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SRI LANKA SINCE INDEPENDENCE

edited by

K. M. de SILVA

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CONTENTS

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I

SRI LANKA IN 1948

K. M. DE SILVA

A perceptive observer watching the collapse of European empires in Asia after the Second World War would have been struck by the contrast between the situation in Sri Lanka and in the rest of South Asia including Burma. It could hardly be expected that the transfer of power in the Indian subcontinent would be free of turmoil, but the violence that raged over British India on the eve of independence was on a scale which few but the most pessimistic could have anticipated. The dawn of Indian independence was marred by massacres and migrations in the Punjab on a scale unparalleled in world history in time of peace. There was a similar extension of massacres and migrations in Eastern India. The sub-continent seemed to be on the verge of calamitous civil war.[1] In Burma too the situation was equally fraught with turmoil and conflict. Aung San the youthful leader of Burma's independence struggle did not live to see the signing of the treaty (which he had negotiated) between Britain and Burma on 17 October 1947 which granted Burma her independence; he was assassinated along with a group of his closest associates on 19 June 1947. If the civil war which at one stage seemed India's inevitable fate was avoided through the drastic device of partition, Burma was not so fortunate. There civil war erupted almost from the very first week of the existence of the new Burmese republic.

Śri Lanka in 1948 was, in contrast, an oasis of stability, peace and order. Set against the contemporary catastrophes in the rest of the former British possessions in South Asia, the industrial disputes and the general strike of the years 1945-47 paled into utter insignificance in the scale of violence involved. The transfer of power in Sri Lanka was smooth and peaceful. More importantly one saw very little of the divisions and bitterness which were tearing at the recent independence of the countries in South Asia. Within a few months of independence in 1948 one of the most intractable political issues in the country—the Tamil problem—which had absorbed the energies of its politicians and the British themselves to an inordinate degree since the early nineteen twenties seemed on the way to amicable settlement. G. G. Ponnambalam who had led the Tamils in their political campaigns since his entry into the State Council in 1934 became a member of the Cabinet bringing with him into the government the bulk of the leadership and members of the Tamil Congress. In so doing he helped convert the government into very much a consensus of moderate political opinion in the country.

1. On this see A. Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten* (London, 1951); P. Moon, *Divide and Quit* (London, 1962); F. Tuker, *While Memory Serves* (London, 1950).

The final phase in the transfer of power had begun under the leadership of D. S. Senanayake. There are two noteworthy points of interest in his negotiations with Britain on this issue. Firstly, he was guided by a strong belief in ordered constitutional evolution to Dominion Status on the analogy of constitutional development in the White Dominions. In insisting that Dominion Status should remain the prime object of policy, and that this should be attained in association with rather than in opposition to the British, he placed himself in direct opposition to the views adopted by the Ceylon National Congress in 1942 (in response to the younger policy makers who were becoming increasingly influential within it) that independence rather than Dominion Status should be the goal of Sri Lanka's development. Secondly he feared that with the British withdrawal the British empire in Asia in the familiar form in which it had existed would have ended, and that the political prospects in Asia would be hardly encouraging. A profound suspicion of India was the dominant strand in his external policy. Accordingly it was as a policy of re-insurance for the country during the early years of independence when it was not impossible that there might be a political vacuum in South Asia that he viewed the agreements on Defence and External Affairs negotiated by Whitehall as a prelude to the grant of Dominion Status to Sri Lanka.

It was in his internal policy that he left the impress of his dominant personality and his moderate views. The guiding principles were: the conception of Sri Lanka as a multi-racial democracy; and his commitment to the maintenance of the Liberal ideal of a secular state in which the lines between state power and religion were scrupulously demarcated. Here again he placed himself in opposition to an increasingly influential current of opinion which viewed the Sri Lanka polity as being essentially Sinhalese and Buddhist in character, and which urged that government policies should be fashioned to accommodate a far-reaching transformation of the island's politics to build a new Sri Lanka on traditional, ideal, Sinhala-Buddhist lines. Implicit in this was a rejection of the concept of a multi-racial polity, as well as the concept of a secular state.

D. S. Senanayake, in contrast, was sensitive to minority anxieties. This was not merely a matter of political realism but also sprang from a deep conviction of the need for generous concessions to the minorities, ethnic, communal and religious, to ensure political stability in a plural society such as Sri Lanka in the vital last phase in the transfer of power. An analysis of his response to the political implications of minority anxieties on Sri Lanka's development as an independent state needs much more space than is available in a very brief introductory chapter such as this. One needs to draw attention, briefly, to at least three points of interest.

Firstly, there were the guarantees against legislation discriminating against minorities, incorporated in the Soulbury Constitution. These guarantees had been borrowed from provisions in the Ministers' Draft Constitution of 1944 which had been introduced on D. S. Senanayake's initiative as a gesture of generosity and re-assurance to the minorities. In retrospect it would seem that the rights of minorities had not received adequate protection in the Soulbury Constitution, but in 1946-7 the constitutional guarantees against discriminatory legislation seemed sufficiently reassuring to them largely because of the trust and confidence they had in D. S. Senanayake.

Secondly, there was the initiative he took in forming the United National Party. This was designed to make a fresh start in politics in the direction of a consensus of moderate opinion in national politics; it was to be a political party necessarily representative of the majority community but at the same time acceptable to the minorities. His own standing in the country was sufficient guarantee of its being acceptable to the majority, but there is no doubt that its position among the Sinhalese was strengthened by S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike's decision to bring in his Sinhala Maha Sabha. From the beginning it had the enthusiastic approval of the small but influential Christian minority, and the Muslims who had in the past given substantial support to the Tamils in their political campaigns at last broke away and sought association with the new party. When the Tamil Congress crossed over to the government in 1948 the equilibrium of political forces which D. S. Senanayake had sought to establish was stabilised at a level which he found acceptable, even though the Tamil Congress did not lose its separate identity and despite the fact that a section broke away from it into a stubborn but, at that time, seemingly futile opposition. Only the Indian community, consisting in the main of plantation workers, were left out. But there were special reasons for that, for they were regarded as an unassimilated group without roots in the country. The decision to leave them out was deliberately taken on that account. To the extent that he shared the attitudes and prejudices of the great majority of Sinhalese politicians with regard to the Indian question,—the status of Indian plantation workers in the Sri Lanka polity, and more specifically to deny them unrestricted rights to the franchise—his conception of a multi-racial polity was flawed.

Thirdly, D. S. Senanayake thwarted all efforts to abandon the concept of a secular state, and the principle of the religious neutrality of the state. He succeeded in this to the extent that in 1948, despite some Buddhist displeasure over the continued prestigious and influential position enjoyed by the Christians, there seemed little or no evidence of the religious turmoil and linguistic conflicts that were to burst to the surface in 1956.

If the political leadership in Sri Lanka took pride in the smoothness of the transfer of power, they seemed oblivious to the political perils involved in making the process so bland as to be virtually imperceptible to those not directly involved. The last British governor of the island became the island's first Governor-General after independence. Next there was the notable difference between the constitutional and legal instruments which conferred independence on Sri Lanka, and the cognate process in other parts of South Asia—for India and Pakistan, Acts of Parliament; for Burma, a specially negotiated treaty; for Sri Lanka, a mere Order-in-Council. All this seemed to suggest a qualitative difference in the nature of the independence that was being achieved when no meaningful difference in status was either intended by Britain or accepted by Sri Lanka's leaders, in the Board of Ministers first of all, and later, in the Cabinet.[2] There was also the fact that the constitution under which

2. Independence did not carry the lingering connotation of constitutional subordination to Britain which Dominion Status, at this time, appeared to have. India's acceptance of membership of the Commonwealth went a long way to demonstrate that Dominion Status was in fact complete independence with the advantages of membership of a world-wide Commonwealth.

the new Dominion began its political existence was of British origin in contrast to the autochthonous constitution drafted for the Indian Republic by a Constituent Assembly. Once again there was an element of exaggeration in the criticism, for the new constitution of Sri Lanka was basically the one drafted for D. S. Senanayake by his advisers in 1944—and approved subsequently by the State Council—modified to suit the needs of the changed circumstances of 1946-7. And these modifications were few and not very substantial or significant. Above all the Agreements on Defence and External Affairs negotiated prior to the transfer of power helped to give an air of credibility to the argument that the independence conferred on Sri Lanka was flawed. The Agreements themselves were regarded as badges of inferiority, and checks on full sovereignty in external affairs; moreover fears were expressed about secret clauses not divulged or a secret treaty even more detrimental to the island's status as an independent nation. Events were to prove that these fears and suspicions were without foundation in fact, and certainly that no secret undertakings had been given by Sri Lanka in 1947-8, but until 1956-7 suspicion persisted and could be used by critics of the UNP and the constitution.

Thus the real worth of D. S. Senanayake's achievement came to be denied because the means adopted for the attainment of independence under his leadership were not as robust and as dramatic as they might have been. By laying so much stress on the decorous and peaceful processes of constitutional agitation the Board of Ministers had deprived themselves, perhaps consciously, of the opportunities of exploring the numerous chances they had of making a more emotional and vigorous commitment to nationalism. Left-wing critics of the government were able to argue that the independence achieved in 1947-8 was 'spurious'. The gibe of 'fake' independence which they kept hurling at the government evoked a positive response from a wider circle of the political nation than merely the left wing alone, largely because the Indian experience seemed to provide a more emotionally satisfying example than the process by which power had been transferred in Sri Lanka—independence granted from above (as Sri Lanka) was regarded as being much less satisfying to the spirit of nationalism than if it has been won after prolonged strife and untiring sacrifice.

As regards the economy, much more so than with the political structure, the mood of the day was singularly sober and realistic though not unduly pessimistic. There were, on the contrary, high hopes for economic achievement. For the country's assets were not unimpressive: though the population was increasing rapidly, it was compared with that in other countries in South Asia, well fed and literate; the government of Sri Lanka was the largest landholder in the country, controlling no less than 3.25 million acres of land (the bulk of this land was waste forest and required the provision of roads and electricity to be rendered productive); the administration was competent, and the island was well equipped with social and economic overheads; above all, there were the large sterling balances accumulated during the war.

Nevertheless the economic legacy left behind by the British was just as ambiguous, and perhaps even more so, than the political. The crux of the problem was that foreign income which "directly or indirectly constituted the bulk of the national income began to fall rapidly" while there was a rise in the cost of imports. This was

reflected in the country's balance of payment which fell consistantly from "a handsome surplus in 1945 to a heavy deficit in 1947". For a country which practically lives by foreign trade, an authoritative contemporary economic survey pointed out, "no economic indices could be more significant. It represented a fall in national income and a march towards greater poverty and insecurity".[3]

D. S. Senanayake's government inherited an undiversified export economy dependent principally on three crops, tea (which in terms of export earnings was the most important) rubber and coconut. The weakness of the economy lay in the fact that the revenue from these exports was subject to wide fluctuations, a reflex of world economic conditions. This was quite apart from the fact that foreign commercial firms—largely British—had a dominant controlling position in the plantations, especially tea and rubber, and in the export of plantation products.

One of the most striking features of this economic structure was the absence of an industrial sector independent of the processing of tea, rubber and coconut for export, and the engineering and mechanical requirements of these processes. Nevertheless there had been since 1931, and more particularly since the outbreak of the Second World War, some state sponsored industrial ventures. None of these proved to be of more than marginal significance, and on the whole little progress had been made. Private enterprise was reluctant to embark on industrial ventures in the absence of firm support from the government. Though the new government declared that the country cannot "depend on agriculture alone to provide the minimum standard we are aiming at for our rapidly increasing people" this was merely lip-service to the almost religious faith among the intelligentsia in industrialisation as the panacea for Sri Lanka's economic problems.

Traditional agriculture—subsistence farming—lagged far behind the efficient plantation sector in productivity due to the long-term impact of a multiplicity of factors. Sri Lanka could not produce rice needed to feed a growing population: the bulk of the country's requirements in rice and subsidiary foodstuffs was imported and accounted for more than half the imports.

Looking ahead in the years after independence the Senanayake regime placed its hopes on the achievement of self-sufficiency in rice and subsidiary food-stuffs; "...increased production particularly in the matter of homegrown food", it declared, "will be given a place of supreme importance in the policy of the Government..."[4] The principal means of achieving this objective was the rapid development of the dry zone, the heartland of the ancient irrigation civilization of Sri Lanka. Thus in this enterprise one discerned too the search for inspiration from the past and the traditional sources of legitimacy of Sri Lanka's rulers.

All in all, there was no great emphasis on far-reaching changes in the economic structure inherited from the British. This latter had taken firm root in the period of British rule, and the process of introducing changes in it was more difficult

3. B. B. Das Gupta, *A Short Economic Survey of Ceylon* (Colombo, 1949).
4. Quoted in H. M. Oliver, *Economic Opinion and Policy in Ceylon* (Duke University Press, Durham N. C., 1957), p. 50.

than it seemed, while any hope of dismantling it was beyond the realms of practical politics. For "the export of estate products enabled the people of [Sri Lanka], or a large part of them, to be fed and clothed.....". Besides the system itself was still viable and its potential for expansion was, if not undiminished, at least reasonably good. And it was also true that the political leadership of the day was reluctant to make changes in an economic system with which their own interests were identified. The result was that in the economic structure, as in the political, there was an emphasis on the maintenance of the *status quo*.

There were other problems as well, and of these much the most important was the rapidity with which population was expanding. A knowledgeable commentator on the country's affairs warned the country in 1949 of the economic implications of the fact that the island's rate of natural increase of population had reached "the astonishing rate of about 3.3. per cent per annum". "There can be no doubt" he added "that this is the fundamental problem of the economy of [Sri Lanka]...."[6]

In the general elections of 1947 left-wing parties made substantial if not spectacular gains, and held between themselves and their fellow-travellers about a fourth of the elected seats. Earlier they had organised a series of major strikes culminating in the general strike of 1947. These strikes had been the most noteworthy demonstrations of solidarity of the working class and white collar workers up to that time. The strikes were as much political demonstrations as they were trades disputes—one of the main demands was the rejection of the Soulbury Constitution. The strife generated by these strikes served the purpose of underlining the difference in approach between two concepts of nationalism. The "moderates" had come into their inheritance, and the "radicals"—in the sense of the left-wing—had demonstrated their determination to deprive them of it. They had taken a stand against the Soulbury Constitution, and they dismissed the grant of independence in February 1948 as a cynical deal between the Imperial power and their pliant agents in Sri Lanka to preserve the old order in the guise of independence.

Though the Board of Ministers had been constrained to treat the strikes of 1945-47, and in particular, the general strike of 1947 as a serious bid for political power by Marxists, they soon realized that the challenge from the left wing had been needlessly exaggerated, and that they were by no means a threat to the country's political stability. While the social order was under increasing pressure from a politicized urban working class and white collar workers, the peasantry was a stable element and D. S. Senanayake sought to meet the left wing challenge by the operation of a socio-economic policy which assumed if not an identity of interests between the governing *elite* and the peasantry, at least a potentially harmonious working relationship between two conservative social groups. In the early years of independence this policy was proving to be increasingly successful. Secondly, the social welfare schemes of the Donoughmore era were continued beyond 1947 as a means of blunting the challenge of the Marxist left. Sri Lanka, poor though she was, enjoyed a much

5. W. I. Jennings, *The Economy of Ceylon* (O.U.P., 2nd ed., 1951) p. 40.
6. *ibid.*, p. 4.

higher standard of living than India, Pakistan and Burma and the national finances seemed adequate to maintain the welfare measures to which the country had grown accustomed in the last years of British rule. In 1947 the total expenditure on welfare absorbed 56.1% of the government's resources; the corresponding figure for the late nineteen twenties has been a mere 16.4%. It was not yet evident that the burgeoning costs of these welfare measures were an unsupportable burden for a developing country and one which "added a dimension of weakness to an economy whose principal feature was its dependence on the vagaries of a world market."[7]

Ironically, however, neither of the protagonists—the government led by D. S. Senanayake, nor its left-wing critics—showed much understanding of the sense of outrage and indignation of the Buddhists at what they regarded as the historic injustices suffered by their religion under western rule. The affront was to culture no less than to religion, and the resentment was felt even more strongly by the *ayurvedic* physician, the Sinhala school master and the notary than by the *bhikkhus*. And as regards religion it was the withdrawal of the traditional patronage and consequent procedence and prestige that was resented. Beneath the surface these religious, cultural and linguistic issues were gathering momentum and developing into a force too powerful for the existing social and political set-up to accommodate or absorb. They were to tear the country apart within a decade of 1948 and accomplish the discomfiture of both the U.N.P. and its left-wing critics.

7. L. A. Wickremeratne, 'The Emergence of a Welfare Policy, 1931-1948, in K. M. de Silva (ed) The University of Ceylon. *History of Ceylon* (Colombo, 1973).

II

THE TRANSFER OF POWER IN SRI LANKA—A REVIEW OF BRITISH PERSPECTIVES

K. M. DE SILVA

The adoption of the main recommendations of the Donoughmore Commission on Sri Lanka's constitutional evolution by the Colonial Office amounted to a crossing of the great constitutional barrier towards self-government in much the same way as the Durham Report had accelerated this process as regards the White Dominions. In both cases while the change was seen to be decisive a considerable period of transition was envisaged in reaching the accepted goal, and self-government was defined in terms of internal affairs and a considerable sphere of imperial interests was assumed. Agitation for the reform of the Donoughmore Constitution emerged virtually from the very inception of the new constitutional structure in 1931. The experience of the years 1931-37 would seem to indicate that while the Ministerial group in Sri Lanka, especially the representatives of the Sinhalese, believed in the inevitablility of progress from semi-responsible status to self-government on the model of the White Dominions, the permanent officials at Whitehall could point to the examples of Jamaica, British Guiana and most recently and prominently Malta, where semi-responsible government had led not to responsible government but to political crisis, constitutional breakdown and a reversion, if only temporarily, to colonial status.[1]

A review of the agitation in the 1930's for constitutional reform in Sri Lanka would indicate that there were three main demands: of these the most important was the pressure for the establishment of a Cabinet form of government on the Westminster model in place of the central feature of the Donoughmore system, the novel experiment of Executive Committees. The others were: a demand for the abolition of the dyarchical aspect of the Donoughmore scheme by the elimination of the Officers of State and the transfer of their powers to elected Ministers; and a substantial reduction of the Governor's powers.

When these claims first emerged the Colonial Office took up the position that it was too early to consider changes of so far-reaching a character. When the pressure for reform continued nevertheless they made no serious effort to accommodate

1. For a discussion of these problems see the author's chapter. "The History and Politics of the Transfer of Power" in ed. K. M. de Silva, The University of Ceylon, *History of Ceylon*, Vol. III (Colombo, 1973) pp. 489-533. This chapter will be cited hereafter as K. M. de Silva, "The History and Politics of the Transfer of Power".

these demands. Far from countenancing a reduction for the Governor's reserve powers, Whitehall endeavoured to strengthen them. They were equally intransigent on the maintenance of a European element in the higher bureaucracy as an essential prop to the Governor's powers. There was also a very perceptible sensitivity to the anxieties of the minorities and much was made of the fact that the demands of the State Council had not received the endorsement of minority leaders and spokesmen.[2]

* * *

This present essay seeks to review the British perspectives and attitudes—those of Whitehall on the one hand and the governor and his (largely British) advisers in Colombo on the other—on the complex issues of the transfer of power in Sri Lanka. In any analysis of the political processes involved in the transfer of power chronology is of crucial importance. The starting point of a clear understanding of events in the transfer of power in Sri Lanka is a realization of the break-through that came in 1937-9 with Sir Andrew Caldecott as Governor of Ceylon and Malcolm MacDonald as Secretary of State. These two men of liberal instincts brought fresh and unorthodox minds to bear on the problems of constitutional reform in the island. The initiative in these was taken by Caldecott whose sustained efforts in the face of many reverses and discouragements enabled a consolidation of this breakthrough in 1942-3.

Within a few months of his arrival in Ceylon as Governor in late 1936, Caldecott after a careful review of the political situation came out in favour of the abolition of the Executive Committee system and its replacement by the orthodox form of Cabinet government. Inherent in this was an acceptance of the need to allocate the administrative duties performed by Officers of State to elected Ministers except in regard to certain special subjects over which the Governor would retain personal control. On all these the Governor's views were in conformity to those of the Ministerial group. On one significant point his considered views were in opposition to theirs: he believed that the advance towards a further stage in semi-responsible government would need to be accompanied, as a temporary measure, by an increase instead of a substantial reduction of the Governor's reserve powers.

On the crucial issue of minority rights he took up the position that "all our political fissures radiate from the vexed question of minority representation", but he firmly rejected communal representation on a mathematical formula of any mind, a line of argument the cogency of which both the Ministerial group and their minority critics could appreciate even if neither group were completely satisfied with it. He advised that a new Committee should be set up in order to create additional seats in the State Council and to ensure the return of more members belonging to the minorities. On this Re-delimination Committee, as he called it, he placed most of his

2. *ibid.*

3. This extract is from Caldecott's confidential despatch of 28 October 1939 to Malcolm MacDonald, 28 October 1939. It is cited by him in his "personal and most secret" letter of 23 December 1941 to Gent (a senior Colonial Office civil servant) in C.O 54/980. File 55541/Part I.

hopes for a settlement of the question of minority rights, and he persisted in advocating it for over four years. Curiously, he did not believe that any purpose would be served by the appointment from Whitehall of a Constitutional Commission on the lines of the Donoughmore Commission, to review the political and constitutional problems of the island and to recommend reforms.[4]

Caldecott's views of constitutional reform received Malcolm MacDonald's endorsement in 1938-9; more importantly a series of resolutions embodying Caldecott's proposals were introduced in the State Council in 1939 and were adopted without modification after long discussion. Thus a consensus on constitutional reform had been successfully negotiated by Caldecott in 1939.

