy, and the naval offensive of Suffren in the Bay of Bengal. It was a threat which as we shall see ultimately materialised. In 1780, therefore, the Anglo-Dutch rupture confronted Britain with the impending prospect that Trincomalee, the key to the Bay of Bengal, and hence to the citadel of British dominion in India, the possession of which was thus vital to her security, would now become both a bridge-head for invasion against her and a base from which the French Navy could challenge her naval supremacy.

To appreciate the full significance of the impact of the Anglo-Dutch war on the position of the British Company in Asia it is nece-

1. Mills, *Ceylon Under British Rule*, p. 5.
2. Raven-Hart, *Pybus Embassy*, p. 9.
3. Harlow, *Founding of the Second British Empire*, Vol. I, p. 143.

ssary to analyse the foundations of British power at this time.[1] British dominion in India still depended primarily on her command of the sea. British victories over the French were due to her superiority at sea. It was essential for British possessions that their lines of communications both with Asia and with the West should be kept open and for this the availability of bases was a prerequisite. In this respect, however, their position in Asia in 1780 was singularly deficient. The only bases at her disposal to sustain the position of political and commercial paramountcy which she had attained in India by that time were Bombay and Madras. The inadequacy of this position becomes apparent if it is compared with the logistics of previous maritime empires in Asia and seen in relation to Britain's own strategic problems. The Portuguese Estado during its heyday functioned through the control of key strategic points dominating the oceans in which it operated. These were mainly the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean.[2] The points in their control were Socotra, Mombasa, Ormuz, Goa, Dia, Cochin, Colombo, Pulicat and Malacca, all of which constituted a chain of bases studding the coasts of the peripheral sub-continents and spanning the oceans as far as the Malayan Archipelago. The Estado was primarily a maritime empire committed to a blue-water policy the object of which was to maintain a stranglehold on the internal trade of the region and keep it free of foreign rivals whether Western or Asian. The control of Ormuz and Goa protected the northern frontiers of the empire against invasions by the Middle Eastern Arab states, like the one attempted by Sulaiman Pasha of Egypt on behalf of the Zamorin of Calicat which was defeated by the Portuguese at Diu in 1538. The possession of Diu, Daman and Cochin enabled the Portuguese to dominate the Malabar cost and keep their rivals in the hinterland like the Zamorin of Calicut and the Moslem states in the Deccan at bay. Through their control of Colombo they had a commanding position in the Indian Ocean, and in relation to the Coromandel and Malabar coast, and a half way house in their trade with the Indies. The base in Malacca marked the south-eastern terminal as it were of the Estado. This far-flung network of bases at their disposal gave the Portuguese a degree or maritime control which enabled them to dominate the intervening oceans at the expense and in some areas to the exclusion of their Arab rivals, in whose hands this trade had been up to that time. The Estado, in fact, copied the pattern of Arab enterprise of navigating in close relation to the coast. It will be recalled that it was an Arab navigator who had steered Vasco da Gama to Cochin. The layout of the Estado which gave the Portuguese free rein over their area of operations was ideally suited to the attainment of their trade and security objectives and was the secret of their strength.

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1. Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond, *Navy in India* 1763-1783 (London 1931), Ch. IV.
2. Dodwell, *Cambridge Shorter History*, pp. 481-505, and A. Toussaint, *History of the Indian Ocean* (London 1966), Ch. X.

The Portuguese were ousted by the Dutch, who replaced them in most of their strategic points except those on the northern side like Goa and Ormuz. Goa remained Portuguese until 1962 and Ormuz was captured by the Persians in 1622. Diu and Daman were occupied by the Marathas. The emphasis in the activities of the Dutch was on the East Indies from where they fanned out into an empire primarily south eastwards in its gravitation.1 It centred round the East Indies and stretched as far as the Coromandel coast, the Malabar coast, Ceylon and the Cape of Good Hope. The scattered nature of their activities fitted in with the objectives and scheme of Dutch enterprise which was to concentrate on control of the spice producing areas of the Indies, of the Malabar coast and of Ceylon, while at the same time, developing regional entrepot trade through which to pay for their spices by barter with the goods of the other areas. In this way they developed a diversified regional trade in fabrics from Surat, and the Coromandel coast, opium and saltpetre from Bengal, cinnamon from Ceylon, pepper from Malabar, copper and tin from Malaya. A unique feature of the Dutch empire was its discovery of the roaring forties which enabled direct voyaging from the Cape to the Indies instead of like the Portuguese following the coastal routes under the direction of the winds.2 This factor further contributed to give an eastward orientation to the Dutch empire but made it dependent for its security on the control of the western approach to Asia, which meant the Cape of Good Hope. Within these limits the Dutch were able to operate as successfully as the Portuguese had done in their day inasmuch as they had the logistical control necessary for the attainment of their specific objectives.

The maritime domain of the British in 1780 extended over the same oceans previously dominated by the Portuguese and part of those within the area of the Dutch, but the number of bases at their disposal through which to exercise their control contrasted painfully with the position of their predecessors in this region.3 For the whole of the western region they had only one base — Bombay. As a harbour it was excellent, being equipped with technically up to date facilities, and it was strategically situated like Goa to defend the northern approaches against invaders coming overland from the Middle East or via the Red Sea and to contain developments on the Malabar coast. To that extent it over-shadowed Cochin in importance and was a good substitute for the bases which the Portuguese had held in this theatre. On the other hand, its strategic value in 1780 was limited in as much as Britain had no rivals originating from the northern direction to contend with at that stage. Bombay's real importance in this respect came to be realised only in 1799 when it became the

1. Dodwell, *Cambridge Shorter History*, p. 505.
2. Toussaint, *Indian Ocean*, p. 148.
3. Parkinson, *War in the Eastern Seas*, pp. 11-13.

focal point of British counter-operations against Napoleon's Egyptian expedition. Besides the centre of gravity of the Company's power lay really on the eastern side and resided in its possessions on the Coromandel coast and in Bengal. The eastern theatre which was the heartland of the empire was also conspicuous for its security gaps.

In the whole of this area which embraced the Bay of Bengal and was the veritable gateway to British dominion in India, she had only one base, Madras, from which to operate and even the suitability of Madras for the purpose was subject to grave limitations.[1] Madras lay on a lee shore at the edge of a shallow beach and surf which obliged ships to anchor out at sea while loading and storage had to be done by small boats. The biggest disqualification was its exposure, in its unprotected state, to the monsoonal winds owing to which the East Indies fleet was unable to shelter in it during the north east monsoon and had therefore to retire to Bombay leaving the whole of that vital region to the mercy of a marauding fleet, as it almost happened in 1782 after the capture of Trincomalee by Suffren and Hughes' departure for Bombay.[2] On the land side too Madras had similar handicaps. Because of its juxtaposition to powerful states and to other foreign trading stations like Negapatam it was a target of attack from those quarters as its chequered history between 1749 and 1784 bore witness. Besides, being a roadstead and not a naval base like Goa and Trincomalee it did not lend itself to defence by naval means. It depended on the navy for the safety of its communications and to ward off enemy fleets. The failure of the navy to do so on two occasions namely on the approach of La Bourdonais in 1748 and of D'Orves in 1781 was almost fatal to British dominion in the south. For all these reasons Madras was quite unsuited and inadequate for the role she had to play in respect of the security of British dominion in India.

What was true of Britain's situation in her regional theatres of operation equally applied to her overall position in Asia. The main approach through which Western powers had entered Asia was on the western side via the Cape of Good Hope. This route had been used both by the Portuguese and the Dutch and this gave the Cape a commanding position over communications between Asia and the West which were virtually the life line of the latter. The Cape was besides the source of supply of Mauritius, which was the headquarters of the French, and of St. Helena, which was a British staging post. Control of the Cape should therefore have been the corollary to a maritime empire on the scale which the British had accomplished but the Cape was in Dutch hands.

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1. Harlow, *Founding of the Second British Empire*, p. 120. (Vol. I).
2. Select Com. to Sir Edward, *Home Misc.*, 161, ff. 631-733, I. O. L.

Another serious shortcoming in the naval dispositions of the British in Asia was the lack of a central coordinating base. The example of the Estado and the V.O.C. had shown that such a naval base which would function as the headquarters was a sine qua non for a maritime empire.[1] In the manner of Goa for the Estado or Batavia for the V.O.C. such a base would be both the administrative centre and the naval command from which forces could be deployed to protect communications and defend the outlying parts of the empire. In the case of Britain, of course, the necessity for a strong naval capital was less urgent because of the increasingly territorial character of British power. Still, to the extent that its security depended on sea power, permanent naval stations strategically situated to cover the territorial limits of the empire were an imperaive necessity. The repeated occasions when her dominion was jeopardized due to the absence of the fleet at hand was indeed a proof of this.

Ironically the bases that could have served these purposes were in the hands of Britain's rivals and enemies. On the eastern side the one base which satisfied all requirements was Trincomalee and that was Dutch. The Cape as we have seen was also Dutch. Not far from the Cape and equal to it in strategic significance was the Isle of France which the labours of La Bourdonnais and Tromelin had converted into the premier French naval base and arsenal in Asia. Situated as it was near the gateway to Asia and at close vicinity to the Cape, it was a threat to British communications and an ideal launching pad for an amphibious offensive by land and sea against British dominion. This threat as we shall see materialised in 1783 with Bussy's expedition. The combination of the French and Dutch in common hostility to Britain could thus logistically be a grave danger to Britain's position.

The importance of having a naval base in the Bay of Bengal for the purpose of protecting a dominion established on the eastern side of India had been appreciated both by Dupleix and the British.[2] The British in fact proceeded hot on the heels of Dupleix's efforts to establish a base in Syriam in Burma and in the Bay of Tourane in Cochin China. For this purpose Dupleix involved himself in the local politics of Burma and proposed the despatch of an expeditionary force to occupy Pegu. His imaginative directors paid no heed to this as to his other schemes. The intensification of the Anglo-French conflict on the Coromandel coast put an end to both British and French initiative in this direction. In any case concentration on these areas east of the Bay of Bengal, which carried with it involvement in the tortuous and dangerous politics of the area, was in a sense a waste of time because all that was required in respect of naval logistics was afforded in Trincomalee. Naturally the Anglo-French rivalry for a base veered after 1763 to Trincomalee.

1. Dodwell, *Cambridge Shorter History*, pp. 494-495.
2. Hall, *South-East Asia*, pp. 343-354 and 355-375.

The reasons for Britain's singularly exposed situation in 1780, the nature of which has been considered above, requires some explanation. This lies in the very nature of the evolution of British dominion in India.[1] When the British did embark on their career in Asia, they had no fixed plan of empire in mind to pursue in the manner of the Portuguese under Albuquerque nor did they begin by supplanting any rivals as the Dutch did to the Portuguese. After their clash with the Dutch at Amboyna in 1623, they eschewed the Indies and concentrated on a separate geographical area where they developed in a context of co-existence with the Dutch and the French. Ultimately, when they clashed with the French, the conflict which resulted was primarily territorial in character in that it was fought in the Carnatic and Bengal with the navy being employed as an auxiliary. The initial theatre of operation was the Coromandel coast with the suzerainty of the Deccan and the Carnatic as the stakes. Thus British dominion in India evolved not as a maritime empire in the manner of the Estado and the V.O.C. but as a territorial empire. This was due in large measure to the influence of Dupleix whose tactics and concepts dictated the terms of the struggle and obliged the British to resort to territorial commitments.[2] Dupleix's ideas of territorial aggrandisement were the cause of his clash with his colleague — La Bourdonnais — who was an exponent of blue-water policy and of his abandonment by the latter in 1749. In these circumstances, with the accent being on territorial dominion, due weight does not appear to have been given by the Company to the naval logistics of its position. For its naval security, the Company was in fact leaning on Dutch neutrality.

It was only when this protective cover was removed by the American war that Britain suddenly woke up to its vulnerability. In point of fact, proper command of the sea came very late to the British in India. One historian has commented that this was not achieved till 1815.[3] Until then Britain had not fully addressed herself to putting her naval logistics in order. This was only done with the acquisition of Trincomalee in 1795 and the establishment of a base in Singapore. During the crucial years of the Anglo-French contest in India, British sea power in Asia was a matter of improvisation. It had no fixed place or headquarters. In 1795 for instance the Cape was tried out as the headquarters for the whole Eastern Command but the experiment was abandoned shortly after owing to the physical impossibility of implementing it.

Thus between 1763 and 1795 there were serious gaps in Britain's naval logistics in Asia which gravely hampered her performance.[4] On the outbreak of the war with Holland, the Government and the

1. *Cambridge History of India* (Cambridge 1929), Vol. V, Ch. IV.
2. Toussaint, *Indian Ocean*, p. 155.
3. Parkinson, *War on the Eastern Seas*, pp. 276-299.
4. Toussaint, *Indian Ocean*, pp. 150-167.

Directors realised the precarious nature of the situation which faced British possessions in India vis-a-vis the Dutch territories. Their attention was at the outset focussed principally on the Cape of Good Hope, the strategic importance of which was summed up in a minute by the Directors of the Company in the following terms: "That the power possessing the Cape of Good Hope has the key to and from the Indies appears to us self evident and unquestionable. Indeed, we must consider the Cape of Good Hope as the Gibraltar of India. This circumstance has not been felt during the long peace subsisting between Great Britain and the States General but the present rupture with the Dutch has totally changed the situation and rendered the possession of the Cape of the last importance".1

Another reason why the security of her Asian empire became a matter of the greatest moment to Britain at this juncture was that the rupture with Holland coincided with the loss of her American empire and the preparations by France to invade India. France had entertained such a plan since 1777 but now with Britain's defeat in America she was emboldened to press home the advantage and extend her operations into Asia. A part of this plan was the despatch of an expedition to protect the Cape owing to its strategic importance and the dependance on it of Mauritius. This however coincided with a British plan to send an expeditionary force to capture the Cape. This expedition which the British planned had behind it a history that was as interesting as its later course was going to be. Originally it was conceived as a South Sea expedition on an idea submitted by William Fullarton and the Earl of Seaforth for the purpose of attacking the Spanish American colonies. It was to act in concert with the East India Company, with the conquest of Spanish possessions as its objective, after which it was to proceed to Mexico and Peru. The plan received cabinet approval in August 1780. Two thousand troops were to be employed on the expedition. As a last minute addition which was prompted by information of unrest in Spanish America, an attack on the River Plate against Buenos Aires was included on its itinerary. The expedition was ready to sail when war broke out with Holland and the East India Company promptly altered its destination from the South Seas to the Cape.

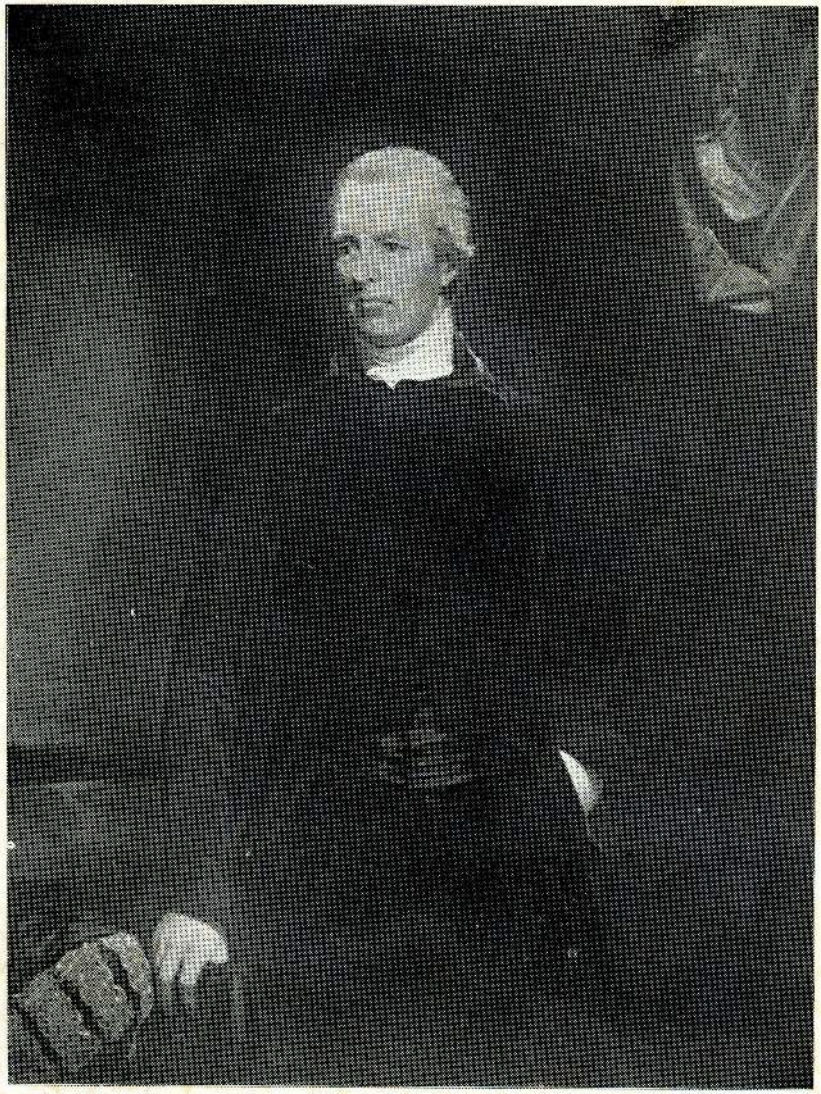
The revised plan was that the expeditionary force should occupy the Cape and garrison it with British troops while the East India Company for its part would undertake an attack on Ceylon and the other Dutch possessions in conjunction with Admiral Hughes. The expedition was under the command of Commodore George Johnstone and consisted of five ships of the line, ten smaller ships, seven armed transports and eleven victuallers. The transports carried between two

1. Vincent Harlow, *Founding of the Second British Empire* 1763-1793 (London 1952), p. 108. (Vol. I).

thousand five hundred and three thousand troops, under the command of General Medows. It left Spithead on 13 March 1781 and on 11 April anchored for water at Porto Prayar in the Cape Verde Islands when word reached Johnstone of the approach of Suffren's squadron. The French had learnt of the proposed British expedition in December 1780 and being as intent to protect the Cape as the British were to capture it, they hastened to send their own expedition. This force, consisting of five ships of the line, was under the command of Suffren and left Brest on 23 March in the company of De Grasse's great armada for America. That it should ever have been allowed to leave Brest was a grave reflection on the efficiency of the home fleet at this time. Johnstone on hearing of Suffren's approach could either have left Porto Praya or prepared to receive him, but he did neither, and Suffren caught him unprepared. The resultant action did not achieve for Suffren the success which his daring deserved. That was due to the incompetency of his Captains but the onset disorganised the English fleet and gave Suffren a start in the race for the Cape, which he won because Johnstone even failed to follow him and lingered at Porto Praya till 1 May. An interesting debate now ensued between the leaders of the expedition as to the next move. Fullarton and Johnstone suggested that because of their failure to achieve their immediate objective, they should revert to the original South Seas project. Medows, however, opposed it and insisted that the expedition should be directed against the Dutch settlements in Ceylon.[1] The obstinacy of Medows prevailed. The expedition was disbanded on arrival in the Cape on 6 August and Medows proceeded with the troops to India while Johnstone returned home.[2] Thus ended the abortive expedition by the British against the Cape and it concluded the first round of the Anglo-French struggle for the control of the Dutch possessions. This first round was fought on the western side and the French had won. The conflict now moved eastwards. On the western side the focal point had been the Cape. On the eastern side it was to be Trincomalee. The struggle for Trincomalee had begun.

The contest, which now commenced, was both a personal duel between two outstanding naval Captains of the day and a struggle for dominion between the two great antagonists in this field. The stakes of the duel were paramountcy in India, and hence Asia. It was fought on land as well as on sea. The projected French invasion was a combined operation aimed at defeating the British at sea and having attained naval command overwhelming the British settlements through joint operations between the French expeditionary force under Bussy and the native princes who were expected to rally to the French colours. On the naval side the duel was between Baillie de Suffren, the French

1. Harlow, *Second British Empire*, pp. 111-116. (Vol. I).
2. Johnston to Medows, 8.6.1781, and Medows to Johnston, 10.6.1781, Expedition against the Dutch, *Dutch Records* A, Vol. XXI.



WILLIAM PITT THE YOUNGER

Courtesy National Portrait Gallery, London

Commander, and Sir Edward Hughes, Commander-in-Chief of the East Indies squadron. Suffren was now in his 51st year at the height of a distinguished career which foreshadowed the greatness to come. Born in Provence, the third son of a Marquis, he had prepared himself from boyhood for the navy.1 He had figured in notable naval engagements, having been made prisoner by Admiral Hawke when the squadron on which he served had an encounter with him in 1747, and again by Boscawen when the latter attacked the French fleet at the neutral port of Lagos. In 1777 he was given command of a battleship. He was selected for the command of the squadron going east on a recommendation made by Comte d'Estaing to the Minister de Castries. The Minister thought highly of him in spite of the envy which the appointment aroused. In the east he was to be second to Admiral d'Orves whose unfitness for this command had been demonstrated when he deserted Hyder Ali in Madras. Suffren did not relish the prospect of being second. He did not take long to show his mettle and prove his calibre. His action at Porto Praya was typical of the man. It was unprecedented for its daring and had it failed that would have been his end. Opposed to him was Admiral Hughes, who was also his opposite in temperament. Hughes was dour as Suffren was dynamic. Hughes was dogged and did not know when he was beaten. Suffren was bold and imaginative while Hughes was tenacious. That he stood up to his dashing opponent was no small achievement for Hughes. The French fleet consisting of eleven ships of the line set sail from Port Louis in December 7, 1781 under the command of d'Orves, with Suffren as his second. On the way d'Orves took ill and died and Suffren took command.

With his appearance off Madras in February 1782 the battle began. The first encounter was fought on 17 February but prior to this Hughes had drawn first blood by capturing Trincomalee. It has been shown how the abandonment of Johnstone's expedition against the Cape and the diversion of the troops under Medows to India prompted Macartney's plan for the capture of the Dutch settlements in Ceylon. This plan had to be abandoned by Macartney owing to the non-arrival of the troops under Medows and the sudden turn for the worse in the war against Hyder Ali. He had thus to be content with the naval expedition under Hughes for the capture of Trincomalee.2 The squadron arrived before Trincomalee on 4 January 1782. It consisted of the *Serpent*, *Monarch*, *Exeter*, *Worcester*, *Burford*, *Eagle*, *Combustion*, *Nymph*, *Expedition*, and the Company's ship *Essex*. Trincomalee had been under blockade since August 1781 when Hughes had posted the *Sea-Horse* to report on Dutch movements. Troops disembarked the same day, with the help of chillingas

1. Col. G. B. Malleson, *Final French Struggles in India* (London 1878), p. 11 and Richmond, *Navy in India*, p. 140.

2. Expedition against the Dutch 1781, *Dutch Records* A, Vol. 21.

and catamarans which Hughes had brought from Negapatam. The landings were in two stages. First a detachment of artillery and two companies of sepoys with two sixpounder field pieces were landed and this was followed by 820 seamen and a further detachment of artillery and a battalion of sepoys. Fort Frederick was taken by surprise on the 5th and surrendered without a fight. Ostenburg was a more formidable proposition. Situated two miles south of Fort Frederick it was perched on a ridge 300 ft. high. It was impregnable on the seaward side and could only be taken from the ridge. Two hundred yards northeast there was a ridge with a defence post which the British captured on the 8th. They then called upon the Fort to surrender. Major Geil was sent with summonses on two occasions and each time he made a careful reconnaissance of its situation. His report was that it could be taken by assault. At dawn on the 11th, the assault was launched and the Fort taken.[1] The comparative ease with which it fell was due to its neglect by the Dutch. The town consisted of three small houses and a hospital near Fort Frederick. There was no dockyard or arsenal.

The capture of Trincomalee by Hughes in 1782 gave the first round to the British. Hughes left Trincomalee on 31 January and on returning to Madras learnt of the appearance of Suffren. Precisely what plans Suffren had in mind at that moment it is difficult to say. That he intended to capture Trincomalee cannot be doubted but for the moment he seemed more intent on attempting the destruction of the British squadron. This would have given him mastery of the situation and automatic possession of Trincomalee. Such an approach was consistent with Suffren's temperament and style. The sequence of the encounters which followed suggests that Trincomalee was the determining factor in the strategy and tactics of the rival commanders. The first battle was aimed at the destruction of the British fleet. This failed and the next two battles occurred while manoeuvering for its capture. Hughes failed to avert this and the fourth battle off Trincomalee was a sequel to its capture by the French. The fifth naval battle was fought by Suffren to relieve Cuddalore. Of the five naval battles therefore three centred around Trincomalee.

Before describing these encounters in so far as they concern Trincomalee a few words should be said about the tactics of the commanders. These battles were noteworthy in naval history because of the tactics employed by Suffren, who broke away from the traditional form of naval warfare in which squadrons faced each other in line and fought without breaking formation.[2] Naval encounters under these rules were hardly ever decisive. These tactics were actually dictated by certain built-in limitations in the design of the ships them-

1. Richmond, *Navy in India*, Ch. V.
2. Sen-*French in India* pp. 227-229.

selves. Their capacity was small and they were deficient in manpower. The line formation which exposed only one side of a ship to an engagement at any given time was thus an adaptation to suit these limitations. Suffren's tactics on the other hand revolutionised naval warfare by having as their object the destruction of the opposing fleets. For this purpose he manipulated his battle order and deployed his ships so as to concentrate his attack on part of the opposing fleet or to engage ships individually. This result invariably was that he upset the enemy's battle order and threw it into dire confusion. Suffren's methods called for bold initiative on the part of his Captains but this was rarely forthcoming. Suffren deserved better Captains and crew and as a result he never realised the success that was his due. His place in the annals of naval warfare and the development of naval tactics is as great as Nelson's whose methods he anticipated. At a later date Napoleon w s to mourn his loss.[1] The tremendous impression which he created at the time can be gathered from the triumphant welcome accorded to him by Hyder Ali. The verdict of a British naval historian on Suffren's enocounters is that "it was the triumph of the greater man over the less".[2]

The dazzle of Suffren's achievements should not blind us to Hughes contribution. His role was somewhat like that of Admiral Jellicoe at Jutland. He was the only man who could have lost the British Empire in one afternoon. His was essentially a defensive role, being responsible not only for the safety of his fleet but also the security of the Indian Empire and its life lines, covering an area which included the Bay of Bengal, Coromandel coast and Trincomalee. Suffren in contrast was an attacker with none of Hughes' responsibilities to tie him down and any setback to him, even the destruction of his fleet, would have only been local in its consequences. This Hughes' achievement was to have stood up to his dauntless adversary, and in doing so, protected the Indian Empire at a critical time in its fortunes. The ultimate results of the encounter vindicated Hughes in that the French fleet was never again to imperil the Indian Empire in the same way that after Jutland the German high seas fleet never again challenged Britain's naval supremacy.

The details of these five naval encounters may be briefly recapitulated.[3] The first action of 17 February off Madras roadstead was the sequel to a surprise attack which Suffren intended on the British fleet lying at anchor in the harbour. Suffren's plans, however, misfired owing to the inactivity of part of his fleet and he achieved much less than he hoped. British losses were more serious than those of the French.

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1. Parkinson, *War in the Eastern Seas*, p. 188.
2. Laird Clowes, *The Royal Navy* (London 1898), Vol. III, p. 563.
3. See W. L. Clowes, *Royal Navy* (London 1898), Vol. III, pp. 549-564; Sen, *French in India*, pp. 226-272; Alfred Mahan, *Influence of Sea-power on History*.

The second encounter occurred on 12 April 1782 while the British fleet was making its way to Trincomalee for shelter. Suffren anticipating this move followed it. When the British fleet was approaching the eastern coast, Suffren blocked the way and forced Hughes to fight. Once again lack of co-operation on the part of his van deprived him of success, until a violent storm terminated action. The French retired to Batticaloa and the British to Trincomalee. The third action fought off Negapatam on 6 July was again inconclusive. The same tale of non-co-operation by the officers was repeated, but this time Suffren took stern action and repatriated three of the offending officers to France.

At the time of the fourth naval action, the fate of Trincomalee had already been decided for the second time. It is necessary to trace the chain of events which led to its capture by Suffren. This event was the crowning glory of Suffren's career in India.[1] To some extent Suffren's achievement was made possible by serious omissions on the part of the British themselves. It will be recalled that the expeditionary force sent from Negapatam was composed of rabble who were unfit to be given charge of the defence of a fort of such importance. This stricture was made by Hughes himself,[2] who felt that both in quality and quantity the garrison was unequal to its responsible task. The exact number of men in the garrison cannot be determined with accuracy owing to conflicting reports. From the time when Captain Bonneveaux assumed command of the garrison, he poured out a continuous tale of woe to the Governor about his difficulties.[3] Boyd personally drew the attention of Macartney to the plight of the commander.[4] He pointed out that the garrison was one third the number estimated as necessary for the defence of the fort and that there was no proportion of Europeans. Bonneveaux himself made representations on this subject to Macartney referring to the poor quality of the troops under his command for which he blamed the laxity of the recruiting officer at Negapatam.[5] He stated that one hundred and sixty of them were absolutely coolies. Bonneveaux's estimate of the defence requirements was that six companies would be wanted for Ostenberg, four companies for Trincomalee, and one company to protect the inhabitants. He complained about the conditions of the Fort stating that the Trincomalee defences had been badly planned, and wanted five thousand pagodas to set up earth works and temporary defences. He submitted that he would have to divide his troops equally between Ostenberg and Trincomalee, although he would have preferred

1. Richmond, *Navy in India*, Ch. IX.
2. Hughes to Macartney, 1. 1. 1782, *Select Com.* 22418.
3. Bonneveaux to Macartney, 23.1.1782, *Select Com.* 22418.
4. Boyd to Macartney, 23.1.1782, *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.* 33 above.

to abandon Trincomalee and concentrate on Ostenberg had the latter been in better condition. Macartney informed him in reply that reinforcements were being despatched.[1] Bonneveaux's troubles increased when on 22 April the squadron deposited the wounded and the sick from the encounter of 12 April at Trincomalee. They included several scurvy cases that died. The admission of these casualties imposed a severe strain on the already demoralised garrison. At one time there were six hundred sick ashore. Bonneveaux complained that his garrison was being harassed to death. The biggest difficulty was to obtain provisions, as the King had forbidden the supply of food to the garrison. Bonneveaux had to send daily foraging parties in search of food. In despair Bonneveaux recommended that the garrison should capture the districts previously held by the Dutch.[2] Macartney approved this proposal on 13 May, provided the Admiral agreed but, in the event of their annexation, he stipulated that the inhabitants should be treated with courtesy and no taxes imposed on them.[3] In the meantime Bonneveaux himself became a centre of controversy. Coote did not have a high opinion of him, but Macartney thought otherwise and felt that he had acquitted himself with distinction, but that he was misunderstood and should be transferred.[4] Bonneveaux's subordinate officers were giving him trouble and he had recommended the transfer of the officer in command of the artillery. A report originating from Trincomalee at this time observed that there was indiscipline among the troops and an acute food shortage, the stocks available being only sufficient till the end of August. In July Hughes gave his concurrence to Macartney's suggesiton to transfer Bonneveaux after making the reservation that the latter's unpopularity was due to the fact that he was a German. Bonneveaux's reputation was to be vindicated later as he rose to be Officer commanding in Ceylon until his untimely death in a curicule accident. Bonneveaux was replaced by Hay Macdowall who was described as an inexperienced officer of the Forty-second regiment. He brought with him reinforcements consisting of a company of the Forty-second regiment and one of the Ninety-eighth regiments amounting to two hundred in all.[5]

While Bonneveaux was complaining about his lot in Trincomalee, the Dutch Governor Falck on the other side of the island was in a similar state of anxiety. Falck had been alarmed by the threat of the proposed British expedition and he had sought assistance from Suffren with whom he was in correspondence. After the fall of Trincomalee

1. Macartney to Bonneveaux, 25.3.1782, *Select Com.* 22418.
2. Bonneveaux to Macartney 3.5.1782, *Select Com.* 22420.
3. Macartney to Bonneveaux, 13.5.1782, *Ibid.*
4. Macartney to Coote, 12.5.1782, *Ibid.*
5. Macartney to Bonneveaux, 29.7.1782, Select Com. 22421.

to the British, he urged Suffren to recapture it as the garrison there was weak. Falck, in fact, made preparations for such an undertaking.[1] He ordered a Malay regiment that was in Jaffna to stand by for a march on Trincomalee. On Suffren's departure from Porto Novo for his second naval encounter, the regiment actually set out and arrived within two days' march of Trincomalee. Suffren having left Porto Novo followed Hughes up to Trincomalee where he engaged him in battle. It does not seem as if at that stage Suffren had any designs on Trincomalee itself. After this encounter Suffren left Batticaloa to the dismay of Falck who thought he was being deserted. By now he had reason to be worried. He had learnt of Macartney's invasion plans from the intercepted Boyd papers. The Dutch in Ceylon were besides feeling the effects of the naval blockade. Falck even asked help from Hyder Ali. Suffren, however, had bigger things in mind being intent on the destruction of the English fleet rather than limiting himself to defensive actions and assured Falck that if the danger persisted, he would protect the security of the island. At that stage Suffren heard the news that two thousand English troops and five hundred sepoys were assembled in the southern districts.[2] He feared that their object was an attack on Ceylon. It is possible that Suffren's decision to give battle at Negapatam where he got the worst of the encounter may have been with a view to frustrate such a design.

Suffren so far had failed to attack Trincomalee, and this omission on his part was the subject of a letter which he had from Bussy while he was in Batticaloa expressing surprise that Trincomalee had not already been captured as a prelude to French operations in that theatre.[3] Suffren however was far from unmindful of the importance of Trincomalee, with Governor Falck there to remind him of it. His capture of the Boyd papers had told him what he wanted to know about the state of the garrison and British plans in Ceylon. Suffren's problem was that during this time his mind was distracted by other equally pressing considerations. His ships had suffered severely during the recent encounter. In April he wrote to Souillac for men and money, stating that "misery is so great here that even with merchandise it is difficult to procure money".[4] Moreover at this time Suffren was contemplating an attack on Negapatam. Being aware of the strained relations between Duchemin and Hyder Ali he hoped that such an action would reassure Hyder Ali whom he admired. Besides he was under the impression that the British fleet was still at Trincomalee, having retired to it after the last encounter, and that Negapatam could therefore be taken by surprise. When he appeared

1. Richmond, *Navy in India*, p. 230.
2. Richmond, *Navy in India*, p. 231.
3. Sen, *French in India*, p. 259.
4. Suffren to Souillac, Sen, *French in India*, p. 252.