The formulation of a constitution on the basis of this consensus was bound to be a time-consuming matter, for the Colonial Office of the 1930's was deliberate and cautious in these matters. Very soon the outbreak of war in Europe began to absorb British energies to the exclusion of questions such as constitutional reform in the colonies. At first however it did not seem as though the war would lead to a postponement of reforms in Sri Lanka since there was considerable agreement, between all parties concerned, on the nature of the reforms to be initiated. When the general elections scheduled for 1940 were put off for two years the reason given officially by Lord Lloyd, the new Secretary of State for the Colonies, in a despatch dated 12 June 1940, was the need for time in which to take careful decisions on problems of constitutional reform, the franchise and delimitation of constituencies. This decision was interpreted in Sri Lanka to mean that Whitehall would have these matters under active consideration on data already before it. Even at the end of 1940 the Ministers still believed that reforms would be introduced shortly.

But British policy had begun to change by the beginning of 1940. Caldecott sensed this, though the Ministers were unaware of any change. The first indication that a change of policy was in the offing had come as early as 26 January 1940 when MacDonald, much to Caldecott's surprise, rejected the idea of a Committee of Redelimination which Caldecott had always treated as crucially important to his reforms proposals. Instead MacDonald suggested that a Governor's Conference of the Board of Ministers and other leaders—presumably minority leaders—be convened to negotiate a settlement of existing differences between the Sinhalese and the minorities. At this stage Caldecott was under increasing pressure from another source—the European community in Sri Lanka, and more especially the planters—to take firm action against trade unionists in the plantation areas. There was a spate of strikes on the plantations, and the planting community, rattled and frightened, were increasingly hostile to all political activity in the island; and with the active support of the European-owned *Times of Ceylon* they sought to exploit the extraordinary situation caused

4. Caldecott to Gent, 23 December 1941, *op. cit.*

5. See, C.O. 54/975 File 55569/6: The Four Point Memorandum of the Ceylon Loyalists, n.d. (but probably early June 1940) sponsored by "J.B.K." and *The Times of Ceylon*; G. P. Bolster, (a British planter in Sri Lanka) to A. T. Lennox-Boyd M.P. 4 June 1940; J. D. Aitken, to Lord Lloyd, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 8 June 1940 (on behalf of a committee appointed by the "Comrades of the Great War" on 4 June 1940.) See also, Colonel T. Y. Wright, *Ceylon in My Time*, 1889-1949 (Colombo, 1951) pp. 160-169.

by the outbreak of war to embarrass Caldecott by making out to Whitehall that he was not as vigilant as he ought to be to be about potential threats to civil order.[5] Whitehall fortunately could distinguish between reasonable criticism and these hysterical outbursts. But the point is that the European community was not without influence within the island itself. And very soon a political campaign began designed to exploit minority grievances and fears and to thwart the reformers among whom was placed Caldecott himself. On 16 March 1940 the *Times of Ceylon* in a leading article set out the case for a Royal Commission on constitutional reform and this was immediately taken up by the minorities. The Ministers were wary of any such Commission and much more favourable to Caldecott's proposal for a Re-delimination Committee. But the fact remained that yet another point of divergence between them and the minorities had emerged and one which was to cloud the whole issue of constitutional progress in Sri Lanka. It afforded a measure of support to those in Whitehall who argued that constitutional reform in Sri Lanka would inevitably exacerbate communal rivalries to the great detriment of the island's war effort.

Britain's energies were now concentrated on the war in Europe and the constitutional problems of a small Asian colony took very low priority in this. The Colonial Office was not represented in Churchill's War Cabinet. And to make matters worse, with Malcolm MacDonald's departure from the Colonial Office on 13 May 1940, there were three short tenures of the Secretaryship of State for the Colonies between that date and 24 November 1942 when Oliver Stanley took over and remained in office till August 1945. All the Secretaries of State during this period were coalition Conservatives (as was Stanley himself): Lord Lloyd, 13 May 1940 to 1 February 1942; Lord Moyne till 23 February 1942, and Viscount Cranborne (the Marquess of Salisbury) till 24 November 1942.

For Caldecott it was no matter for surprise, when on 18 December 1940, Lord Lloyd sent him a confidential despatch stating the impracticability of further examining the constitutional problems of the island till after the war. This was not immediately divulged to the Ministers, much less published. Instead Caldecott played for time in the hope that Whitehall could be persuaded to make a more generous response. Even at this stage the Ministers and other Sinhalese spokesmen felt that the Colonial Office was unnecessarily delaying a decision on a matter on which it possessed all the data. The Governor realised that there was no support for a Constitutional Conference or a Commission from these sources in the colony. What he attempted to do was to get Whitehall to implement the proposals decided upon in 1938-9, and to re-open consideration of his proposal of a Committee of Re-delimitation. (Though MacDonald's rejection of this—something which he had earlier accepted—in January 1940 was a disappointing reverse for Caldecott, he persisted in his advocacy of it) As late as 28 June 1941 he suggested the drafting of an Order-in-Council along the lines set out in his despatches for detailed consideration by the Cabinet. But these arguments and pleas made little impression on Whitehall. Eventually Caldecott made an official announcement—in December 1941—to the State Council that constitutional reform was postponed till after the war, and that the position would be further examined and made the subject of further consultation by means of a Committee or Conference.

This declaration was tantamount to an indefinite postponement of constitutional reform. It was clearly a disappointment for the Board of Ministers but they reacted as was customary with them with a polite note of disagreement and continued to press for a more generous gesture from Britain.

Caldecott now watched the consensus on constitutional reform which he had patiently put together in 1938-9 dissolve in the face of world events and their impact on local politics. At the beginning of 1942 the moderate wing—by far the most influential—of the nationalist movement were no longer bound by the compromise of 1938-9, and had set out Dominion Status as their objective. Within a year the Young Turks who were increasingly influential within the Ceylon National Congress spurned Dominion Status for the more emotionally satisfying concept of independence. It needed all D. S. Senanayake's personal prestige and tenacity of purpose to stand up against this current of opinion, and to insist that the goal of Sri Lanka's constitutional evolution should be Dominion Status, to be attained in association with rather than in opposition to British. Caldecott was not enthusiastic at all about Dominion Status for Ceylon, arguing that "... it is obvious that the implications and obligations of Dominion Status are either not understood or are being deliberately ignored by people who should know better...."[6]

Soon Japan's entry into the war and the string of spectacular successes she achieved initially, began to have their impact on the thinking of both Whitehall and the Board of Ministers. The Governor reported that in the island these developments "thrust every other consideration out of mind, and everybody [had] plenty to do in organizing emergency services and preventing panic..."[7] When in 1942 the headquarters of Mountbatten's South East Asian Command was established at Peradeniya, the island was once again of vital strategic importance, for the destruction of Japanese power, and to a lesser extent she was a vital element in the supply line to the U.S.S.R. *via* the Persian Gulf. Caldecott drove home the point in his despatches to Whitehall that in this situation a more convincing and forthright statement on constitutional reform than that issued in December 1941 was called for to retain the goodwill and co-operation of the Board of Ministers and to secure the wholehearted participation of Sri Lanka in the war effort. The pressure from Caldecott and the cogency of his arguments had their effect and the War Cabinet considered it politic to issue a fresh declaration on constitutional reform in the island.

The main point in this new pronouncement made in December 1942 was the declaration that the objectives of constitutional evolution would be the "... fullest possible development of self-governing institutions in Ceylon within the Commonwealth partnership having regard both to the single interest of the island and the larger interests of the Commonwealth on which the island's security and prosperity ultimately depend".[8] This statement was couched in "... far too indefinite and conditional terms..." to have the desired effect. Indeed the Ministers urged that it should not be published in the form in which it was sent to them. They were supported in this

6. Caldecott to Gent, 23 December 1941, *op. cit.*
7. *ibid.*
8. C.O. 54/980. File 55541/5. Secret Cabinet Paper W.P. (43) 129 of 27 March 1943, entitled *The Ceylon Constitution* and presented to the War Cabinet by Oliver Stanley, Secretary of State for the Colonies, para 4. (Hereafter, Stanley, Secret Cabinet paper on *The Ceylon Constitution*, 27 March 1943).

by Caldecott, and the Commander-in-Chief Sir Geoffrey Layton who took "...a very serious view of what may happen if it is not possible, by some new declaration to meet the desires and aspirations of the more moderate elements in Ceylon. They expect[ed] immediate and progressive loss of co-operation and decrease of war-effort, coupled with the deflection of now moderate opinion towards intransigent nationalism and the demand for the right of secession".[9]

At the same time, Caldecott and Layton sent home a very carefully drafted document, setting out a declaration of policy on constitutional reform in Ceylon for Whitehall approval as a substitute for that sent in December 1941. The principles enunciated in this statement were eventually endorsed by Whitehall and published in the island on 26 May 1943, using much the same phraseology contained in the document sent home by Caldecott and Layton.

A comparison of the two declarations, that of December 1942, and that of 26 May 1943 is very revealing. In both no hope is held out of any changes during the war. But the second definitely committed Great Britain to a far-reaching reform after the war. Where the first declaration held out the promise of "the fullest possible development of self-governing institutions within the Commonwealth", the second offered "full responsibility for government under the Crown in all matters of civil administration". The only matters to be reserved would be external relations and defence "while of course, the proposals do not include the right of secession. Thus constitutionally, Ceylon while not attaining full Dominion Status, would be very much in the position now [1943] occupied by Southern Rhodesia".[10]

One of the reasons that impelled Whitehall to resist any precise definition of the goals of constitutional reform along the lines suggested by Caldecott and Layton was the fear of losing minority co-operation in the war effort. To this Caldecott had an effective reply: "It must be realised", he declared "that the minority communities are just as keen to be released from Whitehall apron strings as the majority, and that their disagreement with the latter is solely in regard to the allocation of Council seats and share of Government appointments, &c. i.e. in regard to machinery and not the essential characteristics of the administration which all agree to keep national".[11]

In urging the War Cabinet to give its support to the proposals set out by Caldecott and Layton, Oliver Stanley gave four reasons. [12] Firstly, that it would be difficult to prevent a very serious deterioration in Ceylon's war effort "unless we go as far as this", especially because of "the vital importance of Ceylon, both as a strategical base and as the source of essential war materials, rubber in particular". Secondly, the Ministers had worked an admittedly difficult constitution "with great goodwill and perhaps, an unexpected degree of success. It would be a natural thing for them to compare the definite promises made to India, where, with

9. *ibid.*, see also Caldecott "personal and secret" despatches to Stanley, 27 January 1943 and 17 February 1943.
10. Stanley, Secret Cabinet paper on *The Ceylon Constitution*, 27 March 1943, *op. cit.*
11. Caldecott's "personal and secret" despatch to Stanley, 17 February 1943.
12. Stanley, Secret Cabinet paper on *The Ceylon Constitution*, 27 March 1943. *op. cit.*

all respect to India's war effort, the political element at least has been largely non-co-operative, with the indefinite hopes held out to Ceylon, where the elected members have thrown themselves heart and soul into war production. This comparison may lead to the argument that more can be obtained from His Majesty's Government by making trouble than by methods of co-operation". Thirdly there was the hope that the declaration would encourage Sinhalese politicians to turn their minds to a settlement with the minorities and "to a realistic appreciation of their future relations with India". And finally he pointed out that even under the declaration of December 1942, "when we come after the war to a discussion of this question, we shall have to offer a great deal, if not all, of what is now contained in the Governor's proposed declaration. We shall, however, have lost the goodwill which we should gain by making the declaration now, and proposals which today, it is believed, will stabilise the situation, may by that time fall far short of the majority view".

He set out, as against these, "the very real difficulties which will arise if [these] proposals are accepted". There was, first of all, the crucial issue of minority rights. "The only definite safeguard, for the various minorities lies in the requirement of approval by three-fourths of the State Council. [Stanley] had feared that the discussion of constitutional reform would exacerbate the communal position and that we might risk losing the co-operation of the minorities in the war effort, but [he had] received the expressed assurance of the Commander-in-Chief and the Governor that they do not share this fear....". Secondly, a popular government "will assume for the first time complete financial responsibility just at a time when the post-war financial and economic problems of Ceylon may be most acute". There were, finally, the questions relating to British commercial interests in the island. With regard to this the declaration made "no specific safeguard for British commercial interests in Ceylon. It is difficult to insert this in view of the fact that the promises made to India contain no such provision. Nor is there any definite safeguard for Indian commercial interests; but India would not be without bargaining power for this purpose".

"Although in our judgement all moderate political opinion would in actuality, be satisfied with assurances on the lines which we propose, this does not, of course mean that there will not be such measure of expressed disappointment as is inseparable from any concessions less than what is asked for". So Caldecott on 17 February 1943 in a confidential telegram to Stanley. This assessment of the situation in the island was as sensible as it was accurate. Though the proposals outlined on 26 May 1943 fell short of Dominion Status (which D. S. Senanayake had set forth as the objective he aimed at), and far short of the goal of independence (which the Ceylon National Congress advocated) the Board of Ministers under D. S. Senanayake's leadership preferred to accept this offer as one further stage in the constitutional advancement of the country and as the basis of further negotiations.

The first task that confronted D. S. Senanayake was to formulate a draft constitution on the basis of the conditions laid down in the declaration of 26 May 1943 and the clarification of this given on 11 July 1943.[13] The requirement that such a

13. For this declaration and clarification see, *Sessional Paper XVII of* 1943.

draft constitution needed to win the approval of three-quarters of all the members of the State Council[14] practically ensured that it would have to be nothing less than a national consensus on constitutional reform. One of the undertakings given by Whitehall in 1943 was that a constitution formulated in accordance with the terms of the declaration of 26 May 1943 would be examined by "a suitable commission or conference" once victory over the Axis powers had been achieved.

A final draft of the Minister's constitution was ready by February 1944 and copies were forwarded to Whitehall. The Board of Ministers began to press for an immediate consideration of their scheme on the grounds that urgent local considerations made an early decision a vital necessity.

* * *

Whitehall's response to these pressures led to considerable misunderstanding. Oliver Stanley announced in the House of Commons on 9 July 1944 that a Commission would be appointed to visit Ceylon, to examine not only the draft constitution prepared by the Board of Ministers, but also to afford minority groups the opportunity of expressing their views. The Ministers took objection to the extension of the terms of reference of the proposed Commission to cover consultations with "various interests, including the minority communities, concerned with the subject of constitutional reform in Ceylon". They argued that this amounted to a fundamental departure from the terms of the Declaration of 26 May 1943; and it was urged that the minorities would be sufficiently protected by the stipulation of a three-fourths majority of all the members of the State Council for the adoption of the draft constitution.[15]

The Ministers' protests were of no avail, and the terms of reference of the Commission were not changed when the appointment of the Soulbury Commission was announced on 20 September 1944.

The Ministers resolved upon an official boycott of the Commission. They did not collaborate with the Commission but "left the various groups to give evidence and allowed their own scheme to speak for itself" even though they had ostentatiously "withdrawn" their scheme.[16]

In the meantime, D. S. Senanayake had decided on his own course of action. First, an official boycott of the Commission. Once the Commission left Ceylon he was anxious to be in London in time for the publication of their report. If the report was favourable he would ask for more, for Dominion Status, in fact, but if it was unsatisfactory he would repudiate it, and refuse to be any longer bound by the Declaration of 1943 which the British Government itself had discarded. In a conciliatory gesture Whitehall readily consented to extend an invitation to D. S. Senanayake to visit London. The latter left for London in early July 1945, but arrived in time to see the shattering electoral defect of the Conservatives.[17]

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14. Excluding the Speaker (or any other presiding officer) and the three Officers of State.
15. For further discussion of these issues see, K. M. de Silva, "The History and Politics of the Transfer of Power".
16. *ibid.*
17. On D. S. Senanayake's role in these negotiations, see K. M. de Silva, "The History and Politics of the Transfer of Power".

The defeat of the Conservatives postponed rather than hastened the grant of Dominion Status to Sri Lanka. With the publication of the Soulbury Report (D. S. Senanayake had been given a proof copy if it shortly after his arrival in London) it was clear that the Commission had in fact endorsed the main principles of the Ministers' Draft Constitution. There were adjustments and modifications no doubt but none of any real substance. More importantly the minorities' political campaign during the period of the Soulbury Commission's visit to the island had had little impact on the Commission's thinking.

In the Soulbury Report the limits on Ceylon's external sovereignity laid down in the Minister's draft were elaborated upon in a manner which made them unworkable in practice. D. S. Senanayake seized on this and made it one of the main themes in his case for the immediate grant of Dominion Status without the intermediate stage envisaged in the Soulbury Report. The case he made seemed convincing enough for he converted G. Hall, the new Secretary of State for the Colonies, to his point of view and he succeeded in extracting from the latter an oral promise of the immediate grant of Dominion Status. But Hall was not persuasive enough, and the Cabinet would not agree to this. For the Labour Government the priorities in the dissolution of the empire were India (including Burma) and Palestine, and they would not be diverted from these to the solution of less important problems.

Though D. S. Senanayake returned disappointed that his demand for the immediate grant of Dominion Status had not been conceded, yet the fact that the obstacle at this stage was not the minority problems in Ceylon but the complex issues involved in the transfer of power in the Indian empire gave an entirely new and much more satisfactory perspective to the problems that confronted him. Dominion Status was now in the offing. Moreover, before his return home he had obtained one vital concession—problems relating to citizenship, the Colonial Office agreed, were to be treated as falling within the ambit of the Ceylon government's powers under the new Constitution.

The publication of the Soulbury Report was followed by a White Paper embodying the decisions of the British government on the new constitution for Ceylon, and clarifying the point that though there was to be no immediate grant of Dominion Status, it was merely postponed pending the successful working of the new constitution. All this undoubtedly served to strengthen D. S. Senanayake's position in Sri Lanka. The State Council on 8-9 November 1945 endorsed his motion for the acceptance of the White Paper on Constitutional Reform by 51 votes to 3.

Caldecott had left the island when the final phase in the transfer of power began. His last few months in office had been especially unhappy. D. S. Senanayake believed that Caldecott and his Chief Secretary, Sir Robert Drayton had been responsible for the unilateral extension of the terms of the Commission sent to review the island's constitutional problems in 1944. Drayton scarcely concealed his dismay at what he viewed as the too rapid transition to responsible government. Caldecott himself had his reservations about Dominion Status for Ceylon, but it is doubtful whether he would have actively opposed it.

The new Governor, Sir Henry Monck Mason Moore came to the island from the Colonial Office, with first hand experience of its thinking on the problems of constitutional reform in Ceylon. At any rate his position as Governor was significantly different under the new constitution from Caldecott's under the Donoughmore scheme; his powers were more akin to those of a Governor-General in a self-governing dominion. His primary function was to preside over an awkward period of transition in the island, and at a time when Britain was seeking to accommodate itself to a drastically altered world situation.

* * *

With a Labour government in power Britain had begun the process of post-war surrender of empire. In retrospect it would seem that this was a consequence of weariness and weakness. The Second World War had stimulated an explosive awakening of nationalism in the Asian colonies, in some respects reminiscent of the French Revolution. No quality of statecraft could have stemmed these forces. Nor would British public opinion have tolerated a resort to force to prolong her control over these colonies.[18]

At the same time the surrender of empire in South Asia could be viewed as "appropriate fulfilment", "a meritorious enlargement of the Commonwealth", and not a humiliating defeat comparable with the loss of the thirteen colonies in 1783. The evolution of the old British empire towards autonomy and equality could well be regarded as a process leading inevitably to a Commonwealth reconstructed and modernised but without loss of structural identity.[19] A generation later this would seem to be a disingenuous interpretation of historical necessity. But it was not so in 1947-8.

At that time despite the transfer of power in India British publicists argued that Great Britain would not necessarily quit Asia, that she still had a vital role to play as an imperial power. Once again a world war had been won, and for a brief period the situation seemed superficially to be not very different from what it had been in 1919.

It could be seriously urged in 1947 that: "A new defence arrangement for South Asia will be needed to replace the dying Empire, and to shelter the countries of the region during the experiments on which they are beginning. However anxious they may be to break with their past, one thing in their past they cannot afford to renounce and that is peace; to reform themselves radically and by their own volition, they need to be undisturbed in their own house...."[20]

This passage redolent with trusteeship (at best) and patronage would have struck a responsive chord at the Colonial Office. Nor was this attitude confined to Whitehall. Men like D. S. Senanayake in Ceylon gave public expression to much the same views both before and after the final transfer of power had been effected.

18. G. S. Graham. *Tides of Empire* (Montreal and London, 1972)
19. *Ibid*
20. G. Wint, *The British in Asia* (London, 1947) pp. 162-3. For a variation on this theme see the unsigned article on 'The Dominion of Ceylon' by a correspondent in Colombo in the December 1947 issue (No. 149) of *The Round Table* pp. 455-59.

Indeed questions relating to defence and external affairs were crucial to the completion of the process of transfering power in Ceylon in the years 1946-8.[21] What D. S. Senanayake wanted was Dominion Status earlier than had been implied by the cautious phrases of the British government's statements of policy in 1945-6, in other words, to reach this goal without experience of working the new constitution and without the intervening period envisaged by the Colonial Office in 1945-6. It was in February 1947 that he sent a personal letter to the new Secretary of State Arthur Creech Jones through the island's governor, urging that the matter should be reconsidered. He followed this up by sending Sir Oliver Goonetileke as his representative to negotiate with the Colonial Office on these questions. When Goonetileke reached London independence for India had already been resolved by the British Cabinet on 20 February 1947. With the decision on the partition of India, and the grant of independence to Burma the way seemed clear for independence for Ceylon.

During the negotiations the Colonial Office raised three questions: the minority problem; the higher bureaucracy, the Ceylon Civil Service, and the implied guarantee that the Secretary of State would look after their interests and see that they were fairly treated; and finally, questions of defence and external affairs. The first two were easily settled. Indeed the minority question had been settled on the basis of the safeguards incorporated first in the Ministers' draft constitution of 1944 and then embodied with extensions in the new constitution drafted for Ceylon in 1946-7; the second problem did not pose any serious difficulties. Essentially the problem of completing the transfer of power in Ceylon was viewed as a problem of defence and external affairs and on these there was very little difference of opinion between government and opposition in Britain.