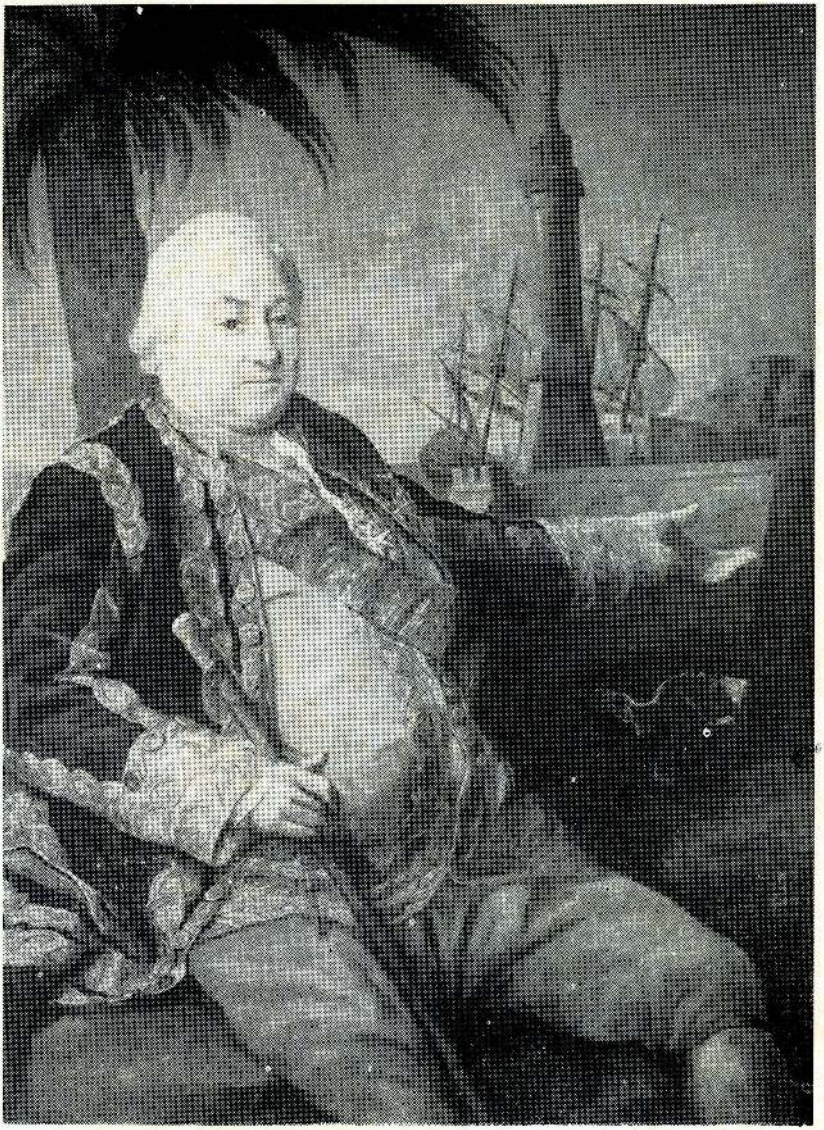
before Nepagatam in July however he was surprised to find it already there with the result that in the encounter which followed he was worsted and had to leave Negapatam without attempting its capture. The severe damage which this encounter inflicted on his fleet increased his difficulties. He wrote a desperate letter to Souillac stating that "it is not an easy affair to remain on the sea without money, without magazines, with a squadron very badly equipped in parts and after having sustained three battles".1 At that very moment De Launay, who had been sent by Bussy from Mauritius to contact him appeared with the good news that at detachment under D'Aymar consisting of two ships of the line and transports were on the way to join him in Batticaloa.2 Suffren was now in a position to proceed with his project for the capture of Trincomalee. The circumstances too favoured him as the English fleet was still at anchor at Madras. He left Cuddalore on 1 August and arrived at Batticaloa on the 9th where he was joined on the 21st by the squadron under D'Aymer which brought six hundred troops, munitions and provisions. On 25 August the combined fleet arrived before Trincomalee and anchored at the Bay. The troops disembarked on the 26th. Their landing was unopposed. They consisted of a battalion of the regiment De Lille de France, a detachment of the regiment D'Austria, of the Volontaire stranger de Lauzon, the Volontaires de Bourbon, six hundred sepoys and Malays, making a total it is estimated of two thousand four hundred men. The Baron d'Augolt was in command of the land forces which worked indefatigably to set up batteries. Three batteries were mounted. The work was conducted at top speed as Suffren was afraid that the British fleet would arrive at any moment. On the 27th the cannonade opened and at 11.30 a.m. a sally was attempted which was repulsed. The cannonade continued during the next three days and was directed on Fort Frederick. At 9 a.m. on the 30th the Fort was called upon to surrender. Two English officers came out to discuss terms but Macdowell was at first too demanding and wanted Ostenberg to be excluded from the surrender. This was refused and when the attack was about to be recommenced the Fort capitulated. The articles of capitulation consisting of eleven clauses were drawn up and signed on 30 August 1782 by Macdowall, Suffren and Baron d'Augolt. Ostenberg surrendered on the morning of the 31st. The total garrison in the Fort at the time of its surrender numbered four hundred Europeans and six hundred sepoys. On 2 September Suffren celebrated his victory with a dinner to which the English officers were invited. As they rose from the table, the English fleet came into sight.3

1. Suffren to Souillac, 30.7.1782, *Ibid.*, p. 257.
2. Suffren to Souillac, 30.7.1782, *French in India*, p. 258.
3. Fr. S. G. Perera, "French expedition against Trincomalee 1782", *Ceylon Antiquary*, Vol. V.

The inability of the English fleet to intervene in time was due in large measure to the negligence of Admiral Hughes who must, therefore, bear partial responsibility for the loss of Trincomalee. His last encounter with Suffren occurred on 6th July since when he had ample time to prepare for the defence of Trincomalee which he knew would be an object of attack by Suffren. After the battle at Negapatam he had retired to that harbour for refitting and from there to Madras. Admiral Richmond in his book thinks that Hughes should have repaired to Trincomalee to refit. Besides, Hughes was aware of the state of the garrison of Trincomalee. It is possible in fact that owing to the supply difficulties the Trincomalee garrison was deliberately kept at its reduced size and therefore really depended for its defence on the English fleet. Also Hughes had received ample warning of the movements of the French fleet.[1] He had been requested by Macartney to undertake pursuit of the French fleet before it could attack Trincomalee. This evoked a sharp reply from Hughes expressing resentment at the order. Macartney further brought to his notice a report from Bonneveaux to the effect that the latter had seen a fleet of ten sail on the 8th while returning from Trincomalee.[2] Besides, the two ships, the *Menmouth* and the *Sceptre*, which had conveyed the reinforcements to Trincomalee and returned on the 10th reported that Suffren was in the vicinity. Regardless of all these alarms Hughes lingered on in Madras collecting stores. It was not until the 21st, when he heard from the frigate the *Coventry* that it had encountered the French fleet at Batticaloa, did Hughes leave for Trincomalee. He arrived there forty-eight hours too late.

The blame must also be shared by the Fort Commander, Macdowall. The capitulation appears to have been premature. Fort Frederick had been able to withstand the cannonade for three days without too great damage and Ostenberg was comparatively unscathed. It is difficult to understand why they could not hold out any longer. It would seem as if Macdowall relied too much on conjecture without discharging to the utmost his duties as a soldier,[3] and assumed that the absence of Hughes implied his defeat at the hands of Suffren. He might therefore have capitulated hastily in the hope of getting the best possible terms. He realised his miscalculation too late. As against this it must be acknowledged that the fort was in a poor condition. Its administration was so bad that after the surrender it was found that the shot was in one fort and the powder in the other. A number of officers, including Bonneveaux, were to be court-martialled later for negligence. Still there is room to think that Trincomalee was capable of a better defence than it offered. The casualty figures on the British

1. Macartney to Hughes, 9.8.1782, *Select Com.* 22421.
2. Macartney to Hughes, 10.8.1782, *Ibid.*
3. Perera, "French Expedition", *C.A.*



ADMIRAL BAILLI DE SUFFREN

From the Portrait by Pompeo Baltoni

side which were fifteen killed, six officers and thirty men wounded, does not suggest a very determined resistance.

The Company's reaction to the fall of Trincomalee is conveyed in the following statement at a council meeting held on the 22nd September. "Failure of the Cuddalore expedition, the capture of Trincomalee, the exhausted state of our resources, the President is of the opinion that the affairs of the Company were never in a more critical state than they are at this moment."[1]

The appearance of Hughes before Trincomalee presented Suffren with an opportunity of removing the only remaining obstacle in the way of the French on the Coromandel coast. Besides, at that very moment, Bussy was on the way to join forces with Hyder Ali. Their junction could have sealed the fate of the south, provided the French had command of the sea. The attainment of this object too had been facilitated by their capture of Trincomalee, which was the key to the Bay of Bengal. Only Hughes had to be eliminated and he was now facing Suffren. The opportunity was too great to be missed but Suffren was having trouble with his Captains who were agitating to return to the languid ease of Mauritius. They had been furious when after the second naval encounter Suffren disobeyed the order to return to Mauritius and to escort Bussy's expedition. Suffren however decided to fight when the *Bellon*, sent out to reconnoitre, signalled that the English fleet consisted of twelve of the line because that gave Suffren who had fourteen ships of the line the advantage. Suffren himself said that the numerical superiority gave him no choice. But the decision was unpopular with the Captains who, as we shall see, had their revenge. On the third morning the French fleet sailed out into the Bay to meet the British fleet which was lying outside.[2] Suffren's intention was to employ his usual tactics and single out the van for concentrated attacks. He had signalled to his ships to get into formation and to open fire only when they had closed up. However, it was not until 2.30 p.m. that they got into line and this too very clumsily because two ships of the centre, the *Petit Hannibal* and the *Sphinx* had joined the van while the *Flamand* had attacked itself to the rear. The result of this was that there were only three ships at the centre, namely the *Heros*, *Illustre*, and *Ajax*, and they had to bear the brunt of the attack. Further, his ships seem to have misunderstood his signal to close in on the enemy because, when he fired a shot to draw attention to this signal, they took this to mean that they should open fire and opened their batteries at long range, which was precisely what Suffren did not want. The battle when it started became an

1. Meeting of the Select Committee, 22.9.1782, *Select Com.* 22422, and *Home Misc.* No. 161, f. 381, and Council of Bengal to Hughes, 25.9.1782, *Home Misc.* No. 161, f. 485, and Love, *Old Madras*, Vol. III, p. 262.

2. See Sen, *French in India*, pp. 226-272.

unequal contest between the outnumbered French centre and virtually the whole of the British fleet as the other sections remained at a distance. The rear sections had been ordered to engage the English tail but this they failed to do and three of them, the *Flamand*, *Hannibal* and *Bizarre*, remained inactive. Suffren's signal to Tromelin and de Segur to help went unheeded. But for the timely and heroic intervention of the *Artemis* Suffren might have been overwhelmed. As it is he received a terrific barrage and at one time the main mast of the *Heres* was shot down. Suffren's enthusiasm roused the men and he carried on even after he had exhausted his shot by firing blank powder charges. Five British ships, the *Beresford*, *Sultan*, *Superb*, *Isis*, and *Heros* were put out of action by the resistance offered by the French centre. At half past four the wind changed from S.W. to S.E. and this enabled the French vanguard to engage more purposefully in the fight. The tide now turned in favour of the French. The British ships already shaken by the courage of the French centre had to cope with seven comparative new comers from the French van which had so far kept out of the fight. Fortunately for the British night intervened. Both sides stole out in the darkness, the French to Trincomalee and the British to Madras.

The inconclusive outcome of this encounter was a turning point in the Anglo-French struggle. By failing to defeat Hughes before the arrival of Bickerton with reinforcements, Suffren lost the last opportunity of obtaining command of the sea and ensuring the success of Bussy's expedition. His only consolation was the possession of Trincomalee from which he could still give the Company anxious moments, particularly because at that very time Hughes was planning to leave for Bombay. As far as Ceylon was concerned, the encounter decided that Trincomalee remained French till the end of the war. Suffren won high praise for his conduct of the battle. English notices at the time remarked that his officers were unworthy of so great a man. One of the effects of the battle was that it saved Cuddalore. Coote had been advancing on it to effect a junction with Hughes but the Madras Council on seeing the state of Hughes squadron after its arrival in Madras hastily recalled Coote for the defence of Madras.

The course of events in India entered a new phase at the beginning of 1783 with the arrival in South India of Bussy's great expedition.[1] Although this event is, strictly speaking, outside the scope of this study some attention should be paid to it for the effect it was to have on the overall position of the British in India. Some historians like Malleson have expressed the view that Bussy's expedition came within an ace of accomplishing the overthrow of the British in India and that, but for the timely cessation of hostilities, the British empire in the south may have been lost. Malleson quotes the opinion of Professor

1. Sen, *French in India*, pp. 295-323.

Wilson,[1] viz, "It seems probable that but for the opportune occurrence of peace with France, the south of India would have been lost to the English". The annihilation of the army at Cuddalore would have been followed by the seige of Madras and there was little chance of defending it successfully against Tipu and the French." Malleson has called his book *A Suppressed Chapter of Anglo-French History* on the view that in the 1783 war the French had almost attained mastery over India. This view, however, overlooks the presence of Bickerton's squadorn, the exhausted state of Suffren's fleet, the resources which the British commanded in Bengal up to then untouched by the war and the overall strength of the British position in India. It also overlooks previous episodes in the history of British india when, faced with similar odds, the British had emerged triumphant. Such situations had existed in 1749, in 1781 and in 1782. The French operation was at the best an amphibious enterprise with overstretched lines of communication. They might have achieved initial success but to hold this would have been difficult without such resources as were commanded by the British. What might be said with fairness was that British dominion in the south had been reduced to a plight which it had rarely experienced before. One of the main elements in this predicament was the possession of Trincomalee by the French and the situation of vantage in which it placed the French to threaten British dominion in the south. It was this fact probably which drove home the potential of Trincomalee to the would-be master of India.

Trincomalee asserted its importance to the last. Even during the peace negotiations in India it was a focal point of the discussions on which their success depended.[2] Both sides being keenly aware of its significance wanted it. The French wanted to retain it as long as possible under the existing arrangement in which the French had military control and the Dutch were repsonsible for the civil administration. The Madras Company's desire was to divest the French of their hold over Trincomalee as early as possible and gain possession of it themselves. Bussy however was anxious to expedite restitution of the other territories, particular Pondicherry, as he was in financial difficulties without funds to maintain his establishments. Accordingly, even before he received news of the definite treaty, he began preliminary talks with the English representative at Pondicherry. News of the treaty reached them in 1784.

The terms of the definitive treaty complicated the negotiations. There was no mention in it of Trincomalee because at the time it was drawn up the news of its capture by the French had not reached Europe. The relevant provision in article 19 of the treaty merely stipulated the restitution of territories captured during the war. In terms of

1. Malleson, *Final French Struggles in India*, p. vii.
2. Sen. *French in India*, pp. 394-399.

this article therefore Bussy should have restored Trincomalee to the British. However, the Anglo-Dutch preliminary treaty provided for its return to the Dutch. Despite the obligation under article 19 Bussy hesitated to deliver Trincomalee to the British. He feared that once possessed of Trincomalee, the British would not restore it to the Dutch. He was anxious to retain it until the definitive treaty between Holland and British had been signed which would enable the double transfer from the French to the British and from the British to the Dutch to be simultaneous. Bussy therefore refused to give way to the British demands for immediate restitution of Trincomalee until receipt of instructions from France. Negotiations broke down on this point, but were resumed on an undertaking by Bussy that, if contrary instructions had not reached him by July 1784, he would hand over Trincomalee to the British. These instructions arrived in June and were to the effect that Trincomalee could be handed over to the British on condition of its immediate transfer to the Dutch. The British would not accept this and negotiations were again suspended. The question was finally resolved in January 1785 when official instructions arrived stipulating a double transfer of Trincomalee in terms of the Anglo-Dutch definitive treaty. But that time Bussy was dead.

It has been suggested that Bussy's delay prevented the British from gaining possession of Trincomalee.[1] Bussy suspected that Britain's insistence on its restoration to them was an indication of their desire to retain permanent possession. He confided this suspicion to Castries and Vergennes. This view however connot be reconciled with what actually transpired in the negotiations at Paris. These negotiations were conducted on the footing that Britain was in possession of Trincomalee. The fact that it was really not so would thus have weakened the case for its possession by Britian. Besides, in the course of the negotiations Britain had to face determined opposition from Vergennes and the Dutch negotiators to the cession of Trincomalee to them. In the circumstances the British negotiators recognised the impossibility of gaining Trincomalee and acceded to the suggestion of Vergennes that Negapatam should be accepted as an equivalent. This being the case one cannot see how Britian could have gained by foul means what they lost in fair dispute. It may be more true to say that the reason why Bussy blocked restitution of Trincomalee to the British was because of a hope which he himself entertained of retaining it for the French.[2] The proof of this lies in a memo which he had addressed to Castries in August 1784 on the subject of the desirability of finding a new center for French enterprise in Asia. It had been suggested that Pondicherry should be abandoned and a new capital established on the Malabar coast at either Karikal or Mahe. Bussy had rejected these alternatives

1. A. Martineau, *Bussy et l'Inde Francais* 1720-1785 (Paris 1935), p. 302.
2. Sen, *French in India*, p. 409.

on the grounds that Mahe was too small and would lead to French involvement in the affairs of the Marathas and Hyder Ali who were its neighbours. The proposal which Bussy made for which he cited the authority of two others was that Trincomalee was the most desirable site for the capital and that its cession should be negotiated with the Dutch.

CHAPTER V

THE PEACE OF PARIS 1784 AND AFTER

If there was one thing which the War of American Independence and the consequent Anglo-French war in Asia demonstrated, it was the importance of Trincomalee for the future of Britain in Asia. The desire to gain possession of this port was to dominate British policy from thereon and was the principal issue in Britain's relations with Holland between 1784 and 1795 when she finally attained her cherished objective.[1] We have seen how the implementation of the peace treaties in India was delayed by the question of the disposal of Trincomalee owing to the hesitation of the French to hand over to the British. Similarly in Europe it was one of the keys to the successful conclusion of the definitive treaty of Paris of 1783. As far as the settlement of Asia was concerned in the peace treaties, the powers principally interested in it were Britain, Holland and France. Their respective situations and policies at this juncture should therefore be considered in order to understand the conflict of interests that were involved in the peace negotiations.[2]

At the time of the termination of the European war, a new chapter in the history of British power in India had begun with the abolition of the diwani by Hastings. By this step, which the policy of Clive had anticipated, the Company assumed political responsibility and divested itself of the fiction of duel control.[3] This period also saw a corresponding assertion of the political authority of the British government[4] over the Company through the Regulating Act of 1774 and Pitt's India Bill of 1784 which subjected Company administration

1. V. T. Harlow, *The Founding of the Second British Empire* 1763-1793 (London 1952), Vol. I, p. 144, and Parkinson, *War in the Eastern Seas*, p. 12.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 312-313.
3. Dodwell, *Cambridge Shorter History*, Ch. V., pp. 597-617.
4. *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. V., Ch. XVIII, pp. 313-321.

to parliamentary control and vested the supreme government in Bengal, with responsibility for the other two presidencies. With this shift in the centre of gravity of British dominion to Bengal, the latter became the official seat of its power in India. This development proportionately enhanced the importance of Trincomalee to Britain because of its position as the key to the Bay of Bengal.[1] Hence its acquisition by Britain became essential to the security of the Indian Empire.

The War of American Independence was the fourth in the series of Anglo-Dutch wars but unlike its predecessors of the 17th century which had actually laid the foundations of the Dutch maritime empire, its effect on Holland's position in Europe and her empire were disastrous. Her ill-advised participation in the war was a departure from the policy of neutrality which circumstances had obliged her to pursue since the War of the Austrian Succession.[2] The result was that the Republic suffered crippling losses in shipping and in territorial empire.[3] She lost Negapatam and, for a while, Trincomalee, until it was recaptured by Suffren. Her other possessions in Ceylon narrowly escaped invasion. From the view point of the Dutch East India Company no event could have been more unwelcome, as these maritime losses and the financial burdens they imposed, coming at a time when it was already hard pressed trying to cope with its increasing territorial commitments, and when the economy of the home country was deteriorating, hastened its decline. In another sense, too, the fourth Anglo-Dutch war was a turning point for the Dutch Company in that for the first time in its history its territorial possessions in India became an object of hostile action by the English Company which until then, though resentful of its monopoly, had co-existed with it. From now on the English Company would cast covetous eyes on V.O.C. territory on the pretext that they impinged on its own vital interests. Within Holland the alliance with France caused a sharp increase in French influence which manifested itself through the anti-Organist patriots. Britain was alarmed by these developments which in her eyes was a serious threat to her continental and colonial interests in that the inviolability of the Low Countries was traditionally one of the tenets of her diplomacy. In retaliation she sought to insure herself against this danger through the seizure of Dutch territories.[4] At this time Dutch opinion was bitter against Britain. This was particularly true of mercantile circles in Amsterdam which had borne the brunt of the shipping losses in the American war. Their grievances were exploited by the Patriots whose strong hold was Holland and their

1. Parkinson, *War in the Eastern Seas*, p. 35.
2. Vide Ch. I.
3. Harlow, *Founding of the Second British Empire*, Vol. II, p. 367.
4. Harlow, *Second British Empire*, Vol. II, p. 368.

wrath was directed against the Stadtholder whose English connections identified him with Britain. The retaliatory measures resorted to by Britain against the Dutch as insurance for the protection of her own interests played into their hands. They served as useful propaganda to the patriots in spreading the view that Britain was deliberately hostile to Holland and intent on depriving her of her East Indies empire.[1]

The French government at this time appears to have been of two minds in its Asia policy.[2] On the one hand it was under pressure from French elements in India for a resumption of hostilities against the British, their argument being that although the attempt under Bussy had failed it had still come within an ace of success. They had the backing of De Castries, the anti-British French Minister of Colonies who was also their spokesman in the Cabinet. On the other hand, Louis XVI mindful of the country's financial predicament was averse to a repetition of the imperialistic adventures which had been responsible for this crisis. His concern was shared by Vergennes whose main objective at this time seems to have been to restore French commercial interests in India and exploit whatever headway she had made in the recent war to this end.[3] The objectives which Vergennes pursued during the peace talks suggested that he had in mind the adaptation of some of Dupleix's projects in the interests of exploiting French influence with native princes to promote trade, rather than as Dupleix visualised, political suzerainty.[4] Vergennes had also to contend with a move to promote a joint Franco-Dutch empire in which France would assume the defence responsibilities of the Dutch in the Indies.[5] The idea owed its inspiration to the Dutch Patriots themselves who, at that time, were bent on securing control of the Company.[6] Thus if one were to compare the attitudes of Britain, Holland and France towards the negotiations, it could be said that Britain's main preoccupation was to secure her dominion in India against threats of rival powers, that of Holland to protect her colonial empire from encroachment by the British and of France to exploit British losses in the recent war to promote her commercial interests overseas and generally strike a balance of power with Britain. It is no exaggeration to say that the question of Trincomalee was germane to the attainment of everyone of these objectives and this is the explanation for the important role which it played in the negotiations for the Peace of Paris and after.[7]

1. Harlow, *Second British Empire*, Vol. II, pp. 368-369.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 372-373.
3. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 317-318.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 313-322.
5. N. Tarling, *Anglo-Dutch Rivalry in the Malay World* 1780-1824 (Queensland 1961), p. 14.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Harlow, *Second British Empire*, Vol. I. p. 389.

To Britain it was essential for the security of her Indian Empire, to Holland it was an integral part of her maritime East Indies Empire and to France it was ideal as a naval base from which to launch an attack against British India or as a centre of a new maritime enterprise.

The negotiations which led to the Peace of Paris were conducted in London between Shelbourne personally and Rayneval, who was the special emissary of Vergennes to Britain, and in Paris between Vergennes and Fitzherbert, the British plenipotentiary in France. The final terms of the settlement were to a large extent the personal contribution of Shelburne and Vergennes. The political background of these talks should be borne in mind for a proper understanding of them. The outcome of the war found Britain in a predicament in which she had rarely been before. She had lost her American empire, barely saved the Indian empire and the whole of the world more or less was united against her. But for Rodney's victory at the battle of the Saints and the defence of Gibraltar by which Britain had asserted her naval invincibility her situation would have been critical indeed. Her tasks at the peace talk therefore were to preserve whatever she could out of the empire, restore her prestige and redress the balance of forces in Europe. That she achieved this finally was due to Shelbourne's skill as a negotiator and the way in which he played his opponents against each other.[1] In his handling of the negotiations, Shelbourne revealed the powers of statesmanship and intellectual acumen which could have made him an outstanding Prime Minister had not his belief in "measures not men" and his Bowater intellectualism made him an object of suspicion to his contemporaries.[2] As head of the anti-British coalition France under Vergennes wanted to pay back the ancient grudge she bore against Britain. By maintaining a united front among Britain's enemies he hoped to be able to dictate terms to Britain which would have achieved for France her own personal ambitions vis-a-vis Britain in the colonial and continental field. In this plan, however, he was out-manouvered by Shelbourne, who detached America into concluding a separate peace with Britain and also set up Spain against France over Gibraltar in lieu of which France had to cede Dominica to Spain. The time factor was also important as both Vergennes and Shelbourne wanted an early settlement due to the instability of their positions in their respective governments.[3] The success of the negotiations finally hinged on the settlement of the Indian question which was an important issue for France. Foiled in her military and naval offensive in India, France wanted at least to secure her presence in India through the acquisition of a network of commercial posts by means of which she could have promoted a trade empire in India making use of her influence with the native

1. Harlow, *Second British Empire*, Vol. I, pp. 312-408.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 312.
3. Harlow, *Second British Empire*, Vol. I. p. 387.

princes and her compatriots resident there. Pursuant to these ideas Rayneval fought bitterly for the restoration of the 1754 position of the French in India. Failing that he demanded the restitution of the trading settlements at Karikal, Pondicherry and Masulipatam with their adjoining territories up to an annual revenue limit of £500,000 to France. Britain, however, under the pressure of the Company, which was aghast at the idea, was unyielding and France had to be content with Pondicherry, Karikal and adjacent territories worth up to £ 30,000 in annual revenue.[1]

The defeat of these plans in India was a bitter pill for Vergennes. It lowered his stock in the eyes of his governmental colleagues, particularly De Castries who was pressing for a forward policy in India. He was obliged, therefore, as a matter of redeeming his reputation to ensure the success of the Dutch demand for the restitution of Trincomalee. This was impressed on him by De Castries on an occasion when after taunting him on the meagreness of the revenues that would accrue to France in India, he emphasised the importance in these circumstances of not yielding on Trincomalee.[2]

In the earlier stages of the discussions, the French had not shown any great enthusiasm over Trincomalee. Shelbourne in his first round of talks with Rayneval had expressed the hope that the French would not make a greater stand than decency required in favour of the Dutch.[3] At a later stage when discussing the strategic value of the Dutch possessions Shelbourne informed Rayneval that Britain wanted Trincomalee. Rayneval conveyed this to Vergennes, his words being "Mi Lord a montre une grande desire d'acquerir Trinquemale".[4] Neither side knew at this stage of its recapture by Suffren. In October 1782, however, Vergennes informed Fitzherbert in Paris in the strongest possible terms that France would insist upon the return of Trincomalee in view of its great importance and value owing to which it was imperative that it should be out of Britain's hands.[5]

The Paris side of negotiations over the Dutch possessions in Asia were at first conducted between Fitzherbert the British plenipotentiary and two Dutch plenipotentiaries Brantzen and Berckenroode. These talks however yielded no results owing to the obstinacy of the Dutch. Fitzherbert attributed this to the attitude of Brantzen on the grounds that he was the senior partner of the two and was devoted to the French and to the aristocratic party in Holland and hostile to

1. *Ibid.*, p. 372.
2. Harlow, *Second British Empire*, Vol.I p. 387.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 334.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 341.
5. Fitzherbert to Grantham, 3.10.1782, *F. O.* 27/3.

Britain.[1] Vergennes then intervened and a final settlement was reached after a series of meetings between him and Fitzherbert. Fitzherbert's initial instructions from Grantham regarding the Dutch possessions were that "should any of these possessions be withheld from the Dutch, I would humbly recommend the retention of Trincomalee and it would afford such a naval protection as no enemy in these seas could ever deprive of us." These instructions were really the conclusion of an elaborate brief on Ceylon which extolled the virtues of the Island describing it as a "kingdom of itself capable of the greatest improvements".[2] It referred to its cinnamon as the finest and sufficient in quantity to supply the consumption of Europe, Asia, Africa and America. The account drew attention to the military unpreparedness of the Dutch who had neglected to form proper magazines as they were not expecting an attack by the British. It also referred to the possibility of concluding an alliance with the King of Kandy who was a tributary of the Dutch under the 1766 treaty and was "groaning under their yoke and would readily join our forces on their appearing before Colombo". The emphasis in this brief was on Trincomalee which it describes as "one of the finest harbours in the world where three to four hundred ships may lie in the greatest safety—by possessing the harbour the greatest advantages may arise to us". These initial instructions suggest that Fitzherbert was to press for Trincomalee only if as a general principle certain Dutch possessions would be withheld from them in the Treaty. The British advanced this claim to Trincomalee presumably in the belief that at this time it was in their hands. The news had not reached them and indeed did not arrive until later that Trincomalee in fact had been recaptured by the French. If the truth were known earlier, the British may not have felt justified to press so hard for it.

At their opening meeting the Dutch plenipotentiaries insisted that as a preliminary Britain should grant security to their navigation according to the principles of the Armed Neutrality, and restitution of all possessions captured on the outbreak of hostilities.[3] Fitzherbert protested against the unreasonableness of these demands which Shelbourne himself in his talks with Rayneval had brushed aside as inadmissible, but the Dutch plenipotentiaries were adamant. At the conclusion of the opening talks Fitzherbert was pessimistic about a fruitful outcome.[4] The British government at first refused to consider claims for restitution of Dutch possessions in principle on the grounds that they were as illfounded as the similar demands of the Spanish at the opening stages of the peace negotiations. Grantham

1. Fitzherbert to Grantham, 29.11.1782, *F. O.* 27/3.
2. Grantham to Fitzherbert, undated, *F. O.* 27/3.
3. Fitzherbert to Grantham, 29.1.1782, *F. O.* 27/3.
4. Fitzherbert to Grantham, 29 .11.1782, *F. O.* 27/3.

was also emphatic that "our situation in India certainly renders the port of Trincomalee not only desirable but almost necessary to us" but at the same time he evinced curiosity over French interest regarding the Cape and justified Britain's interest in Trincomalee on the grounds that with the Cape in French hands it would be impolitic for the British to part with Trincomalee.[1] This statement suggested that at this stage British interest in Trincomalee was relative to French designs and Trincomalee was intended to be a make weight for possible French acquisition of the Cape. When Vergennes took Charge of the negotiations his object was to expedite finalisation of the peace treaties. He feared that any delay caused by the obduracy of the Dutch would upset the other delicate arrangements which he had so painstakingly contrived with Britain and Spain. The impeding financial crisis in France, a sense of his own insecurity in view of the hostility to him of detractors like de Castries, the knowledge of Shelbourne's own limited future in the English political scene gave him a sense of urgency and spurred him on to complete his labours.[2] His task however was not easy as he had to appease the Dutch on the one hand and restrain the British on the other. The chief obstacle in his way was disposal of Trincomalee and therefore his intervention really boiled down to an effort to persuade the British to return it to the Dutch. The argument which Vergennes employed was that the acquisition of Trincomalee by the British would be injurious to Dutch commercial interest and would in fact alarm all the other European nations that were engaged in the China trade.[3] Vergennes challenged Britain's right to Trincomalee, saying that if at all there was one power entitled to it, it should be France for the protection she had given to Holland.[4] He suggested, however, that as a measure of sympathy and gesture of kindness and compassion, Trincomalee should be returned to the Republic which had undergone so much hardship already.[5] According to Vergennes, the main objection of the Dutch to the cession of Trincomalee to the British was the fear that the latter might exploit this foothold to form a connection that would be fatal to their establishment in the island.[6] That the Dutch were not entirely incorrect in attributing such an intention to the British is proved by the reference to this possibility in in Fitzherbert's official brief. This fear was to obsess them throughout their negotiations with Britain over Trincomalee. British assurances that Trincomalee would, if given to them, be administered independent of the rest of their possessions, failed to impress them. The only solution was to dissuade Britain from insisting on Trincomalee and

1. Grantham to Fitzherbert 18.12.1782, *F. O.* 27/3.
2. Harlow, *Second British Empire*, Vol. I, pp. 389-392.
3. Fitzherbert to Grantham, 5.1.1783, *F. O.* 27/5.
4. Fitzherbert to Grantham, 28.12.1782, *F. O.* 27/5.
5. Fitzherbert to Grantham, 9.1.1783, *F. O.* 27/5.
6. Fitzherbert to Grantham, 5.1.1783, *F. O.* 27/5.

this is what Vergennes attempted when he proposed she should retain some other conquest "meaning I suppose Negapatam instead of this obnoxious port of Trincomalee".[1] The tenor of this remark indicated that from his point of view Trincomalee was an inconvenient obstacle which had to be put out of the way in order to expedite his treaties. In making this offer, however, it would seem as if Vergennes had been taken in by Britain's bluff because one cannot see the justification for it except purely as hush money to Britain. Britain's own claim to Trincomalee was of very doubtful validity because at that time she was not in physical possession of it. Besides, although Fitzherbert's initial instructions indicated that she was interested in Trincomalee, Grantham's subsequent statements showed that this interest was only relative to the designs of the French. In the earlier stages of the negotiations Fitzherbert had urged that Britain's claim to Trincomalee, was not out of any consideration of war expenses or desire to have it as a trophy but because of the advantage of its situation which rendered it necessary for the security of her possessions in India. His initial reply to Vergenne's offer of Negapatam was that it could never be considered as an adequate compensation for Trincomalee.[2]

This British government in the meantime was shifting its position. The stubbornness of the Dutch plenipotentiaries had convinced them of the impossibility of extracting cession of Trincomalee. At the same time paradoxically the very inflexibility of the Dutch suited their purpose because it was an assurance that they would themselves not want to deliver it to the French. Besides by this time the British government had learnt that the French would not retain control of the Cape and this had allayed their anxiety over French designs on the Dutch possessions. Although this point is not emphasised in Fitzherbert's instructions, it would appear that Britain's prime interest in Trincomalee was really to deny its use to the French. They would have liked to have it for themselves if possible but failing that they would agree to its retention by the Dutch. This would explain the subsequent instructions to Fitzherbert after he had earlier refused the offer of Negapatam which were to the effect that "if you are obliged to desist from Trincomalee, you will insist as strenuously for keeping Negapatam and procuring Demerara and Esquibo. If this cannot be obtained Negapatam alone. If not Negapatam Demerara and Esquibo are the least which can satisfy the King's just demand for retaining something from one of his enemies".[3] This statement throws further light on the motives of the British regarding the restitution of the Dutch colonies because it reveals the presence of an element of prestige and vindictiveness. In the light of this it does not seem as if

1. Fitzherbert to Grantham, 5.1.1783, *F. O.* 27/5.
2. Fitzherbert to Grantham, 9.1.1783, *F. O.* 27/5.
3. Grantham to Fitzherbert, 9.1.1783, *F. O.* 27/5.

the acquisition of Dutch territory was a strict strategic requirement for Britain at this juncture but was more in the nature of a sacrificial offering. However, it was too late to retract now because Vergennes by his offer of Negapatam had played into Britain's hands. Vergennes still was not agreeable to the British proposal which exceeded his offer and replied that Demerara and Esquibo were out of the question and that the Dutch might consider Padang or Negapatam alone as possible substitutes.1 The deal was finally closed on the cession of Negapatam to the British against the wishes of the Dutch who showed their displeasure by not signing the definitive treaty.

These negotiations for the settlement of Dutch possessions in India in the peace treaties are thus a glaring example of the operation of the policy of compensatory restitution as it was practised by European powers in the latter half of the 18th century for the settlement of their colonial and continental disputes. It was a system in which peace treaties between great powers were effected on the basis of the exchange of colonial territories, where necessary, at the expense of the colonial possessions of weaaker powers. In this instance, Holland was the unfortunate victim of such a bargain struck between Vergennes and Britain for the satisfaction of their particular objectives. The coveted object of Britain among the Dutch possessions in Asia was no doubt Trincomalee, but the cession of Negapatam was to become useful subsequently as it was employed as a lever to press for the retrocession of Trincomalee.

The peace settlement of 1784 terminated the European conflict but it failed to heal the rift between Britain and Holland. In the years immediately following it the name of Britain became anathema to the Dutch public at large. This was due to several factors. Britain's acquisition of Negapatam was an unconscionable act for which there was no justification and which was not calculated to generate goodwill. It had been inspired purely by motives of prestige and vindictiveness against the Dutch. The acquisition of Trincomalee could at least have been justified on sound strategic grounds but this was not true of Negapatam which was accepted, as the second best, as a face saving formula. If Britain's intention in acquiring Dutch colonial territory was to have some insurance against future Dutch hostility Negapatam scarcely served this purpose.

The sacrifice of Negapatam added fuel to the flames that were already blazing over the heavy maritime losses which the Dutch had suffered, particularly the mercantile community in Amsterdam, as a result of British naval action.2 It was felt that these losses had been deliberately inflicted by the British, in an unjust war forced upon the

1. Fitzherbert to Grantham, 13.1.1783, *F. O.* 27/5.
2. Harlow, *Second British Empire*, Vol. II, pp. 368-369.

Dutch as a punishment for asserting the rights of neutral trade which to them as a trading nation were essential. These feelings which were particularly rampant in Holland provided an ideal setting for the activities of the Patriots in their efforts to overthrow the Stadtholder and substitute French for British influence in Holland. The French were likewise able to exploit the situation to further their own influence, making use of the Patriots who were their willing instruments. A situation thus developed in the republic in the immediate postwar years in which the Patriots attempted to assert themselves at the expense of the English and pave the way for their patrons the French to establish a political stranglehold over the country. One of their moves in this direction was to seize control of the V. O. C. taking advantage of its financial situation which one of its directors described as impoverished and destitute of resources.[1] Their plan was to transfer authority from the seventeen to the fifth department consisting of six deputies who would reside at Amsterdam and handle Company affairs. By this means they intended to eliminate the veteran directors, many of whom were pro-British, and replace them with their own representatives as the first step towards bringing the Company under French control.[2] The Patriots even envisaged a Franco-Dutch defensive alliance under which France would be responsible, for the defence of Dutch overseas possessions.[3] Vergennes, however, was not prepared to go that far. The directors, however, were blackmailed into accepting the reform scheme by the threat that otherwise no further loans would be sanctioned. Some powers, notably Zeeland, opposed it vehemently.