O. E. Goonetileke who handled the negotiations on behalf of Ceylon urged that it was ungracious and unfair to delay the grant of full independence to Ceylon which had played a full part in the war effort through the decision of her political leaders when independence had been granted to India whose leaders had been neutral, and to Burma whose leaders had collaborated with the Japanese.[22] This point was conceded by Creech Jones.

There was also a realisation that an announcement of the immediate grant of Dominion Status was a matter of political survival for D. S. Senanayake and his associates who were soon to face a general election in the island in which a strong challenge from Marxist groups was anticipated. The evidence for this latter consideration was provided by prolonged labour unrest which culminated in a general strike in

21. See, K. M. de Silva, "The History and Politics of the Transfer of Power". See also the three books by Sir Charles Jeffries: *The Transfer of Power* (London, 1960), especially Chap. 8. "Ceylon Crosses the Line", pp. 57-69; *Ceylon: The Path to Independence* (London, 1963); and '*O.E.G.*' *A Biography of Sir Oliver Ernest Goonetileke*, (London, 1969).

22. For these negotiations and Goonetileke's contribution see, Jeffries, *O.E.G.* Chap. 6, pp. 81-97.

the years 1946-7. These strikes were not without political motivation and one of the demands advanced was a rejection of the Soulbury Constitution to be introduced in 1947.

The transfer of power would be completed with the signing of three agreements on defence, external affairs and the public service, between the two Governments. The first two were immeasurably more important than the third. Ceylonese leaders were conscious of the island's strategic position in the Indian Ocean and her inability to defend herself; and they realised that this strategic weakness was the crucial stumbling block in the final transfer of power. D. S. Senanayake, to make it easier for the British government to contemplate the immediate grant of Dominion Status, was willing to "sign agreements on defence and external affairs". Creech Jones stated in the House of Commons on 18 July 1947 that these agreements between Britain and the Ceylon government which would assume office under the new constitution were a "condition precedent to the grant of fully responsible status within the British Commonwealth". D. S. Senanayake was to point out that there was nothing irrevocable or coercive about these agreements, and that they were based on the mutual interest of the two parties. On these matters of defence and external affairs, there was substantial identity of views between D. S. Senanayake and Whitehall. But these agreements were subjected to severe criticism both within and outside Parliament in Ceylon, especially but not exclusively from Marxist groups.

It would appear that in the final phase of the negotiations Whitehall officials associated in the talks had attempted to raise two other controversial issues. First, a representative of the Board of Trade suggested the inclusion of special provisions dealing with British trade and investments in Ceylon. Secondly, the India Office quite unexpectedly raised the question of safeguards for Indian nationals living in the island when it became a Dominion. Both proposals were firmly rejected by Goonetilleke, and it is evident that there was no support from the Colonial Office for them. Oliver Stanley had outlined the case against the first in 1943,[23] and as for the second, the Colonial Office did not need to be reminded that it was a matter on which Ceylonese politicians were exceptionally sensitive, and none more so than D. S. Senanayake himself.

One last point. Sri Lanka's attainment of independence in 1948 was regarded by the Colonial Office as a "a special case", and its claim to self-government was justified by its "size, its economic strength, its advanced state of social organization. Since 1931 it had in fact had a form of political constitution which placed the main responsibility for the conduct of its affairs on an elected Parliament (sic) and on Ministers answerable to that Parliament. No other colony seemed to be in sight of fulfilling these conditions. If Ceylon was the forerunner, it had a long start".[24] These were the views of Sir Charles Jeffries, Deputy Under-Secretary of State at the Colonial Office, one of the senior officials deeply involved in the negotiations over Sri Lanka's independence. These were men who, in 1948, believed that despite the transfer of power in South Asia British activity there would not be "a mere afterglow following sunset, ending in night".

23. See, Stanley, Secret Cabinet paper on *The Ceylon Constitution*, 27 March 1943, *op. cit.*
24. Jeffries, *The Transfer of Power*, p. 12.

III

LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVES 1948-1975: AN INTERPRETIVE ESSAY

C. R. DE SILVA and VIJAYA SAMARAWEERA

The study is intended to evaluate the extent to which the hopes, beliefs and plans of the political, administrative and professional *elites* of Sri Lanka changed in the twenty five years that followed the attainment of political independence in 1948. Much of the raw material for this essay was obtained in personal interviews conducted by the authors with twenty leaders of varying ideological and communal backgrounds. The evidence thus obtained was checked with reference to contemporary publications.

A major difficulty that had to be faced was one of categorization. It was obviously impossible to discuss every shade of opinion in an article of short length. On the other hand the use of terms such as 'left wing' or 'right wing' without qualification was bound to be vague and misleading. It was therefore decided to use the names of the major political parties such as the United National Party (UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). The Marxist left, though frequently and acrimoniously divided on personal and ideological grounds was found to have sufficient in common to be treated as one bloc, as was also the case with the representatives of Indian Tamil and Sri Lanka Tamil interests. However, these categorizations are but approximate ones not only because party postures changed with time but also because at the leadership level the apparent ideological diversity was to some extent balanced by a common middle and upper class socio-economic background and a common western education and life-style, throughout the period under survey.

I

The survival of the constitution inherited at independence for well over two decades, a striking record of continuity among the Afro-Asian states which emerged from colonial rule after the Second World War, created the widespread impression that the people of the island and their political leaders were firmly wedded to it from the beginning. But this is far from the truth. The making of the constitution of 1947 was conditioned by the need to compromise with and accommodate diverse, indeed conflicting, forces: the constitution had to be acceptable to the British rulers as well as to the political leaders who formed the membership of the national legislature, the State Council. Moreover underlying all the discussions centred on a constitution for independent Sri Lanka, there lay the assumption that the final outcome would not be a lasting product. In the years since independence this view was strengthened but there was also an understandable reluctance among the political leaders to firmly bend their minds to the task of revising the constitution.

Given the ideological differences found among the political leaders at independence, it is no surprise that the constitution of 1947 was not unanimously endorsed by all those in politics. The Marxist Left rejected it out of hand: its ideological premises did not permit it to accept a constitutional document enacted by the colonial rulers of the country. The Marxist leaders, even those who abandoned revolutionary fervour and joined hands with Centrist SLFP to form governments, were consistent in their attacks on the constitution and repeatedly advocated the adoption of a new constitution which would give expression to the true will of the people of the land. On the other hand they did not take what would have been undoubtedly the radical stand of refusing to enter the political arena created by the new constitutional framework. Participate they did and with this they tacitly approved the parliamentary system of government; extra-parliamentary agitational techniques, though not quite forgotten, were implicitly rejected as the means of gaining state power. This course of action had its dilemmas but it was eminently attractive on pragmatic grounds.

The Marxist Left was not alone in the rejection of the constitution of 1947; a disparate group of individuals, mainly from the Tamil community, were equally vehement in the condemnation of the constitution. They were not moved by ideological considerations but by the inadequacy of the safeguards provided for the minority social groups against the possible domination of the majority, the Sinhalese. Some of these critics were seduced by the prospect of sharing power and gave up their intransigence. With few exceptions, however, they were soon pushed into the opposite camp again by what they deemed to be the failure on the part of the Sinhalese leaders to keep their part of the bargain, to refrain from adopting legislation harmful to the interests of the minorities. This process of joining hands with the Sinhalese for a time and then breaking off as they lost confidence in their partners, was to become a familiar feature in the politics of Sri Lanka in the coming years. The Tamil leadership began to be more cohesive as time went by and its attitude towards the constitution of 1947 became increasingly ambivalent and eventually it turned out to be among the unlikely defenders of the constitution. It became clear to the Tamil political leaders that some of the provisions in the constitution which they looked upon as safeguards provided for the benefit of the minorities were easily nulified in practice by those who wielded state power. Thus, for example, the effectiveness of the Public Service Commission and that of the second chamber, the Senate, were gradually eroded. The entrenched clause in the constitution, section 29 (2), which was initially seen only as a diluted safeguard, consequently assumed a new importance and it became their bulwark, mainly through action in courts of law, against what was interpreted by them as injurious legislation conceived by the Sinhalese. The constitution of 1947 proved to be less than effective in protecting the interests of the minority groups. However, mainly because of the entrenched clause, which soon took an unanticipated sanctity, the Tamil leaderhip became increasingly attracted to the constitution and in the final analysis it was this leadership which turned out to be one of its strongest defenders.

The attitude towards the constitution of those who came into power at independence was understandable enough. Since the new constitution was largely based on

the draft constitution prepared by the Board of Ministers in 1944, whatever the process of enactment, they could justly look upon it as a product of their own labours. They were not attached to it by reasons of sentiment alone. They pointed out, with the weight of constitutional authorities behind them, that in practice the constitution imposed no constraints upon the independence of the young nation; authochtonous constitution-making—a phrase which took wide currency about two decades later—was to them only a window-dressing which was not needed at this particular juncture in the nation's history. Not that they were blind to the faults of the constitution. Some of the UNP leaders, wedded though they were to the Westminister model, doubted the value of a bicameral legislature, at least in the way it was structured in Sri Lanka. Again, the entrenched clause of 29 (2), incorporated in the constitution primarily as a sop to the minorities, to allay their fears and to win their crucial votes in the legislature in the adoption of the new constitution, was seen by others as somewhat of a stumbling block to progressive legislation. Nevertheless, they could hardly claim that the constitution was a failure in practice. Moreover instinct, if not experience, made them cautious in calling for a unilateral revision of the constitution or responding energetically to the demands for the drafting of a new document for the old was familiar and the results of their political activities was somewhat predictable while a sharp institutional change might result in all of them losing their political prominence.

In practical terms, there was a formidable obstacle to fresh constitution-making, the constitutional necessity of obtaining two-thirds of the votes in parliament for the revision of the constitution. On several occasions over the years select committees of the House of Representatives were appointed to consider constitutional amendments but it was always a safe assumption that no government would be able to draw all-party support for amendments, unless these were of an innocuous nature. Given this background, the coming into power in 1970 of a government supported by more than two-thirds of the legislature was significant. The government possessed not only the legislative backing necessary but also a signal determination to start afresh. It is arguable that most of the socialist and populist strands of thought reflected in the new constitution which was brought into force in 1972 were non-controversial, in the sense that all the major political prarties in the country had by then subscribed to them formally or at the very least, begun to pay lip service to them. This is particularly true of the 'Principles of State Policy' incorporated in it. This is reflection enough of the extent to which the different shades of political opinion in Sri Lanka had achieved a broad consensus of view on the basis for principles of public policy-neither the Right nor the Left any longer held to dogmatic positions about policy making. There were of course those who were publicly suspicious about the egalitarian and collectivist idelogy presented by the government through the new constitution but they proved to be surprisingly few in number and they seemed to have come to the understanding that opposition to this ideology would be to oppose the drift of popular thinking in the island evident for over a decade or so.

Greater disquiet was expressed about the authoritarian bent of the new constitution. The authoritarian bias was seen in its non-justiciable clauses, in the primacy given to the legislative branch of the government, in its incorporation of emergency

powers formally contained in ordinary legislation, in the changes brought about in the role of the judicature in the process of government and, to a lesser extent, in the structure of the government it erected. In defence, those who conceived the new document argued that the new constitution should not be judged on the basis of one or another of its clauses but in its entirety and in any case if authoritarianism meant the paramountcy of the legislature, they were not hesitant at all in enshrining this feature in the constitution. There was one further important area of controversy: the provisions relating to the place of Sinhalese as the official language and the failure to incorporate in the new constitution concessions to the demands of the Tamils.

Where the constitution was rejected, excepting in the case of the Tamil leadership which tended to view things from a narrowly communalistic perspective, it was not because of a fundamental disagreement about the form it should take but because of the provision made at the insistence of government members for the extension of the period of life of the parliament then existing. The constitution-making was undertaken in a decorous manner with all the trappings necessary to give it legitimacy but the political background which formed a backdrop to the deliberations of the constitution-makers, the emergency created by the April 1971 revolt, introduced a distinct element of unreality to it, which the critics of the government did not fail to exploit to tarnish the image of propriety.

II

The curious mixture of ideology and pragmatism evident in so many different ways in the politics of independent Sri Lanka, was amply reflected in the leadership perspective relating to foreign policy-making.

The ideological gulf between the Marxist Left and the UNP was patently clear at independence. The Marxists, at this time particularly hamstrung by dogmatism, looked askance at the foreign policy adopted by those who inherited power form the British. The close ties established with the former rulers of the country—epitomized in the defence treaties—and the distinct bias displayed towards the West in foreign affairs administration was to the Left sufficient evidence of the lingering colonial mentality of those who guided the destiny of the new nation. The left strenuously decried association with the west but there were differences of opinion within it as to what precise policy should govern relations with the communist *bloc*. Viewing international affairs in terms of class struggle—here they were at their articulate best—the Marxist leaders in general displayed a sympathy towards the Communist states but a distinct group among them, the Trotskyites, were less than willing to place their full faith on the Soviet Union. Indeed, the question of the attitude towards Russia had been a crucial factor in the original split of the unified Left in the immediate pre-independence period, the split between the Trotskyites and the Communists. The Communists, understandably, championed the Soviet Union and its causes in international affairs until the disaffection between Russia and China began to be reflected in local Left politics. Both the Trotskyites and the Communists of the two persuasions, the pro-Russian and the pro-Chinese, gradually tended to abandon their dogmatic

stands in relation to international problems, especially with the surfacing of non-alignment as the key ideology of the Third World. The Marxist leaders found in non-alignment a viable and dynamic policy for a small, defenceless country like Sri Lanka but neither the pro-Russian group nor the pro-Chinese could be persuaded to abandon their respective tilts towards their mentor states.

To the UNP, there was never a strict ideology as far as foreign policy was concerned; its attitude was consciously moulded by pragmatic considerations. The geo-political situation of the country, in particular the close proximity to a possibly expansionist India, and the inadequacy of the indigenous defence forces were the factors which weighed heavily in the minds of the pragmatic conservatives in their decision to seek the aid of the West in defence matters and associate in general with the West in international affairs. On a different plane, there was the common sharing of a democratic way of life and an economic philosophy which bound Sri Lanka's new leaders to the West. Yet again, there was the intense dislike, indeed fear, which some of the leaders displayed towards Marxism and the Marxists, both within and without the country. Finally, it is also worth stressing that in Sri Lanka, in contrast to many of the new states which emerged from colonial status, there was no strong residual antagonism towards the former rulers either among the people or among the new leaders—indeed, the whole process of transfer of power, though not conducted without strain altogether, had encouraged a mutual trust between the two parties at leadership level.

The Right and Centre like the Marxist Left, gradually gravitated towards the acceptance of non-alignment as the doctrine which should form the key to foreign policy administration. To those who believed in non-alignment, the removal of the close ties with the West and the steering of a middle path between the power *blocs* in world politics was necessarily a pragmatic choice. The very factors which made the pragmatic conservatives opt for association with the West made non-alignment all the more attractive. The close friendship with the West, defence treaties in particular, would inevitably draw Sri Lanka into any major conflict which might develop between the West and the Communist states. If Sri Lanka remained non-aligned, then she could stand outside any conflicts and wars, very much the way Switzerland —the chosen model of those who believed in non-alignment—acted over the years in Europe. Pragmatic considerations were buttressed gradually by reasoned philosophical arguments and the political leaders who advocated non-alignment in local platforms were able to give a special twist to these arguments by using the idiom of Buddhist teachings.

III

The role of the bureaucracy in the socio-political process of the country has loomed large in the political rhetoric of Sri Lanka. Two related questions have dominated leadership perspectives in relation to the bureaucracy in the years since independence: whether the bureaucracy could be implicitly trusted to effectively implement government policy and to what extent it should be subjected to political control.

The complexion of the bureaucracy inherited at independence is important. It was almost completely indigenised and the few expatriate officials who remained, did not last long and thus the bureaucracy was able to function free of controversies relating to colour. This of course did not mean that it was accepted by all political leaders as an institution devoid of bias towards the former rulers. For one, the structure and the long-maintained traditions of the *elite* cadre, the Civil Service, made it particularly vulnerable to charges of holding out to values alien and inimical to the interests of the young nation. These charges came from the Marxist Left but there was also the occasional non-Marxist critic. The logic of the Marxist rhetoric had it that the Civil Servants and their political masters drew emotional impetus from shared ideals and this made the Civil Service all the more suspicious in the eyes of the Left leaders. The UNP which formed the first governments did not find the attitudes of the Civil Service personnel all that congenial and indeed many were the occasions in which relations between them were severely strained. Though they did not see the Civil Service as an institution unworthy of acceptance and did not interfere with it as a professionalized body, they were careful enough to assume greater and closer control and direction over it through the employment of the Public Service Commission as a tool of the government rather than allowing it full scope to defend the Civil Service against "political influences".

It is arguable that with the abolition of the Civil Service, broadening the base of the administrative service and the recruitment of personnel from a different background, from among the *swabasha*-educated, the strong criticism of the bureaucracy should have died down. It did not and indeed, if at all, the criticism intensified. The reason for this is to be found in the gradual acceptance of the idea, touted since independence but widely canvassed only in the 1960s, that the bureaucracy should be subjected to political control: the argument that the administrative service was manned by the culturally alienated formed the rationale and not so much the reason. With the rapid growth of the public service and with the increasingly new and varied duties which were brought under its aegis, the administrative officials were forced into positions which made them more distant from the public: whatever were the public expectations, they could not play any longer the paternalistic role. The bureaucratic process became more cumbersome over the years and to many critics increasingly inefficient as well. All these factors were effectively utilised by those who advocated political control of the bureaucracy to bolster their arguments. From the point of view of the Left, the case for political control did not rest entirely on the prevalent standards of the bureaucrats but also on Marxist teachings. To the cynic —and Sri Lanka does not lack this variety among its leaders—the call for political control of the bureaucracy did not stem from any of these reasons but on the greatly enhanced opportunities of patronage which it would provide to the politicians: the public service was after all by far the largest employer in the island and with the increasing involvement of the state in the economy, the number of public servants was bound to reach even higher figures. What is crucial now is not so much the reasons for the advocacy of this view as the fact that all shades of political opinion, in fact the whole spectrum of it, accept it as axiomatic.

IV

On economic policy the ideological cleavage between the Marxist Left and the UNP was sharp and clear in 1948. The UNP aimed at building up the infra-structure needed for economic advance and hoped that this would stimulate investment by the private sector. From time to time some lip service was paid to greater state intervention. The first post-independence regime for example held that basic industries such as cement and steel, and the production of the "necessities of life" should be state owned. Nevertheless, the UNP leadership was rather inhibited by the poor performance of wartime and post-war state factories and generally proved reluctant to invest in such ventures. It preferred to place greater trust on the expansion of cottage industries which were expected to abate seasonal unemployment in rural areas and to develop import-substitution ventures. Moreover, in the context of a situation when the developed countries were busy trying to rebuild their war-shattered economies there were difficulties in obtaining capital goods and foreign expertise.

The UNP in fact placed greater faith in the development of the agricultural sector, particularly in the expansion of paddy cultivation, a faith strengthened by the food shortage experienced during world war II. The UNP food production strategy was threefold. Firstly the cultivated area was to be increased by peasant colonization in the relatively depopulated dry-zone. Secondly, village expansion schemes were to provide additional land in proximity to existing settlements. Finally an agricultural extension scheme was to popularize better cultivation methods, better varieties of seed and the use of fertilizer. In relation to the plantations a less active policy was pursued. Purchase of foreign owned plantations by nationals was encouraged but there was no desire to make radical changes in the form of ownership. The use of increased taxation and higher custom duties to siphon off some of the surplus were considered by far the better policy.

The Marxist leaders were sharply critical of these policies. Their ideology led them to advocate a much greater degree of state intervention in the economy and a much more detailed and comprehensive planning than was evidenced by the UNP Six Year Plan. They were in favour of a state monopoly of foreign trade and the nationalization of many of the public utility services. The Left leadership also emphasised the need for a rapid programme of industrialization spearheaded by government ventures. Such a policy was viewed not only as a means of ridding the island of its economic dependence on the West but also as a necessary foundation of modern economic development. Indeed, the Marxist Left held that the development of industries such as steel was a prerequisite of the modernization of the agricultural sector. On the other hand, they were more inclined to scoff at cottage industries and import substitution ventures as projects of marginal value.

The Left leadership also followed traditional Marxist norms and gave relatively less value in their development strategy to agricultural development. Nevertheless, their interest in the field was keen enough to deplore the UNP's lack of interest in land reform. To the Left leadership land reform and more effective agricultural credit

for the small holder were methods of ensuring both enhanced production and greater social justice. The Marxists also proposed to nationalize estates and to run them as state plantations.

The persistence of slow growth, a rising population, increasing unemployment and worsening terms of trade in the twenty five years that followed made leaders of very different persuasions re-examine their views. The deteriorating economic situation also limited the options available and in many respects narrowed the differences between the Right and the Left as to what short term measures should be adopted. The UNP, for instance, acquiesed in state control of basic industries and of foreign trade. The Marxists meanwhile came to realise that a speedy programme of industrialization was not feasible and acknowledged the value of cottage industries and of minor labour intensive industries in the context of substantial unemployment and a scarcity of investment capital. A similar convergence of views may be seen in the sphere of paddy cultivation. The UNP having come under the influence of the ideal of the 'Green revolution' of the 1960's had begun to advocate the development of agro-industries. The Marxists too faced with increasing foreign exchange difficulties caused by the unprecedented rise in the cost of food and petroleum in world markets came to accept agriculture as one sector which has substantial growth-potential with relatively low requirements of foreign exchange for expansion. Even in relation to the plantations the divergence of views became less apparent. The Centre Left Government of 1970 began a take-over of all individually owned estates over fifty acres in extent. In October 1975 the same government nationalised all company owned-estates with the support of all political parties including the U.N.P.

The acrimonious debate relating to economic policies at independence could be sharply contrasted with the bipartisan support received by social welfare measures. It is true that the UNP leadership which had had the experience of implementing such policies in the years before independence were more keenly aware of their financial implications. Indeed, there was a minority in the party who had serious doubts about the continuation of wartime food subsidies and who anxiously watched the rising costs of education. Nevertheless there was general agreement on the desirability of welfare measures and a widespread conviction that the country was and would be able to pay for them.

Of all welfare services the least questioned were perhaps those relating to the provision of free medical care. The successful anti malaria campaign of the previous era had convinced most leaders that health-care was a worthwhile investment. Since education was viewed as a means of social mobility, the expansion of the school system which provided free tuition from the lowest classes to the University was also regarded by all sections of the leadership as a desirable step towards a greater equality of opportunity. The third major item in the social welfare programme was the subsidy on rice. The subsidy had originally been designed to ensure a stable low price for consumers in Sri Lanka so that they would be protected from world-price fluctuations. Although the steadily rising price of rice abroad made the subsidised rice ration an

increasingly heavy burden on the Treasury, no political leader was bold enough to publicly criticise the subsidy in the years immediately following independence. Indeed it was an attempt to remove the rice subsidy that directly led to the resignation of Dudley Senanayake as Prime Minister in 1953.

Twenty years later attitudes had changed sharply. Most sections of the leadership came to realize that welfare measures and development investment competed for the same scarce resources and that social welfare, however desirable it might seem, was in fact draining the economic strength of the country. The problem was that cuts in welfare services were so obviously unpopular. The leadership therefore, either tried to disguise cuts in welfare structures or arranged them in such a way that the least affluent groups and the less developed areas would not be as badly affected as the rest. Thus, in 1966, the UNP government reduced the rice ration by half but gave the halved ration free of charge instead of at a subsidised price. In 1973 their Centre Left rivals totally deprived income tax payers of free rice while halving the free ration once more for all others. The emphasis on the development of rural hospitals and of preventive medicine reflects an attempt to provide a more complete health coverage at a lower cost. Similarly the enforcement of a 'district quota' system of admission to institutions of higher education could well be viewed as an attempt to provide students in educationally backward areas an advantage over the others, thus rendering extra expenditure in those areas less urgent. Since 1964 the annual total admission to the Universities have been virtually frozen and the duration of pre-university education reduced from 13 to 11 years.

Both Centre-Left Coalition and the UNP are not above exploiting social welfare retrenchments by the other side to their electoral advantage but there appears little evidence of a fundamental divergence of policy between the two groups on this question.

VI

In a plural society it was perhaps inevitable that conflicts of and competition for privilege and position among different groups would intensify with the achievement of independence. Yet perhaps because of the euphoria generated by independence and their common educational and class background, none of the leaders of the various communities in Sri Lanka foresaw the intensity of the conflicts that were to arise in the first two decades after 1948. Indeed most leaders were congratulating themselves on avoiding the communal strife that had accompanied the transfer of power in the neighbouring sub-continent.

The relation between the two major ethno-linguistic groups—the Sinhalese and the Tamils—illustrates this adequately. Despite historical traditions that had highlighted eras of conflict and the more recent competition for privileges in colonial times neither group envisaged a deterioration of Sinhala-Tamil relations in the island. The UNP it is true made a sharp distinction between the 'Ceylon Tamils' of the north and east of the island who had settled there centuries ago and the more recent Indian Tamil immigrants who had arrived in the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries to supply labour for plantations. While readily acknowledging the former as fellow countrymen, they tended to regard the latter group as unwelcome intruders who threatened to out-number the Sinhalese in some of their traditional homelands. The Indian Tamil family connections with South India, travel to and from that region and the remittance of money to India were adduced as reasons which proved that the group had no abiding interest in the island. The UNP, therefore, proposed to remove their franchise as a first step and to finally repatriate the whole group of some 800,000 persons to India. It is possible that Indian support for Marxist candidates in the 1948 election merely strengthened their resolve. The Marxist Left strongly opposed this policy but failed to find much support for their stand on this issue among the Sinhalese.

More significant, the majority of the Ceylon Tamil leadership too did not oppose the dis-franchisement measure with any great persistence or vigour. They had for long carefully distinguished themselves from the more backward Indian Tamil group. Their lead in educational attainment under British rule had enabled them to obtain a disproportionate share of posts in the higher reaches of the bureaucracy and to virtually dominate the key professions of law, medicine and engineering. All early cabinets had one or two of their representatives and Sinhalese Ministers did often rely on Tamil Permanent Secretaries for advice on policy. The Ceylon Tamil leadership, moreover, had some faith in the assuarance of the Sinhalese leaders who just a few years before independence had decided in the Legislature that Sinhalese and Tamil rather than Sinhalese alone would replace English as the State Language. The Indian Tamils were thus largely isolated and their leaders, guiding a community bereft of political rights since 1949, were forced to fall back on trade union strength and the forlorn hope of a change of heart among the Sinhalese.

A change of heart did occur among the Sinhalese leadership during the next twenty-five years but not in the direction that the Indian Tamil leadersip hoped for. Sinhalese was declared the sole official language of the country in 1956 and Buddhism, the religion of the majority of the Sinhalese, was accorded a special place in the Constitution of 1972. Most Sinhalese leaders came to defend these and other similar measures as justifiable in a land where the Sinhalese and the Buddhists formed a clear majority of the population. Significantly although many of the Marxist leaders opposed some of these measures at one time or the other they were eventually forced by pressure from rank and file to change their positions.

The Ceylon Tamil leadership was most incensed at the change in the language policy and not for emotional reasons alone, for state policy relating to language involved a sharp drop of employment opportunities in the public sector for Ceylon Tamils. The application of 'media-wise standardization of marks' and a 'district quota' system of admissions to most institutes of higher education restricted their entry to the professions. The failure of a sustained campaign for greater regional autonomy at least for the Tamil majority areas of the north and east combined with a feeling of being discriminated against, has encouraged seperatist tendencies even among the highest reaches of the Tamil leadership.

The Indian Tamils, having had fewer hopes were perhaps less disappointed though no less bitter. Their campaign for political rights was undermined by agreements between the governments of India and Sri Lanka which determined that a proportion of the community would be repatriated to India and the rest gradually granted citizenship. The leadership was forced to accept the agreement in principle. By 1973, however, their concern had veered more towards the economic sector. The natural increase of the estate worker population had led to considerable unemployment and underemployment. The takeover of some estates and their redistribution among landless Sinhalese had threatened the livelihood of an increasing proportion of Indian Tamils. Numbers of Indian street dwellers began to appear in most highland towns. The Indian Tamil leadership strongly felt that their community had been by-passed in the provision of several welfare facilities such as state health and education services. Living in Sinhalese majority areas they see no solution for their plight in the federal and seperatist schemes urged by the Ceylon Tamils.

By and large it can be asserted that communal relations have worsened in the twenty-five years after independence, even though examples to the contrary can be quoted. Hostility between the Buddhists and the Roman Catholics for example decreased after the state take-over of private and missionary schools in 1961. On the other hand Sinhalese-Tamil relations have appreciably worsened. Some anti-Muslim sentiment has been kindled in the 1970's by charges of favouritism in the sphere of education during the regime of a Muslim Minister and relations between low-country and Kandyan Sinhalese appear more fragile than before. There is increasing recognition that competition among communal groups for economic and political advantage would remain for a long time to come.

IV

THE ROLE OF THE BUREAUCRACY

VIJAYA SAMARAWEERA

The public service in Sri Lanka has been the focal point of a considerable body of literature in the recent past. Much of this literature, however, has been devoted to an examination of the colonial roots of the service and to an analysis of its structural arrangements.[1] Less has been said of the role of the bureaucracy in the socio-political process of the country—indeed, there has yet to be a full length study of the bureaucracy placed within the context of the developmental goals sought by governments in power.[2] The present essay is in no way intended to fill this void; it has been conceived far less ambitiously, to survey briefly the principal factors which need to be considered if the role of the bureaucracy in the socio-political process of Sri Lanka is to be properly evaluated.[3]

The key question which has been debated for long in the island is whether the bureaucracy could be effectively used to realise the aspirations of a politically awakened people. If this question is asked from a representative politician, the answer would be unhesitatingly in the negative. Indeed, the view that the bureaucracy is innately unsympathetic to the aspirations of the people and utterly incapable of innovation is widely held and the term bureaucracy used in this context has acquired

1. Of the many writings concerned with these aspects, particular reference could be made to the following: R. N. Kearney, 'Ceylon: The Contemporary Bureaucracy', in R. Braibanti (ed.), *Asian Bureaucratic Systems Emergent from the British Imperial Tradition:* (Duke University Press, Durham, N. C. 1960), pp. 485-549; A. J. Wilson, 'Public Administration in Ceylon', in S. S. Hsueh (ed.) *Public Administration in South and South East Asia,* (International Institute of Administrative Sciences, Brussels 1962), pp. 199-240; W. A. Wisva Warnapala, *Civil Service Administration in Ceylon,* (Government Press, Colombo 1974). For a discussion of the more recent changes introduced in the public service see, V. Samaraweera, 'The Administration and the Judicial System', in K. M. de Silva (ed.), *Sri Lanka, A Survey* (London, C. Hurst, for Institute of Asian Affairs, Hamburg). forthcoming.
2. A recent report on Sri Lanka by a mission organised by the International Labour Office placed great emphasis on the role of the bureaucracy in the achievement of developmental goals. See, *Matching Employment Opportunities and Expectations: A Programme of Action for Ceylon, Report,* (International Labour Office, Geneva 1971), ch. 10. The role of the bureaucracy in the socio-political process has been examined rather perfunctorily in C. R. Hensman (ed.), *The Public Service and the People,* (Colombo: Community Institute Pamphlets no 3, 1963), and R. N. Kearney, in his recent *The Politics of Ceylon (Sri Lanka),* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca & London 1973), discusses in some detail the place of the bureaucracy in the political process of the island.
3. The present essay draws heavily on the material collected by the writer on the basis of interviews with administrative officials but for obvious reasons the sources will remain anonymous.

a derogatory meaning.[4] In the years immediately after independence the blame for this was placed on the nature of the structure and the complexion of the bureaucracy which the nation inherited: an institution built up during colonial times to perform 'colonial functions' of maintaining order and collecting revenue was necessarily insensitive to the changing needs of the administration, especially relating to economic development and social welfare. Whatever the validity of this view, the important factor to note is that it generated a movement towards reform and provided the rationale for re-structuring of the bureaucracy: as a government appointed commission of inquiry put it, there was 'the need to reorganise the Public Service, to rid it of its so-called colonial attitudes and to make it a dynamic organization for giving effect to the will of the people through the elected representatives'.[5] Several measures of bureaucratic reform were undertaken and among them were crucial steps like the abolition of the Civil Service and the establishment of the Ceylon (later Sri Lanka) Administrative Service and the ending of the Headmen System and the assimilation of the village administration to the central administrative structure, but the criticisms of the bureaucracy were not abated and the debate whether the bureaucracy serves the people or not continued. Why?

The structural changes brought about in the public service in 1963 with the creation of a broad-based unified administrative service were almost universally applauded. Care was taken, so it was announced at that time, that the obnoxious and unsatisfactory features of the old Civil Service were not duplicated in the new service but evidence accumulated since then casts doubts about it. To be sure, the *elite* cadre is now recruited from a much broader social background, a background which is certainly more representative of the wider society in the island; a rump of the old Civil Service might remain but the higher bureaucracy cannot be characterised, as it was once, as the 'last bastion' of the English educated *elite*.[6] The *swabasha*-educated now dominate the service but to a great many observers there is still a lamentable lack of commitment to the cause of the public within the bureaucracy and in fact the inevitable question has been posed as to whether the bureaucracy as an institution possesses inherent qualities which moulds the recruits in a particular fashion so that they become alienated from the public they are required to serve. There is no doubt that 'Red-tapism' and centralised control continues to inhibit the bureaucracy, preventing it from innovating and dealing in a flexible manner with the public. Much more important is the contention that the new bureaucracy is still governed by the norms of the abolished Civil Service, norms which are insensitive and inimical to the needs of contemporary times. Thus, to take but two examples, the continued reliance placed on the administrative generalist in the service and the prominent position still held by examinations in the recruitment of officials have been often

4. See, the speeches at successive parliamentary debates on the annual Appropriation Bills as reported in the *Parliamentary Debates* (*Hansard*) volumes. The budget debates have become almost ritualistic occasions for political attacks on the bureaucracy.

5. Report of the Salaries and Cadres Commission, 1958-61, *Sessional Paper* III of 1961, p. 10.

6. Cf. H. Abhayavardhana, *et al.*, *The Role of the Western Educated Elite*, (Community Institute Pamphlets, Colombo) : no. 2, 1962.

decried. Equally importantly, the new administrative service seems to be afflicted with the effects of what could be described as a split-personality. The new service was so structured that there would be mobility within the whole public service—direct recruitment, from among young university graduates, was retained but provision was made for the absorption of personnel from the lower rungs—and it was hoped that this would pave the way for an integration of the lower and higher strata of the public service, while eliminating a primary cause of discontent among those who did not belong to the Civil Service. But, a situation soon arose where a division between the direct recruits and others emerged within the service and the direct recruits are now accused of assuming the *elitist* posture which once characterised the Civil Service personnel.[7]

The basic problem seems to lie in the fact that there is still confusion in the minds of the public as well as among the bureaucrats as to what precise role the bureaucracy should play in the administration. Is the bureaucrat a 'servant' of the people or of the government, assuming of course that the interests of the people and the government (defined here as a group wielding state power) do not invariably coincide? This is more than a merely rhetorical question. That multiple images of the bureaucrat exists cannot be doubted. As one 'Public Servant' wrote, a bureaucrat is at different times looked upon by the public as:

'(*a*) a perverse God who must be propitiated
(*b*) a recalcitrant ass that must be driven
(*c*) a privileged snob, impossible to get the better of
(*d*) a lazy hound, impossible to bring to book, and
(*e*) (occasionally) a hardworked, underpaid and harassed official doing his best under difficult circumstances'.[8]

It is arguable that the bureaucrat in Sri Lanka was always a highly visible figure; he never functioned in 'cold anonymity'. This was certainly true of the colonial civil servants. The role they were required to play, especially at the centres away from the capital not only by the very nature of the structure of the administration but perhaps even by the people whom they were ruling, was that of a 'benevolent despot'.[9] With the national politicians increasingly assuming control of the administration, attempts were made to curb the powers which the civil servants wielded and transform them to the status of more regular administrators but there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the old image lingered on among the people, not only during the late colonial

7. The division between the direct recruits and others is most evident in the respective membership of the two principle trade unions formed by the members of the Sri Lanka Administrative Service. The Sri Lanka Administrative Service Association is dominated by the direct recruits and is acknowledged to represent the interests of the direct recruits and the Sri Lanka Administrative Service Union draws heavily on the others for its membership and has been agitating causes which favour this group.

8. Annon., 'The Public Servant : A Self-Portrait and a Self-Criticism', in Hensman (ed.), *The Public Service and the People*, pp. 38-48. This is indeed a most revealing essay.

9. See the revealing memoir, Leonard Woolf, *Growing: An Autobiography of the Years* 1904-1914. (Hogarth Press, London) : 1961.

times but also after independence.[10] It is no surprise that in time to come this image conflicted with and ran counter to the developments which took place within and without the bureaucracy. For one, with the government entering new areas of activity, the work of the bureaucrats expanded apace and encompassed hitherto untouched subjects. This and structural changes brought about at the district level, in particular the complexity which arose with the setting up of numerous agencies of highly centralised departments which radiated from the capital, tended to place a greater distance between the bureaucrat and the public and a sharply impersonal relationship between them developed. This was perhaps more so in areas where specialised technical officials took over from the purely managerial officer and in fact entry of the technical officials introduced a new dimension into the relations between the bureaucrats and the public, for problems and tension cropped up between the administrator and the technical man.[11] Of equal importance in the changing nature of the relationship is the growth of trade unionism in the public service: the bureaucrat is no longer a silent and pliant 'servant' of the public and the government; he has his own distinct interests, relating either to his career or his political convictions, and these interests he has endeavoured to advance in a determined fashion.[12]

The bureaucrats have been often accused of lack of a sense of occasion. The public service, as a number of studies have shown, has always held a very high occupational value in the island[13] but over the last decade and half or so, with the expansion of the activities of the state and the noticeable contraction of the private sector, even greater demands have been made for opportunities in the administration as almost the only realistic avenue of employment open to the rapidly growing national labour pool. The recruitment of either ill-equipped or over-qualified personnel has taken place, hardly the type of persons, it could be argued, who would develop a sense of vocation; and, as an official committee reported in 1966 (and this still holds true), 'there is no special incentive to one in the Public Service to make a special effort under the present conditions (and) it is hardly surprising that the public service is neither enterprising nor dynamic in this context'.[14] Moreover, until recently, by

10. Here the case of much revered H. R. Freeman who for long represented Anuradhapura in the State Council after his retirement as the Government Agent there could be cited. For the post independent period see, V. A. J. Senaratne, 'Some Aspects of Provincial Administration in Ceylon', in Hensman (ed.), *The Public Service and the People*, pp. 91-6. See also the two novels by Leel Gunasekera, *Pethsama* (the Petition), (Saman Prakasakayo, Maharagama: 1961), and *Athsana* (the Signature), (Saman Prakasakayo, Maharagama: 1963), which deal with the problems of the peasants and the attitudes of the peasants towards the bureaucracy. Gunasekera was a member of the Civil Service at the time he wrote these novels.
11. See, Bradman Weerakoon, 'Role of the Administrators in the Context of a Changing Agrarian Situation: A District Point of View', *Ceylon Studies Seminar*, 1973 series, no. 7, mimeographed paper, pp. 2-4 and *Matching Employment Opportunities and Expectations*, pp. 158-9.
12. See, R. H. Kearney, *Trade Unions and Politics in Ceylon*, (University of California Press Los Angeles), 1971.
13. See for example, B. Ryan, 'Status, Achievement and Education in Ceylon', *Journal of Asian Studies*, XX (1961), 463-66, and 'Attitudes of Undergraduates', in *Matching* Employment and Expectations: A *Programme of Action for Ceylon, Technical Papers*, (International Labour Office, Geneva): pp. 147-51.
14. Report of the Committee on Administrative Reforms, *Sessional Paper* IX of 1966, p. 17, quoted in Kearney, *The Politics of Ceylon*, p. 77.

and large the administrative officials were not provided opportunities of acquiring a knowledge of new management tools. This has been remedied to a considerable extent with the establishment in 1966 of the Academy of Administrative Studies by the government.[15] But, it is doubtful whether a mere knowledge of new (and perhaps too sophisticated) tools in administration would turn out a new type of bureaucrat, one who is deeply committed. For one, transferability still persists, despite efforts on the part of some heads of departments to retain experienced officials to prevent disruption of operations; increasingly it has been realised, though no action has been taken as yet, that regular transfer of officials between departments has helped to produce that classic figure, 'Jack of all trades and master of none'. Moreover, there is still a lack of awareness and understanding among the generality of the bureaucrats of the purpose and activities of particular governments in power. This is indeed a formidable problem and deserves separate examination.

The public service has been described as the most modern (or westernized) sector of the island[16] but its performance, by all accounts, has in no way matched or equalled that of the less modern sectors. It has failed to function as an innovating agent in administration: no personality comparable to, say, C. V. Brayne, the official who made a crucial breakthrough in the land policy in the 1930s[17], has emerged. Equally, as it has been often pointed out, the old civil service tradition of scholarship has died; the occasional novelist there might be but no substantial contribution to the study of the islands' history and society has come from the public service in the recent past. The bureaucracy has been subjected to heavy criticism over the last two decades—it is interesting to note the emergence of a whole new genre of Sinhala fiction writing with the 'alienated' 'bureaucrat' as the central theme—[18] and it is hardly an exaggeration to say that it is in a beleagured state. The strongest attacks are from politicians (it is noteworthy that in Sri Lanka fewer politicians have come from a bureaucratic background); the repeated warnings that ill-considered criticism serves only to embitter the public service have not been heeded. The criticisms are there and perhaps are to a certain extent justifiable but it cannot be said that the bureaucracy has totally failed. The Salaries and Cadres Commission of 1958-61, which made perhaps the most exhaustive study of the public service yet, commented that it cannot be 'said to have failed the people it serves'[19] and the role the bureaucracy played during traumatic events like the communal riots of 1958 and the 1971 insurrection amply demonastrated (in the latter case to some who were strongly sceptical) its value.[20]

15. For the work of this institution see, *The Academy of Administrative Studies* (Colombo: Administrative Training Division, General Treasury, n.d.)
16. Kearney, 'Ceylon: The Contemporary Bureaucracy', in Braibanti (ed.), *Asian Bureaucratic Systems*, p. 503.
17. On Brayne see, V. K. Samaraweera, 'Land Policy and Peasant Colonization, 1914-1948', in K. M. de Silva (ed.), University of Ceylon, *History of Ceylon*, Vol. III (Colombo, 1973) pp. 450-1.
18. See, for example, Gunadasa Amarasekera's novel, *Gandhabba Apadanaya* (Sarasavi Printers, Gampaha, 1964) and Henry Jayasena's play, *Janelaya* (window), (n.p., Dehiwela, 1964).
19. *Sessional Paper* III of 1961, p. 11.
20. Kearney, *The Politics of Ceylon*, p. 76. See also below, note 31.

It is quite evident that the bureaucracy neither relished nor cared for the innovating role some observers felt it should play and it does not now act as a catalyst of change. A senior bureaucrat wrote recently that 'in the modern situation....the calalytic function is being performed more and more by political authorities and that the administrators work consists largely in the functions of linking the old with the new, of smoothing over the transition and in a general sense keeping the system in some kind of equilibrium'.[21] This is an image to which perhaps a large number of other bureaucrats would subscribe and certainly the politicians would unreaservedly accept it. In fact, what has occurred is not only the retreat of the bureaucrat to the background in favour of the politician but also a domination of the bureaucracy by the politicians, trend always seen in independent Sri Lanka. The public service, so the makers of the island's first constitution intended, should be insulated from political interference. The device they adopted, the setting up of an autonomous Public Service Commission charged with the recruitment and control of the public servants, never really succeeded in checking overt interference in the public service—as early as 1950 the Commission complained of the 'burden' of 'extraneous influences'—[22] and in fact it was soon reduced to a mere 'rubber stamp' of the wishes of the politicians in power. The Public Service Commission was abolished by the 1972 constitution—its passing away was hardly bemoaned—and a much more realistic position now exists with the cabinet of ministers being vested with the authority for recruitment and disciplinary control of the public servants.