The ascendancy of the Patriots and the unpopularity of Britain was a triumph for France in Holland. It culminated in the conclusion of a defensive alliance between the republic and France in November 1785. In certain respects France showed restraint in exploiting her chance when Vergennes discouraged the enthusiastic offer of the Patriots that France should take over virtual managment of the Company. This revealed a clash of opinion between Vauguyon, the advocate of a forward policy in Holland, and Vergennes, who preferred a commerical alliance, fearful perhaps that too much influence in Holland might rebound back on France in the way it had happened to Britain. At the same time there is evidence to suggest that the French had military designs in Asia which they intended to further through the Dutch possessions. In December 1785 the States General was urging the V. O. C. to reinforce the Cape with 4,000 men and Trincomalee with 3,000 thereby increasing the number of European officers at these stations from one hundred to a thousand.[4] In March 1786

1. Harris to Carmarthen, 13.1.1786, *F. O.* 37/10.
2. Harris to Carmarthen, 27.1.1786, *F. O.* 37/10.
3. Tarling, *Anglo-Dutch Rivalry*, p. 14.
4. Harris to Carmarthen, 13.12.1785, *F. O.* 37/9.

preparations were reported to send four ships of the line and four frigates with as many troops as possible to Asia under the direction of Monsieur de Collieri who had made it known that this was to be part of a French design in Bengal.[1] In August 1786, France was urging the Republic to increase its forces in Asia to fourteen thousand men to which they would be contributing five thousand men under the command of the Rhinegrave de Salm who would become Commander-in-Chief of operations in Asia.[2] In October 1787, Harris forwarded several documents purporting to give details of an elaborate French plan to resume the offensive against the British in India.[3] It was to be a joint Franco-Dutch operation in which troops were to be hired from the Duchy of Wurtemberg, and they together with the legion of Luxembourg which had been transferred from Colombo on the pretext of mutiny would all assemble in Cochin. They would form part of a force of six thousand men who would be placed at the disposal of four princes of the Malabar in a plan which was similar to the one attempted between the French and Tipu Sultan. St. Lubin and a Dutchman, Horman, were to negotiate the treaty with the Indian princes. The plan it would appear failed to materialize because of the death of Vergennes. One of these documents contained an appreciation of Trincomalee written in terms which suggests that the use of Trincomalee was envisaged in the plan. It described Trincomalee as having the most advantageous situation in the whole of Asia and the best facilities to harbour the biggest fleet and in addition it is a base for any enterprise directed against the Coromandel coast, the mouth of the Ganges and Bengal. It is difficult to distinguish here between fact and fiction because most of these reports emanated from Harris and pro-British Directors who had a vested interest in painting the subject in the darkest colours possible,[4] but when taken in conjunction with the later Conway expedition, these reports definitely prove the existence of a bellicose group in the French government which was bent on using the influence they had acquired in the Republic to gain control of Dutch overseas territories and employ them to further their military ambitions in Asia.

The situation in Holland between 1784 and 1786 thus posed a serious threat to Britain's continental and overseas interests because of this collusion between Holland and France and her sunbservience to French wishes. The key to the situation was Holland's susceptibility to French pressures which was due in the opinion of many to the character of the Stadtholder. Harris particularly held him entirely responsible for the situation judging by his statement that "if the Prince of Orange possessed manly virtues or if those who called them-

1. Harris to Carmarthen, 7.3.1786, *F. O.* 37/10.
2. Harris to Carmarthen, 4.8.1786, *F. O.* 37/11.
3. Harris to Carmarthen, 5.10.1787, *F. O.* 37/19.
4. Harlow, *Second British Empire*, Vol. II, p. 373.

selves Stadtholder were not a composition of dullness, timidity and indolence something might still be effected but there is no working with such fools and misfortune may attend him who attempts to use them."[1] Harris was unduly underrating his own powers which as events showed were to prove superior but there is substance in this view that the situation in large measure reflected the deficiencies of the Stadtholder. At a time when the need was for resolute leadership Holland had in William V a Stadtholder who was weak and irresolute, incapable of being master in his own Royal household, let alone guiding the nation through one of the most critical phases in its history.[2]

Britain in the meantime had been fully alive to the implications of these developments in Holland and one of the measures to which she had recourse to combat them was the appointment of James Harris as British Minister to The Hague in December 1784. Harris had already acquired a name for himself as Britain's ablest career diplomat having served with distinction at Madrid, Berlin and St. Petersburg. He had become a legendary figure for his proficiency in the techniques of Baroque diplomacy and as the epitome of the model diplomat endowed as he was with all the attributes considered essential for that role. He was handsome, suave, plausible and a master of intrigue. He was a perfect Augustan figure with the right blend of the Beau Brummel and the wit. He had dazzled the courts where he had served with his charm and also embarrassed them by his playboyish reputation for casanovism at high places. His very self-confidence, however, made him unreliable and inclined to knavery. He did not scruple to mislead his Foreign Ministry which he secretly despised when his personal prestige was at stake even if this meant a sacrifice of his country's interest. He would gloss over inconvenient facts to make a case look plausible, and there were no limits to what he would do to gain his ends whether by way of cajolery, mendacity, flattery or sheer bullying. The consequence invariably was that he evoked the mistrust of all parties concerned. His high spirited diplomacy and individualistic methods might have paid off a century before, but in an age of Foreign Ministries and popular regimes he was a liability. To some extent the Foreign Ministry was to blame for having allowed him such latitude. The fault lay partly with Carmarthan, the Foreign Secretary, who was an easy going philanderer susceptible to Harris's blandishments couched as they were in the flattering mellifluous prose of which he was a master. By failing to assert his authority when appropriate he allowed himself to be led by Harris. The history of the diplomatic initiatives on which Harris embarked as British Minister at this crucial time is an illuminating commentary on the impact of personality and the techniques of

1. Harris to Carmarthen, 26 5.1786, *F.O.* 37/11, and *Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris*, Vol 2. p. 38.

2. A. B. C. Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents* (London 1954), Ch. I.

diplomacy on the fortunes of states. One of the major issues in his negotiations was the question of Trincomalee and it is in this connection that Harris finds a place in the history of the advent of the British to Ceylon. On this, as on several other occasions, he was a determining factor in this history to which he thereby added the lustre of his name.

Needless to say the situation in Holland on his appointment was one after his own heart, rich in the opportunities for intrigue in which he revelled. His initiatives divide themselves into two fields; political and commerical.[1] In the political field he set himself to counteract the Patriots by organising the pro-Orangist elements in the country against them. With this in view he sought to canvass the help of Orangist supporters like Zeeland and mobilised opinion in favour of the Stadtholder. His initial object was to prevent the conclusion of the defensive alliance with France but in this he failed. His chance came however in 1787 when the timely accession of Frederick William and the death of Vergennes combined with his hold over Priness Wilhelmina and the activities of the underground organisation which he had bribed into his service made possible the coup of September that year in restoration of the Stadtholder.[2] It neutralized French influence, scattered the Patriots and reinstalled British influence in the country.

This revolution which Harris contrived was at best a political arrangement without any roots in the wishes of the nation at large. Shorn of its trappings it amounted to an imposition of foreign rule. It was necessary therefore if it was to endure that it should be broad based and reconciled to the country. This could mainly be done by a treaty which would have legitimised it and made it respectable.[3] The possibility of coming to such an understanding by which the British would gain a foothold in the Republic had been considered as early as 1784 before the Patriots had established their ascendency in collusion with the French. The approach at that time was however commercial. Harris had been instructed to scout the possibility of a final and well digested arrangement of commercial union between the two countries.[4] The offer in fact had been welcomed by a section of the V. O. C., one of whom, Boers, an ex-Director, discussed it with Harris and showed great enthusiasm for it.[5] Boers represented the pro-British and pro-Orangist section of the Company which feared the possibility of a take over of the Company by the Patriots acting on the instructions of the French. The proposals made by Boers was that Britain should furnish the V.O.C. with a loan which would enable them to

1. Harlow, *Second British Empire*, Vol. II, pp. 375-376.
2. Harlow, *Second British Empire*, Vol. II, p. 381.
3. Tarling, *Anglo-Dutch Rivalry*, p. 23.
4. Carmarthen to Harris, 12.11.1785, *F. O.* 37/9.
5. Harris to Carmarthen, 27.1.1786, *F. O.* 37/10.

tide over their bankruptcy and thereby forestall the efforts of the Patriots to use this as an excuse for a take over. An even bolder offer was made by the Grand Pensionary of Zeeland, van der Spiegal, who proposed that Zeeland should amalgamate itself with Britain and secede from the union as he felt that the establishment of the fifth committee would mean the disjunction of the Company. Ven der Speigel saw many advantages accruing to Britain by accepting it, including use of the port of Flessique, the only one capable of admitting warships and control of which enabled a watch to be kept on the Texel, the availability of Esquibo and Demerara to Britain. Van der Spiegel described this offer as inviting Britain to do for Zeeland what France was doing for Holland.[1] This particular offer Britain felt nervous about accepting but even the request for a loan fell through on Britain's insistence on a suitable guarantee in return.[2] The specific form of the guarantee however was not stipulated.

The enthusiasm evinced by these Dutch elements for British help was thus not reciprocated by the British government in spite of the rapid takeover of the Company by the pro-French Patriots. Britain, it appears, had concluded that the situation at that stage did not lend itself to solution by this means. Harris thought that "I fear that instead of endeavouring to secure the friendship of the V.O.C., we must awe them into respect by making them feel our power in the East".[3] Accordingly Harris concentrated on his political solution. After the revolution was accomplished the British reverted to the idea of an alliance as the means by which they could consolidate their foothold and convert it into a permanent connection. This idea had the blessing of Grenville on the basis of a conversation which he had with Boers on his visit to Holland in August 1787. Grenville had considered whether Britain should help the Dutch to resist French encroachments on the Company and if so in what way. If Britain helped, what compensation she would have. His answer was "one's mind turns at once to Trincomalee".[4] Grenville however appreciated that any desire which Britain showed for Trincomalee would alarm the Dutch into thinking that the British had designs on the spice trade.

At the time when Britain revived the idea of a defensive alliance following the revolution the French menace in India appeared to have revived. It was at this juncture that Harris as proof of this produced his disclosure of documents purporting to be a French plan for an offensive in India which would have involved the use of Trincomalee. Britain's conception of the proposed defensive alliance was that it should be a general treaty of friendship with a view "to cement

1. Harris to Carmarthen, 26.5.1786, *F. O.* 37/11.
2. Harlow, *Second British Empire*, Vol. II, p. 377.
3. Harris to Carmarthen, 14.2.1786, *F. O.* 37/10.
4. Grenville to Dundas, 27.8.1787, Dropmore papers, Vol. I. p. 279.

and confirm the friendship and harmony which happily subsist between them".[1] The terms which Britain proposed accorded with this intention and included firm friendship between them in every part of the world, mutual defence, guarantee of the constitution of the United Provinces against European powers, arrangement for mutual defence and assistance in the event of an attack by a third power.[2] The Dutch, however, while they reciprocated Britain's desire for a defensive alliance, wanted to derive maximum commercial advantage from it as the price of their consent and proposed two additional articles namely most favoured nation treatment, return of Negapatam and revocation of article six of the Peace of Paris 1784, giving freedom of navigation to Britain in the Indies.[3] Thus the Dutch wanted the proposed treaty to be literally a new deal which would be a return to the status quo ante bellum in respect of the position of the V.O.C. This meant a complete cancellation of the terms detrimental to Dutch interests in the Peace of Paris which they regarded as an act of spite and vindictiveness by the British against the Dutch.

The British Government did not think that these specific matters should be the subject of a general defensive alliance as they could be more appropriately dealt with in a separate convention but all the same they referred it to the India Board for report.[4] At the same time Britain indicated that their consent to such a comprehensive agreement would be conditional on their obtaining a suitable return and Harris was instructed to prepare the ground for this which would be in the form of a "qualified possession or use of the port of Trincomalee as may at all times secure its use for the British and deny it to Britain's enemies".[5] The stage was thus set for the great dialogue for Trincomalee with the Dutch requesting revocation of the discriminatory articles in the Peace of Paris and Britain demanding Trincomalee as the price for it.

The negotiations which resulted were conducted by Harris on the British side acting on the instructions of Carmarthen and on the Dutch side by a special group of Commissioners prominent among whom was the Grand Pensionary of Holland, van der Spiegel. These negotiations were to last till the end of 1788 and it is therefore necessary at this stage to examine the motives and objectives of either side in these talks.

Britain's object in the talks was primarily to regain the friendship of Holland and to restore the ancient alliance to the exclusion of the French. She would have liked to make any reasonable sacrifice for

1. Carmarthen to Harris, 12.10.1787, *F. O.* 37/19.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Harris to Carmarthen, 9.11.1786, *F. O.* 37/20.
4. Carmarthen to Harris, 28-11-1787, *F. O.* 37/20.
5. Carmarthen to Harris, 28.11.1787, *F. O.* 37/20.

the achievement of these objectives but at the same time she was mindful of the security needs of the Indian Empire, and the relationship to it of Dutch possessions in Asia. Britain indeed was torn between wanting to placate the Dutch without at the same time endangering her security. Many felt that the qualified possession or use of Trincomalee was essential to Britain's security in view of the real danger which had been demonstrated more than once before that the French would gain possession of it and use it as a launching pad for an attack against British India. Official opinion, however, was divided both on the necessity of obtaining Trincomalee and the form the control should assume. Harris himself seemed to be innocent of any particular views on the subject and if at all appeared to sympathize with the views of his host. The decision really rested with Grenville and Dundas and they held opposite views. Grenville was adamant on the necessity of having Trincomalee but Dundas advocated a policy of magnanimity and sacrifice by Britain in the first instance, with a view to the restoration of trust and harmony in the context of which some arrangement over Trincomalee might be workable in the future.[1] As to the specific form of control the choice seemed to be its qualified possession or use as a naval station. It was acknowledged that outright possession was impolitic and impossible to obtain for the fear this would have aroused among the Dutch over the spice monopoly. The formula of qualified possession was therefore proposed in the hope that it would allay any Dutch fears that the British had aggressive designs on Trincomalee and Dutch possesions in the Indies. Britain wanted it understood by the Dutch that their interest in Trincomalee was exclusively to protect their own possessions and that of the Dutch. The pressure for a form of control over Trincomalee really seemed to have been applied on the British government by the East India Company. This is also the reason why it was opposed by Dundas who frankly disapproved of the Company's monopoly and contemplated its dissolution.[2] The pressure exerted by the Company and the reason for this will be considered later. Another factor which weighed with the British at this time was the Far Eastern trade with China to protect which they were on the look out for convenient bases and staging posts from which the China convoy should be covered. The interest in Trincomalee was also tied up with the search for trading posts through which an entrepot regional trade could be developed and barter items for the purchase of Chinese goods like tea could be obtained without having to pay precious specie.[3] There was a campaign at this time in mercantile circles against the drain of specie from England for the China trade. The demand for Rhio that was made by the Com-

1. Treaty with the Dutch, *Dutch Records* A, Vol. 27.
2. Dundas to Grenville, 29.9.1786, Dropmore Papers, Vol. I, P. 268.
3. Harlow, *Second British Empire*, Vol. I, pp. 63-68.

pany during the negotiation shows the influence of this factor. Thus the Dutch negotiations also got caught up with Britain's plans for the establishment of a second empire, maritime in form, based like the Estado and the V. O. C. on the control of regional trade operating through a network of points rather than through territorial control. The quest for Borneo, the Mindanao project, the South Sea project, Dalrymple's efforts at Balambagan, were all episodes in this search for trade outlets and naval bases through which to foster and guard Britain's expanding Far Eastern trade.[1]

While the possession of Trincomalee in a qualified form was thus considered to be a vital interest for the Indian empire and the China trade the early conclusion of a defensive alliance was no less important owing to its European implications. Britain could not afford to allow Prussia to beat her to it and besides, it was essential that it should be concluded before the French resumed the initiative and raised objections to it on the basis of their own defensive alliance with the Rupublic which in certain respects militated against such a project.[2]

Dutch opinion on the need for a treaty also varied between the various sections of the nation. Its staunchest advocate was van der Spiegel, the Grand Pensionary. He was the same Grand Pensionary of Zeeland who had in 1785 proposed the amalgamation of Zeeland with Britain. He like Boers represented the old generation, the pro-British section of the V. O. C., whose position had been jeopardized by post war developments.[3] Their interest in a British alliance was primarily in order to sustain and safeguard their own position in the Company and in the country. Their motives were patriotic to the extent that they felt that the spread of French influence would result in the complete subordination of the Republic to French ambitions and in this they were right, as proved by events between 1784 and 1786. At the same time van der Spiegel was mindful of the positive advantages which would accrue to Holland by obtaining a share of Britain's eastern trade. This was the only means by which the Company could be restored to solvency short of sell out to the French. The obstacle in the way of achieving this object was Britain's insistence on Trincomalee. This demand was a highly inconvenient one because, even if van der Spiegel and his group were prepared to accede to the British request, such a concession would have been totally unacceptable to the rank and file and would have seriously compromised their own position.[4] The problem which they and the British had to contend with was that the Dutch nation at large was hardly enamoured

1. Tarling, *Anglo-Dutch Rivalry*, pp. 4-6.
2. Carmarthen to Harris, 21.12.1787, *F. O.* 37/20.
3. Renier, *The Dutch Nation*, p. 236.
4. Harris to Carmarthen, 18.12.1787, *F. O.* 37/20.

of a British alliance embittered as they were by painful recollections of the suffering inflicted on them by Britain in the American War. The mercantile community in Holland had been especially hard hit. On the top of that had come the loss of Negapatam to the British, which added insult to injury and was regarded as an act of gross vindictiveness by the British. These circles felt that if the British genuinely wanted their friendship, it was for them to make some sacrifice and certainly not to make any further demands. In these circumstances, the grant of Trincomalee was out of the question.

There were besides some local reasons for this reluctance. It was feared that the British would use their foothold in Trincomalee to ally themselves with the Kandyan King who was looking for an opportunity to overthrow the Dutch. They also feared for the spice monopoly in the context of article six of the Peace of Paris which had conceded to the British for the first time access to their preserve. These circles felt that Dutch consent to a defensive alliance alone should be a sufficient return to the British for the revocation of article six and the return of Negapatam. The British position as we have seen was that this could be given only for the qualified possession or use of Trincomalee. As regards the security value of Trincomalee for the British the Dutch maintained that the provisions for casus foederies in the defensive alliance of 1787 were quite sufficient to permit its use by the British in the time of war without placing it in their charge during peace time as well.[1] The British argument was that the financial state of the Company made it impossible for it to keep Trincomalee in a properly fortified state.[2] It would thus fall an easy prey to an invasion launched by the French from Mauritius. The British also maintained that the proposed occupation would be exclusively a military one confined only to the Trincomalee roads and harbour, totally excluding the city which would be under Dutch jurisdiction. Trade with the hinterland would be prohibited and every guarantee would be given against interference with Dutch trade or administration. The Dutch, on the other hand, greatly feared the psychological impact of the cession of Trincomalee and its possible repercussion on the Kandyan King. Not all the British assurances could allay their anxiety on this point. Van der Spiegel was sincere about these objections which he could not overlook as by doing so he would have compromised his own position. A reconciliation between the two parties thus seemed impossible so long as the British persisted in their demands for Trincomalee.

In response to Carmarthen's request, at Pitt's suggestion,[3] for the observations of the India Board on van der Spiegel's proposals for two additional articles, the Board submitted a draft treaty, the

1. Harris to Carmarthen, 11.12.1787, *F. O.* 37/20.
2. Carmarthen to Harris, 21.12.1787, *F. O.* 37/20.
3. Pitt to Grenville, 4.10.1785, *Dropmore Papers*, Vol. I, p. 257.

gist of which was that in return for British acknowledgement of the Dutch spice monopoly, the return of Negapatam and the revocation of article six of the Peace of Paris, Holland "cedes and guarantees all interests and claims of rights which they have in Rhio and do cede and guarantee in full the town, road and harbour of Trincomalee to the distance of three miles inland".1

In justification of this demand, it was argued in the abstract of the draft treaty that the necessity to have Trincomalee arose from the inability of the Dutch to defend themselves, that action under the defence alliance would take time, that a modest European force supplied by Britain would be adequate for its defence and that the continuance of the present ruinous connection will make Trincomalee an object of attack.2 The ruinous connection referred to was the possibility of the recurrence of French influence in Holland as a result of which Trincomalee would automatically fall into French hands. This fear was basic to Britain's desire for Trincomalee. Britain offered the guarantee of absolute renunciation of all trading rights in Ceylon. The signatories to the draft treaty which was drawn up by Mulgrave were Grenville, Dundas and Mulgrave. The individual reports submitted in this connection showed the difference of opinion which prevailed between Dundas and the others on the question of Trincomalee. Dundas appears to have been overruled because his plea for magnanimity and clemency towards the Dutch found no place in draft treaty. This draft clearly reflected the views of the diehards in the English East India Company. It must also have been influenced by company reports in circulation at the time notably the report on the Dutch spice trade by Captain Forrest, on the tempting opportunities open to British traders in the area of the Dutch spice monopoly.3 It spoke of the universal detestation in which the Dutch were held by the native princes whom they had crushed by their cruel monopoly, whose lands they had devastated and who were therefore waiting for an opportunity to ally themselves with the English. The report cited impressive statistics of the trade potential. The Dutch sold a chest of opium to the natives for 700 Spanish dollars but the English could charge 250 or 300. The Dutch paid 5 Rix dollars for 142 lbs. of pepper but the British paid 12 Rix dollars for 133 lbs. The report concluded that it is in the Company's power to divert the whole of these emoluments from the hands of the Dutch into their own by becoming the carriers of traffic with eastern merchants.

In reply to the draft treaty, the Dutch were adamant that under no circumstances would they accede to the cession of Rhio or Trinco-

1. Treaty with the Dutch, *Dutch Records*, A, Vol. 27, I.O.L.
2. Carmarthen to Harris, 21.12.1787, *F. O.* 37/20.
3. Captain Thomas Forrest, *Voyage to New Guinea and the Moluccas from Balambagan* (London 1790).

malee. No commercial gains they said could compensate for these losses. Rhio they stated was the key to the straits of Malacca and Trincomalee commanded the Indies. Van der Spiegel was again emphatic about Trincomalee and said that the very idea had produced a degree of alarm and uneasiness.1

Britain by now was also coming round to this view and appreciating the impossibility of extracting this concession for the purposes of the defensive alliance. As an alternative Britain proposed the relegation of these subjects to a separate convention without reference to it in the general alliance but this too the Dutch opposed, insisting that it was important that reference must be made to Negapatam because otherwise it would be impossible to justify the treaty to the Dutch public. Harris by now was himself a convert to van der Spiegel's views and strongly recommended their acceptance to Carmarthen. He described van der Spiegel as too upright a man to deceive him and fully accepted the sincerity of his plea that only on the terms which he proposed could the defence alliance be concluded. Harris admitted to Carmarthen that "I am reluctantly obliged to confess that I consider matters nearly in the same light".2 Van der Spiegel further played on British fears that delay would revive the hope of the pro-French party and that the Berlin treaty, had already been concluded. He assured them that for his own part he accepted the justness of the British demands for Trincomalee but that his own difficulty was to convince his colleagues, particularly the Regents who were influential in Amsterdam, and who would use any excuse to prevent the treaty.3 He therefore besought Britain as a personal favour to him to accede on these points and accept his version of article eleven which provided for the return of Negapatam, revocation of article six, recognition of the Dutch spice monopoly without any specific mention of Trincomalee.4 Harris endorsed his sentiments to the full personally vouching for the truth of Van Der Spiegel's statements about the pertinaciously obstinate and illiberally suspicious Regents.5 Van der Spiegel gave him a guarantee that with article eleven in that form the treaty was a certainty and Harris informed Carmarthen accordingly stating in categorical terms that "treaty will pass with the article; without it, it will not".6 Harris seemed to have been completely taken in by van der Spiegel's sincerity if one is to judge from his statement that "he spoke with a degree of feeling which I never recollect to have seen in any person".

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1. Harris to Carmarthen, 4.1.1788, *F. O.* 37/21.
2. Harris to Carmarthen, 12.2.1788, *F. O.* 37/21.
3. Harris to Carmarthen, 12.2.1788, *F. O.* 37/21.
4. Harris to Carmarthen, 22.2.1788 , *F. O.* 37/21.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Harris to Carmarthen, 25.2.1788, *F. O.* 37/21.

Under the combined pressure of van der Spiegel and Harris the British government now began to yield though with the utmost reluctance and the issue now hung on the formulation of a suitable draft of article eleven which would be mutually acceptable. Van der Spiegel submitted a fresh draft according to which Britain would undertake to treat with the States General for the restitution of Negapatam, she would desist from taking advantage of article six and recognise the spice monopoly of the Dutch in return for which she would not demand anything other than what would be conducive to their mutual interest.[1] Specific reference to Trincomalee was thus excluded from the draft. Carmarthen accepted the draft at the persuasion of Harris and because as he said he preferred to accept a modified version rather than break off negotiations.[2] However, in his instructions to Harris, he made an important reservation to the effect that this approval was being given only on the supposition that it would enable van der Spiegel and the pro British-group to facilitate acceptance of the further measures, and that it would induce the Dutch nation ultimately to agree to cede Trincomalee as an equivalent for the concessions that Britain was now making.[3] Carmarthen's instructions to Harris made it clear that Brtiain would accept the modified article only on this understanding which would be without prejudice to her desire to have Trincomalee in due course. However, even at the eleventh hour, in spite of Britain's acceptance, the treaty encountered further difficulties as the deputies of Amsterdam saw the Grand Pensionary in a deputation and objected to its terms saying that the restitution of Negapatam should be unqualified and that the abandonment of the French connection by the Dutch should be adequate return to the British for any concessions made by them.[4] Harris remonstrated with van der Spiegel that this amounted to a betrayal in that it was at his assurance that he had recommended the draft of article eleven.

Van der Spiegel now took up the position that the opposition was unexpected and that further modifications were required if the treaty was to pass. This was the restitution of Negapatam for which Britain should require nothing in return and the renunciation by Britain of any demands from the Dutch in the Indies which would be injurious to them.[5] This veiled reference could only have meant Trincomalee. The British government was taken aback by these developments and Carmarthen expressed his disappointment to Harris but to avert a rupture it made a further concession of omitting any reference to Trincomalee in the treaty and of not requiring any equivalent for

1. Harris to Carmarthen, 25.2.1788, *F. O.* 37/21.
2. Carmarthen to Harris, 27.2.1788, *F. O.* 37/21.
3. Carmarthen to Harris, 27.2.1788, *F. O.* 37/21.
4. Harris to Carmarthen, 11.3.1788, *F. O.* 37/21.
5. *Ibid.*

Negapatam which would be injurious to the Dutch.[1] Carmarthen continued to emphasise that it should be made clear that this was conditional on Trincomalee being ultimately given as an equivalent. As a compromise formula which would cause less embarrassment to the Dutch Carmarthen proposed a modified form of possession—"the sort of possession which the Dutch had of the town in which they had a right to place their garrison according to their barrier treaty".[2] They would forego the rights of commerce which had been given to the barrier towns. This proposal was conveyed both to Nagal and to Harris. It was finally agreed between Harris, the Grand Pensionary and the Greffier that the treaty would be accepted by the Dutch on the basis of a secret minute submitted by the British in the following terms: "Marquis of Carmarthen and Mr. Pitt both declared in the King's name that in the eleventh article no alteration could be admitted but they could give the assurance that the King would not require anything as equivalent for Negapatam that would be unfavourable in the interests and security of both contracting parties[3]." The treaty thus came to be signed on 13 April 1788 and it was called the treaty of defensive alliance between His Majesty the King of Britain and their High Mightiness the States General of the United Provinces. Under the terms of article eleven which was crucial to it, His Majesty engaged to treat with the States General for the restitution of Negapatam in case the latter should in future have an equivalent to give. His Majesty further undertook to give restitution, to determine the sense of article six and confer commercial advantages in India as soon as an equivalent can be agreed upon. In return as an equivalent Britain would require nothing but what is favourable to their reciprocal interest and security.

The outstanding fact about this treaty as far as it concerns this study is that it made no reference to Trincomalee. However, the fact remains that Britain agreed to it on the clear understanding that Trincomalee would ultimately be given as an equivalent. This understanding had not been conveyed in writing and was even omitted from the secret minutes but Harris had been twice instructed by Carmarthen to leave the Dutch in no doubt about it.[4] The question which has to be asked therefore is whether he did in fact carry out his instructions. It is significant that at the time when the secret minute was discussed, Harris refrained from introducing the subject of Trincomalee. His despatches are silent on whether he did convey Carmarthen's reservation and, if so, on what occasion. One is left with the impression that even if he had conveyed the information, he had not been as emphatic and equivocal as his instructions required. Indeed

1. Carmarthen to Harris, 20.3.1788, *F. O.* 37/21.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Harris to Carmarthen, 23.3.1788, *F. O.* 37/31.
4. Carmarthen to Harris, 27.3.1788 and 20.3.1788, *F. O.* 37/21.

a later statement of van der Spiegel suggests that he had not conveyed them at all.[1] The Dutch on the other hand had made it quite clear to Harris that the cession of Trincomalee was out of the question. The formulation of article eleven had been so worded as to exclude this possibility. The British had believed or hoped that the omission of this reference was only a temporary contrivance of the pro-British group to secure the country's acceptance of the treaty and to facilitate the ultimate cession of Trincomalee. Harris knew that this was not so and it was incumbent on him to have apprised Carmarthen of the position. The despatches do not indicate that he had done so. Thus, if in signing the treaty, the British had thought that they would ultimately acquire Trincomalee, they had allowed themselves to be deceived and for this Harris was responsible.[2] The conduct of these negotiations by Harris is thus a glaring illustration of the limitation of his diplomatic methods and the disservice which he caused thereby to his country.

The question of Trincomalee was now referred for consideration by the commission which was appointed to conclude a trade convention. Harris's proposals betrayed a hesitation to deal with it being fully aware of Dutch views on it.[3] He suggested that the wording of the articles should be such as not to expose the Republic to the suspicions of the French and that if possible it should be a secret article. He also proposed that fortifications should be at their joint expense and that the garrison should consist preferably of a Scotch Dutch brigade or Hanoverians as an English garrison might be tempted to engage in smuggling. In October 1788, Harris requested leave on grounds of ill-health and before departure he saw van der Spiegel on the question of Trincomalee and stated that the cession of Trincomalee was the only condition on which a convention could be signed. Van der Spiegel expressed regret that this was not known earlier and reiterated the reasons which made this impossible.[4] Van der Spiegel's reaction is the proof that Harris had wilfully misdirected both the Dutch and its own Foreign Ministry. His departure from Holland ostensibly on sick leave (but was it a diplomatic illness) marks the failure of British efforts to take possession of Trincomalee by negotiation.

The negotiations for a commercial convention lasted till the end of 1791 and were conducted on the British side by her Ambassadors who were Fitzherbert, Malmesbury's successor, and, after him Lord Auckland. The role of Trincomalee in these negotiations was however

1. Harris to Carmarthen, 7.10 1788, *F. O.* 37/24.
2. Richmond to Pitt, 6.11.1788, Harlow, *Second British Empire*, Vol. II, p. 394.
3. Harris to Carmarthen 29.5. 1788, *F. O.* 37/22.
4. Harris to Carmarthen, 7.10.1788, *F. O.* 37/24.

relatively incidental compared to its importance in the time of Harris's talks. The reasons for this shift in emphasis are several. Both sides had come to realise that negotiations over Trincomalee for the qualified possession of it by the British would be a futile exercise. The Dutch had time and again made it abundantly clear that this was impossible. This was repeated to Fitzherbert too by van der Spiegel when the former stated that Britain could only accept Dutch proposals regarding trade provided they were entrusted with the defence of Trincomalee.[1] Van der Spiegel's reply was that the Dutch in that case would rather reconcile themselves to the loss of Negapatam and treat that as a closed chapter. Fitzherbert then recommended to Leeds that the basis of the talks should be shifted owing to the insuperable difficulties in the way of the old package deal of Trincomalee for Negapatam.[2] His proposal was that the negotiations should be narrowed to commercial issues only and trade concessions be tied up with the question of neutral rights.[3] Van der Spiegel endorsed the idea. The obnoxious port as Vergennes had called it was thus put aside by common agreement rather than let it stand in the way of a settlement.

The emphasis in the negotiations was on a commercial understanding, its true context being therefore the interest evinced by the British government under the influence of Pitt and Dundas in a policy of trade agreements. Trade talks were held in this period with nine countries, notably with France, and led to the conclusion of the Anglo-French trade agreement of 1786 which Auckland successfully negotiated.[4] The principal objects of the talks from the Dutch point of view was to resuscitate the V.O.C. which was financially in a bad way. Auckland reported that the Company was in a state of extreme embarrassment.[5] Its public debt was increasing because of new loans granted by Holland. The original capital was £500,000 but the debt was 100 million florins. The price of stocks had fallen from seven hundred percent to two hundred percent. The usual size of the China convoys from Holland used to be four to six ships which returned with one million two hundred thousand pounds of tea each. The total consumption of the continent then was six million pounds. The convoy had now dropped to two. Sales of pepper which used to be ten thousand bales had dropped to half. The Dutch especially wanted a share in the lucrative Bengal trade in the way of quotas of opium and saltpetre at special prices by the sale of which they expected to recoup their losses.[6] Politically this trade would have been

1. Fitzherbert to Leeds, 10.7.1789, *F. O.* 37/26.
2. Fitzherbert to Leeds, 10.8.1789, *F.O.* 37/26.
3. Fitzherbert to Leeds, 28.8.1789, *F.O.* 37/26.
4. J. Ehrman, *The British Government and Commercial Negotiations with Europe* (Cambridge 1962), p. 174.
5. Auckland to Leeds, 25.2.1790, *F.O.* 37/28.
6. Auckland to Leeds, 25.2.1790, *F.O.* 37/28.

invaluable to the pro-British directors as it would have enabled them to resist the Patriots and French pressures. Trincomalee had no commericial value to either party. The British in particular disavowed any commercial interest in it at all and therefore its connection with these negotiations was only incidental entering into them only as a possible equivalent for concessions.

It would also appear as if the political and srategic value of Trincomalee to the British was changing during this period.[1] This could have been the paradoxical consequence of the Conway expedition to Trincomalee in March 1788 which was foiled by the firmness shown by the Dutch authorities. This had shown that the Dutch were capable of looking after themselves and defending Trincomalee and would have no truck with the French, which was the main fear of the British.

The down grading in importance of Trincomalee could also have been due to the acquisition of other alternatives like Prince of Wales Islands, the Andamans and the general orientation towards the South east and the Far east in the direction of the China trade. This marked a shift in the centres of maritime and imperialist activities from South Asia, where Britain was already safely established in India, further eastwards. There were other matters calling for action like the protection of the Bengal-Canton trade, diversification of the China trade in relation to which Trincomalee could only play a limited role. This also explains the interest shown by Britain to obtain alternative territorial equivalents for any concessions they make to the Dutch. The places suggested were Padang, Rhio, which were located in the East Indies.[2] Interest was also shown by Britain in the possible purchase of Cochin from the Dutch. The interest in Rhio which was suggested in the draft treaty of 1787 is a case in point of the shift of British interest from Trincomalee to the south east, due primarily to the increasing interest in the China trade and the desire to find outlets and bases in close proximity. Negapatam, which was the original quid pro quo for which Trincomalee was sought, also lost its value for the Dutch. The fortification had collapsed and its return was no longer of interest to the Dutch.

As the emphasis in the talks was only on commercial questions the interest in Trincomalee correspondingly turned to the maritime aspects. It was suggested that in lieu of occupation of the port Britain should be allowed admission to the port at all times and all foreign vessels should be excluded.[3] The request was made as an equivalent for the grant of the spice monopoly. Auckland suggested, if need be,

1. Auckland to Leeds, 5.5.1790, *F.O.* 37/28.
2. Harlow, *Second British Empire*, Vol. II, p. 396.
3. Auckland to Leeds, 30.6.1790, *F.O.* 37/29.

that the concession should be sought on the basis of not paying any expenses, to remove a sense of obligation from the Dutch. These ideas however were not pursued because the talks got bogged down and ultimately foundered on the subject of neutral rights. No agreement was possible on the issue of trade by neutrals in enemy goods to neutral ports. Britain wanted a complete exclusion of these items which meant that the Dutch colonies of St. Eustatius and Curacoa would have been unable to trade in French sugar obtained from the neighbouring island. There was a sharp revival of interest in the question of neutral rights which at one time had completely poisoned relations between Holland and Britain. This development was probably due to the growing apprehension over the situation in Europe as a result of the French revolution. The trade-ministary had strong views on it which Leeds was too weak to resist.[1] This coup de grace to the trade talks seemed to have been delivered by Hawkesbury in a forceful memorandum which he submitted on the subject.[2] Top level opinion seems to have been averse to concessions on this point because both Pitt and Grenville advised against it.

The efforts of the British to gain a foothold in Trincomalee lasted thus from 1784 to 1791 and was a continuation and a sequel of the strategic interest they had shown in it in the War of American Independence due to its bearing on the security of British dominion in India. These efforts ended in failure due primarily to Dutch suspicions of British motives and the legacy of bitterness bequeathed by the fourth Anglo-Dutch war to which the acquisition of Negapatam by the British was a standing monument. The current of Dutch opinion after that war had been against the British and the talks by their insistence on the pound of flesh did little to live down this bad reputation. As Dundas advocated, a start should have been made to gain the goodwill of the Dutch through a policy of clemency and magnanimity and perhaps an understanding over Trincomalee might have been possible in a context of mutual confidence. This view however did not find favour with Grenville and the Company, as they were determined to drive a hard bargain. Harris's diplomatic tactics which he tried on his own Foreign ministry also prejudiced the negotiations.

Had the negotiations succeeded and had the British gained this foothold the history to Ceylon might conceivably have been different. It would have given them less justification to covet the rest of the Dutch possessions in the island and to want to acquire the island for themselves. It would have been possible for the British and the Dutch to work together in a system of mutual defence of their possessions against French aggression. The failure of the talks which meant the

1. Harlow, *Second British Empire*, Vol. II, pp. 251-253.

2. *Memorandum* by Hawkesbury, Add. Mss. 38395, British Museum.

continuance of the tension between the two countries kept Britain in a state of suspense and insecurity over the possibility that Trincomalee also would fall into foreign hands with serious consequences for India. This made Britain turn her mind to thoughts of hostile actions against it. Thus when the opportunity presented itself in 1795 Trincomalee became the first target of the British.

CHAPTER VI

THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF DUTCH SETTLEMENTS IN CEYLON

In 1795, the Dutch territories in Ceylon were invaded and occupied by the British. This was their second invasion, the first one having been the abortive attempt of 1781, which, although intended as a full scale operation against the Dutch in Ceylon, ultimately limited itself to the capture of Trincomalee.[1] This was itself a temporary gain as it surrendered to the French a few months later. Both these events were the sequel to concurrent developments in European history in that they were inspired by Britain's fears of French designs in Asia in exploitation of her rupture with Holland. The first invasion was thus an extension of the Anglo-Dutch war of 1781 and that of 1795 was the British reply to the occupation of Holland by the French revolutionary armies in January of that year and the establishment of the Batavian regime.

The incorporation of Holland within the orbit of French influence represented the materialisation of a danger to British continental and colonial interests which it had been the object of British diplomacy for over a quarter of a century to avert. Dutch possessions in Asia held the key to the security of British dominion in India and naturally the growing ascendancy of France over Holland following their association in the American war and through the extension of French patronage to the anti-Orangist Patriot elements was viewed with dismay by Britain. Between the Peace of Paris of 1784 and 1792 British policy had been directed towards detaching Holland from the French by counter-acting the activities of the Patriots and by negotiating for an overall settlement of outstanding colonial issues.[2] The restora-

1. Vide Ch. III.
2. Vide Ch. V.

tion of the Stadtholder in 1787 was a substantial gain in this direction and temporarily upset the plans of the Patriots but the negotiations for a colonial settlement failed and this remained a source of discontent which fed the rancour of the anti-Orangists against the British. The climate was thus conducive to the establishment of French influence in Holland, and acted as an incentive to the invasion.

The French invasion of Holland in 1795 however proceeded from an independent logic of its own and was not a direct continuation of pre-revolutionary French policies towards Holland. This was in fact their second attempt on Holland, the first being the one made in 1792 by Dumouriez in the flush of his victories at Valmy and Jemappes, but his ambitions of carving out a kingdom for himself which would have embraced the Austrian Netherlands and perhaps part of Holland were frustrated by his defeat at the hands of Coburg at Neerwinden. The campaigns of Dumouriez represented the first wave of revolutionary ardour animated as it was by an idealistic zeal to liberate peoples from the clutches of oppressive monarchs who had flung their gauntlet with the Pillnitz decree. This wave fizzled out after Neerwinden and the subsequent desertion of Dumouriez to the Austrians. This transformation coincided with the political upheavals in Paris which saw the overthrow of the Girondists and their replacement by the more reactionary minded Committee of Public Safety headed by Robespierre. The new regime was fiercely nationalistic in its desire to save the revolution from the counter revolutionaries who were gathering their forces in Toulon and Vendee as they had done in 1792, and it was disinclined to embark on foreign adventures and fancy itself as a torch bearer of the revolution to other peoples. Robespierre was even mistrustful of foreign agents living in Paris and, at his instructions, several Dutch Patriots like Cloots, Kock van Hoof, were purged and the Batavian Republican Committee disappeared from Paris.[1] In the words of Carnot its military genius, the spirit of the new regime, was that "we who are French must think of our own country".[2] Thus when the revolutionary armies resumed the invasion of Holland in 1794, their main object was not to help other revolutions but to save and consolidate their own. This was made clear by the Committee of Public Safety when, in reply to an offer of the Batavian revoultionaries to foment revolution, it stated that France was ready to render them assistance but that it was their responsibility to start the revolution first.[3] The second invasion of Holland was a spectacular success for the invading armies under Pichegru. Aided by a severe frost which enabled the capture of the Dutch fleet by the French cavalry on the ice bound Waal and by the pathetic performance of the Duke of York's armies, stragglers

1. R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*, Vol. II, (Oxford 1964), p. 120.
2. Palmer, *Democratic Revolution*, p. 123. (Vol. II).
3. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

from which were even refused shelter by the indignant Dutch peasants, the conquest was accomplished within a few weeks. On 19 January 1795, Daendels entered Amsterdam at the head of the revolutionary legion.

Thus the circumstances of the French occupation of Holland in 1795 show that it was undertaken not as part of a deliberate design to use Holland in any colonial war against Britain but rather as a measure of military strategy in the course of the regime's campaigns against its European enemies. For that matter, even the outbreak of war between Britain and France in January 1792, although declared enthusiastically by the excitable Brissot, was not eagerly sought after by them, if their efforts to avert it are any guide. Neither Pitt, Dundas[1] nor Grenville on the British side wanted it,[2] Pitt least of all, intent as he was on an era of fifteen years of peace and reconstruction. The proud Grenville was even prepared to have truck with the recognition of the Republic and the mission of Maret was a genuine expression of a similar conciliatory spirit on the French side.[3] The decision to open the Schedlt was however a provocative act to the British which their honour and their sense of economic interest would not brook.[4] Ironically, however, in opening the Scheldt, Lebrun the Foreign Minister who took the decision had not intended to challenge Britain's imperial interest but rather to help his associate Dumouriez in his plan to ingratiate himself with the Belgian merchant classes and thus further his imperialist designs in the Low Countries.[5] This action however made Britain's involvement in the European war inevitable. The French occupation of Holland in 1795 however gave a new complexion to the war. It transformed it from a strictly continental to a colonial war and this was becuase of the circumstances prevailing in Holland which led to the French invasion. It has been seen that the occupation far from being an act of aggression by France against Holland was indeed a joyous consummation of the Dutch nationalist movement. It was in fact the climax of the civil war between the Patriots backed by France and the Orangists whose patron was Britain. The victory of the Patriots and the establishment by them of the Batavian Republic which was suspected of being a puppet regime of revolutionary France had grave implications for Britain's colonial empire vis-a-vis the Dutch territories. The possibility arose that the nationalist insurrection might spread to the Dutch colonies and that France under cover of her patronage of the revolution would gain access to them. Thus the struggle against France became

1. Furber, *Dundas*, p. 94.
2. *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy* (Cambridge 1922), Vol. I, p. 218.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 229.
4. Palmer, *Democratic Revolution*, p. 228. (Vol. II).
5. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
6. Palmer, *Democratic Revolution*, p. 256. (Vol. II).

for Britain not only a continental conflict in defence of her purely European interests but also a colonial war to prevent French occupation of the Dutch Colonies in the name of the Batavian Republic.

The trend of events within Holland from 1780 had fore-shadowed the inevitability of a rift between Holland and Britain, in which France would have assuredly gained the advantage. This was an understandable reaction on the part of the Dutch to an accumulation of bitter experiences that they have suffered at British hands like the victimization of Holland in the American war, the bitter privations and losses caused to her by the maritime war, the cession of Negapatam as prize money and as compensation for Trincomalee, the concession of free navigation in the Indies elicited in the Peace of Paris.[1] The wrath of the Patriots got naturally directed against the Stadtholder as his British connections and his well known British proclivities identified him in the public eye with Britain. Besides, he symbolised the social and administrative system against which they were in revolt.[2] It must be said in fairness to him that he was only partly to blame because the decentralised nature of the constitution limited his freedom of action. On the other hand he could have used the considerable powers at his disposal to better purpose and given the country the resolute leadership it required during the wars.[3] Instead he had become the tool of foreign powers that were hostile to the real interests of Holland. His identification with Britain meant that his position deteriorated in proportion to the unpopularity of the British and the failure of the latter to settle their outstanding differences with Holland. It has been seen elsewhere how Britain's efforts to conclude a general alliance treaty with Holland on the basis of mutual trade concessions and security guarantees were unsuccessful. The question of Trincomalee was one of the major obstacles. The intransigence of Grenville was another.[4] The turning point in the situation was the restoration of the Standtholder in 1787 followed by the Triple Alliance of 1788 which, although it neutralized French influence and was a personal triumph for Malmesbury, accentuated the unrepresentative character of the Stadtholder. It made him a puppet ruler installed by the very power which was the traditional rival of Holland and whose machinations had been responsible for its recent calamities.

The 1787 restoration was also a land mark in the Patriot movement as with it dates the revolutionary activities which culminated in the establishment of the Batavian regime.

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1. Palmer, *Democratic Revolution*, Vol. I, Ch. VI.
2. A. Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents* (London 1954), Ch. II.
3. *The Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris First Earl of Malmesbury*, Vol. II, pp. 22-23.
4. Vide Ch. V.

The restored regime resorted to repressive measures which caused and exodus of thousands of emigres who sought refuge in France and the Low Countries and from there awaited a saviour who would lead them back. Abroad they kept alive the spirit of revolution in various ways.[1] Dutch emigres in Paris founded a paper called **La Batave,** devoted to revolutionary propaganda, and established the Batavian Revolutionary Committee. They formed the Batavian legion in Paris which was recognized by the National Assembly in July 1793. The revolutionary regimes in Paris were under constant pressure from them for support of their revolutionary plans. On 9 March 1794 the Batavian Revolutionary Committee submitted a petition to the Committee of Public Safety urging the latter to invade Holland. At the same time revolutionaries within Holland herself were active. By 1794 in anticipation of a French invasion they had organised Jacobin clubs in the big cities. There were thirty-four such clubs in Amsterdam and twelve in Utrecht. These clubs were known collectively as the Leather Apron and were composed mainly of tradesmen.[2]

Much to the dismay of the Patriots the French Revolutionary regimes did not show any enthusiasm for exporting revolution. The policy followed by Dumouriez in the Low Countries in terms of the decree of 19 November 1792 of seizing the revenues of occupied territories came as a shock to them. On 15 September 1793 the Convention at the instigation of the Committee of Public Safey rescinded the decrees promising aid and fraternity to peoples wishing to recover their liberty and prohibited French generals from having anything to do with revolutions in conquered territories. The French regimes at this stage were anything but world revolutionaries and in this respect they differed from their predecessors of 1792. The Dutch Revolutionaries had due warning of the position becasue in August 1794 they were informed by the Committee in reply to an enquiry as to what treatment they would receive if they opened their gates to the French that this would depend on whether they were able to stage their own revolution.[3] When the time came, it must be said to their credit that measured up to the challange. On the approach of the French armies committees were organised to facilitate the transition to the new order. Garrisions were won over and resistance undermined. In Amsterdam and elsewhere local authorities were unseated, and provisional governments installed in preparation. The entry of the French armies thus found the country ready for the change.

As far as Britain was concerned it was the Jacobin implications of the French occupation that concerned her most and actually decided the particular form of her retaliatory measures against the Dutch colonies.

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1. Palmers, *Democratic Revolution*, p. 61. (Vol. II).
2. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
3. Palmer, *Democratic Revolution*, p. 184. (Vol. II)

This is a point to which due weight has not been given in accounts of British counter measures. The Jacobin complexion of the Batavian Republic created the fear in Britian's mind that Dutch overseas territories would be stimulated by its example to organise their own insurrections. In doing so, they would have been emulating the French colonies like Mauritius and those in the West Indies which started their own revolutions on learning of the French revolution. It was one such uprising in Haiti that had drawn the British into hostilities in the West Indies. The spread of the revolution to the Dutch overseas settlements would have been tantamount to opening their doors to the French who would have been hailed as liberators. The British were also aware of the existence of disaffected elements in some of the colonies[1] and this was corroborated during the course of the operations. Thus the main object of British policy was to forestall this danger of insurrection which would have made the colonies an easy prey to the French. It will be seen elsewhere that the British exploited this fear of revolutionary doctrines in their political propaganda because one of the arguments which they used with the King of Kandy in urging him to have a treaty with them was that, if the French came, he would lose his throne and perhaps his head.[2] This circumstance also provides an explanation for the readiness of the Stadtholder to give the Kew letter and Britain's desire for such a letter and perhaps even the particular form of the Stadtholder's own draft. In a sense, the British were trying to forestall what the French would conceivably have done themselves. They used the Kew letter as a licence to claim the settlements in the name of the Stadtholder in the same way that the French would have sought admission to them in the name of the revolution.

The transformation of the European war into a colonial struggle enabled Britain's contribution to it to be more effective. The opening years of the revolutionary war was a record of almost unrelieved disaster in which the British army was frittered away on outdated expeditions to the West Indies and isolated commando operations in north Europe in conjunction with an unco-ordinated coalition more intent on their personal aggrandizement and held together by British purse strings. Britain made the mistake of imagining that she could fight this war on the lines on which Chatham had conducted the Seven Years war in which the balance of Europe could be redressed overseas, with British commitments on the continent being limited to manipulation of alliances.[3] Britain cannot be blamed for this because she was up against a force yet unknown to history. The resilience and the vitality shown by the revolutionary armies in breaking through the forces of

1. Dundas to Grenville, 16.11.1794 cited in Furber, *Dundas*.
2. Hobart to the Kandyan King, 19.1.1795, *Madras Military and Political Proceedings*, Vol. 45, Sec. 2117.
3. A. B. Rodger, *The War of the Second Coalition* (Oxford 1964), p. 2.

the Ancient Regime, which were as degenerate in their fighting spirit as were the regimes they represented, came as a surprise.

On the other hand, in dealing with the security of her overseas possessions, Britain was on familiar ground. She had in her navy and in her imperial establishments in India seasoned forces capable of dealing with such a situation. Above all, she had in Dundas the right man for the job, who in spite of his painful war record as Home Secretary and War Secretary could at least be trusted to excel in a field in which he had made himself master since he became President of the India Board in 1784. Dundas's knowledge of India was only matched by his understanding of Scottish affairs. He was its presiding genius in the years of consolidation, after the Pease of Paris (1784) had established the paramountcy of the British in India.[1] The constructive measures in Indian administration instituted during this period, its unification under Bengal, the permanent settlement of revenue in Bengal, the appointment of Governors like Hobart and Shore, were his personal contribution quite apart from the management of the Board and the Company.[2]

The situation which confronted Britain in Asia in 1795 was a comparatively peaceful one. French ambitions had waned in India even prior to the outbreak of the revolution pursuant to the plans of Luzernc[3] based on the recommendations of Castries for the withdrawal of French military forces from India,[4] there being no hope that the Mughal Empire could be resurrected. The main source of danger within India was Mysore, in view of that country's anti-British record and its ruler Tipu Sultan's pro-French sympathies. However, the French government had cold-shouldered his official overtures of friendship. The Dutch and the British were on friendly terms and the latter had just carried out a naval operation at the request of the Dutch against French privateers.[5] At the same time Dundas had no illusions about the potential danger of the Dutch territories being used by the French to attack India owing to their strategic location as naval bases.

The involvement of Ceylon "which was seldom absent from Dundas's mind"[6] in such a scheme as a base of operations from which the French could support Tipu was a possibility which he feared. Such schemes were not lacking like the one known by Sir John Sinclair in

1. Furber, *Henry Dundas*, p. 96.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 57-63.
3. Holden Furber, *John Company at Work* (Oxford 1931), pp. 73 and 76.
4. S. P. Sen, *The French in India* (Calcutta 1958), p. 496.
5. S. G. Rainbow, *English Expedition to the Dutch East Indies During the Revolutionary and Napoleonic War* (Univ. of London, M.A. Thesis, 1933). Ch. III.
6. Furber, Dundas, p. 108.

which the Marquis de Bouille wanted to use Ceylon as a base for a French invasion of India.[1] Pitt was himself alive to the repercussions of European events in India when he took the precaution of authorising Cornwallis to occupy Trincomalee in case of a war with France over Holland in 1787.[2] The unpredictability of the situation was illustrated in 1787 by the curious expedition of Conway to Trincomalee which was foiled by the stubbornness of the Dutch authorities. In particular, Dundas's attention had been drawn to the importance of the Cape and the danger that in Blankett's famous words, "it will become a sword in the hands of France". It is interesting to see how the strategic consideration which influenced the British in 1780 recurred in 1795. In fact even before the French invasion of Holland, Britain was preparing for such an eventuality because Auckland was instructed by Grenville to inquire from the States General whether they would agree in this event to the admission of British troops from St. Helena to the Cape.[3] The offer of troops was declined but they were agreeable to naval protection. It is more astonishing to find that in November 1794 when the invasion was imminent, Dundas addressed a letter to Grenville in which he foresaw the possibility that if the French gained possession of the "seat and instrument of the Dutch government" they would send a force to occupy the Cape.[4] He thought that in order to forestall this Britain should obtain some authority from the Dutch government which would serve as a "liberty for us to lodge at the Cape any force we please". This shows that the idea of the Kew letter was taking shape in Dundas's mind even before the actual flight of the Stadtholder. Fortunately for him events obliged, because, on 18 January 1795, the Stadtholder beat his ignominous retreat from Holland to seek royal asylum in England where he was installed in the Kew palace. From then began the drama of the Kew letter and the events which led to the British occupation of the Dutch settlements in Ceylon.

The proposal to involve the Stadtholder in a scheme to place the Dutch possessions under British protection first appeared in a letter from Grenville to the Duke of York instructing him to meet the Stadtholder and persuade him to fall in with the British proposal in the interests of the republic and his own house.[5] This letter authorised the Duke of York to give any assurances that the Stadtholder might want that any ships of war or forts surrendered in consequence

1. *Ibid.*
2. Pitt to Cornwallis, 28.8.1787, Cornwallis Papers cited in Rose, "Grenville's mission to The Hague", *E.H.R.*, Vol. XXIV.
3. Grenville to Auckland, 23.8.1791, *Nelville Papers* E/G ref. Furber, *Dundas.*
4. Dundas to Grenville, 16.11.1794, Furber, *Dundas;* also Tarling, *Anglo-Dutch Rivalry in the Malay World* (Queensland 1962), p. 57.
5. Grenville to H. R. H. Duke of York, 1.1.1795, *F.O.* 37/57.

of the order would be restored to the republic at the conclusion of a general peace, by which its independence and constitution shall be secured. A draft order for the Stadtholder's signature was enclosed along with this letter and the Duke of York was informed that "it would be desirable if His Serene Highness could be persuaded to adopt this form". The text of the draft declaration which was the key to the subsequent actions of the British was as follows :1

> Whereas I William Prince of Orange hereditary Stadtholder of the States General of the United Provinces and hereditary Governor of each province and Captain General and Admiral of the forces by land and sea belonging thereto have been compelled by the entrance of a foreign armed force into the territories of the same to withdraw myself therefrom and to retire to the dominion of the good friend and ally of their High Mightiness the King of Great Britain and whereas I am thereby illegally and unjustly prevented from exercising in person within the said provinces the functions of the said high office and of all the offices and powers with which I am legally and constitutionally invested do by this declaration subscribed in due form and in the presence of lawful witnesses notify to all Commanders, Governors, Civil and Military of all forts, castles, garrisons, ports, settlements, plantations and colonies belonging to the States, General and to all Admirals and Commanders of ships of war belonging to the same and do enjoin them that they forthwith deliver of possession of the said forts, castles, garrisons, ports, settlements, colonies and ships of war to the King of Great Britain or to such persons as he shall authorise to receive them in order that they may be secured from falling into the possession of the enemy and under special trust and confidence solemnly assured on the part of His Britannic Majesty that the same shall be restored in full sovereignty and use to their High Mightinesses as soon as ever it should please God to restore to my afflicted country the blessings of independence and of its ancient and established forms of government.

The essential points were that it was issued by the Stadholder in his capacity inter alia as Captain General and Admiral, that it enjoined all commanders and governors to forthwith deliver possessions of forts and installations under their command and that the restoration was assured on the return of independence and of the ancient constitution and established forms of government to the country. The draft however which Grenville was anxious should be adopted by the Stadtholder in toto was not accepted by him. Instead, while complying

1. Grenville to Duke of York, 1.1.1795, *F.O.* 37/57.

with the British request the letter which he issued had a different text and gave room for different interpretations. The text of this oft quoted letter was as follows:1

> "We have it deemed it necessary to address you this communication and to require you to admit into Trincomalee and elsewhere in the colony under your rule the troops of H. M. the King of Great Britain which will proceed there and also to admit into the harbour or such places where ships might safely anchor, the warships, frigates and armed vessels which will be despatched there on behalf of H. M. the King of Great Britain and you are also to consider them as troops as ships belonging to a power that is in friendship and alliance with their High Mightinesses who come to prevent the colony from being invaded by the French."

It differs from Grenville's draft in two essential respects. The order to the commanders was modified from delivery of the forts to admission of troops and ships and the latter were to be considered as belonging to a friendly power that had intervened to save these possessions from the French. The difference between Grenville's draft and the Stadtholder's letter suggests that the two parties might have been at variance on the manner of implementation of the British request. The stipulation in the British draft of outright possession was no doubt a deliberate act of policy because if their desire was only to offer protection, this was already available in terms of article 6 of the Triple Alliance of 1788 which enjoined the three parties to help each other in the event of threats to their security. Action under this treaty could however be taken only on a specific request by the affected parties. Clearly the British considered this provision inadequate for their purpose and this may explain the omission of any reference to this treaty in Grenville's letter or his draft order. The British decision was based on their knowledge of the internal conditions in the Dutch possessions and doubts about the willingness of the latter to resist the French unless the British were there in command to ensure this. Dundas in his letter of November 1794 to Grenville regarding the Cape had expressed the fear that there were too many democratic and disaffected subjects there to leave any doubts of the French being cordially received.2 On the crucial question of the restoration of the Dutch possessions, which should have been a matter of concern to the Stadtholder, there is no hedging on the part of the British because their draft gave an explicit assurance that this would be contingent on the return of established forms of government and independence.

The main point on which the Stadtholder's letter diverged from the British draft was on the issue of delivery because he stipulated admission. The reasons for this divergence cannot be stated with

1. De Silva, *Ceylon Under British Occupation*, p. 18.
2. Dundas to Grenville, 16.11.1794, Furber, *Dundas*.

any certainty. An explanation may be contained in his forwarding letter to S. C. Nederburgh the Company's advocate who was then in Batavia on a commission of investigation.[1] In this letter he stated categorically that all colonies or ships of which the British should take possession should be restored at the peace, being merely taken in deposit to be taken back. He had asked the Batavian officials charged with the execution of his order to consider whether "more is risked in letting the colonies be taken possession of by the troops and ships of His Britannic Majesty on the reliance of their being restored or whether orders can be respected that comes from provinces in the hands of an enemy". This letter proves that the Stadtholder envisaged actual delivery. That the Stadtholder had some doubts and soul searching on the subject of the proper form of his letter is attested by his communication to Nagel, the Dutch Ambassador in Britain, to which he admitted to a sense of uneasiness not knowing precisely what he should do.[2] The only possible explanation for the contradictions in his directions is that, being aware of the opposition to his regime in the colonies, he chose a wording which he thought would give least room for disobedience.[3] The note of entreaty in his letter to Nederburgh shows his awareness of this possibility. The Stadtholder's fears were to be justified by events.

Doubts can be raised over the validity of the Stadtholder's letter on the grounds that it was not attested by witnesses and that the Stadtholder himself had no authority in as much as he was an exile who had been disowned by his own people. On the other hand, the letter was issued on 7 February and despatched on 23 February but the office of Stadtholder was not abolished by the Batavian Republic till 4 March.[4] This meant that the Stadtholderate was still valid when the letter was written. Besides the Stadtholderate was hereditary in the House of Orange and the Stadtholder's functions as Captain General and Admiral in which capacity he wrote the letter subsisted until the formal abolition.

The Stadtholder's letter was used by the British as a mandate to launch a comprehensive operation to gain control of the Dutch possession in Asia. Letters were addressed to the officers in charge of the Dutch settlement at Cochin, Ceylon, Malacca, Ternate, North East coast of Java, Coromandel, Macassar, West and East coast of Sumatra Padang, Borneo, Cheribon, Palembang, Bengal, Surat, Amboyna, Banda, Bantam and the Cape.[5] In each case, an expeditionary

1. Tarling, *Anglo-Dutch Rivalry in the Malay World*, p. 52.
   See also Rainbow, *English Expedition to the Dutch East Indies*, pp. 74-84.
2. Stadtholder to Van Nagel, 2.2.1795, G. Nypel, *Hoe Nederland Ceilon Verloor* (The Hague, 1908), p. 14.
3. Tarling, *Anglo-Dutch Rivalry*, p. 53.
4. Nypel, *Nederland*, p. 9.
5. Rainbow, *English Expedition to the Dutch East Indies*, pp. 166-237.

force was sent as the bearer of the letter. The responsibility for operations was divided between various authorities. Orders were sent either directly to the authorities or through them at the latter's discretion. The order to the Bombay Presidency to occupy Cochin emanated from Bengal while the order to the Madras Presidency to undertake the operation against Ceylon came directly from the home government. The expedition against the Cape of Good Hope was launched from Britain. The response to the Stadtholder's summons varied according to the stations but it was rejected by the great majority. Only Surat, Padang, Amboyna, Pulicat and the other settlements on the Coromandel coast capitulated in terms of the Stadtholder's letter. In the others there was modified acceptance or rejection at first followed by capitulation after varying degrees of resistance ranging from the protracted defence of Trincomalee to the brief resistance at Malacca. In the states which resisted the collapse of the defence was due either to insubordination or to the poor state of the fortifications. In the Cape for instance, which was the first to receive the summons, as it was delivered in February 1795 by an expeditionary force under Sir Keith Elphinstone and General Craig, the Governor refused to surrender until compelled to do so in September by a further expeditionary force despatched from England under Sir Charles Allured. The Dutch station at Cochin played for time when confronted with the summons which was in this case not accompanied by the Stadtholder's authority, and a force had to be sent against it under Major Petrie which opened fire and compelled its surrender in a day. The Director at Chinsura declined the offer of "the obtruding friendly protection of the English" but was soon persuaded to change his mind. In most cases, officers in charge suspected British perfidy and even those who were amenable, like the commander at Malacca, agreed to admission of forces purely as an auxilliary. This was also the stand taken by Fornbauer in Trincomalee. This arrangement was not acceptable to the British who wanted full command. Resistance to the Stadtholder's directive might have been instigated by Jacobin elements whose presence in a number of settlements is attested by some incidents which belong to this time. In February 1795, coinciding with the establishment of the Batavian Republic in Holland, they had staged a Jacobin revolution in the Cape. A number of Burghers staged a demonstration in Batavia in November 1795 when word was received of the capture of the Cape by the British and they submitted a petition to Nederburgh demanding independence of the Council of India and a strong stand against the British. In general the adverse reaction to the Stadtholder's order may be attributed to opposition to his rule inspired by Jacobin elements and in some cases to lawlessness of the soliders and to genuine perplexity of the officers in charge over the interpretation of the order.

The occupation of the Dutch settlement in Ceylon was the most eventful of the operations undertaken by the British pursuant to the Stadtholder's mandate. It contained certain features which made it unique. It was the largest and most protracted operation of its kind and lasted from July 1795 until February 1796. It was accompanied by diplomatic initiatives on the part of the British, in respect of the King of Kandy and the De Meuron regiment, which influenced the outcome. The handling of the operation caused disagreements between the Madras Presidency which was in immediate charge of it and the supreme government in Bengal. It is a subject therefore which is worth considering both for its intrinsic interest and for its bearing on the history of British dominion in Asia. Details of the operation are familiar to students and so do not need repetition here and attention will only be focussed on its main features.[1] These were the capture of Trincomalee, the diplomatic mission to Kandy and the capitulation of Colombo.

The responsibility for the conduct of the operation against Ceylon was entrusted to the Madras Presidency, the Governor of which at that time was the redoubtable Lord Hobart.[2] It is an interesting coincidence that the man who launched the second invasion of Ceylon was cast in the same mould as the Governor who had presided over the abortive first invasion. Hobart, like Macartney, was of aristocratic lineage, being the son of the Duke of Buckinghamshire.[3] He had come to Madras in expectation of and as a stepping stone to the Governor Generalship of India. He was a benevolent despot in the best traditions of proconsuls of his class in that, while he was incorruptible and dedicated himself to his task with an evangelical zeal and almost led a crusade for integrity in public life, he could also be vicious against those who stood in his way and had no patience with the ways of native diplomacy. The undertaking with which he was now entrusted was ideally suited to his imperialist disposition, and it is natural that he should have impressed on it the stamp of his masterful character.

In view of their urgency orders to Madras were transmitted direct from London and reached the Presidency on 26 June. Simultaneously letters were also received by the Commander-in-Chief of the East Indies squadron, Vice Admiral Peter Rainier, and the military commander, General Aberorombie.[4] The order was in the form of

1. For details see de Silva, *Ceylon Under British Occupation*, Vo . I, Ch. II, and L. J. B. Turner, *Collected Papers on the History of the Maritime Provinces of Ceylon* (London 1923).

2. Board to Governor of Fort St. George, 19.2.1795. *Board's Drafts and Secret Letters to India*, 31.5.1781 - 5.11.1795.

3. Love, *Old Madras*, Vo . III, pp. 457-459.

4. Madras *M. & P. Proceedings*, Vol. 45, Sec. 1848.

a letter signed by Dundas, Pitt and Grenville and issued in London on 20 February.[1] The letter stated that in order to prevent the capture of Dutch possessions by the French, the British government had in concert with the Stadtholder taken measures under which the Stadtholder had issued an order to Governors and Commanding Officers of the different settlements to admit British troops and ships to protect such settlements and to hold possession of them until their restoration to the Republic at the conclusion of a general peace by which its independence and its constitution as guaranteed in 1787 should be secured. The Commanders of the land and sea forces were directed to co-operate with the Governor in the execution of such plans as the Governor may determine.

This letter it will be seen was based on Grenville's unutilized draft for the Stadtholder's signature and differed as much from the Stadtholder's letter as did Grenville's draft. It deviated even further in that it was the first to specify restoration of the constitution as guaranteed in 1787. The divergence created a contradictory situation because according to the home government's instructions the Madras authorities had to follow a line of action that was contrary to the order issued by the Stadtholder to the Governors and Commanding Officers of the Dutch settlements. In addition Lord Hobart took the further step of drafting another letter under his own authority to serve as a forwarding letter to the stadtholder's order when it was being served to the Dutch authorities in Colombo.[2] Hobart however went one better and inserted an ultimatum that force would be employed to take possession of the settlements if resistance was encountered. His letter conveyed the substance of the official order and detailed the terms on which the possessions would be accorded British protection. Existing laws would be respected, friendly relations maintained with inhabitants who were allowed trading facilities within the Company's territories on a most favoured nation basis. The sting of the letter was in its concluding part when the use of force was threatened in which case, being the result of a disregard of the Stadtholder's order, it would render those concerned responsible for the consequences. Hobart's letter was addressed to Angelbeek, the Governor of Colombo, who was directed to send his reply without undue delay to the Commander-in-Chief in Trincomalee.

The ultimatum which is the controversial part of the letter was presumably inserted by Hobart, making use of the latitude allowed to him in the official order, where he was directed to execute such measures as he deemed necessary. Whether the threat of force was in keeping with his instructions,[3] and whether it did not defeat the

1. Board to Governor of Fort St. George, *Board's drafts and Secret Letters to India*, 31.5.1781 - 5.11.1795.
2. Hobart to Angelbeek, *Madras M. & P. Proceedings*, Vol. 45, Sec.1920.
3. Abercromby to Dundas 27.8.1795, *Dutch Records A*, Vol. 27.

purpose of the letter by putting the Dutch on their guard are arguable questions. The supreme government reflecting the views of the peace loving Governor General Sir John Shore disapproved of the threat to use force[1] and argued that Hobart should have employed conciliatory methods at the outset. The supreme government also felt that the letter should have been delivered to the Trincomalee Commander because, by handing it first to Colombo, the British had allowed time for Trincomalee to prepare its defences. Hobart's reply to this was that it was incorrect protocol to approach the Trincomalee Commander before the Governor and that Fornbauer would in any case have either refused to accept it or, having accepted it, asked for time until receipt of his superior's orders.[2] This might have meant a delay of twenty days.

The Stadtholder's letter along with Hobart's letter was delivered to Governor Angelbeek on 25th July by Major Agnew, who arrived in Colombo ahead of the invasion fleet the same morning. The letter was considered at a meeting of the Colombo Council the same day. Opinion was divided between some who were mistrustful of the British offer and others who saw no objection to the admission of troops as allies in terms of the 1788 treaty but not in command.[3] The chief administrator, the Governor's son, painted a rather gloomy picture of the supply position, particularly the limited stocks of rice, and recommended acceptance which he thought would be in conformity with the Stadtholder's wishes. The Governor however was sceptical and although he did not doubt the ability of the major forts at Trincomalee, Galle and Colombo to defend themselves was yet fearful of the adverse consequences of a rupture with the British on the lucrative pearl fisheries. On the other hand he did not favour delivery of the possessions for fear that this was a British trick to retain permanent possession. He proposed a middle course of accepting a limited number of troops but without prejudice to control of them by the Dutch. It was decided therefore that 800 troops would be admitted for distribution between Colombo (300), Ostenberg (300), and Matara (200). Agnew proceeded with this reply to Trincomalee where he arrived on 1 July.[4]

In the meantime, the invasion fleet had arrived at Trincomalee on 30 July and was lying anchored outside it. It consisted of a squadron of three ships of the line under Rainier's command: the *Suffolk* (74 guns), *Centurion* (50 guns), and *Diomedes* (44 guns). The *Diomedes*

1. Hobart to Secret Committee of the Court, 2.10.1795, *Letters from Fort St. George*, Sept. 1784 - Oct. 1796 (I.O.L.).
2. *Madras M. & P. Proceedings*, Vol. 45, Sec. 1920.
3. Secret Resolution of Ceylon Council, 16.7.1795, *Ceylon Antiquary*, Vol. 8 (1922-1923), p. 104.
4. Hobart Papers, *Ceylon Literary Register* III Series, Vol. I.

subsequently struck a rock at the harbour entrance and sank. The expeditionary force which accompanied the fleet was composed of the flank companies of His Majesty's 71st and 73rd Regiments (351 of all ranks), His Majesty's 72nd Regiment (743) under Major Frazer, a native brigade under Lt. Colonel Bonneveaux, consisting of the first battalion (14 Europeans and 643 natives) and the pioneers. The artillery consisted of a detachment of royal artillery and of Madras artillery. The commanding officer of the land forces was Colonel Stuart of the 72nd Regiment.[1] Colonel Stuart, nicknamed "old row" was a veteran India hand with a reputation for irascibility and an unsavoury record. He had come to public notice for his complicity in the arrest and deposition of Governor Pigot. He was dismissed by Macartney in 1783 but defied the order and had to be placed under arrest and sent to England. On Macartney's return to England Stuart challenged him to a duel which was accepted and fought in Kensington. He was reinstated in 1791 and returned to India in command of the 72nd, which was the old 78th. On the field, he had taken command on the death of Sir Eyre Coote and led the assault against Bussy at Cuddalore in 1783.

The nature of Hobart's instructions to Stuart and the size of the expeditionary force revealed a further contradiction as regards the conduct of the operation. According to these instructions priority was to be given to the acquisition of Trincomalee which was to be taken by force, if necessary, and concerning the other settlements Hobart stated that "the importance of the Dutch settlements makes us hope that you can extend operations beyond Trincomalee."[2] He subjected this however to the reservation that he should not "make efforts to which the forces under your command may not be deemed adequate". In terms of these instructions therefore Stuart's main responsibility was to acquire Trincomalee and the other places were to be attempted only if the troops at his disposal were equal to the task. These instructions indeed accorded with the fact that the size of the forces at Stuart's disposal were only sufficient for an assault on Trincomalee if it resisted, or if it did not, for the peaceful occupation of the Dutch settlements in the island in terms of the Stadtholder's letter. This being the case, it would seem that Hobart's threat to use force in his letter to Angelbeek was an unwarranted and calculated bluff on his part which, as events were to show, misfired. It was naive for Hobart to think that if Trincomalee had to be taken by force the other places could have been peacefully occupied. He should not therefore, in the first instance, have issued this ultimatum which carried with it the possibility of a full scale war against the settlement,

1. *Madras M. & P. Proceedings*, Vol. 45, Sec. 1848, and Fr. S. G. Perera, "British Occupation of the Maritime Provinces", *Ceylon Antiquary*, IV, p. 216, and Love, *Old Madras*, Vo . III, p. 229.