The argument that the bureaucracy should be subjected to political control is based primarily on the strongly held view that the bureaucracy inherently generates implacable opposition to those who wield state power. While this view is stated as a general principle from a neo-Maxian standpoint—there cannot be 'neutral' public servants, so it is argued—it has also assumed a particular perspective. It has been widely held that in the immediate post independence period, in the years when the United National Party formed the government, bureaucrats and their political masters were 'connected not only in manner and ideals but also in kinship' and that when another government came into power in 1956 with a different political complexion, it had to face the hostility of the bureaucracy.[23] This view cannot be entirely dismissed but it is worth noting that the relations between the UNP government and the bureaucracy were far from smooth all the time.[24] On the other hand, it could be established that in the case of every government which has been formed in the island,

21. Weerakoon, 'The Role of the Administration in the Context of a Changing Agrarian Situation', *Ceylon Studies Seminar*, 1973 series, no 7, pp. 1-2.

22. Annual Report of the Public Service Commission 1950, *Sessional Paper* XVI of 1951, p. 11. It is worth recalling here that the pre-independent administration under the Donoughmore Constitution encouraged direct interference in the work of the administrators by the legislators. See, Wisva Warnapala, *Civil Service Administration*, pp. 75ff.

23. S. D. Saparamadu, introduction to Leonard Woolf, 'Diaries in Ceylon, 1908-1911', *Ceylon Historical Journal*, IX (1959/60), p. xxii; Hensman (ed.), *The Public Service and the people*, p. 65.

24. Interview with M. Rajendra by C. R. de Silva, 6 May 1974. I am grateful to Dr. C. R. de Silva for allowing me the use of this material.

there has been a significant group of officials belonging to the higher bureaucracy who had close kinship and other social ties with the politicians in control.[25] Therefore, it is perhaps more realistic to look at this reasoning as a rationale for political control rather than as an actual state of affairs which prevailed.

All major political parties in the island now accept that the bureaucracy should be subjected to direct political control, though they differ on the degree desirable. The more extreme position, taken by the United Front Government formed in 1970, is that the higher bureaucracy, at least those officials who are in influential and sensitive positions, should display a positive commitment to the policy-goals desired by it. To some extent the problem of functioning through unsympathetic officials was overcome by this government by bringing in outside personnel or promoting junior officials with decidedly clear commitments to the key positions. The politicisation of the public service has proceeded unabated during the last decade or so and the extent to which it has taken place could be perhaps measured by the examination of two recent developments. Firstly, there is the institutionalised acceptance of letters of (government) parliamentary members—described by some as 'the political certificate' —in matters relating to appointment, transfer, dismissal and disciplinary control of public servants. It is relevant to note here that under the 1972 constitution, exercise of the authority of the cabinet in relation to the public service is specifically excluded from the purview of courts of law.[26] Where the fortunes of the bureaucrats now rests was perhaps best summed up by a public servant: 'Power lies where there is the right to (determine) promotion and preference. In our system of administration, it is not the Permanent Secretary who determines promotions and other preferences. ....(These decisions) tend to lie in the political sector and naturally power lies there'.[27] Secondly, there is the appointment since late 1973 of 'Political Authorities' in each of the twenty-two administrative districts in the island to give immediate political control and direction to the administrative work carried on within them. These Political Authorities are chosen and appointed by the Prime Minister from among the (government) parliamentary members who (generally) have constituencies in the particular administrative district.

The politicisation of the public service has obviously generated tension and discontent. With considerable justification it could be argued that the island has yet to see a government in power with a cohesive ideology or well constructed and clear set of policy-goals. Many of the governments in the recent past have been coalitions of political parties with differing ideologies and within this context the lot of the bureaucrat has been difficult indeed. If the role of the Political Authorities is taken into consideration, it could be shown that similar problems have arisen. There are often clashes between the Political Authority and the other parliamentary members of the district,[28] and in such cases the plight of the bureaucrat, who can ill-afford to antagonise any member of parliament, is unenviable. It is also worth

25. See, Janice Jiggins, *Family and Caste in the Politics of the Sinhalese*, 1947-1971 (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 1973, University of Sri Lanka, Peradeniya).
26. Section 106 (6) of *The Constitution of Sri Lanka (Ceylon)*, Colombo: Government of Sri Lanka, 1972.
27. Quoted in Kearney, *The Politics of Ceylon*, p. 80.
28. See, *Sun*, 4 March 1974, for one reported instance of a clash.

examining what changes have taken place in the decision-making process with these developments. Quite obviously the political picture which prevails in the country would be a primary determinant at every level of decision-making. The position of the Secretaries of the Ministries (prior to 1972, Permanent Secretaries) would depend on their relationship with their ministers; those who relish exploiting opportunities could become powerful figures in the decision-making process—indeed examples have been cited where, despite the politicisation which has taken place, the Secretaries virtually run the ministries because of the relinquishment of their powers by some ministers. Situation could still arise, as it occurred earlier, where Secretaries could pursue their own personal or particularistic interests regardless of the stance taken by the government in general.[29] At the next important level of decision-making, at the district level of the Government Agents, much the same could be said. Examples are there of Government Agents completely surrendering their initiative in administration to the Political Authorities as well as of those who have retained much of the powers they were originally entrusted with. Unlike at the centre, the Government Agents have been subjected to additional forms of pressure. The local government institutions and other regional interests, uneasily articulated to the central administrative structure, could be quoted as examples. Reportedly even technical officials, who, it was asserted in the past, escaped political presures, have been subjected to political interference in their work in recent years. With diverse and conflicting pressures upon them, it is no surprise that officials entrusted with powers of decision-making either fight shy of the responsibility or work towards the achievement of consensus, which means weak or unworkable compromises, rather than taking firm and clear-cut decisions.

With the politicisation of the public service increasingly taking place some political observers have begun to speak ominously of the creation of a veritable 'MP's Raj' in the island.[30] The politicisation has placed the bureaucrat in a vulnerable position in more than one sense. The occupational value which employment in the public sector carried stemmed from, apart from other factors, the relative security which it provided but this factor no longer seems to be relevant. Over the last dedade, and increasingly so in the recent years, with every change of government those in the higher echelons of the administration have been replaced with personnel upon whom the new wielders of state power could place confidence and trust. Indeed, mere appointment to a high office by one government, though based only on merit, has been at times considered an adequate reason to refrain from reposing trust upon officials. The present Minister of Public Administration has publicly acknowledged mistakes made in this fashion[31] but it is doubtful whether a reversal of this trend would take place. In fact, the evidence seem to indicate that this trend would be

29. Permanent Secretaries, as administrative heads of ministries, have often been accused of favouritism towards either their fellow caste or family members. Thus, allegation were made in parliament in 1962 that the then Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Defence and External Affairs favoured members of his *karāva* caste within his ministry. See, R. N. Kearney and R. L. Harris, 'Bureaucracy and Environment in Ceylon', *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, II (1963-64), 260.
30. See, *The Tribune*, 27 Oct. 1973, editorial.
31. See, the Minister's tribute to the performance during the 1971 insurgency of two Government Agents who had been transferred on 'punishment' after the U. F. Government was formed, in House of Representatives, *Parliamentary Debates* (*Hansard*), 94 (1971/2), cols. 582-3.

strengthened and that Sri Lanka would entirely adopt the American 'spoils' system by moving away from the British tradition of a completely professionalised public service, at least in the case of the higher appointments.

The public service has been politicised, a relatively new development, but it has also had to function at the same time within a framework in which what could be described as pressures from the old order persisted. Of these of particular significance are ethnic, caste and kinship pressures. The ethnic pressure has been perhaps the most explosive and disruptive of the influences to which the public service has been subjected. It was popularly held by the Sinhalese-Buddhist majority community that the public service was dominated at independence by Tamils and Christians and the late 1950s saw a distinct bias against these groups in the matter of recruitment and promotion of public servants. The resistence to the switch-over to Sinhala language in the administration by the Tamils generated further hostility. There is little doubt that the Sinhalese-Buddhists dominate the public service now but prejudice does not seem to have been entirely erased. The minority social groups, especially the Tamils[32], have in the recent years made repeated allegations of bias against them in the public service and it cannot be said that these allegations, though simply dismissed by Sinhalese politicians, are without foundation. Moreover, given the fact that the Tamils traditionally depend largely upon government employment for their livelihood, this has had considerable implications on the relations between the two social groups on the political plane.

That there are kinship and caste pressures operating in the public service is widely acknowledged.[33] Kinship and caste affliations are looked upon as the means of mobilising channels of advancement where the chosen medium is the public service. There is sufficient evidence to indicate, for example, that where an individual belonging to a less priviledged caste reaches a position of power and influence in the bureaucracy, he is required to play the role of the patron, creating and enhancing opportunities for mobility. Caste has also acted in a negative way, by the prejudices and bias it arouses. Thus, a parliamentary member, speaking of the discrimination a particular caste faced, declared that 'the feeling among the poeple of that caste (is) that they will not get any public office, that they are not being treated equally in a matter like appointments of even police constables'.[33] Family ties have always been important in the matter of recruitment and promotion of public servants, though it would be difficult to document each such instance. It has been even argued that family loyalties tend to eclipse political pressures, for individuals with opposing political sympathies find opportunities in the public service because family 'obligation' plays a peculiarly pervasive role in the society in Sri Lanka.

It has been often announced by national leaders, with considerable pride, that universalistic criteria govern the composition of the public service, but clearly this is an assertion which deserves little credence. It was inevitable that the bureaucracy would mirror the values dominant in the socio-political process in the island.

32. See, *A Memorandum on Discrimination Submitted to The International Commission of Jurists by the Tamil United Front of Ceylon*, Jaffna: St. Joseph's Catholic Press, 1973.
33. See, the recent study by Janice Jiggins, *Family and Caste in the Politics of the Sinhalese, 1947-1971*'.
34. Quoted in Kearney, 'Ceylon: The Contemporary Bureaucracy', in Braibanti (ed.), *Asian Bureaucratic Systems*, p. 505.

V

THE FUTURE OF PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT

A. JEYARATNAM WILSON

General Questions

After more than twenty five years of its working in our stagnant economy and conflict-ridden plural society challenged from many sides by extra-parliamentary forces, the question as to Parliament's appropriateness is most relevant. Put another way, it will not be out of place to ask whether Parliament has in fact been a failure.

The answer to these questions lies in our inquiry into what Parliament was intended for. Did those who agitated for it seek to imitate Westminster or did they wish it to be a genus of its own transformed into a Ceylonese version of the foreign model? Part of the anwser lies in the fact that the opponents of Parliament are unable to provide a local alternative sprung from the genius of our own people. Whilst in the neighbouring subcontinent Jayaparakash Narayan and those like him may sing the virtues of village government (*panchayati* raj), there is no evidence of a nationalist effort in Sri Lanka to adapt the historical council of village adjudication, the *gansabha*,[1] into an effective instrument of contemporary government. In other words Parliament in the Ceylonese setting is just another term for a legislature to which is responsible a cabinet of ministers under the leadership of the Prime Minister. Elections to this legislative body take place within a system of electoral demarcation that places a premium on area, sparse population and therefore ruralism and conservatism[2]. We have deliberately preferred the cabinet system to the presidential type or any other form. Therein lie clues to the answer to our question.

It is questionable whether the prerequisites for the successful functioning of parliamentary government exist.

An elastic economy that can absorb social discontent is not available. Although the liberal system of social welfare that has been built into the system is so onerous

1. For an instructive essay on the subject, see R. K. W. Goonesekera, "The Eclipse of the Village Court" in *The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 138-154.
2. Sections 40 to 44 of the 1947 Constitution. These have been more or less reproduced in Sections 76 to 81 of the Republican Constitution of May 1972.

that governments find it increasingly burdensome, it does help to cushion shocks that might otherwise have endangered the foundations of the state.

The relative cultural homogeneity that preceded Parliamentary democracy in Britain is absent. But the Sinhalese Buddhist ethos of tolerance does help overcome in limited ways the militancy and rigidity of Sinhalese language and Sinhalese Buddhist extremists. This tolerance helps produce an atmosphere for accommodating the demands of minority groups. In this way, extreme elements on both sides are inhibited from gaining the upper hand. But the fact of Buddhist tolerance is only a marginal consideration and does not in all situations act as a moderating factor.

Agreement on the fundamentals of the state is very necessary. It is the absence of such agreement that made the United National Party (UNP) governments of 1947-1952 intolerant of the main opposition which comprised the traditional Marxist parties, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP)[3] and the pro-Soviet Communist (CP), and *vice versa*. With the rise of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike's social democratic Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) as the major oppositional force after the general election of 1952, a measure of acquiescence resulted between the two major parties. Since then the SLFP and UNP and their respective partners, inclusive of the traditional Marxists, have worked the state apparatus on the understanding that there is a commitment to constitutional government. There are wide areas of conflict on the essential details of what are considered fundamentals but there lies always the assumption that these could be resolved within the existing framework. Extra-parliamentary forces no doubt seek to challenge the efficacy of Parliament and even to question its validity.[4] The most serious challenges came from the unsuccessful attempt at a coup d'etat by right wing officers in the armed forces and the police in January 1962 and, in April 1971, from the Marxist Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP, People's Liberation Front). But these very challenges have in effect helped in various ways to correct administrative and social deficiencies that otherwise could have hindered Parliament. Following 1962 a far-reaching reorganisation of the armed forces and the police was effected. After April 1971, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike's SLFP-led left-centred United Front (UF) coalition government responded by putting through a number of important land reforms. There have been extra-parliamentary protests as well from the Tamil Federal Party (FP), the Marxist-oriented trade unions and on occasion even from the UNP and the SLFP when in opposition. These have however helped to clear the air and have at other times produced necessary changes within Parliament.

3. Until 1950, the LSSP was splintered into the Bolshevik Leninist Party of India which later took the name, Bolshevik Sama Samaja Party, and itself. In 1950 the rift between the two groups was healed and a merger occurred. Further splits followed this merger.

4. See Chapter 6, "Challenges to the Political Order" (pp. 192-227) in Robert N. Kearney, *The Politics of Ceylon (Sri Lanka)* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1973) and H. A. I. Goonetileke, *The April* 1971 *Insurrection in Ceylon: A Select Bibliography (July* 1973) (Louvain, C.R.S.R., 1973).

A predominantly two party or bi-polar system with an electorate which is experienced and is willing to nominate a government and not merely return a legislature is conducive to the proper functioning of Parliament. During 1931-70, the Ceylonese electorate had experience of nine general elections, the electorate tending to become increasingly literate with free education (the literacy rate has ranged between 70 to 80 per cent). Up to 1956, Sri Lanka seemed to follow the "one-party dominance" pattern.[5] But signs of this eroding away were already evident following the 1952 general election, when the SLFP emerged as a credible oppositional force.[6] After the general election of 1956, with the defeat of the UNP by S.W. R. D. Bandaranaike's SLFP-led coalition, the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP, the People's United Front), what might be called a coalitional two party system emerged. Apart from March 1960, when the political scene was confused after the assassination of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, the electors have rejected incumbents and replaced them with elected governments with clear majorities.

The Imitation of Westminster

At independence, a conscious effort was made to imitate the British House of Commons. Not only were British conventions incorporated in the 1947 Constitution[7] but the privileges and practices of the House of Commons were made part of the Constitution.[8] Mr. Speaker until 1970 and even after[9] was more or less a carbon copy of his counterpart in Westminster and continues to rely on the accepted authorities on British parliamentary procedure, Erskine May and Gilbert Campion, as sources for rulings and as guides to the work of the House.

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5. For further information see Rajni Kothari, "The Congress 'System' in India", *Asian Survey*, 4 (December 1964), pp. 161-73 and W. H. Morris-Jones, "Dominance and Dissent: Their Inter-relations in the Indian Party System," *Government and Opposition*, 1, (August 1966), pp. 451-466.

6. See my "Oppositional Politics in Ceylon (1967-1968)" in *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 54-69. For a detailed overall analysis, see Calvin A. Woodward, *The Growth of a Party System in Ceylon* (Providence, Brown University Press, 1969). Also his, "Sri Lanka's Electoral Experience: From Personal to Party Politics," *Pacific Affairs*, Winter 1974-75, pp. 455-471.

7. For example Section 4 (2) of the 1947 Constitution stated that "all powers, authorities and functions vested in His Majesty or the Governor-General shall, subject to the provisions of this Order and of any other law for the time being in force, be exercised as far as may be in accordance with the constitutional conventions applicable to the exercise of similar powers, authorities and functions in the United Kingdom by His Majesty...."

8. For example Section 27 (1) of the 1947 Constitution in referring to the "privileges, immunities and powers" of Senators and Members of Parliament specified that there should not "exceed those for the time being held or enjoyed by the Common House of Parliament of the United Kingdom or of its Members". In actual practice they more or less approximated to those of the British House of Commons.

9. After the general election of May 1970, Mr. Speaker declared that he would maintain his party affiliations unlike his predecessors who renounced them as soon as they were elected to the office. However Mr. Speaker continues to maintain impartiality in the conduct of proceedings in the National State Assembly in accordance with the best traditions of the British Speaker.

Even after the "revolution of 1956" members on both sides of the House often quote from Dicey, Anson, Berriedale Keith, Jennings, Laski, Eugene Forsey and S. A. de Smith to sustain opposing positions on consitutional controversies.[10]

Till 1956, and even for some years after that, the principal language of debate in the House was English.

What was more the physical arrangements of the House which were semi-circular under the earlier constitution were altered so as to resemble the British House of Commons with Government and Opposition facing each other across the floor. The objective of course was to encourage a confrontation of two great parties.

Until its abolition in 1971 the Senate played its role in true House of Lords style, generally inactive when the conservative UNP was in office and even when the social democratic SLFP ruled. When it tended to become obstreperous after the victory of Mrs. Bandaranaike's SLFP-led UF in 1970, it was legislated out of existence. However there was never any agreement on the question of a second chamber, even at the time of independence. The island's political leaders did not want the insitution. This was clearly evidenced in the debates in the State Council on the Sri Lanka Bill for a constitution providing for full responsible government, and in the Draft Scheme for a Constitution that the Board of Ministers submitted to Whitehall.[11] It was one of the strikingly British impositions brought *via* the Soulbury Constitution.

The Republican Constitution of May 1972 is in its essentials once more a copy of Westminster, although there are, of course, differences in detail. In theory all power is concentrated in the unicameral National State Assembly. In practice, however, power emanates from the Prime Minister and the Cabinet of Ministers. The same kind of cabinet dictatorship that Ramsay Muir alleged existed in Britain[12] is now by implication and otherwise constitutionally enshrined in the Sri Lankan situation. The National State Assembly still adheres to the proced ures of the British House of Commons[13] and its members have deliberately preferred the abbreviation MP rather than MNSA and are legally referred to in this way.[14]

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10. See S. A. de Smith, *The New Commonwealth and its Constitutions* (London, Stevens, 1964) pp. 77-105.

11. Sessional Paper XIV of 1944, also referred to as the *Draft Scheme* of the Board of Ministers.

12. See his *How Britain is Governed* (London, 1930). Also Humphrey Berkeley, *The Power of the Prime Minister* (London, Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1968).

13. Section 37 (2) of the Republican Constitution states that the Standing Orders of the previous legislative body, the House of Representatives, will continue in force until the National State Assembly otherwise provides. The Standing Orders of the House of Representatives followed very closely those of the British House of Commons. Further, Section 38 (1) states that "the privileges, immunities and powers of the National State Assembly and of its Members shall be the same as those of the House of Representatives" until the Assembly otherwise provides.

14. Note Section 29 of the Republican Constitution states that "Members of the National State Assembly shall be designated Members of Parliament".

Legislative Activity

Parliament has been utilized by successive goverrments to implement their legislative programme. Many of Parliament's legislative measures have been controversial, a great deal beneficial, some premature and others overdue. However in numerous ways, Parliament successfully contained discontent, provided opportunities for the expression of dissent and instilled a measure of confidence among the ethnic and social groups.

Legislation especially in the economic and social sectors muted attempts to undermine faith in Parliament. The nationalization of omnibus transport, the ports and insurance, the enactment of the paddy lands act, the adoption of Sinhalese — and to a limited extent Tamil—as the languages of administration, the takeover of schools, the provision of numerous welfare services, the ceilings on land and house ownership and on incomes have, in several ways, satisfied dissident sections which might otherwise have sought relief via a substitute model or by violence.

On the other hand the public security act, and legislation restricting trade union activity, disfranchising the resident Indian Tamil population and controlling the press have encumbered the exercise of democratic rights. The public security act, in particular, has been a restricting influence on Parliament in that the executive, in times of emergency, is vested with an excess of power.

However neither too much credit nor excessive blame can be attached to Parliament. Most legislative activity emanates from the cabinet. The cabinet's parliamentary majority has seldom tampered with the work of government. Only at the margin, on issues concerning severe cuts on the welfare services, has the government parliamentary group reacted adversely.

On the debit side

Parliament was not intended to be a true mirror of the nation and it remains so still notwithstanding the many political and social changes that have taken place since independence. Efforts at reform in this area have not been successful partly because the political parties (the traditional Left and the principal ethnic group, the Tamils) involved do not have enough weight to compel attention. Partly, there is a Lack of interest among the public as well—the white and blue collar workers, the trade unions and professional associations, social institutions, the press, the unversities and the intelligentsia in general.