2. Hobart to Stuart, *Madras M. & P. Proceedings*, Vol. 45, Sec. 2113.

without having the means with which to enforce it. He should instead have explored the possibility of gaining occupation or admission through negotiation resorting to force only if it became absolutely necessary. As it is, the issue of the ultimatum not only militated against the spirit of the Stadtholder's letter, and the home government's instructions, but it also cast doubts on the intentions of the British. It also put the Dutch on the defensive and made them less amenable to complying with the Stadtholder's letters. To that extent one thinks that Shore's criticism of Hobart's handling of the operation was justified. On the other hand there was no guarantee that the Dutch would have responded to a peaceful approach. The history of the other settlements shows that an adverse reaction to the Stadtholder's letter was not confined to Ceylon. Still there was no reason for Hobart to adopt a war-like posture without exhausting the possibility of a peaceful takeover. His actions were the more irresponsible in that he lacked the military means to support it and, as a result, it placed the expedition in an embarrassing situation. The truth of the matter seemed to be that the home government was desirous and hopeful of a peaceful occupation and in view of this they sent an expedition that was only capable of limited undertakings but Hobart's impatience upset these calculations and dragged them into a protracted involvement.

The interlude which occurred at Trincomalee between Fornbauer and the British deserves special attention as it altered the whole character of the expedition.[1] The commander of the Trincomalee fort was Jan George Fornbauer. He was a major in the Fusiliers and by profession an engineer. He had written a report on the Kantalai tank. He remained in Ceylon after these events and died in 1798. One wishes that more information was available about him to gauge his personality and character because the stand which he took was unusually independent and determined. Angelbeek's order was delivered to him by Agnew and Francken, a business man from Colombo on 1 August 1785. His reply, which was conveyed to the British on the same day through Renaud and Hoffman of the De Meuron, sought an assurance from them that they had no aggressive intentions as rumours of their preparations had suggested. He wanted a word of honour from the commanders in writing that they had no orders authorising them to make war. Rainier and Stuart replied through Agnew and Burrows that these matters had already been thrashed out in Colombo but, as he insisted, he had their assurance that they had come as ancient friends. Fornbauer replied on 2 August through Renaud and Bellon that he had received orders to admit 300 but could not implement this because the letter had been signed only by the Governor. His plea was that this was contrary to usage and if Angelbeek died, Fornbauer might be accused of treason and his head

1. Perera (ed.), Hobart Papers, *C.L.R.*, Series III, Vol. I.

cut off. He wanted time to get instructions. The British were now losing patience and reproved Fornbauer emphasising that in agreeing to the admission of troops only they had already departed from Hobart's wishes but that any further delay would oblige them to resort to their original instructions. Fornbauer's reply to this was to protest aginst the menacing tone of the note and invite them to do their worst. With that the die was cast. Hostilities began on 3 August when troops disembarked. The resort to hostilities altered the whole complexion of the enterprise because it violated the terms of Hobart's letter and freed the British of their undertaking to treat the possessions as protectorates taken in trust. The factor responsible for this decisive change was the inexplicable obstinancy of Fornbauer who, on the face of it, was acting in excess of his instructions. Although his decision was subsequently upheld by the Council in terms of their resolution of 15 August, at the time of the exchange with the British he had instructions to admit British troops. Instead Fornbauer appears to have acted in terms of the order of the Council of 12 July that Trincomalee should be defended against the British. It should be noted that Rainier and Stuart on their part acted with great restraint because the Council order to which they agreed was actually contrary to Hobart's instructions. In fact, in doing so, both were acting in the conviction that Angelbeek's order was more in accordance with the Stadtholder's letter than Hobart's which they thought was founded on a mistaken idea of the former's order.[1] Fornbauer's conduct seems both indefensible and irresponsible as he was not an independent authority and should have been bound by the orders of his superiors in Colombo.

The fighting which followed was half hearted at the start.[2] The British appear to have waited in the hope that Fornbauer would receive fresh instructions. What he received in fact was the revocation of the earlier order because the Council had since learnt that the Batavian revolution had been a popular movement and had accepted the Batavian republic as the lawful government. On 15 and 16 September, there was an exchange of fire with the guns of the fort. On 18 September the British were mounting batteries on an esplanade in front of the fort without interception by the Dutch. In the mean time, the garrison within the fort was restless and mutinous in disgust against the inaction of their officers. On the night of 24 September, a Malay detachment launched a surprise night attack against a British outpost which they found sleeping and inflicted many casualties but there was no follow up. On 26 September, Fornbauer requested a twenty-four hour truce but his offer to capitulate on condition that the troops would be allowed to withdraw to Colombo and Jaffna was rejected. The bom-

1. Abercrombie to Dundas, 27.8.1795, *Dutch records* A, Vol. 27, I.O.

2. Nypel, *Hoe Nederland Ceilon Verloor* (The Hague 1908), p. 53.

bardment then began in earnest and was in progress when a group of European mutineers lowered the Dutch flag. The British then ordered an assault and Fornbauer capitulated.

Fornbauer's explanation for the collapse of his admittedly courageous defence was the lack of resources but this was only half the truth. He could, if he wanted, have intercepted the landing but no attempt was made either to do that or prevent the mounting of batteries on the 18th. He might have shifted his defence to Ostenberg which was better suited for the purpose but this was not done. The night assault showed that the troops were not lacking in spirit. It seems more likely that they were betrayed by their officers and this might explain their mutinous conduct. One should have expected from Fornbauer the same pluck and spirit in the defence which he showed in his initial confrontation with the British. Ostenberg surrendered on 31 September on similar terms and in similar circumstances as Trincomalee. After the fall of Trincomalee it had lost the will to fight. Hoffman, its commander, had bragged that he would die fighting but there was no one to support him. There was also evidence of seditious conduct among the soldiers who deserted in broad light demoralised by the example of Trincomalee and with their will to fight impaired by divided loyalties. The question of whom they were fighting for and the implications this would have on their pensions caused soul searching. When it surrendered there were only 130 men of which more than half were European. The de Meuron regiment had 85 men remaining and had suffered the heaviest casualties. It is important to note that in reporting the fall of these forts Stuart stated that they had been damaged severely by the attacks.1 He wanted an engineering corps and two corps of pioneers to be rushed without delay together with artificers, carpenters, smiths, masons and brick layers. He requested gun carriages for the mounts, which he said were in bad condition, and 24-pounders. He thought that the necessity for repairing these forts would require the postponement of any further military undertakings.2 The protracted nature of the action at Trincomalee and the damage which the fort sustained had a disruptive effect on the time table of British operations in the island and made Stuart cautious about proceeding against Colombo. The minute preparations, both diplomatic and military, which were undertaken for the reduction of Colombo were to a large extent prompted by these opening experiences in Trincomalee. In this respect he was obeying Hobart's instruction to desist from operations for which his troops were inadequate.3 The capture of Trincomalee was followed in the next few months by the reduction of the Dutch forts in the

1. Stuart to Hobart, 31.8.1795, *Madras Proceedings*, Vol. 47, Sec. 2937.
2. Braithwaite to Hobart, 11.9.1795, *Ibid.*, Sec. 3000.
3. Hobart to Stuart, 19.7.1795, *Madras Proceedings*, Vol. 45, Sec. 2113.

outlying provinces. They fell like rotting fruit from a withering tree. The circumstances of their fall showed that Dutch power in Ceylon was indeed stricken with a malaise. Batticaloa capitulated on 17 September, when eight ships appeared before it, in spite of the orders issued by Angelbeek to its commander, Wambeek, that he should withdraw on sight of the enemy.1 A detachment from the fort fled to Matara and from thence to Colombo in protest against what they considered their Commander's treason. Mannar, Jaffna and the Wanni forts had orders to withdraw their troops to Colombo in terms of the Council order of 12 July but only a portion complied with it. Jaffna surrendered after the British had rejected their offer of its commander to admit troops. Mannar was occupied undefended on 15 October, Puttalam and Kalpentyn on 24 November, but the garrisons of these two along with the Chilaw garrison had withdrawn to Negombo. Thus, by the end of 1795, all the Dutch settlements in the island except Negombo and Galle, were in British hands. The ring was now closing round Colombo.

Concurrent with the despatch of the expeditionary force to Ceylon Lord Hobart, on his own initiative, appointed a Company servant, Robert Andrews, as an emissary to negotiate a treaty of defence and friendship with the King of Kandy. This appointment of Andrews was the first step in a long connection between him and Ceylon in which at a later stage he was to attain notoriety. Like Pybus, to whom he was temperamentally akin, he was a veteran officer, having joined as a writer in 1778 and risen from the ranks to become senior merchant in 1790 and a member of the Council of Cuddalore in 1791. In December 1793, while till serving as envoy he was concurrently appointed superintendent of the revenues of Jaffna and its dependencies. This association with revenue affairs was to be his downfall because he incurred the antipathy of Lord North for his alleged mishandling of this subject during the Madras administration. The Governor anathematized shim in a series of memoranda and Andrews had to leave Ceylon under a cloud. Better times however lay ahead for him because from 1804 to 1808 he was Collector of the Trichinopoly district and became a judge of the provincial court of appeal in 1810. He died in 1821. His tombstone carries the panegyric that "in him truly did the wretched find a friend, the poor a parent and mankind a man".2

The nature of his mission and his instructions were conveyed to Andrews in a letter addressed to him under the signature of Lord

1. Stuart to Braithwaite, 20.9.1795, Capture of Dutch Settlements 1795-1796, *Dutch Records* A, Vol. 27.

2. J. P. Lewis (ed.), "Andrews' Embassy to Kandy", *J.R.A.S.*, Ceylon Branch No. 870, p. 50.

Hobart and the Council on 21 July 1795.1 The object of the mission was set out as a preamble in the following terms: "the importance of establishing British influence upon the Island has upon former occasions attracted the attention of the government but no justice of circumstance has ever offered so favourable an opportunity of accomplishing this object as the late subversion of the government of Holland. To avail ourselves of this advantage we have appointed you the Ambassador to the King of Kandy." It further stated that the conduct of the Dutch towards the King gave the hope that the King would embrace an alliance and Andrews was authorised to conclude a treaty on the most favourable terms. The actual terms would vary according to the particular situation of the British. If they became protectors they would undertake to desist from hostile engagements against the King which would not preclude any commercial agreements. The proposed treaty was to be preliminary to a more comprehensive treaty of alliance and commerce which would have to be submitted to the Board of Control. Anticipating any complaints from the King as he had done to Boyd over the capture of Trincomalee Andrews was to explain that the action was taken to avert a civil war and forestall its capture by the French. He was to impress on the King the dangers of the French, of the "detrimental tendency of French principles and particularly the zeal with which they are endeavouring to propagate in all parts of the world." In matters of protocol the necessity of taking special care to comply with Kandyan customs, even to the extent of using the Tamil language, was emphasised. He was to obtain minute information about Dutch Kandyan relations along with copies of treaties and get permission from the King to erect a factory in some convenient part of the territories for trade purposes. The Company should be allowed to build fortifications to protect the factory, and the land so granted should belong to the King of England forever. On cession of the land the Company would discuss terms of trade in cinnamon with the King. The Company hoped that the liberal terms which they could offer when contrasted with the narrow trading habits of the Dutch would induce ready assent from the King.

Andrews' instructions were similar to those of Boyd, except for the touch of political propaganda against the terrors of French Jacobinism, the object of which was to alarm the King with fear of insurrection and his own deposition in case of a French invasion. In addition to his instructions Andrews was furnished with two alternative letters to the King. Andrews had to decide upon the right one for delivery to the King at his discretion, according to the situation at the time. The emphasis in one letter was on the desire of the British to free the King from the oppression of the Dutch, to protect him from their ally the French who were at that moment spreading their dange-

1. Hobart to Andrews, 21.7.1795, *Madras Political and Military Proceedings* Vol. 45, Sec. 2221.

rous revolutionary propaganda across the seas. The letter stated that the French were at that moment contemplating an invasion of Ceylon with intent "to take away your life as they have done that of their own King". The British had attacked the Dutch to avert this calamity befalling Ceylon. They proposed that the King should enter into a treaty with them which would be preliminary to a perpetual alliance of friendship between the two nations. He was requested to supply the troops in Trincomalee with provisions.[1] The alternative letter which had to be delivered in case the Dutch forts had been occupied without any resistance contained an additional paragraph assuring the King that the British operation would not extend beyond the Dutch settlements.[2] Ultimately it was the first draft which was delivered in as much as resistance was offered by the Dutch.

Andrews arrived in Kandy on 27 September having landed in Trincomalee on 13 August and left for Kandy on 15 September. He remained in Kandy till 14 October during which time he had an audience with the King who reminded him, as he reminded Boyd, of King Henry VIII, and several meetings with the Ministers. In his dealings with the latter Andrews prejudiced his position from the outset by involving himself in the political intrigues of the Court. The first Adigar at this time was the opportunistic and unscrupulous Pilima Talauwa then on the threshold of the powers and fame he was later to attain. One of his rivals for the favour of the King was the second Adigar Arawwawela. Arawwawela himself was a powerful chieftain being the Disawa of Matale and Tamankaduwe and together with his nephew, Denegamuwa, who was Disawa of Uda Palata, constituted a formidable opposition to the First Adigar.[3] The arrival of the British in Ceylon and their desire to conclude a treaty with the Kandyan King gave Arawwawela the idea that he could use them to further his amibtion by offering them his services to procure their treaty and thereby putting them under obligation. In accordance with this plan his nephew Denegamuwa accosted Andrews at Gonawila on his way to Kandy and introduced himself as the nephew of the Prime Minister. He described the latter as a powerful figure at the Court who warmly approved of the British. He assured Andrews that everything would be done for his business to be happily concluded. He suggested to him that to expedite accomplishment of this business he should communicate with the Court only through his uncle the Prime Minister. He offered Andrews the draft of a letter which he should sign as an undertaking to this effect.[4] Andrews was perplexed not wanting to displease one whom he thought could ensure the

1. *Madras Political and Military Proceedings*, Vol. 45, Sec. 2117.
2. *Madras Political and Military Proceedings*, Vol. 45, Sec. 2120.
3. Lewis, "Andrews' Embassy to Kandy", *J.R.A.S.* (Ceylon), No. 70, editor's footnote to p. 68.
4. 21.9.1795, Andrews' Account, *Factory Records* (Ceylon), Vol. I.

success of his business or to commit an act which he knew was improper and might compromise his mission. In spite of these doubts Andrews walked into the trap, as he offered an alternative draft of his own which Denegamuwa happily accepted. Andrews appears to have been rather confused about the idnentity of the Ministers because he referred to Denegamuwa who was a Disswa as the treasurer. The treasurer was really Arawwawela. In the draft letter Andrews gave an undertaking that he would not "ever accept or listen to the advice of any other Minister or people of distinction in the island."

Andrews realised on the following day that he had been misled when he was interviewed by two other ministers, namely Migastenne Snr. Disawa of the Four Korales and his son Migastenne Jnr. Disawa of Sabaragamuwa and later of the Seven Korales.[1] Migastenne Snr. was a cousin of Pilima Talauwa. His son who is described as an arrogant chieftain by Andrews was one of the two ambassadors who was sent to Madras. In contrast, Andrews was impressed by Denegamuwa's genuine concern for friendship with the British. The Ministers questioned Andrews regarding his credentials and even threatened to withhold his letter to the King unless he divulged his business. Andrews refused being under the impression that the Ministers were bluffing and threatened to return to Madras.[2] On the following day he realised what a mistake he had made when the two Ministers produced the letter which colonel Stuart had addressed to the King, as proof of their authority.[3] This was also proof to Andrews that the Ministers to whom he had unwittingly committed himself were not what they professed to be. This faux pas of Andrews would have done irreparable harm to his mission because in challenging the two Ministers he was really affronting Pilima Talauwa, whose henchmen they were. Andrews had thus backed the wrong horse. He could not have foreseen that the two partners in his secret undertaking were to suffer the revenge of Pilima Talawa and be executed at his orders in 1798.

Andrews' account does not distinguish between the identity of the Ministers with whom he conducted negotiations. They are all referred to as the King's deputies. Andrews was further handicapped by his ignorance of the existing treaties between the Dutch and the King, particularly of the 1766 treaty in which the King had recognised the sovreignty of the Dutch over the maritime provinces and the coastal belt. The Ministers thus had the edge over him in the discussions relating to the future of the territories which the British had captured from the Dutch. Andrews merely stated on one occasion that the British would expect to retain the Dutch territories other

1. Lewis, Andrews' Embassy to Kandy, *J.R.A.S.*, No. 70, footnote to p. 89.
2. 26.9.1795, Andrews' Account, *Factory Records*, (Ceylon), Vol. I.
3. 28.9.1795, *Ibid*.

than those which the latter had obtained unlawfully. The discussions in Kandy centred mainly on the readmission of the Dutch to Ceylon. The main pre-occupation on the Kandyan side was that if the treaty was to be of any use to them it should be an insurance against the return of the Dutch. This was really a basic and fundamental issue with them going back to the time of Pybus, from whom they had made the same demand. They had been wary of making the same request from Boyd, not being sure of the ability of the British to honour it. This was after all a very natural request for the Kandyans to make, as it was basic to their security. The British however, whatever they might have professed at the time, were really interested in the short term benefit of obtaining the King's assistance in their operations against the Dutch. They too could hardly do otherwise because any engagements which they contracted would in the last analysis have to be reconciled with the continental peace that would ultimately be concluded. The difficulty of reaching agreement on this issue actually reflected the basic divergence in their outlook. Articles 3 and 4 of the draft treaty submitted by the King stipulated that "the Company would not allow the Dutch government by any treaty a footing on the island and should repel by force any attempt which they make to re-establish themselves on the island", and that "it was incumbent on the Company to guard and protect the King and religion of the Country against all its enemies."[1] Andrews suggested in reply that article 3 should be omitted and replaced by 4 and that a new article should be drafted which provided that it was incumbent on the Company, should the Dutch on any pretext wish to be re-established in their former possessions to prevent even a foot of such ground being returned back until the permission of the King was first obtained. The Ministers were ready to accept the modified version and preparations were made at Andrews' request for an embassy to accompany him to Madras to conclude a preliminary treaty. The King however refused to sign the draft treaty and the article had to be dropped.[2] Andrews took umbrage and walked out expressing regret at the unhappy conclusion of the negotiations. The abrupt and inconclusive termination of the negotiations did not affect the decision to send an embassy which arranged to join Andrews in Trincomalee.[3] Andrews' efforts although they failed in their principal objective of securing a treaty had the consolation prize of obtaining supplies from the King for the troops. He reported to Hobart on his arrival in Trincomalee that the King had ordered cattle for delivery to Stuart.[4]

1. 1.10.1795, Andrews' Account, *E.I. Factory Records*, Ceylon, Vol. I.
2. 10.10.1795, Andrews' Account, *E.I. Factory Records*, Ceylon, Vol. I.
3. 4.10.1795, *Ibid.*
4. Andrews to Hobart, 22.10.1795, *Ibid.*

NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE
AS FIRST CONSUL

Parallel to Andrews' discussion in Kandy a similar debate was being conducted in India between his principals on the subject of his mission. These were Lord Hobart and Sir John Shore, who were in head on collision over the propriety of the mission and the instructions issued to Andrews. At heart this was a clash of temperaments between two persons, than whom no two could have been more unlike.[1] History has shown that few situations could be more productive of strife and tension and detrimental to administration than the juxta-position in parallel positions or in a context of divided authority of strong willed persons of either clashing or like temperaments, each pursuing what he thought was the right course. It is a problem which can set at naught even the most perfect administrative system and it demonstrates the power of personality in shaping the destiny of institutions. The history of British dominion in India was particularly conducive to such situations. The rivalry between Hobart and Shore was one such instance which anticipated the later duels between Morly and Minto and Curzon and Kitchener. Hobart and Shore were by birth and background destined to be rivals. Shore was of respectable Derbyshire stock and Hobart a born aristocrat. Shore was a ranker risen to the top, "a milk and water Governor General of low birth" as Hobart reminded him, while Hobart came from on high en route to becoming Governor General.[2] Hobart was dynamic and impatient of the type of native politics symbolised by the Nawab of Arcot and of corruption such as was rampant in Madras. Shore too shared the abhorrence of evil and had an evangelical ardour against it but while in his case "the strong sense of the all pervading wonder of providence" was a pretext for inaction and compromise, to Hobart it was a spur to ruthless acts amounting to despotism. Shore was a pillar of the establi-shment in the founding of which he had played a so notable part having been one of the architects of the permanent settlement in association with Cornwallis. He had won high parise for it in India and London and it was even said that the settlement might have been even better if his own proposals had been made its basis. By association so long with the establishment and having seen it attain its then stature almost from the beginning (he joined in 1766) he had understandably become timid and unadventurous, sceptical about actions of questionable propriety which would jeopardize British dominion. Hobart in contrast was venturesome, having come to India to win fame and for-tune, and would not be brooked by scruples when he felt that honour or justice or the imperial interests were at stake. In some respects they were similar, in others opposite, and complementary. It has even been suggested that Hobart had been appointed to make up for shore's deficiencies.[3]

1. Furber, *Henry Dundas*, (Oxford 1931), pp. 132-135.
2. Furber, "Baron Teignmouth", *Harvard Historical Monographs* (Cambridge 1933), p. 20.
3. Furber, *Dundas*, p. 34.

The disputes over policy arose logically from the contrasting temperaments and became ultimately a clash of wills and ambitions. Policy differences occurred mainly on two questions. These were Hobart's desire for strong measures against the Nawabs of Arcot and Tanjore and his diplomatic initiative with the King of Kandy. Hobart wanted annexation of the Nawab's territory but Shore was opposed to this, being swayed by the same considerations of non-intervention which had prompted him to abandon the Nizam of Hyderabad to his fate at Kurdla at the hands of the Marattas, thereby considerably enhancing the power of the latter. Shore was influenced by a similar spirit of compromise in dealing with the army mutiny for which he was severely criticised. On Ceylon affairs he was critical of Hobart's handling of the expedition against the Dutch and his negotiations with Kandy. His opinion of the expedition which he confided to Dundas was that Hobart's intimation to Angelbeek that force will be employed was "calculated to irritate and perhaps excite an indisposition which did not exist". He even thought that Hobart's action was an obvious violation of an act of Parliament.[1] In these statements Shore was admitting to him his own pre-occupation with constitutional proprieties and his fear of a forward policy which was at the bottom of his clash with Hobart. Hobart protested that this allegation showed a want of confidence in him on Shore's part.[2] The really serious clash occurred over the negotiations at Kandy which became the subject of a long and bitter exchange between the two. It began with Shore's letter, which was tabled at Madras on 4 December 1795, in which he pulverised the terms of the draft treaty with Kandy and the policy which inspired it.[3] His objections against it were as follows.[4] The treaty was to be in the nature of a perpetual guarantee of the King of Kandy against all enemies in return for which Britian would obtain a fort and trading rights. In principle, a "guarantee of a prince or state is the most serious obligations which a nation can impose and therefore all risks and obligations should be weighed". Considered in this light the treaty had overlooked a number of implications. It had ignored the possibility that the European Peace Treaty could restore the Dutch possessions and thus oblige the British to abandon the King. If this happened the Dutch were bound to claim the restoration of all their trading privileges in the island, the nature of which was unknown to the British. This would embarrass the British and provoke hostilities with the Dutch. The presence of British power in India would be no practical deterrent in view of the provocative spirit of Dutch policy as demonstrated in the past.

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1. Shore to Dundas, 26.8.1795, Furber, *Private Record of An Indian Governor General*, p. 77.
2. Shore to Dundas, 21.11.1795, *Ibid.*
3. Bengal Council to Madras, 4.12.1795, *Madras Political and Military Proceedings*, Sec. 4678.
4. *Ibid.*

A treaty with the King on the lines proposed by Madras would serve little purpose and would in fact be an encumbrance. If the provinces were ceded to the British there was no need for the treaty but if they were not, the British would be obliged to maintain an army and be involved in the local politics of the King. The real beneficiary of such a treaty would be the king, who would gain much more from the British than the letter got from him considering that the King was under no obligation in the treaty to assist the British against their own enemies. The Company was now placed in the dilemma of either signing a disadvantageous treaty or rejecting it and incurring the displeasure of the King. For all this embarrassment casued to the Company, the Madras Presidency was to blame and must be held responsible. The resolution for negotiating the treaty was made without any positive communications with Bengal nor did the treaty contain a clause, as it was obliged to, in terms of the statute governing conduct of external affairs by presidencies, subjecting it to the approbation or rejection of the supreme government. The instructions to the negotiator were in excess of the authority to which Madras was entitled. In these circumstances the supreme government deemed the treaty "premature unnecessary and dangerous". This was not the first time that Madras had exceeded their authority, having done so once before in time of the Cornwallis. The supreme government agreed that there should be a treaty but on different lines. It should be confined to general expressions of amity, the more general the principles the less embarrassment that would be caused. If the King was prepared to make trade concessions they should be accepted, provided no obligations were incurred. The object of a treaty should be purely to gain the King's goodwill and not to commit the Company to any undertakings on his behalf. The Madras Presidency was directed in accordance with these views to apologise to the Ambassadors and, while assuring them of the Company's desire to have the King's friendship through a treaty of alliance and amity, explain that the treaty proposals were unacceptable because they would be incompatible with Britain's international obligations. However, if the Abmassadors were unimpressed by the plain sense and candour of this explanation as the Governor General hoped they would be, the Madras government was authorised to accept the treaty subject to its ratification or rejection by the Company within two years.

Hobart was not the man to accept a censure of this nature coming as it did from a superior whom he personally despised and whose continuance in office was frustrating his own ambitions of becoming Governor General.[1] Hobart's mind at that time was unhinged by the death of his wife and infant son and he might have felt that Shore was deliberately undermining his reputation in order to deprive him of the Governor Generalship which was to be his only if his performance

1. Furber, "Baron Teignmouth", p. 20.

was satisfactory. Shore in his memorandum had cast serious aspersions on it. Hobart replied to his letter in equally strong terms answering his charges point by point.[1] Describing the Governor General's attitude towards the treaty he thought that they "have shown to the utmost pitch of possibility every imaginative evil which human ingenuity could devise". Hobart's case was that the treaty with the King was essential both to Britain's immediate and long term interest. He did not think that it would cause international or local complications were the territories restored to the Dutch. Friendship with the King was in any case desirable for the sake of obtaining supplies for the current military operations and to ensure amicable relations with him if the provinces remained British. The treaty would be directed exclusively against the Dutch, the latter being the only other party concerned, and would not then add to Britain's international commitments. Besides the feelings of the Dutch did not matter at that moment in view of the possibility that Holland would continue to be in the degenerate situation of a province of France which made this treaty the only security which the British would have against the establishment of the French in the island. He was confident that the peace treaty would be an honourable one for the British but even if the provinces were restored to the Dutch he saw no difficulty in Britain retaining their lodgments. It would not be easy for the Dutch to evict them from Ceylon and they would prfer to come to terms with the British. The example of Pulu Run which had cornered the trade of Malacca through illicit trade with the Dutch showed the possibilities that would be open to the British if they had a factory in Ceylon. Besides a treaty with the King was the only basis on which there could be a future for the British in Ceylon. The hostility of the pro-Dutch ministers at the Court made it impossible to obtain the King's assistance through other means. Besides without a treaty it would not be possible to obtain supplies from the King, which was the most pressing need at the moment. Its importance increased with the lengthening out of the military operations in Ceylon into the form of a siege. If the King remained neutral he might even be persuaded by the pro-Dutch courtiers under the influence of bribes from the Dutch to oppose the British and impede the military operations against Colombo. With regard to Bengal's suggestion about the explanation which should be given to the Ambassadors Madras observed that the King's knowledge of Europe was based exclusively on his dealings with the Dutch, whose reputation for good faith was not proverbial. He would thus feel outraged to experience similar conduct from the British, particularly after the latter had made the King irretrievably committed to them and thus prejudiced him in the eyes of the Dutch. Hobart concluded with a note which he dictated to Fallowfield for inclusion in the verbatim minutes

1. 4.12.1795, Minutes of Meeting of Madras Council, *Madras Military and Political Proceedings*, Vol. 50, Sec. 4694.

of the Council meeting of 4 December 1795 affirming the importance to the Company of having a respectable establishment in Ceylon for the purpose of securing the trade and commerce of the Company's possessions in the south against likely invaders. It offered commercial prospects and advantage could be taken of the friendly disposition of the King who had already evinced his good intentions by the help he had proffered. This was therefore a favourable moment to accomplish what former governments had attempted and conclude a treaty which would give the British proper assistance, retention of revenue in conquered provinces, trade concessions and other assistance on his part in return for protection against the Dutch. The Council similarly passed a resolution undertaking to follow the supreme government's instructions but without accepting responsibility for resultant embarrassments and dissenting from the supreme government's view, that the treaty would cause embarrassment in Europe or India.[1]

The duel between Hobart and Shore proved suicidal to both sides because Hobart did not get his Governor Generalship and Shore was recalled in 1797 and replaced by Wellesley. Their feud alarmed Pitt and Dundas into terminating their services.[2] Their clash however is historically interesting for the light it throws on the evolution of British policy in India. Both belong to a period of transition when the necessity of a forward policy was being forced upon an administration which till then had hesitated to accept the full logic of paramountcy. Shore represented the conservative point of view inherited from Cornwallis who was intent with bureaucratic thoroughness on reconstruction and consolidation and on keeping foreign involvements to a minimum for fear that it would rebound on these more urgent tasks. Cornwallis it will be recalled had displeased Dundas by his half cock operations against Tipu in 1792. Hobart on the other hand was the man of the future who saw the inevitability of the process by which the native states would ultimately be absorbed within the British Raj and thus in a sense he anticipated Wellesley. These differences in outlook erupted over the Ceylon operations. Hobart's conception of this shows that he was thinking in terms of a permanent lodgement. Shore however regarded it as a purely military operation in the war which should be limited to such measures only as would conduce to their objectives. The case of Ceylon belonged to the same order as the cases of the Nawabs of Tanjore and Arcot on which Shore revealed his fundamental divergence from Hobart on the aims and purposes of British policy in India.

The Kandyan Ambassadors, Denegamuwa and Migastenne, arrived in Madras on 29 December blinsfully unware of the controversy of which they were the centre. They were received in audience

1. 4.12.1795, Minutes of Madras Council Meeting, *Madras M. & P. Proceedings*, Vol. 50, Sec. 4694.
2. Furber, *Dundas*, p. 133.

on 31 December by Hobart, who took delivery of the letter addressed to him by the King submitting a draft treaty.[1] Andrews had the task of breaking the news which he did under protest. The Ambassadors were indignant and accused the British of luring them with false promises stating that if they knew they were to be left in the lurch, they would have negotiated with the Dutch for better terms. Andrews had to pacify them with the hope that further success of the British operations in Ceylon might induce the Bengal Council to change their minds.[2] The Ambassadors agreed to stay provided they could conclude a treaty.

In the resumed negotiations which began on 13 January the emphasis was on article 4 of the Kandyan draft treaty which reads as follows :[3] "Company may erect forts and warehouses in such places which may be pointed by the King out of his gracious pleasure agreeable to the purpose of stationing troops for constant protection and trade". Hobart was not fooled however and argued that the British were entitled not to what the King of Kandy offered them out of the goodness of his heart but to all the Dutch possessions which were theirs by right of conquest from the Dutch to whom they had been ceded. The Ambassadors replied that the Dutch were the King's watchers employed by him to protect the kingdom and replaceable at will by the King.[4] Andrews insisted that it was not for the King to grant them the Dutch territories. The Ambassador then suggested as an alternative draft that the "Company shall not interfere but at places as the King may cede to them". Andrews proposed a modified form that "the Company should not interfere with any part of the present possession except such as shall henceforth be ceded to them by the treaty".[5] This was not acceptable to the Ambassadors to whom Andrews offered yet another draft to the effect "the Company shall investigate the subject as soon as they had captured the Dutch possessions and restore to the King on conclusion of the war and should they remain in permanent possession of the Dutch settlement such internal situations as he may appear to have just claim to".[6] A draft treaty[7] incorporating the amended article was submitted by Andrews but it was accepted by the Ambassadors only after they had further modified article 8 by the addition of the clause "notwithstanding the preceding article as soon as the Company becomes possessed of the Dutch settlements on the island they shall restore to the King the situa-

1. 31.12.1795, Andrews' Account, *Factory Records* (Ceylon), Vol. I.
2. *Ibid.*
3. 13.1.1796, Andrews' Account, *Factory Records* (Ceylon), Vol. I.
4. 13.1.1796, Andrews' Account, *Factory Records* (Ceylon), Vol. I.
5. 16.1.1796, *Ibid.*
6. 20.1.1796, *Ibid.*
7. 23.1.1796, *Ibid.*

tion upon the coast for the sole and express purpose of procuring an adequate supply of salt and fish for the consumption of the people". The Ambassadors were still dissatisfied and refused to sign the treaty but were finally persuaded to do so by Andrews on 12 February 1796. Although the terms of the treaty did not fully come up to the expectation of both sides still it was not without positive benefits to them. The British received permanent possession of a favourable situation on the island and the limits of the Dutch territories were to be defined on conclusion of the war but it was made clear that only such parts as the King had a just claim to would be returned. The Kandyans had reason to be pleased as they had undone the effects of the 1766 treaty to the extent of obtaining a trade outlet and the eight to employ ten ships. Andrews returned to Kandy in August 1796 to secure ratification of this treaty but he was unsuccessful as the King made new demands for additional forts which Andrews rejected. The treaty thus remained unratified. By that time however it had outlived its purpose because the British were now in command of the maritime provinces, they knew of the 1766 treaty and there was need for them to have a fresh look at their relations with Kandy.

In the meantime Colombo had become a beleaguared fort isolated from the rest of the Dutch possessions which were being swiftly overrun by the British. On 8 October it received its second summons to surrender from Major Agnew, who came with a letter from Hobart and the startling news of the transfer of the de Meuron regiment consisting of Swiss mercenaries in the service of the Dutch at that time in Ceylon.1 It was formed in 1781 by a Swiss Colonel Daniel de Meuron for service in the Netherlands East Indies Company and had a distinguished record of service having served under Suffren in the capture of Trincomalee and in the encounters with Hughes and under Bussy at Cuddalore fighting against Stuart. Between 1783 and 1788 it garrisoned the Cape. It was transferred to Ceylon in 1788. The regiment was originally composed of about 1,200 men but in 1795 it numbered around 900 who were divided between Colombo, Galle and Trincomalee. The regiment constituted the best fighting material on the Dutch side.2 Its transfer at this time was the handiwork of Professor Cleghorn whose name as a result has become synonymous with the surrender of Colombo. This is however a highly overrated estimate for which Cleghorn himself was responsible as he was apart from other things an expert publicist for himself. Cleghorn was a Professor of Civil Law for 20 years at St. Andrews University but he had a temperament which made him singularly

1. Agnew to Hobart, 19.10.1795 *Madras Political and Military Proceedings*, Vol. 38, Sec. 3960.

2. Perera, Notes on the British Occupation of the Maritime Provinces C.A. IV p. 216.

unfiitted for the cloister.[1] His restless spirit burned within him for adventures which until 1795 had to be satisfied by his frequent incursions to Switzerland where he cultivated the friendship of the proprietory Colonel of the regiment — Pierre Daniel de Meuron.[2] When he heard of the Ceylon expedition the thought occurred to him of a bargain by which he could launch out on the career of adventure and intrigue for which he craved and render a service to his country. He put the idea of a transfer of the de Meuron regiment, making use of his personal connections with the proprietor, to Dundas who fortunately for Cleghorn had a notorious partiality for his compatriots and also shared his love of intrigue. Dundas gave it his blessing and government support and Cleghorn was authorised to negotiate the transfer at Neuchatel after which he was to proceed with the Colonel if possible or without him to Madras carrying the important news. At this time Cleghorn also had his eye on a comfortable diplomatic appointment in the circle of Swabia. He and his party left Venice in May 1795 and arrived in Madras in September after a journey which recalled the travels of Sinbad. He was fleeced and robbed by Levantine merchants, obliged to travel on a pilgrim ship to Mecca and thence in an open boat and undergo various other hazards. If he had ambition he also had pluck and determination and was one of the first to do the overland trip to India via Suez. He arrived on the Coromandel coast just in time to contact Stuart at Mannar and convey the news of the transfer and also transmit the information to the Colonel's brother, for which purpose he used the Dutch cheese that he found on the flat bottomed transport boat that ferried him. He was obviously a man of ingenuity and resourcefulness but his love of intrigue was his besetting sin. He offered himself to accompany Agnew to Colombo and dropped a suggestion to Hobart's secretary Adderley but the hint was not accepted.[3] He even tried to force his way into Kandy and do Andrews' job for him but his services were again declined. His contribution therefore was limited to his service and skill in effecting the de Meuron transfer and for this he deserved due credit. However to claim as has been said on his tombstone at Dunino churchyard that "he was the agent by whose instrumentality the island of Ceylon was annexed to the British Empire" is a gross exaggeration which could have been coined by Cleghorn himself.[4]

The transfer of the regiment facilitated the capture of Colombo in a number of ways. It deprived Colombo of its most experienced and dependable fighting unit. It gave the British access to knowledge regarding the conditions of the fort through its commander Colonel Frederick de Meuron who furnished the British with maps and inside

1. Revd. W. Neil (ed). *Cleghorn Papers* (London 1927), p. 2.
2. *Ibid.*, p.3.
3. Cleghorn to Adderley, 26.12.1795, *Cleghorn Papers*, p. 231.
4. *Cleghorn Papers*, p. 231.

information on his arrival in Madras.1 It cannot be said however that the surrender of Colombo was due to the transfer of the regiment alone because the capitulation occurred five months later and besides there was a substantial fighting force left in the garrison. Moreover as the secret resolution of the Dutch council showed the transfer stiffened the determination of the defenders.2 The ultimate fall of Colombo was due to a number of other circumstances, which the Governor explained to the Council at their last meeting held on 14 February 1795. These were the lack of help from Holland or Batavia, the non-arrival of a French fleet which had been expected, the failure of Tipu to create a diversion, large scale desertion by the Sinhalese, Moors, Malays and Sepoys, the advance of a Kandyan force estimated to be 3,000 strong to join forces with the British the numerical superiority of the British forces which was reported to number 10,000, complete exhaustion of money supplies. Further the staff officers advised the Governor that the fort could not hold out against an attack any longer than three days.3 The proposal to surrender was put to the Council who accepted it unanimously except for one dissentient. In accordance with the decision the fort capitulated on 15 February 1796.4

The circumstances in which Colombo surrendered have given rise to expressions of doubt by some writers about the bonafides of the defenders. The best known of these critics are Tombe and Percival.5 Tombe attributed the surrender to the treachery of the Governor van Angelbeek and Percival to the Jacobin temper of the troops. These questions have been examined by historians who have concluded that they are without foundation. Broadly speaking one cannot quarrel with their verdict. Angelbeek has been vindicated by the verbatim records to the final council meeting which showed that the decision to surrender was unanimous. In none of the meetings did he show any inclination to surrender or defy the wishes of the majority. In fact it was he who recommended the middle course of admitting 800 troops and declined acceptance of British protection outright. On that occasion he openly expressed mistrust of British intentions. Secondly while there is evidence of lawlessness and indiscipline there are no grounds on which it can be established that this was political jacobinism. Still for all one feels that these facts were not the whole truth and that there was more to the situation than meets the eye.

1. *Ibid.*, Preface, p. ix.
2. 9.10.1795, Secret Resolution of the Colombo Council, *C.A.*, Vol. VIII, part II, p. 112.
3. 4.2.1796, Secret Resolution of the Colombo Council, *C.A.*, Vol. VIII, part II, p. 116.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
5. De Silva, *Ceylon Under the British Occupation*, p. 46.

Colombo admittedly could never had prevailed against the numerical superiority of the British but it was certainly capable of a better defence considering that the Portuguese held out against the Dutch from October 1655 to May 1656. That this was not the case is proof that other factors must have intervened which undermined the defence. The performance of the other garrisons in the island as well as in other Dutch possessions in Asia like Malacca show that Dutch power in Asia had been stricken with a debilitating malady which sapped their energy and will to fight. This was due partly to the bad pay and wretched terms of service of the soldiers and partly to the widespread corruption among the administrative class particularly. Prior to the outbreak of war a commission of inquiry had been sent to Batavia to investigate the Company affairs under the leadership of Nederburg, but the commission had virtually abandoned its work following the death of one of the commissioners and his replacement by the son-in-law of the Governor. This was a glaring and typical case of nepotism. This clannishness was not absent in Colombo too where the chief administrator was the son of the Governor though in this case nepotism has not been alleged. It might be noted however that he expressed himself in favour of the acceptance of the British offer of protection. Governor Angelbeek had acquired considerable private property in Ceylon and remained in the island until his death. So did Fornbauer. These instances suggest that there was a class consciousness and a gulf between the establishment which flourished on private trade and nepotism and the underprivileged rank and file.[1] This gulf was similar to the rift between the politically underprivileged patriots and the Regent Oligarchy in Holland who monopolised office. The mutinous state of the troops and their disgust at the pusilanimity of their officers which prompted them to lower the flag at Trincomalee is further evidence of a lack of sympathy between the "ruling class" and the soldiers. The dissatisfaction which expressed itself in mutiny and indiscipline among the soldiers could have among the intelligentsia taken the form of political jacobinism. This happened as we have seen in Batavia where the citizens demanded a democratic constitution and the Cape where there was a revolution. The only positive evidence of the existence of jacobinism as such in Colombo is the account of Percival and the reports of Colonel de Meuron.[2] Percival might have mistaken the outburst of indiscipline which accompanied the capitulation of Colombo for jacobinism. He has suggested that the outbursts were inspired by a feeling among the soldiers that they had been secretly betrayed by the Governor to the British unknown to the rest of the government. This was of course absurd as the council minutes show. The report of de Meuron however merits attention owing to his personal knowledge of inside conditions. His

1. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire*, p. 210.

2. *Cleghorn Papers*, p. 224.

remark that if the Jacobins got on top they would defend the place to the last is significant.1 It suggests not only that jacobinism was an organised force to be reckoned with but that the fort authorities would have been inclined to invite the British to save themselves from this jacobinism.

This political instability was aggravated by the peculiar conflict of loyalties which the British invasion created. The governing authorities were torn between loyalty to the Stadtholder and to the new regime, while the soldiers and lower executives were concerned with more immediate questions relating to their pensions, their future career, prospects and their pay. They were afraid that they would be treated as traitors whether they resisted or not, by the British if they resisted and by the Batavian Republic if they did not. The authorities therefore attempted the compromise of defying the order to surrender but capitulating without resistance except in Trincomalee, the conduct of which was rather out of tune with that of the rest. The spectacle of double dealing by the authorities must have undermined the morale of the troops and caused a loss of confidence in the officers resulting in large scale desertions and a state of mutiny.

The circumstances suggest therefore that at the heart of the failure of the Dutch to give a better account of themselves was a state of social and political discontent within their settlements which in many ways reproduced the situation that had caused a revolution in Holland.2 The colonies seemed to have become miniatures of the home country in respect of their social structure and the conduct of their governing class. The only difference is that in Holland the French came as liberators while to the Dutch colonies the British were an enemy power that was further tainted by association with the reactionary regime in pre-revolutionary Holland. Because of this fact the elements in the colony who were opposed to the Stadtholder's regime would have wished to offer resistance but the vacillation of the authorities would have frustrated their plans. No determined leadership was forthcoming from the authorities to resist the British although they knew after 12 August that the Batavian revolution was a popular movement. The disobedience of orders issued from Colombo as for example by Wambeek, the half hearted abandonment of the outlying garrisons, the lack of any attempt at interception, notably by Fornbauer, show a lackadaisical approach to defence. Besides, the Dutch had ample time after August to prepare their defences and place the settlements on a war footing. Instead they gave in too easily to rumours and fears and accepted the grossly exaggerated figures of the strength of the

1. *Ibid.*

2. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire*, p. 212, and Nypel, *Hoe Nederland Ceilon Verloor*, Ch. III & IV.

attackers. The authorities seemed to be more keen to secure their interests in the island and fell for the bait prepared for them by the British of the guarantee to purchase Dutch promissory notes to the value of £50,000. Thus a purposeful will to fight was lacking to cover which they magnified their difficulties.

CHAPTER VII

THE PARIS AND LILLE NEGOTIATIONS

The capitulation of Colombo in February 1796 completed the subjugation of the Dutch territories in Ceylon by the British. Theoretically the position of the British in Ceylon was in the nature of a military occupation necessitated by their war against revolutionary France and the Batavian Republic or alternatively a form of protective custody on behalf of the Stadtholder in terms of the latter's mandate. Whether the British felt that they were no longer bound by this letter in view of the resistance of Trincomalee or whether they visualised a permanent occupation of these territories was not made clear at this particular time. It was a subject on which Hobart and Shore had a difference of opinion as will be seen by their attitudes to the draft treaty with the Kandyan King. For the time being, however, the British Government acted as if the occupation was provisional, in as much as the administration of the occupied territories was entrusted to the Madras Presidency. This arrangement terminated with the appointment of Frederick North as Governor of these territories. This decision marked the first step towards the establishment of an independent British administration in Ceylon as the Governor was appointed by the home government to which he was directly responsible for all matters other than those of a commercial nature. One of the reasons for this change of policy which anticipated the permanent acquisition of these territories by the British Crown was the failure of the Anglo-French peace talks which were held in the intervening period. An understanding of the nature of these talks is therefore essential for purpose of this study.

The Anglo-French peace negotiations which were held at Paris (1796) and at Lille (1797) were part of the campaign for peace which Pitt in his earnest and idealistic desire for that consummation waged

concurrently, with the war against revolutionary France.[1] If these talks had succeeded, they would have altered the course of European history and certainly of Ceylon history. One of the major issues at the talks on which to some extent their outcome depended was Ceylon and this was a further illustration of the role which the island played in European international relations during this period. It is no exaggeration to say that from the negotiations leading up to the Peace of Paris of 1784 until the Peace of Amiens, it was one of the major factors in European diplomacy.

The Paris and Lille negotiations however were foredoomed to failure because, like other peace efforts which were attempted between 1792 and 1803, they depended on the vicissitudes of the prevailing military and political situations of the two countries and were at times of doubtful sincerity. They were based more often than not on considerations of expediency and desire to elicit diplomatic or political advantage and hence interest was rarely concentrated on the intrinsic issues. Notwithstanding a genuine desire for peace on the part of the two nations, the economies of which could ill-stand the strain of these protracted struggles, there were other forces psychological and political, the pressures of domestic politics, the clash of personalities and the ramifications of international relations which stood in their way and prevented their fulfilment.

The Paris negotiations were a case in point of these obstructive forces, inimical to peace, at work. The overtures which led to them were initiated by Pitt on the advice of Nettement who had assured him of their cordial reception in Paris. Earlier in that year the King, much against his wishes, announced a desire to negotiate for peace.[2] The initial offer, which was transmitted through the French Minister in Berne,[3] was at first rather curtly rejected by the Directory but they subsequently agreed to issue passports to an envoy. A desire for peace was at all times foremost in Pitt's mind but since 1795 the protracted and wasteful character of the war had intensified this mood. Besides, the failure of the First Coalition, the defection of Prussia, the irritating obsession of Thugut with his hatred of Prussia and his constant demand for ever increasing subsidies from Britain, the unpredictability of Catherine and her own preoccupation with Turkey and Poland, augured unfavourably for the future of the Triple Alliance which was formed in 1795.[4] At that moment however an opening

1. J. Holland Rose, *William Pitt and the Great War*, (London 1911), pp. 265 and 321.

2. A. P. Bowman, "Preliminaries of the Peace of Amiens", *University of Toronto Studies* (Toronto 1901), p. 10.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy* (1783-1919) (Cambridge 1922) Vol. I, pp. 260-269.

was afforded to Pitt by the unexpected success of Archduke Charles over the French on the Rhine and he judged the opportunity propitious to pursue his efforts.

The talks commenced in Paris in October 1796 and lasted till the summary dismissal of the plenipotentiary in December of that year. The breakdown and the futility which generally marked them was due in large measure to the way in which they were handled by Britain, and the instructions which were issued to her plenipotentiary. Although this aspect of the talks is outside the scope of this study it is necessary to gain some idea of it in order to serve as a background to an understanding of Ceylon's position in these talks.

Serious doubts have been raised by historians on Pitt's own motives in taking the initiative to hold these talks.[1] It had been suggested that his object was to force the Directory into a position where they would be obliged to reject the British offer and, by thus putting themselves in the wrong, enable Pitt to silence his critics in Parliament and rally support for his government, which was then under attack by Fox and under the strain of economic pressures. Pitt himself has admitted to such a motive in a letter to his brother but he has also affirmed his interest in peace, which justifies Sybel's conclusion that he had both objects in mind.[2] The same however could not be said of Grenville the Foreign Minister who was responsible for the conduct of the talks. They could scarcely have appealed to his anti-jacobin fears and although he went along with Pitt in the Paris talks his innate distrust of France was to come into the open in the later talks at Lille. Yet he exerted an influence on Pitt's peace policy to the point of wrecking the Paris talks insidiously through the contradictory instructions which he issued to Malmesbury and the obstructive positions which he adopted in the negotiations.[3]

The choice of Malmesbury as the British plenipotentiary was itself a questionable decision. While admittedly he was Britain's ablest and most experienced diplomat, he was also the same man who had outwitted the French in 1787 by stage managing the restoration of the Stadtholder which won for Britain the hatred of the Patriots and which had thereby opened the gates for the French to establish their ascendancy in Holland. His presence could scarcely have been an earnest to the French of the sincerity of British intentions. On the other hand, the only available alternative to him was Auckland who was his equal in ability and had to his credit the Anglo-French trade agreement of 1786 over which in fact he had clashed with Malmesbury.

1. Bowman, *Peace of Amiens*, p. 11, *Cambridge History of Foreign Policy*, Vol. I, p. 263
2. Pitt to Chatham 4.9.1797 Bowman, *Peace of Amiens p.* 12.
3. E. D. Adams, *Influence of Grenville on Pitt's Foreign Policy* 1787—1795 (Washington 1904) pp. 40-55.

Auckland however was clearly unsuited for the role of peace-maker owing to his obsessive hatred for the revolution and his hankering after a Bourbon restoration. Another possible reason for the choice of Malmesbury may have been his Foxite connections which again seem to give point to Pitt's political motivation in undertaking these talks. Malmesbury it must be said adapted himself admirably, with typical resourcefulness, for the role and even over-reached himself in wearing the national cockade on occasions to ingratiate himself the more.[1] The old lion proved himself to be not less adept at his tricks than he was in the hey day of his triumphs in the Court of William and Wilhelmina. Britain's object in the talks was ostensibly to arrive at a peace settlement with France pursuant to the King's announcement to Parliament that Vendemire had created a government in France with which it was possible for her to treat.[2] The basis of Britain's peace offer was that she was prepared to consider the payment of compensation to France for any restitution by her of conquered territories to Britain's allies such as would contribute to the restoration of the balance of power in Europe and the establishment of a lasting peace. This at least was the approach countenanced by Pitt but on this he was apparently at variance with Grenville who paid equal weight to the participation of Austria in the negotiation and insisted on Austria's approval of these terms as a prerequisite.[3] Grenville's enthusiasm for Austria's support reflected his attachment to the idea of an Austrian alliance in preference to the Prussian alliance on which issue but for Prussia's timely defection in concluding a separate agreement with France he had been on the point of breaking with Pitt. His insistence on Austrian participation in the peace talks was in fact a continuation of the peace overtures which he had addressed to Thugut through Morton Eden in 1795 offering a settlement on the basis that French possessions in Italy and Germany would be recognised in return for the cession of the Austrian Netherlands to Austria and the payment of compensatory restitution by Britain to France for any sacrifices made by the latter in the course of the settlement. These were the identical terms which Malmesbury was now instructed to offer to France. The snag in Grenville's scheme was that Thugut had no use for peace at that stage and was infuriated at the idea.[4] Archduke Charles' success over the French which had given Pitt the idea of peace had produced the opposite effect on Thugut of making him less amenable to peace overtures. Thus while Malmesbury was negotiating with Delacroix in Paris, he was left in the lurch by Grenville whose main effort was directed towards persuading Austria to participate in the peace talks. Malmesbury was thus kept waiting in Paris for firm instructions until

1. Malmesbury, Diaries and Correspondence (London 1845), Vol. III, p. 260.
2. Malmesbury, *Diaries*, Vol. III, p. 250.
3. Adams, *Influence of Grenville*, pp. 40-55.
4. *Cambridge History of Foreign Policy* Vol. I, p. 269.

Thugut had made up his mind.[1] Grenville justified his insistence on Austrian participation and the restitution of the Austrian Netherlands by France on the ground that in terms of Britain's treaty with Austria she was under obligation not to make peace except on terms which were acceptable to Austria.[2] Whether this plea was only a pretext to stultify the Paris negotiations or he was sincere in his distrust of the Triple Alliance and his faith in the efficacy of an Anglo-Austrian alliance is a moot question. The practical effect of Grenville's Austrian policy was that his overtures to Austria became a rival to the Paris negotiations in the same way ironically that Auckland's negotiations of 1786 with France had rivalled Malmesbury's initiatives in Holland, and seriously prejudiced the latter's mission in Paris.

The course of the Paris negotiations were visibly affected by these cross currents and cross purposes on the British side. Malmesbury found himself in an unenviable position from the commencement of the negotiations. The talks began with a submission by him to Delacroix of Grenville's memorandum containing Britain's offer of compensatory restitution. Delacroix inquired whether the basis of the offer was *uti possidetis* or *status quo ante bellum* whereupon Malmesbury elaborated on it saying that it represented "His Majesty's intention of employing the effect of his successes during the war in compensating France for restituting such of her conquests on the continent as may be necessary to satisfy the just claims of His Majesty's allies and to preserve the political balance of Europe."[3] Delacroix replied to the memorandum with a letter from the Directory asking for particulars of the compensation proposed and the mechanics of compensatory restitution.[4] This indeed was a logical reply because as Delacroix repeatedly explained to Malmesbury, if this proposal was to make any sense and lend itself to the consideration of the Directory, it was essential that Britain should ennumerate concrete details of the territories which she had in mind as compensation. Malmesbury appreciated the difficulty and confided his uneasiness to Canning but the clarification was not forthcoming. Instead Grenville replied with his famous letter accusing the Directory quite unnecessarily of "insinuantes offensanteset injurieuses."[5]

This letter put Malmesbury in a quandary. It convinced him that the object of the negotiation was to effect a rupture with France and that his mission was to achieve this in such a way as would enable Britain to retire honourably and discredit France. He sought

1. Chalres Ballot, *les Negotiations de Lille*, Paris 1910, Ch. I.
2. Grenville to Malmesbury 10.10.1796, *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, p. 257.
3. Malmesbury to Grenville, 27.10.1796, *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, p. 269.
4. Directory to Malmesbury, *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, p. 274.
5. Memorial to Directory, *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, p. 291.

confirmation of this from Grenville suggesting that his instruction seemed to have this object in view.[1] Malmesbury at this stage was virtually squirming under the strain of his impossible situation, helpless as he was to meet Delacroix's justifiable taunts about the impossibility of negotiating under these ridiculous conditions which amounted to a "cercle vicieux".[2] Malmesbury poured out his grievances to Canning complaining that Britain would never be in a safe and responsible position till she has got her project and that he preferred to be recalled rather than have to go on submitting notes and memorials. Malmesbury was most disturbed by an observation in Canning's letter that Pitt would not have objected to more firmness on his part.[3] This confirmed the impression in his mind that both Pitt and Grenville were in accord on the objects of the negotiation and he accordingly assured Grenville that it would be his endeavour to effect as painless a rupture as possible in a manner which would redound to Britain's credit. Malmesbury was in a dilemma of not knowing exactly what was expected of him. The contradictory nature of the instructions or the absence of them gave him no means of ascertaining the true position. He had to surmise his instructions from the tenor of the communications and not unjustifiably he assumed that his mission was a negative one.

Delacroix in the meantime was insistent on his demand for particulars of the compensation proposed and submitted a memorandum wanting to know "les objects de compensation reciproque que vous proposez".[4] With regard to the basis of the British offer Delacroix made it clear that France was equally unable to consider the cession of the Austrian Netherlands as much as Britain was unable to agree to its retention by France on the same grounds in fact that France too was bound by her constitution under which this territory had been vested as an integral part of the Republic. However the interest which he showed in the details of the compensation suggested that there was some leeway for manouvering over the details of the compensation offered.

Grenville's reply came on 15 December and this was the climax of the negotiation. Grenville by now was tired of waiting upon an unyielding Thugut and was disposed to lay down his terms to France. The reply which was delivered by Malmesbury to Delacroix was, in the main a reiteration of the familiar offer of compensatory restitutions. The principal restitution which Britain demanded was the cession

1. Malmesbury to Grenville, 11.11.1796. *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, p. 294.
2. Malmesbury to Canning, 27.11.1796, *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, P. 310.
3. Canning to Malmesbury, 7.11.1796, *Ibid.*, p. 287.
4. Malmesbury to Grenville, 13.11.1796, *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, p. 298.
5. Note to Delacroix, *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, p. 229 - 332.

of Austrian Netherlands to Austria. On the crucial question of the proposed territorial compensation on which she had remained silent up to now Britain's position was that with regard to the Dutch colonial territories then in her possession she would consider the return of a substantial part of these provided the ancient constitution of Holland was restored, but if this was not done, she would feel entitled to retain a considerable portion herself. The specific territories and scale of restitution were to be a matter for negotiation between the Plenipotentiaries. The resultant discussion was the only substantial attempt made to arrive at a concrete settlement in the whole course of the negotiation.[1] However, little progress could be made because Britain's insistence on the cession of the Austrian Netherland or of an alternative formula which would render that country independent of France and Delacroix's emphatic rejection of such a possibility owing to its constitutional implications for France shut the door to any headway in this direction.

A part of these discussions centred on the subject of compensation and it was in this context that the question of Ceylon was broached. While discussing the future of the captured Dutch colonies Delacroix assumed that Britain would want to retain Trincomalee and the Cape.[2] Malmesbury affirmed that this was so primarily for defensive purposes. Delacroix did not seem to mind the sacrifice of Trincomalee but he had reservations about the cession of the Cape which he said would mean the loss to France of her Asian empire; he nevertheless conceded that Britain was entitled to compensation with respect to the Dutch colonies. The discussions did not proceed any further because on the following day Malmesbury received his orders to leave Paris after he had confirmed to Delacroix that the cession of the Austrian Netherlands was a *sine qua non* of a peace. However, the reference brief though it was served to bring out the role of Ceylon in the negotiaions.

Ceylon came into the picture as one of the likely compensatory restitutions that would have been incumbent on either Britain or the Batavian Republic depending upon the nature of the agreement reached. The basis of the peace offer, as we have seen, was that Britain would offer territorial compensations in the way of captured colonies for the cession by France to her allies of any of the territories which she had acquired in Europe. Malmesbury explicitly informed Delacroix that Ceylon and the Cape would not be restored. This being the case, the question to decide was whether France was disposed to part with Ceylon as part of the scheme. The issue was not forced to a conclusion owing to the rupture of the negotiations but the statements of the two plenipotentiaries suggest that France was more concerned with the Cape and that Britain wanted both the Cape and Trincomalee.

1. Malmesbury to Grenville, 20.12.1796, *Idid.*, pp. 337-349.
2. *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, p. 345.

Delacroix was not clear about Trincomalee but this should not be taken to mean that he was agreeable to its cession. Actually this was not a matter on which he could have decided because the wishes of the Batavian Republic would have had to be consulted and it is most unlikely that the Dutch would have acceded so easily. Delacroix was therefore only apparently talking off the cuff and no positive affirmation of the French position emerged at the conference mainly because the issue did not arise. Delacroix's statement in fact appeared to be a personal opinion which did not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of his Government. Delacroix apparently was full of ideas. Malmesbury has mentioned that he was a disciple of Turgot and hence a believer in free trade,[1] it being his conviction that the destiny of France lay in Europe, where she had the right to power and natural frontiers, while Britain's role was to develop her overseas empire where she had already made herself formidable by appropriating the wealth of the Indies.[2] Delacroix seemed to envisage a division of spheres of influence between Britain and France and in this he anticipated the ideas on which the Peace of Amiens was based. In point of fact Delacroix's ideas may have been genuine and even true of the Directory as there is no evidence to show from the record of the latter that it was inclined towards any colonial aspirations. The main object of its policy appears to have been to consolidate its position within the country and ensure the security of France in Europe by acquiring her natural frontiers through military action and establishing friendly regimes in other countries. This was to be the basis of its later policy of Cisalpinization. Colonial aspirations were thus as foreign to the Directory as they had been to previous revolutionary regimes and it was not until the advent of Napoleon that France became fired with imperial ambitions extending beyond Europe.

In considering Britain's attitude towards Ceylon one is up against the difficulty of resolving, the eternal conundrum as to which of the two — Ceylon or the Cape — Pitt preferred. This question was to figure even more prominently in the Lille negotiation. There is no categorical record of how Pitt felt on the relative importance of the Cape and Ceylon or whether he ascribed equal importance to both. The truth seems to be not that he valued one less than the other but that he loved peace more and was prepared to sacrifice either of them for the cause of peace. Historians in fact have differed violently on the question of Pitty's preference.[3] The consensus would appear to be that initially he preferred the Cape but was ultimately persuaded by Dundas in favour of Ceylon. No expression of opinion however was either given by Grenville or Pitt or became necessary during the

1. *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, p. 322.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 321.
3. Rose, *Pitt and the Great War*, p. 323.

Paris talks. Malmesbury's affirmation of Britain's interest in Trincomalee was presumably a re-echo of what he knew only too well from his one time struggle on behalf of Trincomalee with the Dutch. The real test of Britain's attitude would only have come if France agreed to the cession of the Austrian Netherlands and demanded adequate compensation but the negotiation never came to that.

The Paris talks of 1796 thus ended as a half hearted almost nefarious diplomatic exercise which did not bring much credit to Britain. Indeed, far from retiring with honour, her conduct was bitterly criticised in the English Parliament and the French press. Malmesbury to some extent had exceeded his instructions because acting in the belief that he was expected to break off the negotiations he had deliberately worked towards that end and forced the pace.[1] The farcical character of the instructions, which was responsible for Malmesbury's dilemma was exposed by Fox in the course of his interventions in the debate on the Paris negotiations.[2] Referring to Britain's known desire to retain Ceylon and the Cape, he described it as an example of diplomacy a la Francaise in that on the same ground France was perfectly justified in retaining the Austrian Netherlands on the pretext that she was doing so on behalf of Austria. He also referred to the absurdity of Malmesbury's position at the talks in not being furnished with instructions regarding details of the territorial concessions proposed by Britain in order to answer Delacroix's enquires.[3] It is difficult therefore on these facts to resist the conclusion that the Paris talks were a theatrical act connived at by Pitt with a view to discrediting the Directory but on the off-chance that he might elicit a peace out of it. He had reckoned however without the great incorruptible Grenville whose intervention not only robbed it of any chance of success but even prevented an honourable retreat. Perhaps the real indictment of the Paris negotiations was that at Lille less than an year later Britain was to offer terms which were the very opposite of those on which she insisted at Paris.[4]

Pitt's dialogue with France for peace was resumed again in 1797 at the Lille negotiations. His need for it at that time was dire indeed. Britain was faced with a grave financial, military and political crisis. Consols were down to 48, the navy was in mutiny at Nore and Spithead, there was an army riot at Woolwich and an insurrection in Ireland, Irish opinion was at boiling point over Catholic emancipation and the withdrawal of Grattan from the Irish Parliament, Fox had threatened to withdraw and on top of all came the news of the preliminaries of

1. Bowman, *Peace of Amiens*, p. 12.
2. Cobett, *Parliamentary History* (London 1820), Vol. 32, Col. 1476.
3. Cobett, *Parliamentary History*, Vol. 32, 1479.
4. Ballot, *Lille*, Ch. I.

Leoben between France and Austria.[1] On the side of the Directory too there was a similar desire for peace; one which was dictated in fact by its internal political struggle. The elections of 1797 had resulted in a majority of royalists and moderates who were anxious to disassociate themselves from the militant policies pursued by their Jacobin predecessors. They were represented on the Directory by Carnot and Barthelmy who replaced Le Tourneau, and they became thus engaged in a power struggle with the other three Directors Reubell, Le Revelliere and Barras. As a matter of tactics the latter did not wish to bring the conflict to a head until they had properly organised themselves for it and therefore they were willing to go along with Carnot and Barthelmy in accepting Pitt's overtures and making a pretext of responding to the general desire for peace in the country.

The atmosphere of the talks was also good, the manner of the delegates cordial and Malmesbury observed that he received more attention than on previous occasions. The French had been anxious that Malmesbury should not be the British Plenipotentiary but Pitt did not oblige. The presence on the French side of Maret as chief delegate was a further sign that the Directory meant business.[2] He dominated the other two Plevelle and Le Tourneur. Maret was now in the prime of his diplomatic career in the course of which he had already made his mark, having come as a secret emissary to Britain in 1792 at which time he had impressed Pitt, and served as emissary to Naples after which he had been captured by the Austrians and kept a prisoner till 1795.[3] He was to become the future Duc de' Bassano and a favourite of Napoleon. His professionalism won him the confidence of Malmesbury and the two were to work together as a team. The only ill-omen in an otherwise favourable setting was the hostility of Grenville who offered the King his resignation over the peace overtures. The King however who shared his feelings requested him to stay for the purpose of safeguarding Britain's interest which presumably meant obstructing the talks.[4] Thus Grenville from the outset was the declared enemy of the negotiations, and this was to influence the outcome. Further proof of Pitt's sincerity on this occasion were the terms of the offer which was made through Malmesbury. They were the opposite of the terms offered at Paris and consisted of the following: (a) France was to retain possession of her conquests in the Netherlands and Italy and obtain restoration of her colonies. (b) Britain would retain as compensation colonial conquests from

1. Adams, *Influence of Grenville*, p. 55.
2. Malmesbury to Grenville, 11.8.1797, *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, pp. 364-369.
3. Ballot, *Lille*, p. 159.
4. Adams, *Influence of Grenville*, p. 56.

Holland and Spain in the way of Ceylon, Cape and Trinidad.1 The cession of the Austrian Netherlands on which the Paris negotiations had foundered was thus excluded. This was because of the Leoben preliminaries which marked the breakdown of Grenville's pet scheme of an Anglo-Austrian alliance.

The question of Ceylon was a major issue in the Lille negotiations and ran through its entire course. It should therefore be traced in some detail to understand the specific role of Ceylon. The Lille negotiations really consisted of two sets of concurrent talks namely the formal discussions between the British and French plenipotentiaries and the secret talks on which Ellis and Pein were engaged. The two negotiations should be considered separately. However, before proceeding to do so, it is necessary to consider the extraneous factors which influenced their course and determined their outcome. The history of the Paris negotiations would have shown what is invariably the truth about negotiations of this kind undertaken by governments in a context of war, that their success or otherwise is more a matter of external forces outside the control of the delegates rather than the merits of the issues itself. The delegates are puppets manipulated by a remote control and the negotiations are only the subplot of a larger drama being enacted elsewhere. These features were only too true of the Lille negotiations.

The outcome of the Lille negotiations really depended on conflicts that were concurrently being waged in London and Paris. In London, the combatants were Pitt and Grenville, while in Paris Carnot and Barthelmy were pitted against the other three Directors in a conflict which reflected the mounting struggle between the moderates and the Jacobins. The situation was aptly described by Canning and Malmesbury. Of London, Canning wrote, "you will however have to understand that the point belonged rather to the state of things here than that at Lille, to the triumph of those whom I wish not to triumph over those to whom I wish to maintain an ascendancy."2 In a similar vein Malmesbury wrote of the Lille talks, "the fate of the negotiations will depend much less on what passes in our conference here than on what may happen very shortly at Paris."3

The tension between Grenville and Pitt related mainly to the concessions which Pitt was disposed to make to France to secure the peace. Grenville seemed to have feared that the prospect of peace would impulsively tempt Pitt into over generous concessions. It is possible that these fears in Grenville's mind applied mainly to Ceylon because he was firmly convinced of the necessity of obtaining Ceylon

1. Bowman, *Peace of Amiens*, p. 14.
2. Canning to Ellis, 23.7.1797, *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, p. 421.
3. Malmesbury to Grenville, 25.7.1797, *Ibid.*, p. 406.

at all costs, and emphasized this in his instructions to Malmesbury. The tone of Grenville's very forthright statements on this subject are unmistakable on this point and he would not have brooked any retreat by Pitt on it.[1] Pitt was concious of Grenville's vigilance and attempted to conceal his moves from him and canvassed the support of the rest of the cabinet, but Grenville effectively checked him by moving a cabinet resolution binding the cabinet to secrecy over the Lille negotiation.[2] Canning describes this as a measure to tie up Pitt's tongue. In a sense this was a salutory move in view of Pitt's known willingness to sacrifice anything for peace. The unfounded report that Pitt had secretly instructed Malmesbury to barter Ceylon, may be based on one such generous impulse.[3] On the other hand Grenville's intervention in the negotiations which was invariably on the side of inflexibility had firmness was calculated to give offence and affront to the French. It seemed to be his object to prove that the French were inflexible, and any stubborness or toughness on their part served his purpose. In fact at one point until cautioned by Canning, Malmesbury almost unwittingly played Grenville's game by reporting unfavourably on the French negotiations.[4]

On the French side, the actions of the delegates and their instructions were shaped entirely by the vicissitudes of the power struggle in Paris. There were in fact two struggles, the one between the moderates and the Jacobins and the other between Maret and his colleagues, one being a reflection of the other. There was perhaps a third conflict between the delegates and the Directory as in the later stages they showed frank disgust of their masters. Maret's confident manner and the way in which he dominated the negotiations and entered into secret parley with Malmesbury almost on his own authority suggested that he had access to secret authority or operated on a mandate of his own. It has been suggested that he was the agent of Barras who was responsible for his appointment and was in league with Talleyrand.[5] His participation in the financial deal suggests that he might have been linked with Talleyrand and Barras. If this was so Maret's motivations in his initiatives would appear to have been pecuniary gain and not as one would have liked to think his liberal beliefs. In the power struggle in Paris the Royalist majority was gradually asserting itself and gaining control of the Directory and might ultimately have prevailed, had their leadership been resolute but Carnot vacillated being bedevilled by memories of his guilt, Barthelemy was weak and

1. Ballot, *Lille*, pp. 86, 143, 145.
2. Adams, *Influence of Grenville*, p. 59.
3. *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, p. 385.
4. Canning to Ellis, 23.7.1797, *Ibid.*, p. 421.
5. Ballot, *Lille*, p. 177.

Pichegru and Moreau the two soldiers confused. They were thus an easy prey to their determined opposition who alarmed by the resurgence of Royalism, overthrew them at Fructidor.1

The formal discussions between the delegations were of comparatively short duration. The project which Malmesbury submitted was a mixture of *uti possidetis* and compensatory restitution and provided for the mutual restitution of territories in return for recognition of each others current possessions. Blanks were left in the project for insertion of the particular territories, the restitution of which would be agreed upon. Automatically this focussed attention on Ceylon. The reaction of the French plenipotentiaries to the project revealed a greater concern on their part for the Cape than for Ceylon. Pleville objected to the retention of the Cape on the grounds that it was important to both Britain and France and should therefore be in the hands of an imperial power, the more so because it supplied Mauritius.2 Pleville in fact enquired whether Britain coveted all the Dutch possessions but Malmesbury denied this. Malmesbury had the impression from these talks which he conveyed to Pitt that Britain should have no difficulty in obtaining one of the two great Dutch establishments and this would probably be Ceylon.3 Canning had the same impression because in a letter to Ellis he stated that from the conduct of the French it appeared as if they had no objection to their allies being stripped by Britain. This optimism was of brief duration because in the official reply to the British memorandum the Directory had stiffened and took up the position that the secret agreements with their allies precluded restitution of territories and that as a condition for a peace, Britain must restore all possessions captured during the war.4 Malmesbury was somewhat surprised and objected but the French declared a readiness to discuss any new points which Britain had to raise.5 Grenville now tried to capitalize on the situation and insisted that the negotiations should be terminated unless France was able to persuade her allies to agree to restitution of their captured territories.6 At this stage, the first signs of the conflict looming a head in France appeared with the Ministerial changes in Paris by which Talleyrand replaced Delacroix and three new Ministers were appointed. It was this change which evoked Malmesbury's prescient utterance about the future of the negotiations.

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1. R.R. Palmer, *Age of the Democratic Revolution*, Vol. II (London 1959), p. 255.
2. *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, p. 370.
3. Malmesbury to Pitt, 16.7.1797, *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, p. 385.
4. Malmesbury to Grenville, 16.7.1797, *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, p. 385.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 389.
6. Grenville to Malmesbury, 20.7.1797, *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, p. 393.