Only recently, after 1970, has one major political party, the UNP, begun to agitate for a reform in the system of representation, even of parliamentary government. But this has been mainly due to the several defeats it has suffered at general elections since 1956. That party, when defeated, obtains a low percentage of seats in the legislature despite the very large number of votes it polls. Thus it is now forced to reject the very system of representation it had designed earlier in efforts to keep its Marxist opponents from effective political participation. However the framers of the 1972 Constitution have retained the very same provisions because these now seem to present an advantage to the SLFP. Efforts by the Trotskyist Minister of Constitutional

Affairs, Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, to correct the imbalance when the 1972 Constitution was being framed were thwarted. Another attempt in late 1974 when a fresh demarcation of electorates was being contemplated proved just as futile. On this occasion, despite the presence of the traditional Left in the UF government, the UNP and SLFP combined to agree to limit the total number of seats in the National State Assembly. An increase in seats based on the distribution of population would have meant more urban constituencies—areas where the Left is usually stronger.

This basis of representation distorts the political picture considerably. Its effect is that, following the disfranchisement of the Indian Tamil population in 1948-49, it confers an excess of representation on the rural and sparsely populated parts of Sri Lanka. The Kandyan Sinhalese districts stand to gain most from the present arrangement, although they are the least touched by modernizing or radical political influences. The minority ethnic groups—the Ceylon and Indian Tamils—whom it was intended to benefit no longer have an advantage. The low country Sinhalese as well as the urban areas remain under-represented. As a result, there is not even an attempt to approximate to the principle of one man one vote.[15]

The traditional Left despised the system from 1947 to 1952 and looked on Parliament only as a platform from which to present its views and to reach out to the public. With the rise of the Bandaranaikes and their SLFP, the Left switched its stance to one of support for these social democrats in the ultimate hope that they could utilise the latter's political organisation as a vehicle to arrive at the seats of power—an exercise in which they have, in part, succeeded.

The principal ethnic group, the Ceylon Tamils, jibbed at the system at the start, despite the slight advantages it conferred on them. Increasing disillusionment with Parliament because of their inability to make themselves felt have made them turn to extra-parliamentary forms of protest—satyagrahas, hartals, civil disobedience campaigns etc. An important section of the Ceylon Tamils organizing through the Tamil Federal Party began to demand a protected Tamil homeland in the contiguous north and east linked to the rest of Sri Lanka under a federal system of government. That organization has now changed its position and wants a separate Tamil state. Up to the general election of May 1970, the Tamil Federalists tried to exploit parliamentary divisions among Sinhalese political groupings for the advancement of their objectives. After May 1970, and sepecially after the enactment of the Republican Constitution of May 1972, they seem to have concluded that Parliament cannot or will not redress their grievances.[16]

15. For further details see my *Electoral Politics in an Emergent State: The Ceylon General Election of May* 1970 (Cambridge, at the University Press, 1975), Chapter 3, "The Electoral Framework".

16. For example see Walter Schwarz, "Sri Lanka Ripe for Explosion" containing the text of his interview with the Tamil United Front leader, S. J. V. Chelvanayakam in *The Guardian*, 8 March 1975.

For various reasons the low country Sinhalese have not protested overmuch against the excessive representation of their Kandyan Sinhalese counterparts. The conservatives among them see in the Kandyan Sinhalese a useful bastion against socialist directions. Many of the low country Sinhalese fear that an agitation for reform could result in the Tamils (Ceylon and Indian) obtaining a more advantageous position over the Sinhalese in general. But more importantly, there is no urgency among the low country Sinhalese because they believe that leadership at the political and bureaucratic levels is still vested in their hands.[17]

The young in Sri Lanka consitutute roughly 52 per cent of the population.[18] The eighteen year olds were enfranchised in 1960 and exercised the vote at the general elections of 1965 and 1970. But they too realised their inability to make their presence felt at the centres of power. Neither the cabinet of 1965 nor that of 1970 provided for the representation of the youth element—most cabinet ministers being over forty years of age. Parliamentary candidates put up by rival political parties did not noticeably belong to the youth category.[19] Failure on the part of Parliament and governments to pay attention to their problems contributed in a measurable way to the violence unleashed by the JVP insurrection of April 1971[20]—the first tangible evidence of a rejection of Parliament by an organized political movement.

Remedial Measures

From 1947 to 1956, Parliament was largely the preserve of the English-educated and the affluent. Despite the bias towards the rural areas and the unexpected success of the traditional Marxists, LSSP, BLPI, (later BSP) and the CP at the 1947 general election, there were neither "villagers nor workers in the House of Representatives." The UNP had their country squires and the Marxists their intellectuals, professional men and the odd full-time man. This pattern was repeated at every successive general election right up to that of May 1970. It is true that there has been some, but insigni-

17. Note G. Uswatte-Aratchi in his careful and balanced study, "University Admissions in Ceylon: Their Economic and Social Background and Employment Expectations", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (1974), argues that four important districts where there is a major concentration of Low Country Sinhalese (Kalutara, Galle, Colombo, Matara) have since independence (1948) "been the source of strength of the major political leaders and the permanent home of the senior bureaucracy" (p. 300). He adds that this stretch of country is "more westernized and politically more influential" (p. 301). He further states that the Ceylon Tamil district of Jaffna is also "the home of high-level bureaucrats" (p. 301).

18. They are under nineteen years of age. Forty per cent of the total population is under fourteen.

19. see my *Electoral Politics in an Emergent State*, *op. cit.*, Chapter 5, "The Candidates".

20. See W. Howard Wriggins and C. H. S. Jayawardene, "Youth Protest in Sri Lanka (Ceylon)" in W. Howard Wri gins and James F. Guyot (editors) *Population, Politics and the Future of South Asia*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1973) pp. 318-350 and Nazli Choucri, *Population Dynamics and International Violence* (Massachusetts, D. C. Heath and Company, 1974), pp. 146-148, 172, 184.

21. see W. Howard Wriggins, *Ceylon: Dilemmas of a New Nation* (Princeton, N. J. Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 104-149 and Calvin A. Woodward, *The Growth of a Party System* in *Ceylon* (Providence, Brown University Press, 1969).

ficant, dilution of the party parliamentary contingents with "the men of the people." But by and large, both the UNP and the SLFP continue to have a large component of country squires. And their urban professionals indeed wield a larger influence. The traditional Left and the Tamil parties for their part have a much higher percentage of professional men in Parliament, hardly any farmers, peasants or workers.

Nor did legislation enacted in 1959, 1964 and 1970 designed to democratize elections and to reduce the election expenditure of parliamentary candidates and political parties help in any measurable way the poor candidate, the poor parties or new political parties seeking entry for the first time into the parliamentary arena. This was indeed the declared intention. If anything, it minimized the advantages the UNP had enjoyed till that time, improved the prospects of the SLFP and its Marxist allies and reduced the reliance of the SLFP on vested interests and pressure groups which would otherwise have financed them and exacted from their governments rewards and payments in various forms.

However the SLFP and the traditional Marxists, despite the many changes were aware of the continuing exclusiveness of Parliament and the difficulties of opening its membership in any meaningful way to the lower income and social groupings. At first therefore the SLFP advocated decentralised provincial, regional or district councils as a way of bringing the administration closer to the people. During 1965-68, the UNP too became committed to this principle. But the governments of both parties could not proceed to implement any proposals for decentralisation because of its connotations of federalism. Sinhalese pressure groups and interests feared that these councils would be the first steps towards the achievement of the federal goals, often identified with separatism, of the Ceylon Tamils, particularly of the Tamil Federal Party.

In their 1968 Common Programme, the SLFP and its Marxist allies presented a scheme for popular participation in government to be effected through divisional development councils, people's committees, employees' councils and advisory committees in state offices. These were established by the United Front government of the SLFP, LSSP and CP in 1971. The Marxists hoped that these could be utilised to press the government towards further socialism. However there is little or no evidence of success either in this direction or even of increased popular interest in the business of daily government.

The institution of District Political Authorities by Prime Ministerial fiat in October 1973 has introduced a measure of decentralisation at the political level.[22] Under this, the Prime Minister appoints as District Political Authority, a cabinet minister but more often a deputy minister and at times a senior government backbencher to each of the island's twenty-two administrative districts. This Authority is responsible

22. For more details see *Administration Report of the Government Agent, Badulla District for* 69/70 (Colombo, Government Printer, 1971).

for coordinating the activities and programmes of government departments as well as disbursing funds for medium and small sized developmental work. In this way demands and representations that the public make at ministerial level in Colombo are reduced and the local Member of Parliament as well as local interests have greater opportunities of persuading the Political Authority in their respective districts of the necessity to take, defer or negate action on matters that concern them. However the institution can disorganise coordinated overall national development because it will have to bend to parochial demands. This, it is said, can be remedied to some extent by the Prime Minister's Coordinating Secretariat to which these Authorities are in theory responsible. But the sum effect is "direct (political) control over administration at district level"[23]—an unhealthy development. Nevertheless the institution is in some ways a rival to Parliament. Its protagonist, a higher rung career civil servant argues that 'the group associated with the District Political Authority for decision-making purposes at the district level is far more representative of the people and their aspirations than any counterpart group in Colombo with the exception, of course, of Parliament'.[24]

Whilst these reforms have, to a limited degree, encroached on the influence that Parliament hitherto exercised on the decision-making processes, attempts have also been made to bring the institution closer to the people. The proposal to have Parliament's proceedings broadcast was rejected on the score that this was not an administratively feasible proposition for the Ceylon Broadcasting Corporation. On the other hand there has been, since 1956 and to a more complete extent since 1960, a switchover to the national languages, Sinhalese and Tamil, as the principal media of debate and discussion. Its effect has been to increase measurably the sales of copies of Hansard whenever important debates take place in the legislature.

Suggested Changes

There are at least four identifiable sources from which demand for reform arises. The fifth, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, has presumably achieved its objective by the enactment of the Republican Constitution of May 1972. Its late leader, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike had earlier criticised the cabinet system and expressed a nostalgia for the executive committee form of government that had prevailed under the Donoughmore Constitution of 1931-1947. He felt that both Government and Opposition as well as their respective back-benchers shared executive work under this dispensation. It was his view that the system de-emphasised party controversy.[25]

23. W. A. Wiswa Warnapala, "Sri Lanka in 1973: A Test for both the Rulers and the Ruled", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 14, No. 2, p. 156.

24. From an unpublished manuscript by B. S. Wijeweera entitled "A Colonial Administrative System in Transition: Some Reflections on Current Administrative Reforms in Sri Lanka (Ceylon).

25. Address on "Democracy in Asian Countries" to the Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi on 4 December 1957 reproduced in Department of Information, *The Government and the People: A Collection of Speeches made by the Prime Minister of Ceylon, the Honourable S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike* (Colombo, Government Press, 1959) pp. 44-53 especially, pp. 51-52. The Prime Minister stated on that occasion that "unfortunately we gave that up. I was personally against giving that system up. There were certain defects, but I thought they could be remedied within the system".

On another occasion he advocated the Swiss type, perhaps because it collegial plural executive (the Federal Council) had a resemblance to the Board of Ministers under the Donoughmore Constitution. He was also in favour of combining this with the referendum on the gound that it "not only provides a broader and more stable base for the principle of democracy, but implements more fully the very spirit of democracy".[26] The Prime Minister, for various reasons, expressed strong opposition to the British form of government.[27]

It is open to question whether a revised version of the Donoughmore Constitution or an adaptation of the Swiss type could have accomplished the task of rapid economic growth that was needed at the time that this change was proposed. These systems seem more suited to stable societies with small populations enjoying an optimum of economic prosperity. Hence Bandaranaike's proposal did not find acceptance either in the Joint Select Committee of Parliament appointed to revise the then constitution or among the framers of the Republican Constitution of May 1972.

The United National Party has voiced strong objections to some of the features of the new Constitution—in particular those relating to the political executive and the system of representation. That party appears to prefer now a presidential-cabinet type of government after the model of the French Fifth Republic. A Gaullist style President will be elected directly by the people. This is one way by which the UNP will ensure that the actual votes it polls at a general election are translated into political authority. Its other suggestion is to introduce proportional representation at the provincial level. Each of the island's nine provinces will form a multi-member constituency returning the number of representatives which it is entitled to on the present basis of assigning seats in terms of area and population. This would give the UNP seats in actual proportion to the votes it polls. The party will in all probability implement these proposals if it is successful at the next general election.

The traditional Left had earlier thought in terms of a government based on the communist model, the LSSP being enamoured more by Yugoslav practices while the CP was committed to the Soviet example. Now the trend appears to be to utilise Parliament and the instrument of participatory democracy to achieve their socialist objectives. The Trotskyist Minister of Constitutional Affairs articulated such a viewpoint a few months before the UF was elected to office when he stated that Parliament must, if the UF was to implement its socialist policies, be characterised "by leadership and not consensus."[28] The policy appears to parallel somewhat the thesis put forward by Mrs. Gandhi's late communist cabinet minister, Mohan Kumaramangalam.[29] As stated elsewhere, the Left had attempted to effect changes in the representational system but failed.

26. see text of the memorandum submitted by S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike in January 1959 to the Joint Select Committee of Parliament to Revise the Constitution, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-77, in particular, p. 77.
27. *op. cit.*
28. For further details see text of the Minister's address to the UF's Sociali st study Circle in *Ceylon Daily News*, 14 December 1969.
29. see Satindra Singh, *Communists in Congress: Kumaramangalam's Thesis* (Delhi, D. K. Publishing House, 1973) especially Chapter 13, "What are the Lessons for the Future" and Chapter 14, "Postscript", pp. 80-92.

The Tamils, both Ceylon and Indian, would also want the demarcation of constituencies restructured so as to provide them adequate if not additional parliamentary representation. They have not been successful so far. On the other hand a sizeable section of Ceylon Tamils supported the Tamil Federal Party's demand for a protected Tamil homeland in the north and east of Ceylon with a regional Parliament in Jaffna. Repeated failure has now led this section of Ceylon Tamils to ask for a separate sovereign state. Some observers raise the question as to whether we are now on the verge of "nation-breaking".

There are those who are weary of the game of "parliamentary musical chairs" and demand the overthrow of Parliament and its elitist power structure. Tissa Fernando states that the insurrectionist JVP does "not represent yet another political party within the parliamentary system".[30] He argues that they constitute what F. G. Bailey has called "a rival political structure"[31] which he (Fernando) insists "rejects the old political game and all the subtle rules that go to support it." He goes on to assert that "the elite model of politics has for the first time been challenged by a counter-model". He does not however articulate what this counter-model is except to pose the view that the JVP will refuse to be "bourgeoisified" or be lured into Parliament. A reasonable assumption is that the JVP, if successful, will opt for a Maoist-style political system. This however is not likely to be very different from what the traditional Marxists will want if they themselves had the opportunity.

Conclusion

Ever since its inception observers have raised the question whether Parliament could survive, given the contracting economic situation and the obstacles to adapting it to the local environment. The traditional Left uttered cassandra-like warnings of a "revolution round the corner". There have always been fears that ballot boxes will be tampered with at general elections, that unrest will be fomented by the party in power as an excuse to cancel elections, and that governments suffering defeat in Parliament or at the polls will not give up office. From time to time political leaders have experienced the imminence of military dictatorship as well as confronted armed insurrection.

However the attention of the public is constantly being focussed on these threats to the parliamentary order by a vigilant Opposition. There is also an overly critical party press while the national press was active and vigorous in its criticism till 1973 when various kinds of legislation were enacted to control it. And it is this vigilance and criticism that provided strength to the system and helped it avoid the mishaps and disasters that it was exposed to.

Nevertheless the question arises as to whether the system can last any longer. There is continuing evidence of an excessive reliance on the military and semi-military arm of the state to suppress opposition and public opinion. Growing unemployment

30. "Elite Politics in the New States: The Case of Post-Independence Sri Lanka", *Pacific Affairs*, Fall 1973, pp. 361-383.

31. *Stratagems and Spoils: A Social Anthropology of Politics* (Toronto, 1969), pp. 15-16.

and economic hardship are exploited by political parties to stimulate unrest. The failure to achieve national unity has brought enthusiastic support to separatist parties. The island is consequently in a permanently contingent state of disequilibrium and will for some length of time have to be sustained by armed force and liberal injections of foreign aid. The dangers of collapse began to be really felt from 1956 but the expected calamity has not yet occurred.

A shift to socialist directions, such as the present United Front government endeavours to effect, could contain social discontent for awhile. But it is hamstrung by the uncertainties and limited amounts of foreign aid it receives and by the prospect of having to face elections in the near future. It is doubtful whether it could handle the economic problem satisfactorily even if it were absolved from elections. Nor is it likely that a grand national coalition which included the rival Opposition, as is seriously mooted from time to time, would improve matters substantially, though it could reduce the costs to the polity of excessive and divisive contention.

The shrinking westernized elite, increasingly impoverished by the burdens of taxation and the difficulties of finding rewarding outlets for its talents and enterprise, have either taken to migration or live in constant frustration. Alternatively many of its members opportunistically adapt themselves to the changing political order. The crisis that they face makes them incapable of attracting to their ranks the lower orders and those aspiring to upward social mobility. This elite still acts as the transmitter of western values. But the situation will not last for long.

Parliament is therefore likely to face its most serious crisis after the next parliament election. If the United National Party is returned, it will seek to improve the situation, within the democratic framework, by endeavouring to obtain economic assistance from friendly powers—a task in which it was not entirely successful in its last term of office, 1965-1970. If the present government renews its mandate, it will go all along the way to use Parliament as a rubber stamp for its policies.[32] That institution will cease to be the instrument of consensus that it has hitherto been.

32. This article was written in early 1975 before the split between the SLFP and LSSP occurred.

VI

SRI LANKA'S FOREIGN POLICY — CHANGE AND CONTINUITY*

A. JEYARATNAM WILSON

General Considerations

For a thorough examination of Sri Lankan foreign policy, it becomes necessary to examine the environment in which the state operates, foreign policy *outputs* as manifested in the orientations and actions of responsible statesmen, an *explanation* of their behaviour and lastly an investigation of the patterns of interaction between Sri Lanka and foreign powers.[1] Such an analysis will encompass effectively the gamut of foreign policy pursued by Sri Lankan governments of different political complexions, conservative and socialist, in the years since independence.

Our view is that there is a line of continuity in foreign policy. At varying points however, depending very much on the personality of the proponent of action, there has been a tendency towards emphasis, de-emphasis, sometimes indifference—behaviour that is also determined by the objective factors of the domestic and international situation.

The question of foreign policy orientation seldom bothered the nationalists of the independence movement in the countries of South and Southeast Asia. Their literature and public statements abound with plans to remedy the domestic situation especially in the areas of economic and constitutional development. There was little attention paid to the external environment. Consequently when power was transferred, Whitehall insisted on external affairs and defence being invested in the office of Prime Minister.[2] Presumably it was hoped that the men who took power, Jinnah (Pakistan), Nehru (India)[3], D. S. Senanayake (Sri Lanka) and Tunku Abdul Rahman

* The author is grateful to Drs. Thomas Allen Levy, Calvin A. Woodward and W. Howard Wriggins for helpful comments and useful criticisms.

1. See K. J. Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972, second edition).
2. see Peter J. Boyce's instructive article, "Foreign offices and new states", *International Journal*, pp. 141-161.
3. There are some comments and hopes expressed in the closing pages of Jawaharlal Nehru's *An Autobiography* (London, John Lane the Bodley Head, reprinted 1947), but as the author himself declares in the title page, it is an autobiography "with musings on recent events in India"; pp. 573-595 and 599-611 are particularly interesting, but they are essentially tangential to the whole question of the foreign policy of a potential sovereign state, more the reflections of a sentimental liberal. Mr. Gandhi did not have even the kind of interest that Nehru displayed.

(Malaya), not having defined foreign policy goals, and being western-oriented, would not merely maintain the Commonwealth connection but also guarantee the protection of British interests in the new environment of independence. The trust reposed has been amply justified. Today many many years after independence, despite political changes and shifts to more radical policies, all the countries concerned, with the exception of Pakistan maintain their Commonwealth ties. Even Pakistan retains a form of relationship after its decision to quit in 1971 over Bangladesh.

Our position vis-a-vis Sri Lanka is that over the years there has been change but this has been on a stable *continuum* of non-involvement in the politics of the rival power blocs. The end result is that the system, the outputs, the explanation for behaviour patterns and the forms of interaction available with neighbors as well as friendly powers leaves Sri Lanka's Prime Ministers little option but to operate along the only *continuum* of action available, that is, non-involvement but at the same time involvement as an intermediary or concilator when such action becomes necessary. This line of thought may be challenged given the kinds of personalities involved, Prime Ministers as different as D. S. Senanayake (United National Party, UNP), S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike (Sri Lanka Freedom Party, SLFP), Sir John Kotelawala (UNP) and Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike (SLFP) but the similarities are there and are rendered more obvious in the synthesis of these seemingly different policies effected by the most astute of Prime Ministers, Dudley Senanayake, especially in his fourth phase as Prime Minister (1965-1970).

The Sri Lankan System

Sri Lanka is an island specialising in the export of three primary products, tea, coconuts and rubber in that order, and in recent times in the export of gems and precious stones and the development of tourism. Most of the tea and a fair proportion of rubber is in the control of British capital.

The export of industrial goods has still to become an established fact as most of the raw material component has to come from abroad and this involves the utilisation of much needed valuable foreign exchange.

Trade is not adequately diversified, most exports going to the United Kingdom (tea) and the Peoples' Republic of China (rubber) while the principal import of rice is from the latter country. Over the years there has been some diversification of this trade but essentially the pattern of British and Chinese domination of trade continues.

Fluctuations in export prices and increases in the price of food imports cause serious difficulties in the island's balance of payments. What is more, Sri Lanka maintains a generous system of social services and is the classic example of the insolvent welfare state. Lack of hard currency compels the island's governments to depend on international banking agencies and foreign states for credit accommodation.

The presence of a sizeable Tamil minority is a relevant factor in political behaviour. Indian Tamil labour works in the midland and sourthern tea and rubber plantations. This Indian Tamil population roughly amounts to ten per cent of the island's population, is in the control of two strong trade unions, the more powerful of which maintains

political connections with neighbouring India.[4] This union has close ties with the Tamil Federal Party (FP), the principal instrument of political action of the discontented indigenous Ceylon Tamils who form some eleven per cent of the population.[5]

While influential sections of Sinhalese opinion regard the Indian Tamil population as the equivalent of a Sudeten German minority vis-a-vis a potentially expansionist India and therefore a veritable *fifth column*, there is as much to fear from the indigenous Ceylon Tamil minority. The Ceylon Tamils reside mainly in the northern and eastern parts of the island inclusive of the coast line. This coast line is the most exposed flank on the Indian side.