Concurrent with the quickening tempo of the power struggle in Paris, the negotiations also entered a new stage when secret talks were initiated between the two sides. These talks were the core of the Lille negotiations and they are of particular interest because they revolved round Ceylon. These secret talks were conducted between Ellis and Wesley on the British side and Pein on the French side. Their basis was an offer by Pein that Britain would be able to obtain possession of the Dutch colonies on payment of a sum of money to Holland. The background to this offer it was explained was that the Dutch needed money in order to repay their indemnity amounting to five million francs to France and as they had already paid two million francs, the sum which they expected would be three million francs.[1] Information was received at this point from Canning that he had got confirmation of the offer from Paris and that Maret had been authorised to pursue it. Canning thought that the Dutch would not be unwilling to part with the Cape and Ceylon on these terms.[2] Maret himself confided to Malmesbury that he should be able to get the Cape and Trincomalee for Britain.[3] Pein's chief concern was that Ellis should persuade Malmesbury to continue negotiating having ignored the latest communication from the Directory refusing restitution of the territories of the allies. Pein further stated that although the Directory had adopted this posture officially they were in fact exploring the possibility of obtaining the assent of the Dutch to this restitution through the French Ambassador Noel in Holland. Pein went to great lengths to explain that this was an operation of the utmost delicacy owing to the contradictory position of the Directory in as much as on the one hand they were unable to agree to the restitution of the Dutch territories because of their pledge that in return for payment of their indemnity they would guarantee restoration of these territories to the Dutch. On the other hand, he said that the Directory was unwilling to compel Holland to agree to restitution although they could have done so if they wished. The point which Pein wanted to convey seemed to be that the Directory was unwilling to obtain these territories from the Batavian Republic on Britain's behalf by force but that it needed the money very badly and therefore desired that Britain should conduct the transactions directly with Holland to which it had no objection.[4] The circuitous line of Pein's reasoning makes one doubt whether it was the French government that was the interested party or some private individual on whose behalf he was acting.

At the same time that Pein was making these offers Maret himself was exploring possibilities in Holland through a Spaniard Cabarrus

1. *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, pp. 449-461.
2. Canning to Ellis, 8.8.1797, *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, p. 435.
3. Ballot, *Lille*, p. 297.
4. Canning to Ellis, 8.8.1797, *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, p. 436.

whose daughter Madame Tallier was the mistress of Barras. Cabarrus's instructions were to persuade Holland to adopt the same line which Spain had taken of agreeing to restitution for the sake of concluding a peace. Canning also had information which he obtained from Wickham based on the report of a British agent in Paris that Maret had authority to propose to Britain abandonment of all the Dutch colonies except the Cape which could be purchased for the payment of £50,000 to each of the Directors.1

All these confusing series of activities and intrigues pointed in only one direction, namely that Holland held the key to the situation. The success of these moves really depended on the ability of the various parties concerned to persuade Holland whether by force or bribes to agree to restitution. The interesting feature in all these offers except the one attributed to Maret was that the payments were being sought as if they were meant for the Batavian Republic for the purpose of enabling the latter to pay the indemnity to France. Specious excuses were offered to explain the reluctance of the Directory to intercede directly with Holland.

The facts of the situation however, in so far as one can reconstruct them, reveal a rather different story. Talleyrand had, in fact, approached the Batavian Republic for its concurrence to the restitution for the sake of a just peace but these overtures were rejected by the Dutch. They took violent objection to the proposed cession of Ceylon and the Cape.2 Schimmelpenninck and van Leyden informed Barclay the British agent in Holland that they considered the restoration of the Cape and Ceylon as the *sine qua non* of the proposed peace. As a compromise the Dutch were prepared to make the Cape a neutral port open to all ships and to guarantee that Ceylon would only be garrisoned by Dutch forces but even these matters they wished to discuss directly with the British and they sought permission to send plenipotentiaries. Talleyrand expressed disappointment at the rejection of his proposal and requested its reconsideration in view of all the French had done for Batavia. The Dutch reply was even stiffer and they categorically refused to consider the cession of Ceylon and the Cape in the following words: "Les cessions de ces deux interessante possessions est un des articles auxquels le government Batave ne saurant souscrire".3 As a conciliatory gesture, the Batavian Republic was prepared to make the following concessions to Britain. She would cede the city and town of Cochin with its dependencies subject to the Dutch having a factory there, and Palicotta and Bimlipatam on the Coromandel coast in return for Sadraspatam and Jagernachpouram.

1. Canning to Ellis, 8.8.1797, *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, p. 436.
2. Ballot, *Lille*, p. 276.
3. Batavian Republic to Talleyrand, 2.9.1797. Ballot, *Lille*, p. 281.

She would also forego the return of Negapatam. The Directory's efforts to obtain the Batavian Republic's assent to the cession of the Cape and Ceylon were thus defeated by the obduracy of the latter. The spirit of independence shown by the Batavian Republic may appear surprising coming as it did from a state which was ostensibly a satellite of France. The explanation is to be found in the history of the Republic since its establishment in 1795 and its relations with France. The main feature of its history during this period was the struggle to appoint a convention which would draft a new constitution for the country in the face of the bitter conflict between the unitarists and the Federalists each of whom wished to impose their own ideas.[1] A convention was finally appointed and met in March 1796 but it broke up almost immediately after owing to acrimonious factional disputes. This was followed by the revolt of the Amsterdam Cannoneers which coincided with the Babeuf uprising in Paris. This circumstance made the Directory suspect that the two events were linked and they took action against prominent Dutchmen. Vlackener, the Batavian Ambassador designate to Spain who was suspected of complicity in the Dutch uprising was refused entry into France. French military intervention was necessary to quell the Dutch uprising. These punitive measures of the Directory were inspired by the deeper fear that the two conspiracies represented an attempt of the international revolutionary movement to overthrow middle calss regimes like itself. French policy towards the Republic from thereon was directed towards the establishment of an unified constitution which would have made it more amenable to control. Such a constitution was finally drafted in August 1797 and submitted for a plebiscite but it was rejected by 108, 761 to 27,955. At the time of the Lille talks therefore the Batavian Republic was still in a state of uncertain political instability and the Directory was understandably nervous about undue interference in its affairs. It was not in a position to impose its will on the Republic in the manner in which Napoleon was able to do this in 1801. The precariousness of the Directory's own position as well as the tensions within the Republic made this an inopportune moment for high handed actions. The Directory was thus unable to overrule the Republic's rejection of the peace proposals. The suggestion by one historian that French disinclination to bully the Republic into acceptance of its terms was due to its desire to popularize the policy of Cisalpinization seems inapplicaple to the situation which existed in September 1797.[2] That policy was to become important to the French only after the advent of Napolean and was part of his scheme of scattering satellites all over Europe to have the continent in his thrall.

Faithful to Malmesbury's prognostication, the Lille talks collapsed with the Fructidor uprising. The internal movement for peace which

1. Palmer, *Democratic Revolution*, Vol. II, pp. 192 - 197.
2. Palmer, *Democratic Revolution*, Vol. II, p. 256.

had supported the overtures disappeared with Fructidor and the era which was to lead to Napoleonic militarism was ushered in. The immediate reason for the failure of the talks however was the intransigence of Holland over the question of Ceylon. Britain's efforts to obtain Ceylon by negotiations with the Directory failed not because of any unwillingness on the part of France to part with Ceylon but that the latter was unable to persuade the Batavian Republic to make the sacrifice. Britain had to await the strong arm tactics of Napoleon to achieve this ambition. But for this, the Lille negotiations might have succeeded and the Peace of Amiens might never have been. It is of course arguable whether a peace settlement would have been possible with a regime so unstable as the Directory. The disposal of Ceylon had thus to be deferred for another four years, but in the meantime the failure of the Lille negotiations had convinced Britain finally of the necessity of retaining permanent possession of Ceylon and this decision was signalled by the appointment of Frederick North as the first Governor of Ceylon in February 1798.

The breakdown of the Lille negotiations did not mean the end of the overtures relating to Ceylon. It had a strange aftermath in the offer that was made to Pitt to obtain Ceylon through a bribe. The facts of this transaction have to be pieced together from the accounts of Malmesbury[1] and Grenville. Prior to Malmesbury's departure for Lille he had seen a man called Potter who suggested the purchase of a treaty for a bribe but he had not taken it seriously. However, after the commencement of the secret negotiations with Maret, another man called Melville saw Malmesbury with a similar offer purporting to come from Barras. Maret whom Malmesbury consulted could not confirm its genuineness but he affirmed that Barras and Reubell were venal. Malmesbury directed Melville to Pitt who gave serious consideration to the offer which was for the sale of the Cape, Cochin and Trinidad for a sum of £450,000 on condition that Britian signed a peace treaty. Pitt informed the King of the proposal and suggested that the funds could be obtained from Indian territorial revenues and the remainder from the secret service. Pitt wanted to conclude the transaction through Malmesbury but before that the rupture occurred.[2]

A new offer was now made to Pitt by Boyd a prominent banker, this time for the sale of Ceylon and the Cape and for a much higher figure which was £2 million or £1 million two hundred thousand for Ceylon alone. The sum was too big for negotiations without parliamentary sanction but Pitt virtually transmitted an acceptance of it to Paris with the knowledge of only Dundas. He then informed Grenville who strongly disapproved of it. Grenville submitted a memorandum setting out his criticisms to the effect that it would be a humilia-

1. *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, pp. 557 - 561.
2. Adams, *Influence of Grenville*, pp. 67 - 71.

tion to send Malmesbury back to Lille to conclude the transaction without having in hand some declaration from the French of agreement to his visit. Pitt accepted Grenville's suggestion and requested such a declaration but the French sent their reply reiterating the offer without including the declaration. Pitt thus lost confidence in the transaction and it was not pursued.

It is difficult to decide whether this was a genuine offer or not or to trace it to its origin. The names of Talleyrand, Barras and Reubell have been mentioned but this is conjecture. It has been suggested by some that this was a pure stockmarket operation. The fact that such an offer was made should shock no one because it was perfectly in accord with the standards of diplomacy at that time. Britain had offered to purchase Trincomalee from Suffren or take it on lease from the Dutch. Talleyrand later made an offer to Schimmelpenninck for the sale of Flushing. Talleyrand had demanded a bribe of £50,000 for himself from the three American Commissioners who had come to settle affairs relating to a captured American vessel. Portugal was reported to have paid £400,000 for her peace with France. Talleyrand is estimated to have secured £60,000 in bribes. The record of the Directory in this respect was rather scandalous[1] but this conduct was not merely confined to it. It was after all a logical extension of the principles of compensatory restitution and mutual restitution as it was practised in 18th century diplomacy. A cash gift would have served just as much as a territorial grant if the object was pure gratification unrelated to strategic interest.

1. *Cambridge Modern History* (Cambridge 1900), Vol. VIII, p. 492.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PRELIMINARIES OF LONDON 1801 AND THE PEACE OF AMIENS 1802

Ceylon was formally ceded to Britain in the Peace of Amiens of 27 March 1802 by which Britain made peace with France and obtained a much needed intermission in her ten year war with that country. So far as Ceylon was concerned however, the Peace of Amiens merely ratified the preliminary peace which was concluded between Britain and France in London on 1 October 1801, one of the key articles of which was the retention of Ceylon by Britain. This was one of the few articles in the London preliminaries to remain unchanged in the Peace of Amiens and this is the measure of its basic importance to both settlements. As the concluding part of this enquiry, we should therefore consider the circumstances of this session and the grounds on which this momentous decision, which was to seal the fate of Ceylon for the next 150 years, was made.

Parallel to the bitter contest between Britain and France since 1792, there had been an intermittent exchange of overtures and negotiations for peace on both sides, two of which, the Paris 1796 and Lille 1797 talks which came very close to success have already been considered.[1] This desire for peace however, was sometimes genuine and at other times not, and depended invariably on the vicissitudes of the struggle at that particular time, which may also explain the abortive outcome of these efforts. Their failure unavoidably caused a sense of humiliation and wounded pride on either side which added rancour and rendered each successive peace making effort more difficult. Typical of such efforts was Napoleon's overture of 26 December 1799 which he rather churlishly addressed to the King and

1. Vide *Ch. VII.*

to which Grenville sent his notorious reply postulating the restoration of the Bourbons as the condition for peace.[1] Napoleon's desire for peace on that occasion arose from the failure of the Egyptian expedition and the impending fall of Malta, but these very circumstances made it an unpropitious time from Britain's point of view. It is possible however, that on this occasion Napoleon was genuine because his formal overtures were accompanied by secret approaches which he made through Auckland and Peregeaux directly with the government,[2] but Grenville was implacable and his blunt rejection may possibly have rallied support for the First Consul at this juncture.[3]

These intermittent peace exchanges, however, reached a definite stage with the arrival at Dover on 22 January 1800 of the French Agent Lewis G. Otto, ostensibly in the capacity of Transport Commissioner for the exchange of prisoners of war, but in reality as a special emissary of Napoleon on a secret peace mission. Otto until then had been the secretary of the French Legation in Berlin, and he was soon to prove himself as one of the most gifted diplomatists of his time. Otto's mission was a continuation of Napoleon's previous overtures and had as its object the conclusion of a naval armistice with Britain with a view primarily to saving Malta for Napoleon.[4] The possible loss of Malta, then on the verge of capitulation after its two years siege, was a source of great concern to Napoleon even more than his failure in Egypt, in that under the EL Arish Convention, Egypt would have reverted to the Porte but in the case of Malta it would have become a British gain. This would have been a setback to Napoleon's ambitions in the Mediterranean. Since the Egyptian expedition Napoleon's thoughts had turned increasingly to the possibility of expelling the British from the Mediterranean in line with his ambitions of extending France up to her natural frontiers which in this case meant her domination of the Mediterranean. Malta as much as Minorca or Egypt were fundamental to this plan. Otto however, made little headway in his talks owing to the extravagence of his demands which included unrestricted circulation of French ships between ports and grossly excessive supplies for the Malta garrison.[5] In any case Otto's real motives were exposed when after the fall of Malta in September 1800 he informed the British delegate Hammond, much to his surprise as the British were now warming up to the talks, that the situation had changed and that the talks were being abandoned.[6]

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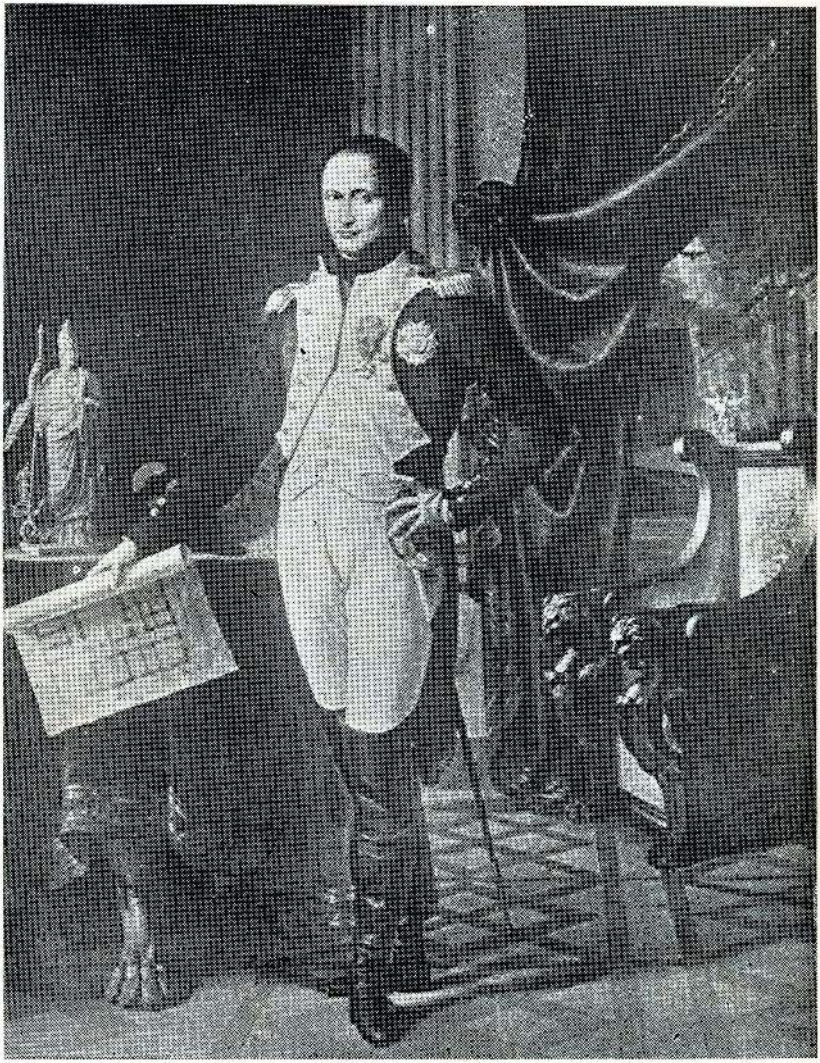
1. H. P. Bowman, The Preliminaries of the Peace of Amiens 1802, *University of Toronto Studies* (1900), pp. 23-29.
2. Bowman, *Peace of Amiens*, p. 25.
3. *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy* (Cambridge 1922), Vol. I, p. 305.
4. *F.O.* 27/55 (P.R.O.) ff. dated 2 August 1800, Otto's authority.
5. Bowman, *Peace of Amiens*, p. 53.
6. *Ibid.* and F.O. 27/55.



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The successive failure of the peace overtures up to this time was due not only to the doubtful sincerity of the parties concerned but also because the political and military climate as a whole was unpropitious for the prosecution of serious peace talks, or for that matter of the war to a conclusive outcome. The character of the conflict was that Britain and France found themselves in a state of military equipoise in which each was master in her own field and unable to affect the other.[1] Napoleon was master on land and dominated the European continent while Britain had command of the sea and was invincible overseas. No serious settlement was possible without a measure of sacrifice which neither side was prepared to make for fear of their own security unless compelled by some particular event to resort to peace. Napoleon's interest in peace talks in 1799 and in Otto's talks of 1800 was occasioned by his fears over Malta just as much as Pitt was interested in the 1797 peace talks because of the naval mutiny and the economic crisis at home. Enthusiasm invariably flagged no sooner the moments of crisis passed as they were wont to with time. Despite the obvious war weariness on both sides, neither France nor Britain seemed willing to take the first concrete steps and therefore it was not until the spring of 1801 when important changes occurred in their respective situations that they were able to embark on serious negotiations with a view to a peace settlement.

In the first two months of 1801 Napoleon came closer to the attainment of his ambition of destroying Britain than he had ever been before or was to a gain in his career. This happened when Czar Paul forsook the second coalition in chagrin over the attitude of Austria to him and of Britain over Malta and when the Northern powers organised the Armed Neutrality. This combination of forces would have enabled Napoleon to strike a blow at Britain's maritime supremacy which he knew was the sustaining force in her struggle with France. At the same time within Europe, Napoleon had attained the same position of supremacy which he had enjoyed after Campo Formio in 1797. He had defeated his last remaining coalition enemy Austria successively at Marengo and Honenlender in the last decisively and imposed on her the humiliating treaty of Luneville which had given him all Italy beyond the Adige and recognition of the Batavian, Helvetian, Cissalpine and Ligurian Republics. The possibility of crushing England seemed to be in his grasp, but only for a moment, because Nelson's destruction of the Danish batteries at Copenhagen and the assasination of Paul on 23 March robbed him of his chance forever.[2]

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1. *Cambridge History*, Vol. I, p. 304.
2. Bowman, *Peace of Amiens*, pp. 70-71.

In the meantime Britain which had been saved by these timely events was herself in the throes of a crisis similar to the one which had prompted Pitt's overtures of 1797.[1] The Armed Neutrality affected her trade to Europe which was the mainstay of her war efforts so far. The stoppage of corn and timber imports accompanied by a bad harvest caused bread riots and increased her food import bill owing to the necessity of having to purchase more grain. These additional commitments were draining Bank of England of its reserves at a time when Britain had already paid £23¼ million as her subsidy to her allies in the years 1800-1801. The defeat of the Second Coalition had produced a wave of war weariness and pessimism which was expressed in Addington's statement that "there was not the least prospect of obtaining any such alliance again".[2] Besides, Napoleon's reverses in the North and in Egypt where on 21 March 1801 Menou was defeated by Abercromby at the battle of Alexandria had been offset by gains in other quarters which had dangerous commercial implications for Britain. He had forced the Treaty of Aranjuez on Spain on 21 March 1801 under which she ceded Louisiana to France and undertook to wage war against Portugal. This led to the subsequent defeat of Portugal and the imposition on her of the Treaty of Badajoz by which Portugal ports were closed to Britain and Olivenza was ceded to Spain. On 27 March he concluded the Treaty of Florence with the King of the Two Sicilies under which the latter also closed his ports to Britain. These developments had the contradicting effect that while they threatened Britain with a serious economic blockade, they were from Napoleon's point of view reasons to have peace in order to consolidate and expand French trade. Peace was necessary to undertake for instance the development of Louisiana for which purpose the assistance of Haiti was required and for the promotion of French economic prosperity in general.[3]

The event which prepared the ground for talks really occurred on the British side with the resignation of Pitt in March 1801 over Catholic emancipation and his replacement by Addington. In fact his decision to remove himself at this juncture has been considered by some as a deliberate step on his part to promote peace. It has been suggested that his motive was to enable the creation of a British government not handicapped by the anti-French reputation of his own which would thus prove more acceptable to the French. The less charitable interpretation is that in anticipation of a humiliating peace he allowed Addington to bear the odium and thus saved his own reputation.[4]

1. J. Steven Watson, *The Reign of George III* 1760-1815, Oxford History of England (Oxford 1960), pp. 406-410.
2. Watson, *Reign of George III*, p. 406.
3. H. C. Deutsch, *The Genesis of Napoleonic Imperialism*, (London 1938), Harvard Historical Studies, No. 11, pp. 23-38.
4. Deutsch, *Napoleonic Imperialism*, pp. 23-38. This is the view of Sorel and French Historians.

These aspersions against Pitt's motives have been rejected by Dr. Rose who is convinced that Pitt's sense of honour was the only reason.[1] There can be no doubt that Pitt's departure and the establishment of the new government was the turning point in the peace moves and also determined the particular form and outcome of the peace negotiations. Addington was by nature pacific to the point of appeasement. Hawkesbury though he had a reputation for pugnacity at the time he was in the Trade Ministry and had been a thorn in the side of Carmarthen appeared to have toned down.[2] Hobart the Minister for the Colonies was one time Governor of Madras who had stage managed the occupation of the Dutch territories in Ceylon in 1795.

Perhaps it was just as well for Britain's economic interests as well as her international relations that she made the effort at this moment. If the comment of a contemporary diplomat to the effect that "the dominant principle of European politics and the dominant principle of all the political thinkers and writers is at this moment the jealousy of British power" is any guide there was need for Britain to build her bridges with the world.[3] Thus in March 1801 there was in Britain a pacific minded if medicore government, an economic crisis and a sense of war weariness and isolation. Correspondingly Napoleon felt that it was high time that he gave France the peace which the Directory had promised and took time to utilize his ascendancy on the continent to consolidate his hold as well as strengthen France commercially. He needed a respite to prepare himself for the future struggle with Britain which he felt was inevitable. The setbacks to his immediate plans in the North were probably a chastening influence which disposed him to thoughts of peace.

The first move to establish cantact was made by Hawkesbury when he invited Otto to his house for a secret meeting on 21 March and broached the subject of negotiations.[4] He confirmed his offer in an official note which was delivered to Otto indicating the government's disposition to enter into immediate negotiations for the restoration of peace for which purpose a person fully authorised could be sent to Paris. Napoleon replied welcoming the overture[5] and requesting an armistice. Britain declined this but reaffirmed her desire to enter into immediate talks.[6] Otto was then appointed by

1. J. H. Holland Rose, *William Pitt and the Great War*, (London 1911), p. 446.
2. J. Ehrman, *The British Government and Commercial Negotiations with Europe*, 1783-1793, (Cambridge 1962), Ch. 8.
3. Gentz, see *Deutsch, Napoleonic Imperialism*, p. 25.
4. Hawkesbury to Otto, 21.3.1801, F. O. 27/66, (PRO).
5. Otto to Hawkesbury, 2.4.1801, F. O. 27/66, (PRO).
6. Hawkesbury to Otto, 2.4.1801, F. O. 27/66.

Napoleon as the French Plenipotentiary. The talks proper started on 2nd April and were conducted between Hawkesbury and Otto. Otto indicated that he would be representing Holland and Spain but not the Northern powers. It was clear from the outset that the objects of these talks from the French side was to elicit the maximum advantage possible from Britain for the French presence in Egypt. In fact at the opening meeting Otto bluntly indicated that "the point on which the negotiations would be likely to turn would probably be Egypt, the question for decision will be whether France should relinquish Egypt, Britain relinquishing the whole or some part of her conquest or whether France should retain Egypt, Britain preserving her conquest".1 On this basis he submitted two propositions to Hawkesbury in an unsigned note. These were that a. France should keep possession of Egypt while England retained her principal conquests in India. Malta should be returned to the order. Minorca, and Trinidad should be restored in compensation for which Spain would restore her conquests in Portugal. France would relinquish her claim to Corfu and the territories ceded by the Treaty of Campo Formio. The Cape of Good Hope would be a free port under Holland. Other conquests in the West Indies would be restored. b. France will evacuate Egypt on condition that Britain surrendered all her conquests.2

Napoleon's proposition that the treaty should be a bargain on Egypt is typical of the spirit that animated the talks on both sides. This is of course no aspersion against the morality of the negotiating parties but indicated the barter basis on which the terms were negotiated and settled. In typical diplomatic fashion, claims were advanced merely in order that by their withdrawal other concessions could be gained. Otto's suggestion that the talks would turn on Egypt was a Napoleonic bluff because even if Britain owing to her notoriously bad communications did not know of it, Napoleon had word of how things were going on in Egypt. His object therefore was to derive as much advantage as he could while the French were still there and hence his desire to rush the negotiation. The terms of the first proposition indicated that France was prepared to acquiesce in the retention of Ceylon by Britain. It is also clear from Napoleon's opening terms that he was not disposed to make any sacrifices or concessions of his own to achieve a peace settlement. His intention was to secure a treaty which would recognise his own position intact at no cost to himself or costs if any being paid either by Britain or by his own allies. Britain however, did not entirely fall for the bait. Hawkesbury replied to Otto's proposal with the offer that Britain would agree to peace on the basis that the French would evacuate Egypt and return it to the Porte and that Britain would return the following possessions to France and her allies, viz: Pondicherry,

1. Hawkesbury to Otto, 2.4.1801, F.O. 27/66.
2. ff, dated 12.4.1801, F.O. 27/66.

Chandernagore, Mahe, Malacca, Amboyna, Banda, Cochin and Cape of Good Hope provided it was made a free port, Goree Surinam, Curacoa, Les Saints, Pierre and Miquelon, St. Marcon and Minorca.1 Another condition was that the Dutch Republic should grant to the House of Orange full compensation for the loss of property it had sustained by the revolution. The offer contained the all important reservation that in the event of authentic intelligence being received previous to the signature of the preliminaries of the evacuation of Egypt or of a convention being agreed to for that purpose Britain would not consider herself bound to adhere to these conditions in the full extent. This was the first intimation in the talks of Britain's decision to retain Ceylon. As will be seen this was to become the fulcrum of Britain's position.

Britain's reply obviously disconcerted France because nothing was heard from Otto for two months when the latter complained that Napoleon was concerned over the delay.2 The fact is that in this period Napoleon under pressure from Spain had invaded Portugal and forced on her the Treaty of Badajoz by which Olivenza was ceded to her. Napoleon now seized on this as an alternatire bargaining counter to demand concessions in lieu of Egypt which was now slipping from his hands. The basis of his offer now shifted from Egypt to Portugal because he made a new proposition agreeing to accept the status quo anti bellum in Portugal in return for recognition by Britain of the status quo ante ballum in America and the Mediterranean.3 In making this offer Napoleon made an important submission presumably for tactical reasons when he accepted Britain's desire to compensate herself in the colonial sphere as the price for recognition of the position which France had acquired for herself in Europe.4 The question now was one of deciding which territories Britain would be justified in claiming as the price of giving this recognition. Napoleon did not think that it justified the retention of Ceylon and Malta.5 Britain objected to this offer on the grounds that it would mean the abandonment by her of the Mediterranean and of the colonies which she had captured in America from the Dutch. However, she was ready to agree to the status quo ante bellum in Portugal provided that the French evacuated Italy or in lieu of that allowed Britain to have Malta and was given in addition Tobago, Demarara, Esquibo, and Berbice.6 Britain's justification for this claim was that the French defeat in Egypt had deprived her of any right to claim compensation

1. Hawkesbury to Otto, 14.4.1801, F.O. 27/6.
2. Otto to Hawkesbury, 1.6.1801, F.O. 27/66.
3. Otto to Hawkesbury, 18.6.1801, F.O. 27/66.
4. Otto to Hawkesbury, 18.6.1801, and Hawkesbury to Otto 6.6.1801. F.O. 27/6.
5. Otto to Hawkesbury, 18.6. 1801, F. O. 27/66.
6. Hawkesbury to Otto, 25.6.1801, F. O. 27/66.

in Egypt and therefore she had only to be compensated for any claim which she would raise in Portugal. On these grounds Britain contended that the offer made by her to recognise the status quo in Portugal was a fair one for which she expected suitable compensation in America.

Britain's endeavour at this stage in line with her submission to Napoleon that she should receive suitable compensation for recognition of his position in Europe was to resist any attempts of Napoleon's part to weaken her overseas interests particularly in America. It would appear that she rated her position in America as superior to that in the Mediterranean as she was prepared to accept the French in Minorca and Italy. The issue now became a tussle between Britain's efforts to conserve her colonial empire and Napoleon's attempts to have both the Continent and an empire and drive inroads into Britain's empire. Napoleon objected to these terms, his main argument being that it was inadequate compensation for the great sacrifice which he and the Batavian Republic was making by the cession of Ceylon. He described Ceylon in this connection in the following terms : "Dans l'Inde l'angleterre gardera Ceylon et par la deviendra maitresse inexpugnable de ces immenses et riches contrier".[1] He expressed extreme regret at having to make such a concession personally and for depriving his ally Holland of one of its prime possessions. Napolean was thus trying to convey the impression that this was a reluctant concession wrung out of him. Napoleon was also opposed to the grant of Martinique. This deadlock was resolved however by a further British proposition that in return for Napoleon's recognition of her position in the West Indies, Britain would consider an arrangement to make Malta independent of both France and Britain.[2] Britain also offered to withdraw her claims to Martinique on condition that in the West Indies she would be allowed to retain Trinidad and Tobago in which case Demarara, Esquibo and Berbice would be made free ports. The offer of Malta clinched the issue as Napoleon was very enthusiastic over it and this enabled a settlement to be reached on the other issues.[3] It seems to have reconciled Napoleon to the cession of Ceylon.

The exact form of the article on restitutions to Britain was hotly debated in the final meeting at which the terms of the preliminaries were settled. Otto was opposed to any mention of the colonies that were retained by Britain and wanted Britain to merely enumerate the territories which she was returning. Otto's argument was that the restitutions were not allowed as a matter of right but purely out of

1. *Suite de pieces relative aux discussions entre la France et L'Angleterre*, Archives des affaires Etranges, Cahier CXX, 23.8.1801.

2. Hawkesbury to Otto, 5.8.1801, F. O. 27/66.

3. Otto to Hawkesbury, 11.8.1801, F. O. 27/66.

Napoleon's desire for peace.1 The real reason, of course, was that the territories in question were not hers' to dispose of and hence it would have been embarrassing for France to affix her signature to such an agreement. Hawkesbury however contested the point, which was vital to him, having sensed the object of the French attempt to evade it. Omission in the treaty would have given the real owners room to disavow the cession. Hawkesbury gained his point because the form of article 2 of the treaty was the very opposite of Otto's proposal. The Preliminary Articles of Peace between His Majesty and the French Republic as it was called was signed on 1 October 1801 by Hawkesbury and Otto.

The general form of the treaty and its other provisions are outside the scope of this study which is concerned with it only in so far as it relates to Ceylon. The preliminary peace had many shortcomings which Britain was to realize to her cost at the Conference of Amiens which in terms of article 15 was to ratify the treaty. The diplomatic defeats which Britain sustained at Amiens were the result of these defects and omissions which were in turn caused by Britain's haste to rush it through. Another serious misjudgment on Britain's part is that she allowed herself to be stampeded into signing the treaty and postponed the other matters for later decision because Napoleon ordered Otto to sign it before the end of September or break off negotiations. Britain needlessly gave in to the threat without realising that diplomatically she had the advantage as the French forces had just surrendered in Egypt. Napoleon was anxious to get the treaty signed before this fact was known and Britain fell into his trap. The treaty was signed two days after the capitulation of the French forces.

It is no exaggeration to say that one of the worthwhile gains to Britain of an otherwise unsatisfactory peace was the cession of Ceylon. The fact that this was one of the few articles retained in the Peace of Amiens makes it all the more significant. In fact when the peace was discussed in Parliament and came under fire from Windham and Grenville, its main defence as we shall see was the acquisition of Ceylon.2 The cession of Ceylon may thus to an extent be called the main justification of the peace.

It is also clear from the course of the negotiations that from Britain's point of view, the acquisition of Ceylon was one of her basic objects in the negotiations on which she was not open to compromise. Her strategy, as we shall see, was to protect the overseas empire and recoup herself in that field in return for recognising Napoleon's position on the continent. Ceylon was fundamental to her position in Asia and therefore she would not allow any variation on

1. *Cahiers CXXIV*, 7.9.1801.

2. W. C. Cobbett, *Parliamentary History of England* (London 1820), Vol. 36, Col. 48.

it. In contrast, though she endeavoured to retain her position in the West Indies intact she was still obliged to make substantial concessions there retaining only Trinidad and making concessions on Malta in order to obtain Napoleon's acquiescence. If one has to sum up the effects of the treaty it can be said that it was tantamount to a sacrifice of Britain's position on the continent and in the Mediterranean in return for the strengthening of her position in India and the safeguarding of her basic interests in America.

The importance which Britain attached to the acquisition of Ceylon in the peace reflected the impact of a number of concurrent developments on her thinking on Ceylon. As we have seen the Dutch territories in Ceylon were occupied by the British in 1795 as part of Britain's offensive against the Dutch overseas possessions to prevent them from falling into the hands of the French revolutionary government in the name of the Batavian regime. The occupation of Ceylon was the culmination of efforts pursued by the British for fifteen years to establish their presence in Ceylon particularly in the form of the control or qualified possession of the harbour of Trincomalee which was the key to the security of her Indian dominion.[1] The exact status of the territories under the British however, was rather vague. Theoretically they had been conquered in the name of the Stadtholder but in point of fact they had ostensibly forfeited this status by the resistance of the Dutch at Trincomalee. This point had not been clarified, but for the first few years after the occupation the British authorities seemed to regard their stay as provisional in nature, because they attached the occupied territories administratively to the Madras government with disastrous results. This short term approach to its administration, which was conducted in such a summary fashion that it caused an uprising against British rule, was further proof of a purely temporary interest.

The reason for this vacillation seemed to have been not any change of opinion about Ceylon's strategic importance but a conciousness of its possible value in a peace negotiation. Actually there were two schools of thought on this. Dundas who was responsible for the occupation of Ceylon was steadfastly for its retention but Pitt though convinced by Dundas of the strategic importance of the island weighed this factor against its diplomatic value. It has been suggested that at the Lille negotiations, Malmesbury was secretly authorised by him to offer it to the French in return for peace and that Britain on that occasion only wanted to retain the Cape. That Pitt could never make up his mind on the relative value of the Cape and Ceylon is suggested even in his speech on the Preliminary Article of Peace when he stated that his friend Dundas had convinced him of the value of Ceylon which he (Dundas) thought was superior to the Cape.[2] This

1. Vide *Ch. V.*
2. Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, Col. 57.

gives point to the view that Pitt was prepared to barter Ceylon and Addington mentioned this in his speech on the same Peace.[1] There is a footnote to this effect in the edition of the Malmesbury diaries.[2] This being the case, one can then understand why the authorities were wavering over the future of Ceylon during the opening years of the occupation. However after the breakdown of the Lille negotiations, the situation changed. In November 1797, the home government took the step of appointing Frederick North as Governor of Ceylon thereby bringing to an end the vicious system of the Madras administration. Under the new arrangement there was to be dual control in Ceylon in which North would have all political control but he had to proceed primarily in commercial matters in consultation with the East India Company and correspondence had to be conducted with the Court of Directors.[3] It was an anomalous position of which North was only too well aware and against which he was to fight but it was a positive step in the direction of control over Ceylon by the home government. This decision it is believed was prompted by Dundas in implementation of his desire to retain possession of the island. Realizing that it would be difficult to negotiate for its acquisition at a future peace treaty if it was the property of the Company he instituted this political change to alter its status.[4] Such a step was understandable coming from Dundas and proof of his determination to retain Ceylon at all costs, despite Pitt's reservation.