The Ceylon Tamils are dissatisfied with the present United Front (UF) government's language policy which they believe provides undue primacy to the Sinhalese language.[6] The Indian Tamils until recent times were a stateless minority having been deprived of voting and citizenship rights by legislation enacted in 1948 and 1949.[7]

The island is strategically situated in terms of India's defence. It could be India's Achilles heel and in its location may be compared to Eire and wartime Britain or Cuba and the United States.

It stands at the junction of important sea routes and for this reason will acquire added importance when the Suez Canal is reopened. In the vast expanse of sea between Madagascar and Djakarta, Trincomalee provides one of the few excellent natural harbours.

On the nuclear map too, Sri Lanka is well placed. Besides affording opportunity for nuclear submarines to find shelter in the deep canyon that lies in the Bay of Bengal which almost hugs the natural harbour of Trincomalee in the north, the seas that lie to the south of the island are also a vantage point to nuclear submarines that would want to fire missiles on targets in both the Soviet Union and the Peoples' Republic of China. Such a convergence of strategic location for a dual purpose against a common ideological foe is not readily available elsewhere on the globe.

Foreign Policy Outputs-Orientations and Actions

The proximity to India which is compounded by the complicated presence of the discontented Ceylon and Indian Tamil minority produces a similarity in policy among the major Sinhalese political parties despite the differences they have on domestic matters.

4. The more powerful Ceylon Workers' Congress (CWC) is under S. Thondaman's leadership. Thondaman is politically conservative and is in touch with New Delhi.

5. Tamil political parties opposed to the United Front Government's policies on language have united to form a Tamil United Front (TUF). Its leader is the leader of the Tamil FP, S. J. V. Chelvanayakam. The CWC is now a member of the TUF.

6. For further information see my *Politics in Sri Lanka* 1947-1973 (London, Macmillan 1974), Chapter 2, "Problems in a Plural Society", pp. 15-59.

7. Note under agreements signed between India and Sri Lanka in 1964 and 1974, it was agreed that India would take back 600,000 of the Indian Tamils and that Sri Lanka would grant citizenship to 375,000 (with their natural increase) over a phased period extending beyond fifteen years.

Both D. S. Senanayake (UNP) and S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike (SLFP) maintained the Commonwealth connection. The former was explicit when he stated that a special relationship with Britain and membership in a wider club such as the Commonwealth could ensure some protection against a possibly future aggressive India.[8] Though the latter did not clearly articulate his fear of Indian expansion, he defended his policy of imposing Sinhalese as the only official language on the grounds of possible cultural and economic threats from neighbouring South India.[9] Bandaranaike is also reported to have once stated that he would not rest satisfied till the last Indian departed the shores of Sri Lanka.

However while D. S. Senanayake and his UNP successors preferred to have a mutual defence agreement which included the provision of military bases for Britain in the island, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike had these bases removed. But he did not abrogate the defence agreement. This meant that Sri Lanka could still rely on Britain in the event of attack. Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike herself has insisted that the defence agreement remains intact. Perhaps there is the belief that these bases could be made available at very short notice in the event of attack by a hostile power. There is now a nearby RAF base in the island of Gan (Maldives), and furthermore there is the Anglo-American communications centre at Diego Garcia, also close at hand. Furthermore both S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike and Mrs. Bandaranaike believed in keeping Sri Lanka within the Commonwealth, a matter on which their UNP rivals are in complete agreement.

However while the UNP Prime Ministers (D. S. Senanayake, Dudley Senanayake and Sir John Kotelawala) had for various reasons a kind of arms length friendship with the Government of India, the SLFP Prime Ministers (S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike and Sirima Bandaranaike) developed closer ties. But still and all, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, as Prime Minister, warned his fellow Sinhalese countrymen of the dangers of a pan-Tamil movement that could straddle Sri Lanka, South India and Malaya while Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike's UF government has required Tamil FP members of Parliament travelling abroad to post bond that they will not visit Tamil Nadu (Madras state). Somewhere in the Sinhalese political mind there is the lurking fear that in the not too distant future, Tamil Nadu could well, under the leadership of a separatist party, declare itself a sovereign state and that this sovereign state will harbour territorial designs over at least north and east Sri Lanka.

The fear of India is reinforced by other factors. There is a record of invasions going back through history which accounts for the presence of the indigenous Ceylon Tamil minority along the northern and eastern coastline. This minority is politically discontented refusing to co-operate with Sinhalese dominated governments except

8. see Lucy M. Jacob, *Sri Lanka From Dominion to Republic* (New Delhi, National Publishing House, 1973), p. 31. Dhirendra M. Prasad, *Ceylon's Foreign Policy under the Bandaranaikes* (1956-65): *A Political Analysis* (Chand & Co., New Delhi, 1973) Also, Sir Ivor Jennings, "The Commonwealth in Asia", *International Affairs*, Vol. 32, p. 138.

9. *Parliamentary Debates* (House of Representatives), Vol. 23, column 684.

at occasional intervals. Both in 1947, on the eve of independence, and in 1956 when the grant of military bases to Britain was cancelled, the principal political party of the Ceylon Tamils, the All Ceylon Tamil Congress in 1947 and the Tamil FP in 1956 laid claim to the strategically based harbour of Trincomalee which is located in the Tamil-speaking area of east Sri Lanka. Furthermore some influential members of the Sinhalese political elite point to the examples of the Indian occupation of Hyderabad, Kashmir and Goa as a foretaste of what could happen to Sri Lanka. And Tamil separatism derives encouragement from the support given by the Government of India to the emergence of Bangladesh as a new state. Similarly Turkish interest in the affairs of Cyprus and Turkish support for a separate Turkish Cypriot state make sections of Ceylon Tamil opinion feel that India or the conjectured sovereign state of South India will come to the assistance of the Tamils of Ceylon should circumstances warrant it.

Despite all the professions of friendship with India, SLFP governments have nevertheless looked on that country as a potential aggressor. Hence undivided Pakistan was looked on as a counterbalance to India. And a leading SLFP minister remarked in private conversation that Sri Lanka would seek assistance from the People's Republic of China in the event of an Indian attack.[10] Such hopes have dwindled after the Bangladesh episode when the People's Republic declined to go to the assistance of Pakistan.

Thus there is little difference between the policies followed by both UNP and SLFP governments towards India since independence.

There is secondly the view that Sri Lanka should remain a non-aligned or neutral nation in the context of the prevailing global patterns of conflict.

Much has been said and made of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike's concept of dynamic neutralism, a policy which was sometimes open to criticism because of Sri Lanka's ambivalence in condemining Soviet intervention in Hungary during his premiership.[11] Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike's attempts at stretching this dynamic neutralism to the point of active involvement in selected areas—such as support for the Arab cause against Israel, condemnation of South Africa and the recognition her UF government extended to a number of communist regimes in Southeast Asia—were criticised for their tendency to be obliquenly, and at times, overtly anti-West.

Mrs. Bandaranaike has also actively canvassed the view that the Indian Ocean should be declared a nuclear free zone. While there has been some support for this, her position has been rendered nugatory by the Indo-Soviet pact of 1970. There is an active Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean today and India is the largest littoral state in this area.

10. As told to the writer by a very close friend of the Minister concerned.

11. For further details see S. U. Kodikara, "Ceylon's Relations with Communist Countries (1948-1966)" in *South Asian Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (July 1967) especially the section "Ceylon and the Hungarian Events", pp. 118-121. At first Ceylon was reluctant to condemn Soviet intervention, at the U.N. General Assembly. Then Ceylon deplored the Soviet action. Finally Ceylon reverted to her earlier position of "passive neutralism".

The fact that the original protagonist of nonalignment and neutralism was the first Prime Minister, D. S. Senanayake (1947-1952), tends to be overlooked. Partly this arises from the fact that the conservative Senanayake was in competition with the local oppositional Marxist parties. Partly this was a phase of Soviet expansionism in an easterly direction and as S. U. Kodikara has remarked, "in such a context, it was not surprising that UNP Prime Ministers should have adopted a completely negative attitude towards communist countries."[12] To make matters worse, the Soviet Union was until 1955 vetoing Sri Lanka's application for admission to the United Nations. Nevertheless it was the government of D. S. Senanayake which, along with other Asian states, condemned in 1948 the Dutch police action against the Republic of Indonesia. The same government was one of the first among the nations of Asia—in January 1950—not only to recognise the People's Republic of China but also, at the same time, to sever diplomatic relations with the Kuomintang regime in Taiwan. This policy of noninvolvement in Cold War issues was underscored by D. S. Senanayake in a speech he made over the BBC in London in January 1951. The Prime Minister emphasised that in international politics he wished his country to follow the middle path and not entangle itself in the power and ideological conflicts of the rival blocs.[13] If anything this was indeed the very first time that a Ceylonese statesman had articulated a definite guide line on foreign policy.

However, UNP governments during their first phase in office, 1947 to 1956, consistently refused to establish diplomatic or cultural links with communist states. But again the reason was to be seen in the fear of communism during this time. There was the suspicion that the local Marxists would obtain various forms of support if communist embassies were established in Colombo. India too had similar apprehensions and J. C. Kundra therefore argues that Nehru's foreign policy, despite its proclaimed neutralism, took a pro-western orientation up to the end of 1949.[14]

Nonetheless the policy laid down by D. S. Senanayake was followed by his successors, Dudley Senanayake (1952-1953) and Sir John Kotelawala (1953-1956). The government of the former was responsible for the rubber-rice trade agreement with the People's Republic of China in 1952. The latter's government established trade relations with Poland and Czechoslovakia in 1955 and with Rumania in 1956. Despite his affirmed opposition to communism, clearly manifested at the Bandung Conference in 1955, Sir John Kotelawala declared that Sri Lanka would not join any power bloc or participate in ideological warfare.[15] And he did not take Sri Lanka into SEATO. Notwithstanding his markedly anti-communist stances, the Chinese Foreign

12. *loc. cit.*, p. 106.

13. see the text of D. S. Senanayake's speech delivered over the BBC on "the Middle Way of Moderation as a Path to Peace" in *The Ceylon Historical Journal*, Vol. 5, p. 114.

14. see his *Indian Foreign Policy* 1947-54: *A Study of Relations with the Western Bloc* (Groningen, J. B. Wolters, 1955), p. 52.

15. For further details see his *An Asian Prime Minister's Story* (London, Harrap, 1956). Also see his "Ceylon as Switzerland-in-Asia", *New Commonwealth*, Vol. 29, p. 316.

Minister at the time, Chou En-lai, invited the Prime Minister just before the Bandung meeting to pay an official visit to China. This did not work out as Kotelawala was defeated at the general election held next year (April 1956).

However during the regime of Sir John Kotelawala there was a genuine fear that Sri Lanka would find its way into the Anglo-American bloc by entering SEATO. But the ex-Prime Minister, Dudley Senanayake and his influential cousin, R. G. Senanayake resolutely opposed possible attempts to have Sri Lanka involved in any "international entanglements".[16]

As Prime Minister of a "National Government" in 1965-1970, Dudley Senanayake pursued the same policy of noninvolvement whilst maintaining friendly ties with the West laid down by his father, D. S. Senanayake. His government was critical of the U. S. presence in South Vietnam,[17] the American bombing of North Vietnam, the Smith regime in Rhodesia[18] and South Africa's control over South West Africa. The Prime Minister was strongly supportive of China's admission to the United Nations Organization. And his government maintained friendly relations with, and continued to receive aid from, the Soviet Union and China. As evidence of his desire to establish closer relations with the two leading communist states, he appointed former Marxists as ambassadors to the Soviet Union and China.

Thirdly, Prime Ministers seek global recognition in the belief that rival power blocs will look to them as mediators, conciliators or will take them seriously in their cautioning exhortations. D. S. Senanayake was one of the Commonwealth statesman whose views were given careful consideration at Commonwealth conferences. Sir John Kotelawala's attempts at winning the plaudits of the anti-communist world was evidenced in his utterances at international conferences (Colombo, April 1954; Bogor, December 1954; Bandung, April 1955). But he also articulated his view of Sri Lanka being a "Switzerland of the East" and Colombo a "Geneva of the Orient",[19] a view very much in line with the principles of nonalignment and dynamic neutralism enunciated by his successor, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike. Moreover S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike looked on the world stage in a similar way as Sir John Kotelawala did. He opined that Sri Lanka had a role to play in the United Nations in a joint endeavour "in which the weak and the strong would be able to render a useful service".[20] He did not however live long enough to spell out this role. But his wife, Mrs Sirima Bandaranaike had greater opportunities of intervening actively in international affairs by offering her good offices on such complicated issues as the Congo, Cyprus, the Indo-China war and Bangladesh. But such activity was no different from the role set out to itself

16. Lucy M. Jacob, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
17. *Ceylon Daily News*, 5 June 1966.
18. *Ibid.*, 3 September 1966 and 10 September 1966.
19. Lucy M. Jacob, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
20. From his Address to the United Nations General Assembly on "The New Asia", on 22 November 1956. For the full text, see Department of Information, *The Government and the People: A Collection of Speeches made by the Prime Minister of Ceylon, the Honourable S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike* (Colombo, Government Press, 1959), pp. 20-32.

by the 'National Government' of Dudley Senanayake during the phase 1965-70. In September 1966, that Government in defining its position in the United Nations Organisation stated that "the contribution of smaller and non-aligned nations towards the solution of international problems has in recent years been progressively of a significant nature" adding that it was prepared "to play the role commensurate with its special position in the world today".[21]

Explanations

There are two strands of nationalism in Sri Lanka, one which is western-oriented while the other being strongly indigenous. Both strands frequently meet on common ground. But while the former leans more on the West, the latter tends to make common cause with the non-aligned nations. Over the years however there has been a tendency for a bi-partisan foreign policy to evolve largely conditioned by (1) dependence on Britain and China for trading purposes and credit accommodation, (2) the presence of separatist forces among the Ceylon and Indian Tamil minority which look for inspiration and has hope of succour from India, (3) fear of India and (4) pressure from an electorally influential Muslim minority which compels governments to support the Arab cause against Israel.

At times UNP governments have tended to move a little to the right and SLFP governments somewhat to the left but the persistent trend has been to move nearer to the centre. In this way Prime Ministers have been successful in resisting pressures from their extreme wings to commit the island to the side of one power bloc or the other. However other important motivations such as the anxiety to protect the national interest have led Ceylonese governments to look to diverse sources for insurance against possible aggression. Thus the fear of aggression from a foreign foe or of internal challenges to the established order have obliged Ceylonese Prime Ministers to look elsewhere for the security that the island itself is unable to generate from within —mainly a question of finances. Likewise the reliance on Britain and the Commonwealth by all governments since independence, the talk of joining SEATO, the search for a mutual security system among the nonaligned states of South and Southeast Asia, and the appeal for military assistance to the West, the Soviet Union and some of the nonaligned states during the JVP (People's Liberation Front) insurrection of April 1971 are manifestations of the realization of weakness. But at no time has there been any real attempt at a complete involvement with one or other of the rival power blocs.

There is further a realization that a minor power cannot achieve a great deal. But an attempt is made to make a virtue of smallness as well as to elevate the moral force of Buddhism that is Sri Lanka's special legacy into a guiding principle of international conduct. Hence the advocacy of moderation, the middle path, dynamic neutralism etc. In this way Sri Lanka's statesmen have obtained a certain degree of international recognition.

21. *Ceylon Daily News*, 1 September 1966.

Conclusion

The objective in foreign policy is not to imitate the Red Cross state performing services such as are undertaken by the Government and public organisations of Switzerland. Nor is there anxiety to convert the island into a business state so typical of the Republic of Singapore despite the dire need for foreign investments to promote economic development. The Buddhist ethic inhibits such a search for excessive profit and the Buddhist ethos militates aginst an epicurean tourism characteristic of Bangkok and Singapore. Profit and tourism no doubt are prevalent motivations but society is not wholly engrossed in achieving only these objectives.

The aim is to have Sri Lanka recognised as a nonaligned state following a policy of positive neutralism. This does give her statesmen the opportunity to posture on the international stage—a useful booster in domestic politics. But there is also a genuine belief that a small state strategically situated, as Sri Lanka is in the global context, has a role to play.

The differences in foreign policy between the two major parties (UNP and SLFP) reflect to some extent their competitiveness in domestic politics. But the distinction, as stressed earlier, is a quantitative rather than a qualitative one. On most questions, except one, namely Marxism, the two parties are at one. The only question is to what extent will they deviate in the pursuit of the national interest from the broad *continuum* already set out for them by predetermined circumstances. Even the deviations are effected only in so far as these are consonant with the national interest. There has never been any serious attempt on the part of either party to barter the island's independence for economic or political gain.

There can be honest doubts as to whether there are even differences on the controversy relating to Marxism. The issue is a local one, that of mobilising maximum support—and in this instance Marxist electoral backing—to keep out the powerful UNP. But if S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike's views are the index to the current attitude of the SLFP in their electoral pacts and united fronts with the Communists and Trotskyists, then the objective is obviously one of socialising into the body politic, what to this social democratic statesman were political deviants who were also being treated for that reason as political outcastes. In April 1956, Bandaranaike stated that there would be an "explosion" if "you tried to dam up communism". The best way to deal with it, he said, was to leave it free to expand, arguing that in the end it would become "less extreme" and "with the capitalist world moving left, the two systems would gradually even out and meet at a democratic socialist centre".[22] Even though his UNP adversaries alleged that the Marxists were anticipating him in the role of an Alexander Kerensky, they themselves (the UNP) followed his example when at the general elections of 1965 and 1970 they made common cause with the "father of Marxism" in Sri Lanka, Philip Gunawardene.[23]

22. see text of "interview with Ceylon's Prime Minister, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike" in *U.S. News and World Report*, 20 April 1956, p. 61.

23. see my *Electoral Politics in an Emergent State: The Ceylon General Election of May 1970*, (Cambridge, at the University Press,) 1975.

Trade, aid and defence are the prime considerations in foreign policy. On these three matters the two major parties are, in varying forms, striving for the same objectives.[24] These considerations obviously cause a degree of dependence on the outside world. The issue is to what extent should this dependence compromise freedom of action. The answer lies in our original proposition that the predetermined circumstances compel policy to move along a given *continuum*. To this extent the strategic, positively neutralist, Buddhistic middle path state is obliged to pursue a predictably narrow course with very little room for manoeuvre.

24. The talk of Sir John Kotelawala taking Sri Lanka into SEATO was highly exaggerated. As he himself insisted, he had an "open mind" on the question. At the same time he wanted Sri Lanka to be a "Switzerland-in-Asia". It is very doubtful that he would have committed Sri Lanka in the way it was alleged he was planning to do. At the same time domestic forces would have obliged him to take a more politic course had he attempted to join SEATO.

VII

NATIONALISM AND ITS IMPACT

K. M. De Silva

Of the distinctive features of the Sri Lanka variant of Asian nationalism[1] the most remarkable is the prominent role played by the "reform" movement within the wider theme of nationalist agitation. 'Constitutionalist', 'moderate' and 'conservative' are some of the terms used to describe the reformers and their political attitudes. Each of these has its uses. What is common to them all is an emphasis on constitutional reform as the major goal of political endeavour.

At every stage the 'constitutionalists' had demonstrated a commitment to agitation through the prosaic techniques of memorial and deputation and formal negotiation; there was at the same time a pronounced distaste for agitational techniques such as 'non-co-operation', 'boycott' and for a politicization of the masses. Secondly, there was a firm belief in the possibility of reconciling 'Ceylonese' patriotism with loyalty to Britain on the assumption that these were complementary and not inherently incompatible. In the decade after independence this took the form of an emphasis on the Commonwealth connection, and Defence Agreements with Britain, and the maintenance of the link with the British Crown—Ceylon was a monarchy in striking contrast to the republican status which India and Pakistan opted for. The third feature was their vision of the goal of political endeavour—the concept of a territorial nationalism without any special, much less, exclusive association with any ethnic group, or any section of an ethnic group, in brief a multi-ethnic nation state. In this comprehensive all-island focus, and in the emphasis on the concept of a multi-racial polity they were at one with their Marxist critics of the nineteen thirties and forties. Indeed the Marxist version was much more comprehensive because it

1. For discussion of nationalism in Sri Lanka see particularly, K. M. de Silva, 'Nineteenth century origins of nationalism in Ceylon' in, *University of Ceylon, History of Ceylon* Vol. III, K. M. de Silva (ed) (Colombo, 1973) pp. 249-261; anb 'The reform and nationalist movements in the early twentieth century'. *ibid.*, pp. 381-407; 'The history and politics of the transfer of power' *ibid.*, pp. 489-533. M. W. Roberts, 'Reformism, nationalism and protest in British Ceylon: The roots and ingredients of leadership'. *Ceylon Studies Seminar* 1974, No. 4; and 'Variations on the theme of resistance movements: the Kandyan rebellion of 1817-18 and latter day nationalism in Ceylon'. *Ceylon Studies Seminar* 1970/2, No. 10. See also, Sir Ivor Jennings, 'Nationalism and political development in Ceylon' in *The Ceylon Historical Journal*, Vol. 3, pp. 62-84, 99-114; and 197-206.

The present essay is based largely on these articles.

encompassed the Indian plantation workers as well, a group which not even the most liberal of the "constitutionalists" were willing to regard as an integral element of a Sri Lanka polity. Fourthly, Sri Lanka was to be a secular state, embracing all the indigenous people in a territorial concept of citizenship. In this too the "constitutionalists" and their Marxist critics saw eye to eye.