Another factor which would have weighed heavily with Britain in her thinking on Ceylon was the situation of the Batavian Republic vis-a-vis France. The main reason which prompted Britain's occupation of the Dutch territories was the fear that they would fall into the hands of the French. She could not have contemplated their restoration, therefore, until the internal situation was radically altered in favour of a Holland that was definitely independent of France and French influence and this was not to be attained until the Peace of Vienna of 1815. Ever since 1795 however, trends had been in the opposite direction and the Batavian regime had become a satellite of Napoleon. Napoleon's hold over it grew tighter with every year and culminated in the imposition of a popular plebicite in 1801 which was organised by General Augereau and the promulgation of a new constitution.[5] Since 1799 mounting taxes and requisitions had discredited the French regime and the populace showed their resentment by

1. *Ibid.*, Col. 83.
2. *Malmesbury Diaries*, Vol. III, p. 385.
3. Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, *Ceylon Under the British Occupation* (Colombo 1953), Vol. I, p. 224.
4. de Silva, *Ceylon Under the British Occupation* (Colombo 1953), p. 224.
5. G. Bruun, *Europe and the French Imperium* (New York 1938), p. 56.

rejecting the revised constitution which Napoleon had offered in 1801. This was, therefore, hardly the right time for Britain to restore Ceylon to her.

Of the various factors which influenced Britain's decision to retain Ceylon, the impact of Napoleon's Egyptian expedition can hardly be exaggerated. The expedition was not unexpected as due warning had been given in 1796 by the East India Company of a possible French invasion of India through Egypt.[1] When the invasion was launched, Dundas reacted with the same energy which he had shown in 1795.[2] Anticipating an overland invasion of India along Alexander's route he took military and diplomatic measures to impede him. He instructed the Bombay government to occupy Perim and seal off the Red Sea. Wellesley was ordered to undertake hostilities with a view to eliminating the only possible ally on the Indian mainland with whom Napoleon could effect a junction of forces on the West coast, namely Tipu. Wellesley accomplished this mission in February 1799 when Seringapatam was stormed and Tipu killed. Dundas went as far as to order the comparatively useless expedition of Commodore Blankett to the Red Sea in order to bar the way to Napoleon. Blankett was ultimately to fritter away his time oscillating between Mocha, Aden and Perim of which the last was quite inaccessible, bombarding Kousseir which Desaix had fortified, visiting the Sheriff of Jeddah to discourage trade between him and Egypt and generally proving himself an embarrassment to the lawful commander of this beat, Peter Rainier.[3] In the meantime Wellesley was trying to prove himself not less energetic than Hobart had been in his time in seeking to protect the Indian empire and destroy the Dutch. Whether Wellesley actually feared an attack on India through Egypt and shared Dundas's view on this it is difficult to say, but he showed concern over the threat, which Mauritius and French naval operations launched from there, could pose. Dundas however forestalled him by ordering an attack against the Dutch empire in the Indies. An expeditionary force was assembled at Calcutta for the purpose but Wellesley vacillated. Convinced that the menace of a French invasion through Egypt was greater, he changed its destination to Mauritius and made preparations to launch the invasion from Trincomalee instead of Calcutta. He sent his brother Arthur Wellesley to Trincomalee to take command. This plan too was overruled by Dundas who ordered instead that the expedition should be despatched to the Red Sea to serve as a diversionary operation for the main assault which was being planned against Kleber in Egypt.

1. C. N. Parkinson, *War in the Eastern Seas* (London 1954), p. 120.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 139-140.
3. Parkinson, *War in the Eastern Seas*, Ch. VI.

This operaion which was led by Baird proved to be as futile as the naval expedition of Sir Home Popham, as Baird arrived in Cairo only after its capture by Hutchinson.1

One cannot help thinking that the danger of the French expedition to Egypt to India was exaggerated. After the death of Tipu and Napoleon's departure from Egypt, the chances that the French, who were by now more intent on saving themselves, would embark on a hazardous expedition without assured communication lines and transport through unknown desert country seemed rather remote. However, neither Dundas nor Wellesley was prepared to take chances and the feverish activity which ensued with three naval squadrons competing with each other in the Red Sea and three other expeditions being planned was a measure of the anxiety which the French expedition caused. Ceylon played a not inconspicuous role in these operations as she was selected as the bridgehead for the proposed Mauritius expedition and in general served as the focal point of the counter measures against the French danger to India. As a result its strategic potential was revealed to the full and its value to Britain in a crisis. The moral could not have been lost on her. While at the time the French were in Egypt, the danger from them to India may have been exaggerated for Napoleon's secret instructions to Decaen, subsequently leaves room to think that this anticipation of French designs on India was not altogether incorrect.2 How serious Napoleon was about the mission which he entrusted to Decaen cannot be estimated. Perhaps it was only a plan which he was toying with for implementation if circumstances permitted but the fact that he had such intentions shows the persistence of the French threat to India. In these instructions Napoleon actually anticipated a peace rupture by 1805 and enjoined Decaen particularly to study the Dutch settlements and the resources they offered. The hopes which Napoleon held out to Decaen were attractive to a man of his ambition. Viz : "but the First Consul aided by information received from him as well as by the exact observance of these instructions will some day be able to place him on to a fame outlasting the memories of men and the passing of centuries".3 In the background of these instructions, Napoleon's insistence at the Peace of Amiens on the grant of additional territories to him in India takes on a deeper significance. Thus the danger to India of French aggressive designs which the Egyptian expedition demonstrated could conceivably have been the deciding factor in Britain's determination to retain Ceylon at the peace in London.

That Britain or at least the supreme government in Bengal was also thinking in terms of permanent occupation after 1799 can be inferred from Lord North's relations with Kandy. In 1800 North

1. A. B. Rodges, *The War of the Second Coalition* (Oxford 1964), Ch. XVI.
2. Parkinson, *War in the Eastern Seas*, pp. 194-195.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

embarked on his notorious policy of subsidiary states, copied from Mornington, aimed at reducing the Kandyan kingdom to a pensioner under British patronage. North was reversing the traditional policy of the Dutch and also the earlier policy of the English Company at the time of the embassies of Boyd and Andrews of seeking the King's friendship on the basis of a mutual defence alliance. North's policy of converting Kandy into a subsidiary state in which a garrison subsidized by Britain would be stationed presupposed an intention on the part of the British to regard Ceylon as a permanent possession. The first concrete step in this direction was taken in March 1800 when Macdowell was despatched on his famous diplomatic mission accompanied by an escort of 1,164 men and six pounders to Kandy.[1] North's policy was not only inspired by Wellelsey but also had his express approval.

All these considerations leads to the conclusion that Britain approached the London peace talks with the fixed intention of retaining Ceylon as one of the conditions. It was not to be a gambit or a pure bargaining point but one of the basic terms. It was requested categorically in the first proposition submitted by Hawkesbury on 14-4-1801 and it was not really challenged. Napoleon accepted the position but he complained about it bitterly.[2] In fact the cession of Ceylon in the London also preliminaries was almost acceptance of a fait accompli because in February 1801, a few weeks before Hawkesbury's formal approach to Otto, Ceylon was made a Crown Colony independent of the Company and instructions issued to North vesting him with all powers civil as well as military.[3]

From Napoleon's point of view, the main interest in the talks was to secure recognition of his situation in Europe and the Mediterranean and to weaken Britain, his most implacable for. He had no specific colonial objective in mind unless it was India and it does not seem as if the future of Ceylon was a matter of intrinsic importance to him. He hoped to achieve his objects at no cost to himself but at the expense of his allies. Thus for his first proposition he offered to barter his conquests in Egypt which he was on the point of losing. His next offer was of Spanish conquests in Portugal and later of the Dutch possessions in the Indies and Asia. Napoleon's actions in this regard were both morally and legally unconscionable. The case of Ceylon was an instance of flagrant duplicity and cynical exploitation on his part. When Schimmelpenninck at his interview with Napoleon had warned him of the possibility that Britain would want to retain Ceylon and the Cape because of their strategic importance to the Indian empire, he had brushed his fears aside with the assurance that

1. de Silva, *Ceylon Under British Occupation*, p. 79.
2. *Cahier* CXX, 23.8.1801.
3. de Silva, *Ceylon Under British Occupation*, p. 248.

France would abide by the Hague Treaty of 1795 which guaranteed the Dutch overseas possessions.[1] Thus Schimmelpenninck was unaware until their conclusion of the nature of the London talks and least of all of the bartering away of Ceylon. Britain for her part seems to have acquiesced in the establishment of Napoleon's supremacy in Europe based as it was on command of the Mediterranean, the possession of the left bank of the Rhine, his hold in Italy, and his control of the satellite republics which he had strewn all over Europe as a series of buffer states. Her outlook was coloured by Addington's personal pessimism over the futility of organising a coalition against Napoleon. Perhaps at the back of Addington's mind would have been the thought that this peace was only a truce in which Britain could take stock of herself and prepare for the future. The guiding consideration in Britain's position in the London talks was thus the opposite of compensatory restitution which was her stand at the Paris and Lille talks.[2] Malmesbury it will be recalled was prepared to compensate cession of Territory by France in Europe by colonial concessions. In the London talks, Britain consciously acquiesced in Napoleon's position in Europe, however powerful and dangerous that might make him, and fell back on her colonial possession as her line of defence. It was the policy of the Armadillo in the face of its enemies.

The various shortcomings of the peace and the policy on which it was based were the subject of critical comment when it was discussed in the Parliamentary debates. The main grounds of criticism were that it had abandoned Holland thereby violating one of Britain's most sacred diplomatic obligations, that it was a peace imposed on the vanquished for which there was no justification in as much as Britain did not come to the talks as a defeated nation. On the contrary Britain was unbeaten in 1800 and on the threshold of victory in Egypt. One would have expected Britain to retain all her conquests, and not acquiesced in Napoleon's aggrandizement. What therefore was the justification for the government's acceptance of the peace?

The chief spokesman for the government were Hawkesbury and Addington but the strongest supporter turned out to be Pitt who was thereby honouring his undertaking to Addington that he would support his government.[3] Pitt's powerful advocacy combined with Fox's eloquence saved the day on what could otherwise have been an embarrassing experience for the government, confronted as it was by the diatribes of Wyndham and the scorn of Grenville, for whom this treaty meant the parting of the ways from his cousin. It is significant that the government case was based for the greater part on the acquisi-

1. G. Nypel, *Hoe Nederland Ceilon Verloo* (The Hague/1908), p. 118.

2. Vide Ch. VII.

3. Cobett, *Parliamentary History*, Cols. 29-90.

tion of Ceylon. Hawkesbury referred to Trincomalee as one of the great ports of the world valuable for its location and ability to shelter the whole navy. His justification for the treaty was that it accorded with the then logistical situation in which owing to the military equipoise between France and Britain "neither power could affect the other".[1] How was it possible he asked for Britain in spite of its immense superiority at sea to strike a fatal blow at France. Britain was therefore obliged to consolidate herself in the field in which she had mastery. The acquisition of Ceylon fitted into this scheme of things, into the framework of British policy in that more than any other place in that region it ensured the security of her Indian empire. He made light of the cession of Minorca and Malta on the grounds that the Levantine trade was no longer valuable to Britain compared to her colonial trade which depended on the possession of overseas territories.

This is the same argument which was developed by Pitt. Pitt maintained that the treaty safeguarded Britain's maritime strength and the security of her colonial empire which to her at that stage was the key consideration in her struggle against Napoleon. The Mediterranean was of secondary importance. Levantine trade was inferior in comparison to the East and the East Indies. Even the Cape he thought was not essential and "he considered it as far inferior indeed to Ceylon which he looked upon to be of all places upon the globe the one which would add most to the security of our East Indies possessions and as placing our dominions in that quarter in a greater degree of safety than they had been in from the first hour that we set our foot on the continent of India."[2] Pitt's contention was that the acquisition of Ceylon was ample compensation for any imaginary loss Britain might have sustained by not having the Cape and Cochin which was the criticism made by Grenville. The value of Cochin in particular Pitt said had been lessened after the destruction of Tipu. In Pitt's eyes therefore the value of Ceylon was so high that her acquisition by itself justified the peace.

At the begining of December 1801 exactly two months after the Preliminaries of London were signed, delegates met at Amiens to ratify the agreement. Napoleon was angered at the delay because he was already behaving as if peace had been restored. The conference in fact had an inauspicious begining because while the delegates were arriving, Napoleon was preparing the expedition under Leclerc against Toussaint I'Ouverture in San Domingo. One of the first acts of the British delegates was to remonstrate against this, with Talleyrand and the First Consul but they brushed these objections aside and refused to accede even to the British demand that the warships should be stripped of their guns.[3] The details of the Amiens Conference is not

1. *Ibid.*, Col. 38-48.
2. Cobett, *Parliamentary History*, Col. 57.
3. Hawkesbury to Cornwallis, 1.11.1801 and 12.11.1801, F. O. 27/59 (PRO).

a subject on which much has been written probably because of the shortlived history of the treaty and perhaps because as a diplomatic effort it reflected poorly on British diplomacy. The sorry performance of the British plenipotentiary and the manner in which he was outwitted at every turn is admittedly not a very edifying thought. For this performance of its representative the British government was entirely to blame. If it was Britain's intention to capitulate at Amiens, she could not have chosen a better man than Cornwallis who was notorious for his weak-kneed policy in India over the Nawabs of Carnatic and Tanjore and the army mutiny. His pacifism had even infected his protege Shore and made the latter an object of Hobart's impatient wrath. Cornwallis at this time was infirm, gouty and old, at the twilight of a career both as a soldier and an administrator which had been distinguished more for gentlemanliness and human qualities than for the firmness and the sterner attributes which his positions demanded. He was a gentleman of the old school, unable to understand how other gentlemen could be capable of breaking the word given in private or acting in an unsportsmanlike manner. In the hard cut and thrust world of Napoleonic diplomacy his naivete and idealism was a national disaster. He was capable on occasions of fits of honest indignation when he could be stubborn and have his way but his chronic temperamental unsuitability for the role of negotiator made him a plaything in the hands of his opponents. It was indeed his misfortune that he had to pit himself against the most ruthless and unscrupulous practitioners of their trade of all times like the First Consul and Talleyrand. On the other hand there is room to think that the selection of Cornwallis instead of Malmesbury was an earnest of the government's desire for peace knowing their nominee's pacific disposition.

Another mistake of the Addington government was to have signed an inconclusive treaty at London having been rushed into it quite unnecessarily by Napoleon leaving several important problems unsettled. Having once taken this step no retreat was possible from the trap laid by Napoleon. The French were at least honest to the extent that they were prepared to honour the agreed terms on the Preliminaries to the letter but they would not allow one syllable more. As will be seen from the instructions to the French plenipotentiary, the conference was to them a purely confirmatory exercise but Britain deluded herself by expecting it to produce a permanent settlement of all outstanding issues between her and France and the latter's allies. These were precisely the terms of Cornwallis's instructions. Thus Britain entered the lists at Amiens having already lost her battle.

Cornwallis arrived in Paris on 10 November under express instructions to settle whatever issues were possible through private talks in Paris before proceeding to Amiens.[1] With his typical naivete he

1. Hawkesbury to Cornwallis, 27.10.1801, F.O. 27/59.

expected to establish cordial relations with his adversaries but he was soon to be disappointed. His first encounter with Napoleon was cordial and Cornwallis was charmed with the latter's pretentions of respect for Britain.[1] At the second audience Napoleon, got down to business and tried to lure Cornwallis with blandishments about his desire for peace, into making territorial concessions to France in India. Cornwallis however stood firm and ruled out this possibility, whereupon Napoleon smilingly conceded that "vous etes tres dur".[2] Cornwallis however, was obviously overawed by the encounter and was even unnecessarily deferential in assuring Napoleon of Britain's admiration of the great work he had done for France in rescuing her from the confusion and anarchy by which she had been oppressed. Cornwallis was equally ill at ease in his encounters with his opposite number Joseph Bonaparte and Talleyrand. He was carried away by Joseph's charm and apparent sincerity and his assurances of simple-mindedness and lack of duplicity, little knowing that this was the negotiator responsible for the Convention of Mortefontaine with America and even Luneville where if his performance displeased Napoleon, it was due to lack of clear instructions from the latter than his own incompetency.[3] The attitude which he showed in his preliminary discussion with Cornwallis was anything but accommodating and should have forewarned the latter.[4] Talleyrand lived up to his reputation and filled Cornwallis with such dread that he asked to be excused from his instructions and fled to Amiens at the first opportunity with the plea that he preferred to deal at the open conference table with Joseph rather than remain in Paris and deal with Talleyrand and fall a victim to the latter's chicanery.[5] He thought that Bonaparte would be a check on the spirit of intrigue which Talleyrand possessed. Such were his inauspicious introductions to his antagonists and it is not surprising that the negotiations which followed were a continuation of this moral and psychological defeat.

Details of the negotiation and of how Cornwallis was systematically worsted by Bonaparte and Talleyrand are irrelevant to this study and therefore attention would only be focussed on the discussions in so far as they related to the settlement of Ceylon. Suffice it to say here, by way of providing a background to the conference, that the differences between the French and British, the irreconciliability of their positions arose from a clash of basic and fundamental objectives. Britain's expectations of the conference was that it would produce a definitive treaty and therefore Cornwallis was instructed to agree to the

1. Cornwallis to Hawkesbury, 10.11.1801, F. O. 27/59.
2. Cornwallis to Hawkesbury, 3.12.1801, F. O. 27/59.
3. R. B. Mowat, *The diplomacy of Napoleon*, (London 1924), p. 85.
4. Cornwallis to Hawkesbury, 26.11.1801, F. O. 27/59.
5. Cornwallis to Hawkesbury, 20.11.1801, F. O. 27/59.

ratification of all the agreed items in the preliminary peace with the exception of article 4 relating to Malta, article 10 on the payment of expenses on the prisoners of war, article 13 on the Newfoundland fisheries. He had also to arrange for satisfactory compensation to the Stadtholder for losses suffered in the revolution. Talleyrand's instructions to Bonaparte on the other hand stipulated that Russia and Austria should be excluded from the Malta arrangement and Naples or Madrid substituted, that all decisions of concern to France's allies should be avoided, that there should be no reference to previous treaties or precedents and that no trade discussions should be embarked upon or consessions allowed.[1] In short, it was Napoleon's intention at the peace talks to gain acceptance of the new international order which he had established in Europe and any extra issues which had been left over from the preliminaries and stood in the way should be summarily disposed of. Although Britain had acknowledged Napoleon's position in Europe in the preliminary treaty she was still hopeful of wringing concessions out of Napoleon which would enable a lasting peace to be established between France and Britain. However, the instructions to Bonaparte precluded him from coming to grips with the outstanding issues and therefore Britain's hopes vain indeed.

The clash of objectives came into focus on the question of Malta which thus became the central issue in the conference. Britain had agreed in the Preliminaries of London to render it independent of both France and her and hand it over to the order of St. John under a security guarantee to the latter of a third power. France on the other hand while not opposed to this neutarlization wished to make it impotent by denial of effective military resources or a guarantee and thereby eliminate it as a potential threat to her in the Mediterranean. France at the same time was ill disposed to giving any colonial concessions to Britain which would have strengthened her empire, her object being rather to weaken it by driving wedges wherever possible. This was the reason for Napoleon's territorial demands in India, for the refusal of Britian's claim to Tobago, the disallowance of the reimbursement of expenses on prisoners of war and the rejection of compensation for the Stadtholder. While it cannot be denied that the French were ruthless in their methods, it was not her fault that the British were unequal to her onslaught. It may also be said in fairness to France that she had a genuine sense of grievance over the perfidy of the British in amassing such a vast empire for herself at the expense of France. She believed that Britain because of her ill-gotten gain was not entitled to any interests on the continent except in exchange for colonial concessions. Any appraisal of the conduct of the French at these negotiations, ruthless and sharp as it was, should make allowance for her feelings on this point. France expected Britain to recog-

1. Mowatt, *Diplomacy of Napoleon*, pp. 85-101.

nise her right to her natural frontiers in Europe just as much as Britain wanted France to acknowledge her colonial empire. In fact it had been agreed at the Preliminaries of London that Britain would recognise French territorial acquisitions in Europe in return for adequate compensation in the colonies. If the French were ruthless in the exploitation of every possible opportunity to advance their claims in the Amiens conference, Britain had been no less avaricious at the negotiations in London when she matched every demand of the French with fresh claims for compensation. Her demands ranged from St. Domingo and Tobago to Demarara, Esquibo, Berbice and Martinique. It is hardly possible in these circumstances, for any one side to claim to be the aggrieved party as both were equally ambitious in pursuit of their interests. Victory understandably went to the side that was superior in its tactics.

As the history of the Amiens negotiations is outside the scope of this study a brief reference may only be made to its principal trends and the manner in which the basic issues were disposed of. At first the trend was not unfavourable to Britain. She won her point on the admission of Spain and Holland and the necessity of having a general treaty. She appeared to have gained French acceptance of her conditions to ensure the security of Malta. There seemed to be a fair prospect of obtaining compensation for the Stadtholder and reimbursement of the expenses of the French and Dutch prisioners of war, as Bonaparte had agreed to study this claim.[1] These hopes were shattered at the end of December 1801 when the French submitted their counter project which revealed how illusory indeed had been the British expectations.[2] One of the copies of the project even excluded the article on Ceylon and caused consternation among the British. From January 1802, the British side showed signs of weakening under the relentless pressure exerted by Bonaparte and their policy became one of giving concessions. They waived their claim to Tobago, agreed to settle the compensation of the Stadtholder with the Batavian republic, acquiesced in the exclusion of Portugal and shamefully connived at the French proposal to provide for the appointment of Commissioners to consider the prisoners of war question while secretly deciding not to implement it. These were the fatal mistakes of which Napoleon made capital. Britain was also overawed by the First Consul's melodrama in appointing himself President of the Ligurian Republic. An extraneous factor which prejudiced the negotiations at this time were the attacks against Napoleon in the British press notably in the l'Ambigu by its editor Jean Peletier. Napoleon retaliated with fresh demands for the accession of the Ligurian Republic to the treaty, the retention of Otranto until evacuation of Malta by the

1. G. C. Brodrick, *History of England*, 1801 - 1837, (London 1928), Ch. I.
2. Cornwallis to Hawkesbury, 30.12.1801, F. O. 27/59.

British and opposition to the Sultan's accession to the treaty. The situation was by now out of hand for Britain and Cornwallis's only desire was to flee from his tormentors as fast as possible and it was in this spirit of defeatism that the treaty was signed on 27 March 1801.

The prominence given to Malta in the negotiations has obscured the relatively important role played by Ceylon in the Conference of Amiens. A study of the proceedings shows that this issue almost disrupted the conference. The question at issue regarding Ceylon was not its cession to Britain which had already been settled in the preliminaries but of obtaining the formal accession of the Batavian Republic to this article. In fact, concurrent with the struggle between Cornwallis and Bonaparte at the conference table, another battle was being fought between the French and the Batavian Republic, the latter being represented by Schimmelpenninck. The issues in this subsidiary struggle were the efforts of the French to secure the accession of the Batavian Republic and the latter's insistence on satisfactory compensation from France in order to do so. This contest did not enter the conference proper except at a later stage but its repercussions were felt in the proceedings and considerably affected its timetable.

This subject may therefore be considered from the viewpoint of its impact on the conference and as a separate issue between France and the Batavian Republic. The object of the Amiens conference in terms of Article 15 of the Preliminaries of Peace of London was to ratify the latter and make it a definitive peace to which the allies of the contracting parties would accede. From Britain's point of view the accession of the allies of France was a matter of cardinal importance because the territories which had been ceded to her in the London preliminaries, belonged to them. It was agreed at the London talks that the articles of restitution of territories particularly article 2 on the cession of Trinidad and Ceylon would be ratified automatically without modification at the Amiens conference. Britain was afraid, having been forewarned by Otto's attempts during the final proceedings of the conference on the preliminaries in London to omit any reference to the Batavian Republic in the relevant article, that France would dissosiate herself from this responsibility of implementing the article and would leave it to be settled between Britain and the Batavian Republic directly. The attitude of France on this article at the Amiens conference showed that Britain's fears were not in vain. Accordingly one of the instructions issued to Cornwallis on his appointment as plenipotentiary was that he should conclude a definitive treaty in which Britain and the allies of the French were to be included. At the time of his visit to Paris this became one of his principal endeavours. The French being opposed as a matter of policy were unresponsive and Talleyrand tried to make a joke of it and when Cornwallis persisted, replied that he would see what he could do.[1] In fact one of the

1. Cornwallis to Hawkesbury, 3.12.1801, F.O. 27/59.

reasons which Cornwallis gave for his decision to abandon his private talks in Paris and repair to Amiens was that he intended to obtain an explicit declaration of accession from the allies whereas by remaining in Paris he was jeopardizing the chances of doing so owing to the chicanery of the French Minister. In the meantime by the end of November the British government expressed surprise at the long delay in the arrival of the Dutch and Spanish plenipotentiaries and emphasised on Cornwallis that he should not attend to any other business until this cession had been ratified.[1] Cornwallis's first action at the opening meeting of the conference on 5.12.1801 was to request a formal notification from the plenipotentiaries of the allies of their accession and he requested their presence at the conference to ratify the cession.[2] He stated that he would hold the French responsible for the action of the allies in this regard. By his resolute stand on this point Cornwallis obtained recognition by Joseph of the principle of allied participation in the conference, but on the actual presence of the plenipotentiaries Bonaparte was evasive. He reported the arrival of Schimmelpenninck on 8 December but of his participation there was no sign and this was soon building up into a major issue in the conference.[3] The reason as we shall soon see was that France was experiencing trouble from her allies. Having cheated them at the preliminaries in London she had now to face up to her guilt. Campe Alonge the Spanish plenipotentiary pleaded diplomatic illness having taken umbrage over the cession of Trinidad. Schimmelpenninck was made of sterner stuff and became a thorn in the side of the French by his persistence in demanding compensation for Holland for the cession of Ceylon. His demand was for the renunciation by the French of all rights on the harbour and town of Flushing in exchange for the sacrifice of Ceylon.[4] In order to avoid the embarrassing confrontation with the allies in the conference table which would have disrupted the talks in favour of the British, Bonaparte attempted in the first instance to canvass the idea that separate treaties should be concluded between Britain and the allies of France. Britain however had anticipated this move and warned Cornwallis accordingly who nipped it in the bud. Bonaparte was now seriously embarrassed over the presence of Schimmelpenninck and played for time with the excuse that he had no power to deal with him.

Schimmelpenninck in the meantime was engaged on diplomatic initiatives on his own. Smarting under his humiliation he contacted Cornwallis and attempted to enlist his support for his claim to Flushing. Cornwallis was not uninterested, having sensed the value of such an

1. Cornwallis to Hawkesbury, 27.12.1801, F. O. 27/59.
2. Cornwallis to Hawkesbury, 6.12.1801, F. O. 27/59.
3. Cornwallis to Hawkesbury, 8.12.1801, F. O. 27/59.
4. Cornwallis to Hawkesbusy, 25.12.1801, F. O. 27/59.

arrangement to Britain as well which, owing to the importance of the Scheldt, would have liked a neutral power to have this port. The home government however discouraged any dealings with Schimmelpenninck. The former was afraid presumably that this would lead the guileless Cornwallis to further complications in the hands of the astute Schimmelpenninck. The tension over the presence of the Dutch plenipotentiary came to a head at the end of December over the counter project submitted by the French. The explanation offered by the French for the omission of the article on the cession of Ceylon in one of the copies of the project was that this was due to the absence of the plenipotentiary from the discussions, and that it would be rectified on his participation. However, in the draft protocol of the days proceedings, the version which Joseph gave to explain the absence of the Dutch plenipotentiary was that he had not arrived. Merry, Cornwallis's plucky assistant intervened strongly on this occasion and insisted on the revision of the protocol to read that the absence was due to the lack of full powers to treat with him on the part of Bonaparte.[1] The discussion over the counter project indeed revealed that France was engaged on a much deeper game than the mere fobbing off of the Dutch plenipotentiary.[2] The claims which they submitted at this juncture for enhanced territorial possessions in India in the way of Valdahoor, the environs of Yanaon and Courchy near Mahe were a hint that they expected these acquisition in return for Ceylon. Schimmelpenninck in the meantime after further unsuccessful attempts to strike a bargain with Cornwallis in which the Batavian Republic would compensate the Stadtholder in return for British payment of damages sustained by the Company in the captured colonies was finally persuaded under French pressure to issue a formal notification of accession.[3] This created fresh difficulties because the declaration which he issued merely notified accession to the principle viz: "en accedant aux bases poseis dans les articles preliminaries signe a Londres".[4] Schimmelpenninck was called to the conference on 15 January where in the face of pressure from the French and the British representatives he continued to insist on proper restitution to the Batavian Republic for the cession of Ceylon. Cornwallis however was adamant on express instructions from Hawkesbury that no concessions could be made to him. Schimmelpenninck thus had to fall back on the French for compensation.

Schimmelpenninck's determination to obtain restitution for the loss of Ceylon thus made him a formidable adversary to Bonaparte and a serious embarrassment to France at this conference. His was

1. Cornwallis to Hawkesbury, 10.1.1802, F. O. 27/59.
2. Cornwallis to Hawkesbury, 23.1.1802, F. O. 27/59.
3. Cornwallis to Hawkesbury, 10.1.1801, F. O. 27/59.
4. Cornwallis to Hawkesbury, 11.1.1801, F. O. 27/59.

a gallant attempt to seek redress for what he thought was a gross victimization of his country by the big powers. At the time of the London treaty he had attempted unsuccessfully through Merry to include provision for adequate restitution for the loss of Ceylon in that treaty. Schimmelpenninck had reconciled himself to the loss of Ceylon being appreciative no doubt of Britain's determination to retain it and of the futility of pursuing this. His object was a limited one of obtaining compensation in the way of Flushing and if possible damages for losses sustained by the Company in the captured territories. On his appointment as plenipotentiary to the Amiens conference he had pleaded with Talleyrand and Bonaparte for the support of his claim. Bonaparte had undertaken to do his best[1] but Schimmelpenninck did not have to be told how much faith he could have in Napoleon who only a short while ago had assured him that France would guarantee Dutch colonial possessions in terms of the Hague treaty while at the same time he authorised the cession of Ceylon to Britain. In point of fact Talleyrand's instructions to Bonaparte expressly forbade him to discuss the questions of the Scheldt, of Flushing and of French troops in Batavia. Napoleon for his part had no desire to be partial to the Batavian Republic because of the strained relations prevailing at that time between France and the Dutch Republic. Schimmelpenninck himself confided at a later stage to the Cornwallis that there was not a man in Holland more disirous than he was of emancipating the country from the yoke of France.[2] His worst fears were confirmed by the treatment which he received from Joseph at the conference. Bonaparte's conditions for admitting Schimmelpenninck to the conference was that he should first agree to accede to the treaty. The question of compensation was to be discussed after his accession. Schimmelpenninck had no illusions that having secured this accession France would refer the matter of compensation to direct negotiations between Batavia and Britain. At the same time he realised that the only bargaining power which he had whereby he could gain his ends was to withhold his accession as long as possible in the hope that France would be so embarrassed and agree to his terms.

Schimmelpenninck therefore embarked on a rather devious and hazardous game of dipolmacy to force the hand of France. Britain's insistence on participation of the allies in the conference afforded an opening which he could exploit for this purpose. One of his moves referred to already was to contact Cornwallis and request his support counting on the latter's interest in giving Flushing to a neutral. At a later stage he proposed that Batavia could compensate the stadtholder provided Britain was ready to pay damages for shipping and other lossess sustained by the Company. Hawkesbury however rejected

1. Nypel, *Nederland*, p. 121.
2. Cornwallis to Hawkesbury, 25.12.1801, F. O. 27/59.

his offer with the reply that Britain had already compensated for the acquisition of Ceylon in the way of other colonial concession. He even resorted to secret diplomacy and intrigue in league with Le Hoc an adventurer and Talleyrand in which in return for payment of substantial sums he could purchase Flushing and possibly Flanders.[1] Such bargains were apparently quite respectable as the previous offer to Pitt had proved and the cash offer of the British to purchase Trincomalee from Suffren.[2] With Bonaparte he played a waiting game refusing to accede except on the grant of restitution and obliging him to cover up his absence with fancy excuses. When Napoleon heard of Schimmelpenninck's st stubborness he was so enraged coming on top of his bad experiences with the Dutch that he threatened to send Augereau with a force of 25,000 troops. On 3 January Schimmelpenninck issued his notification of accession and because of this presumably he was addmitted to the conference on 11 January but the note merely acceded to the basis of the preliminaries and for this he was attacked at the conference table by Britain and France.

By now Schimmelpenninck had held out for over a month in his heroic if forlorn campaign against the treaty. He was however beginning to feel uneasy within himself over the wisdom of his policy. He had exaggerated the bargaining power of his position and the truth was not known to him that Napoleon had decided to call his bluff and instructed Joseph to sign the treaty with or without Holland.[3] Other factors now intervened to shake Schimmelpenninck's confidence. The intrigue with Le Hoc misfired[4] and Spain's agreement at this juncture to acquiesce in the cession of Trinidad for which purpose she sent D'Azara weakened his position.[5] Cornwallis's refusal to treat with him either on compensation to the Stadtholder or over Flushing was a further blow. Schimmelpenninck now realised his isolation, and the imminent disaster to his diplomacy and his thought turned to capitulation. He requested a promise from the first Consul that the question of Flushing would be considered in return for his accession.[6] On 25 March, he received an undertaking to this effect from Napoleon.[7] On 26 March, he indicated to Joseph that he had instructions to sign the treaty. Needless to say Napoleon broke his promise but the irony is that Schimmelpenninck signed the treaty on the very basis which had been offered to him and been rejected by him

1. Nypel, *Nederland*, p. 127.
2. *Ibid*, p. 121.
3. Napoleon to Joseph Bonaparte, 6.1.1801, Nypel, *Nederland*, p. 132.
4. *Ibid*, p. 136.
5. *Ibid*, p. 135.
6. Nypel, p. *Nederland*, p. 137.
7. *Ibid*, p. 139.

four months ago. The final draft of the article on Ceylon took the form which was suggested by Schimmelpenninck and accepted by Cornwallis. The diffenence between the two treaties is that in the definitive Treaty of Amiens, the cession of Ceylon by the Batavian Republic was stated as a separate article supplementary to the clause which specified its retention by Britain under article 3.

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No.	25	1798-1799	Proceedings of the Governor in the Secret Department 12.10.1798-25.2.1799.
No.	26	1799-1800	Proceedings of the Governor in the Secret Department 27.6.1799-24.3.1800.
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The advent of the British to Ceylon is a study of the historical circumstances which led to the acquisition of Ceylon by the British. It represents the first and a pioneer attempt at a study of this subject and to that extent this book is a contribution to research into Ceylon history. This study traces the elaborate and complicated chain of circumstances and events extending for a period of about 40 years and stretching throughout Europe and Asia and even America, and originating in the rivalries of European and Asian powers which were responsible for the establishment of British power in Ceylon. Strictly speaking, this event in terms of its immediate origins was a by-product of Anglo-French rivalry on the continent of Europe and overseas during the 18th century but subsequently it became inextricably involved in the web of intrigue and the dramatic, political, diplomatic and military developments at the end of the century resulting from the French Revolution and the Napoleonic war.

Britain's interest in Ceylon, which increased proportionately in relation to the trend of European events, was the fear that Dutch possessions, particularly Ceylon which was endowed with the great harbour of Trincomalee, would fall into French hands as a sequel to the growing French ascendancy in Holland which culminated in the establishment of the Batavian Republic. Thus, British interest boiled down to a desire to possess Trincomalee which was regarded as the key to dominion in India. Ultimately Ceylon was ceded to Britain as part of a bargain which Napoleon struck in 1801 in order to obtain a respite in his war with Britain. Britain was also inspired by a fear of Napoleon's own designs on Asia as manifested in his famous Egyptian expedition.

The above background is the substance of the book but it takes the reader along a fascinating journey through the major events of one of the most stirring periods in European history when the old world was crumbling in Europe under the Napoleonic onslaught and Britain was establishing her great Asiatic empire at the expense of the French and the Dutch establishments. It is amidst this welter of events that the British period in Ceylon began. Although the subject relates to Ceylon, its very nature gives it a foreign setting and thus the scenario moves between battle fields, naval battles and the intrigues and diplomacy between the chancelleries of Europe. What is not sufficiently realised today is that over 150 years ago Ceylon was as well known as it is now in the diplomacy of Europe and was the key to many international negotiations.

The author, Mr. V. L. B. Mendis, is presently the Director-General of External Affairs of the Ministry of Defence and External Affairs, Ceylon. He is a very senior career diplomat of the Ceylon Government who has been serving in many diplomatic assignments in U.S.A., London, France, Japan, U.S.S.R. and India. A study of history, in which he graduated, is one of his hobbies. This book was originally presented as a post graduate thesis to the University of London and was awarded the degree of Master of Philosophy.

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