In the years after independence one of the major pre-occupations of the government was with the need to establish a sense of Ceylonese nationalism on territorial lines, and under D. S. Senanayake's leadership political leaders aimed at subordinating communal differences to the common goal of fostering parliamentary democratic institutions and strengthening the foundations of nationhood. The primary aim was the establishment of an equilibrium of ethnic forces within a multi-racial polity. For many years it seemed as though these policies had succeeded, but beneath the surface powerful forces were at work to upset the equilibrium; ideals of reconciliation and harmony gave way before the stresses released by the divisive forces of language and religion. This shift was consistent with the essence of party politics in which, given a common basis of agreement, the numerically larger group could peacefully alter the power structure. Thus the Sinhalese-Buddhist majority, long dormant, began to assert its national dominance. The first casualities were the concepts of a multi-racial polity, of a Ceylonese nationalism, and of a secular state.

One of the common assumptions about the evolution of nationalism in Sri Lanka is that there were two distinct phases in it, one liberal, moderate and concerned about communal reconciliation and harmony in a plural society, and the other populist if not radical and essentially disruptive of communal and religious harmony. The dividing line is 1955-6. But any realistic assessment of nationalism in the island in the years after independence must begin by demonstrating that any novelty in this second phase was deceptive and that it had its roots in earlier phases of nationalist awakening going back to the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

In Sri Lanka as in many parts of Asia the origins of modern nationalism can be traced back to programmes of religious revivalism which were a reaction against missionary enterprise. Religious revival—a Buddhist revival, more specifically—preceded and inspired political nationalism providing as it did an ideal basis for the rejection of the West. This first phase in the emergence of nationalism would cover the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Whilst the incipient nationalist sentiment was primarily religious in outlook and content—a re-assertion of Buddhist values—political overtones in it were visible quite early and became more pronounced in the first two decades of the twentieth century with the growth of the temperance movement. These activities were concentrated in the low-country and there religious revivalism and temperance agitation demonstrated many of the characteristic features of nationalist activity as it emerged after 1955-6.

Nevertheless it is remarkable that a movement as powerful as this, and one which affected not merely the *elite* but the people at large should have had so little impact on the formal political activity of the *elite* in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Efforts were made to establish an ideological link between religious

revival and political nationalism, most notably by Anagarika Dharmapala. He saw the political implications and potential of the forces that were emerging, and he was among the first to advocate *swaraj*, but the blend of religious enthusiasm, militant nationalism and the advocacy of radical social reform which Dharmapala stood for evoked little sympathy from the effective political leadership of the national *elite*, "nationalist" and "constitutionalist" alike.

Though men like Dharmapala responded more positively and perhaps more intelligently to the challenges of the first decade of the twentieth century, the initiative in political issues went almost by default to the "constitutionalists". These latter seldom understood the complexities of the nationalist movement of their day. Steeped in the British Liberal tradition they placed their hopes on the establishment, in the course of time, of a Sri Lanka version of the British system of parliamentary government and the transfer of a substantial measure of political authority to the elected representatives of the people of the country. For many years students of the politics of Sri Lanka, many of whom consciously or unconsciously reflected these same political attitudes, tended to regard the "constitutionalists" and their political activities as *the* nationalist movement in the island, and they chose to disregard the virile brand of politics associated with the agitation for Buddhist revival and the cultural heritage associated with it and the Sinhala language.

This brand of militant Buddhist nationalism receded into the background after the riots of 1915, and for over a generation thereafter. The reasons for this would appear to lie in the field of politics rather than in any decline of interest in Buddhism or Buddhist activity. There was a mood of restraint and excessive caution in politics, and the distrust of enthusiasm which was one of its most notable characteristics spilled over into the sphere of religious activity as well. F. R. Senanayake[3] and D. B. Jayatilaka the most prominent of the leaders kept a tight rein on religious enthusiasm. Their approach to the religious problems of their day was in every way a contrast to Dharmapala's. They set the pace in Buddhist activity from about 1918, up to the time of Jayatilaka's retirement from active politics in 1942 (with F. R. Senanayake's untimely death—he died on 31 December 1925—D. B. Jayatilaka emerged as the undisputed Buddhist leader).

In the nineteen thirties, with the introduction of universal suffrage, politicians of the first (1931-1935) and the second (1936-1947) State Council, unlike their predecessors in the reformed Legislative Council of the 1920's, became subject to the pressures of a popular electorate. Buddhist pressure groups could now work through the electoral process to influence elected State Councillors. Sinhala Buddhists were awakening to a new political awareness, and by the very nature of democratic "parliamentary" politics there were political groups who sought to build a political programme emphasising the traditional cultural and religious patterns associated with Buddhism. The most notable of these groups was S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike's Sinhala Maha Sabha.

2. Despite F. R. Senanayake's key role in the politics of the 1920's there is a surprising dearth of published material on his career apart from a pamphlet in Sinhalese, and a few brief newspaper articles.

There could be few doubts about the viability of religio-cultural nationalism as a political force, or of the validity of its appeal to a democratic electorate, but its potentially divisive effect on a plural society such as Sri Lanka's deterred the moderate leadership in the Board of Ministers from giving their support to such a programme with any enthusiasm. The Sinhala Maha Sabha could not conceive of a Ceylonese polity that was not essentially Buddhist or Sinhala in orientation; and, in the late 1930's it took issue with the Ceylon National Congress on the question of a "Ceylonese" political entity. For the Ceylon National Congress this was an essential element in its political policy. But the Sinhala Maha Sabha had always been sceptical about it and was not reluctant to give public expression to its doubts about the viability of a "Ceylonese" political entity.

The government still prided itself on its neutrality in religious affairs, but it had become politic to underline a sense of special obligation towards Buddhism. The political leadership of the day attached to western concepts of secular government and the apparatus of political democracy, would not go beyond this. They were disinclined to yield to pressure from the more vociferous Buddhist groups such as the Sinhala Maha Sabha and the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress. The influence of D. B. Jayatilaka was crucial in this. His dual role of elder statesman in political and religious affairs gave him added prestige in both spheres, which he used to dampen excessive zeal and enthusiasm, and to curb what he regarded as extremism. Along with D. S. Senanayake he successfully postponed an open confrontation between a militant Buddhist movement urging the establishment of a Sri Lanka polity on traditional Sinhala-Buddhist lines, and those who were committed to the maintenance of the liberal ideal of a secular state in which the lines between state power and religion were carefully demarcated. (The Marxists too, at this stage, remained dogmatically unresponsive to this brand of nationalism, often dismissing it as mere chauvinism) It required D. B. Jayatilaka's retirement from active politics (and his death shortly thereafter) to open the way for a new generation of militant activists many of whom were members of the Sinhala Maha Sabha to take control of the Buddhist movement. Their impact on the life of the country became noticeable after independence, and with the formation of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party there emerged a mounting hostility to the western educated elite and the equilibrium of political forces which had been established in 1948 and seemingly consolidated in 1952 in the general election that followed upon the death of D. S. Senanayake.

The Sinhala-educated intelligentsia found that rewarding careers were closed to them by the pervasive dominance of English as the language of administration. Though they were not without influence in the villages they had seldom in the past been able to exert any influence on a national scale, and they felt that they had been unjustly excluded by the western educated elite from a share of power commensurate with their numbers. More importantly they felt that they were better able than the latter to speak for the villagers. By extension they also felt that the Tamil community had taken an unfair share of power by virtue of their superior educational opportunities.

In addition they felt that in its spiritual home Theravada Buddhism and the culture associated with it were not receiving sufficient support or respect. These fears culminated in the *Buddha Jayanthi* year, the world wide celebration in 1956 of the 2500th anniversary of the attainment of *nirvana* by the Buddha. At that time too a report by a prestigious non-government commission (consisting of Buddhist personalities), on the deplorable state of Buddhism in Sri Lanka heightened these fears—they charged that the value of independence was vitiated by the fact that the ruling elite was completely dominated by an alien outlook, and values and estranged from their national history and culture.

If religious fervour was the prime determinant of change, the language question was its sharp cutting edge. Indeed the two—Buddhism and Sinhala—were so closely interwined that it was impossible to treat either in isolation. The anxiety to preserve and strengthen the Sinhala language stemmed partly at least from the fear that if it fell into decay in Sri Lanka, its valuable religious and cultural tradition would die with it. What occurred at this time was a profoundly significant transformation of nationalism—language became the basis of nationalism on the lines of the linguistic nationalism of Central Europe of the mid-nineteenth century.[3] This metamorphasis of nationalism affected both the Sinhala and Tamil populations.

The consequences of the transformation may be outlined as follows: Firstly, the concept of a multi-racial polity ceased to be politically viable any longer. In Sinhala the words for *nation*, *race*, and *people* are practically synonymous, and a multi-racial or multi-communal nation or state is incomprehensible to the popular mind. The emphasis on Sri Lanka as the land of the Sinhalese carried an emotional popular appeal compared with which the concept of a multiracial polity was a meaningless abstraction.

Secondly, the abandonment of the concept of a multi-racial polity was justified by laying stress on the western concept of a democratic sanction deriving its validity from the clear numerical superiority of the Sinhala-speaking group. At the same time the focus continued to be an all-island one, and Sinhala nationalism was consciously or unconsciously treated as being identical with a Sri Lanka nationalism. The minorities, and in particular the Ceylon Tamils refused to endorse the assumption that Sinhala nationalism was interchangeable with the larger Sri Lanka nationalism.

Similarly the association of Buddhism with the state, and the simultaneous reduction of Christian influence especially after 1960 were integral features of the abandonment of the concept of a multi-racial polity. There was increasing pressure for the declaration of Buddhism as the state religion, but this the political leaderships in both the major parties, the S.L.F.P. and the U.N.P., were able to resist. However,

3. For a succint analysis of linguistic nationalism in mid-nineteenth century Europe, see Sir Lewis, Namier, *Vanished Supremacies*. See the essay on "Nationality and Liberty." (Peregrine Books, London 1962).

with the adoption of a republican constitution in 1972 the position changed. Chapter II of the Constitution laid it down that: "The Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the state to protect and foster Buddhism while assuring to all religions the rights granted by Section 18 (1) (d)". Sri Lanka had ceased to be a secular state pure and simple, even if it had not become a theocratic state which Buddhist pressure groups would have liked it to be.

Thirdly, linguistic nationalism was a populist nationalism, in contrast to the elitist constitutionalism of the early years after independence. The masses—and more especially the rural masses—had enterted the political arena, and no longer could political activity be confined to the *elite*. This linguistic nationalism despite its seeming novelty at the time it first appeared in the mid 1950's, had its roots in the recent past, and especially in the temperance movement of the early years of the twentieth century when a similar mixture of religious fervour and commitment to national culture had captured the imagination of the Sinhalaese people, particularly in the rural areas of the low country, and in the towns in all parts of the island save the Tamil areas. In the nineteen fifties the scale was wider, and the appeal somewhat deeper.

One of the notable consequences of this emergence of Sinhala Buddhist populism was the setback it gave the Marxist movement. By the end of the nineteen thirties Marxism had continued the process of politicizing the urban working class which A. E. Goonasinha had pioneered in the early nineteen twenties. They had always been conscious of the inter-connection between social problems and the political struggle for national independence, and in so doing they had helped accelerate the pace of national regeneration. Marxist thought had served to strengthen the forces of secularism in the island's politics. The Second World War had the effect of disrupting their activities and halting the progress they had made, but with independence and the first elections to the House of Representatives in 1947, they emerged as the most potent challenge to the government of the day, if not a credible alternative to it. To this status of the alternative government they always aspired and it was this aspiration which was thwarted by the emergence of linguistic nationalism and the populist form it took in the mid-nineteen fifties. With the emergence of the language movement, they watched the gains of the past disappear, and the prospects of the future become much more limited. They found to their dismay and discomfiture, that linguistic nationalism had an appeal which cut across class interests, and that it evoked as deep a response from the Sinhala working class as it did among the peasantry and the Sinhala educated *elite*. The cosmopolitan outlook of the Marxists and their enlightened advocacy of a multi-racial secular polity proved to be profoundly disadvantageous, and they were compelled to compromise on these issues, without, however, any substantial political benefits. From the position of the alternative government they were reduced to the status of an appendage of the populist Sri Lanka Freedom Party.

Though the Buddhist movement was generally hostile to Marxist ideology, it had no strong opposition to the adoption of a socialist programme. Since plantation

enterprise, nascent industry and the island's trade were dominated by foreign capitalists, and the minorities were disproportionately influential within the indigenous capitalist class,. Buddhist pressure groups viewed socialism as a means of redressing the balance in favour of the majority group. Every extension of state control over trade and industry could be justified on the ground that it helped curtail the influence of foreigners and the minorities. The Sinhala Buddhist section of the capitalist class was not averse to socialism so long as its own economic interests were not affected. The result was that the populist Sri Lanka Freedom Party has been able to reconcile a commitment to a hazy socialism with an advocacy of the interests of a section of the indigenous capitalist class—the Sinhala Buddhist segment of it.

We now turn to the last of the consequences of the emergence of a populist linguistic nationalism among the Sinhalese—its effects on the Tamil question. It is of such far-reaching importance in the island's contemporary history that it needs separate treatment.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century and in the early years of the twentieth, there was a remarkable contrast between Tamils and the Sinhalese in their political attitudes: the former were far ahead in political consciousness and receptivity to nationalist ideas then emerging in the Indian sub-continent. This lead they maintained till the early 1920's. During this period they did not regard themselves as a minority, but aspired to equality with the Sinhalese as one of two majority groups in the island as indeed their enfranchised segment was under the restricted franchise then prevailing.

It was in the early 1920's that the basic issues involved in the fundamental problem of Tamil politics—their relationship with the Sinhalese within the larger Sri Lanka polity—were dramatised in the careers of two distinguished Tamil politicians who dominated the politics of the island at this time, the brothers Ponnambalam Arunachalam and Ponnambalam Ramanathan.[5] Their careers afford a study in contrast as regards their aspirations for the people of this country: Arunachalam stood for harmonious association between the Sinhalese and Tamils in nationalist politics and nation-building, for mutual trust and responsive co-ordination of sectional interests in the struggle for a common goal of *swaraj*. He viewed the Sinhalese and Tamils as associates in the building up (and eventually in the government) of a multi-racial polity.

Ramanathan, in contrast, emphasised the virtues of a separate identity for the Tamils, of a Tamil nationalism to be fostered in collaboration with the British and if necessary in opposition to Sinhala nationalism. Ramanathan was much less visionary and idealistic than his brother. For him, the numerical inferiority of the Tamils had to be accepted as a fact, and on that basis it was imperative to protect the special interest of the Tamils by emphasising their distinctive communal identity. Under British rule this would mean unabashed collaboration with the imperial power in

return for the protection of minority interests and rights, and an insistence on a special if not privileged status as the price of acceptance of the eventual transfer of power by the British. G. G. Ponnambalam's 'Fifty-Fifty' campaign of the nineteen forties was the *reductio ad absurdum* of this process of political activity. There were two basic considerations: the emphasis on Tamil nationalism as something essentially divergent from, if not positively hostile to, Sinhalese nationalism; and secondly, the rejection, tacit or explicit of Arunachalam's concept of a multi-racial polity and a Ceylonese or Sri Lanka nationalism. There was a hard-headed pragmatism in all this, for the events of the mid-nineteen fifties were to demonstrate that for the Sinhalese themselves the concept of a Ceylonese nationalism could hardly hold its own against the compelling attractions of Sinhalese nationalism. Besides, Arunachalam's eventual disenchantment with the Congress served to underline the fact that, for many Sinhalese, responsive co-operation between the Sinhalese and Tamils pre-supposed the acceptance by the Tamils of an essentially subordinate position merely by virtue of their numerical inferiority, and that their status in a Ceylonese polity could seldom be anything more than that of a junior partner.

One important feature needs to be emphasised. At this time, for all their talk of a linguistic, religious and cultural separateness from the Sinhalese, the Tamils' concept of nationalism lacked coherence and cohesion. As with the Sinhalese, it was language that provided the sharp cutting edge of a new national self-consciousness. This was the Federal Party's great contribution to Tamil politics. Not only did they draw attention to the possession of a Tamil territorial unit, and the memory of an independent Tamil kingdom (which survived from the thirteen century to the beginning of the seventeenth), they also emphasised the role of language as the determinant of nationhood. In 1951 at the first national convention of the Federal Party it was claimed that "the Tamil speaking people in Ceylon constituted a nation distinct from that of the Sinhalese by every fundamental test of nationhood"—the "separate historical past" of the Tamils and their linguistic unity and distinctiveness. While the Sinhalese regard Sri Lanka as a nation state, the Tamils preferred to look upon it as a state-nation created by western imperialism, and in particular by the British. This view has been consistently emphasised by the Federal Party as well as by other Ceylon Tamils in recent years, and it is the foundation of their claim for a measure of regional autonomy (ranging from a unit or units in a Federal structure, to the more recent emphasis on a separate Tamil state).

With the change of government in 1956 the power of the Sinhala intelligentsia was quickly translated into a growing clamour for "Sinhala only", and the demolition of the language settlement arrived at in 1944-6. The fears of the Tamils were immediately aroused, tensions grew extremely high and erupted in 1956 and 1958 into race riots. To assuage the feelings of the Tamils, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike introduced legislation to permit the "reasonable use of Tamil" in administration. Though the bill was approved by Parliament, the regulations necessary for its implimentation were not passed till 1966.

If the race riots of the nineteen fifties underlined the combustible nature of linguistic nationalism in a plural society, there were more ominous long-term dangers

as well. The fact is that the Sinhalese, though an overwhelming majority of the population of the island, nevertheless have a minority complex *vis-a-vis* the Tamils. The Sinhalese (who number about 9 million) feel over-shadowed by the more than 50 million Tamil speakers in Sri Lanka and present-day Tamilnadu their nearest neighbours. Within Sri Lanka the Sinhalese outnumber the Tamils by more than three to one; but they are in turn outnumbered by nearly six to one by the Tamil speaking peoples of South Asia.

Historical tradition, cultural distinctions and geography separate the Tamils of the two countries from each other, and in the early years of independence in Sri Lanka the Tamils of the North and the East showed little inclination to identify themselves with the Tamils of Tamilnadu. Nevertheless the Sinhalese feared this possibility. Ironically enough, worsening relations between the Sinhalese and Tamils, and the deep sense of grievance engendered among the latter by the abandonment of the language compromise of 1944-6 has tended to make the link with Tamilnadu more attractive if not yet politically viable. This trend has been strengthened by the decline in power of the Indian National Congress in Tamilnadu and the emergence of the DMK more conscious of the rights of Tamils in South Asia and less inhibited in expressing concern about these. The association is still fitful and tentative, but it has potential for transformation into something more cohesive. The fears of the Sinhalese are thus in danger of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.

There is also the question of the relations between the Ceylon Tamils, and the Tamil speaking plantation workers in the island. The only link between them is language. Once again a closer association has emerged in the face of Sinhalese pressure. But it was only in 1972 that the growing solidarity between them was consolidated into joint political activity in which the Ceylon Workers Congress, the main trade-union cum political party of the plantation workers, pledged themselves to work together in the newly formed Tamil United Front under the leadership of the Federal Party leader, S. J. V. Chelvanayakam.

For decades the plantation workers were regarded as transients, and as an unassimilable minority living in their plantation ghettos isolated from the indigenous population. But the question of their franchise came up in 1927 and remained a matter of deep controversy for a generation thereafter. Their rights to permanent citizenship have been defined with elaborate care eliminating the claims of the bulk of them who came to be classified as "stateless" though resident in Sri Lanka. Treaties negotiated with India in 1964 and 1974 have all but settled this question of statelessness. Most will be repatriated to India, but a limited number will be accepted as citizens and permanent residents of Sri Lanka, thus conferring a new legitimacy on those plantation workers recognized as Sri Lanka citizens.

It is the Kandyan Sinhalese who feel most threatened by the plantation workers in their midst. They have taken the lead in the insistence on rigid rules and regulations for the grant of citizenship to the latter; on this issue the Kandyans have found easy converts among the low-country Sinhalese. Indeed it was the common campaign

against liberal citizenship rights to Indian plantation workers, conducted in opposition to the Donoughmore Commission, which brought the low-country Sinhalese and Kandyans together after a period of estrangement. Not that Kandyan fears and suspicions about the low-country Sinhalese dominance ever completely subsided. The Kandyan claim for a federal political structure in 1927 before the Donoughmore Commission and in 1944 before the Soulbury Commission was proof that they had not.

In the first half of the nineteenth century Kandyan resistance was the major political problem that confronted the British in Sri Lanka. But Kandyan resistance to the British petered out in the two or three decades after the suppression of the 'rebellion' of 1848, and disappeared for ever thereafter. By a deliberate change of policy the British converted the Kandyans from a suspect group into a bloc of loyalists. The Kandyan problem in the sense of a 'traditional' nationalism guided by an aristocratic leadership had ceased to be a serious threat to the continued stability of British rule.

Between the 1880's and the attainment of independence the Kandyans mostly took satisfaction in a new role, that of associates of the British, and a counterweight to the reform and nationalist movements dominated by the western educated *elite* of the low country. The leaders of Kandyan opinion seldom showed much sympathy for the political aspirations of these movements. They stood aloof and suspicious when not positively hostile. The tradition of Kandyan "resistance" was invoked not against the British but against the "constitutionalist" leadership. Nevertheless the memory of Kandyan resistance and of the Kandyan Kingdom as the last independent Sinhalese kingdom persisted, to provide some inspiration for the more forward looking "reformers" and those among the latter who came to form the nucleus of a genuine "nationalist" movement basing itself on Sinhalese tradition.

There were many reasons why the Kandyans took shelter under the colonial umbrella and offered collaboration in return for certain minimum requirements being met. The most important of these, it would appear, were the basically economic ones. Though the Kandyan region was the main centre of the plantation industry, fewer benefits from this process of economic development had accrued to the Kandyans themselves than to any other group among the peoples of the island. Indeed their claim that they had suffered greatly from the development of plantations in their midst, though somewhat exaggerated, is not entirely without merit. Grievances about land, and fears about a potential political threat from the Indian plantation workers were the two most important aspects of this. They were a self-proclaimed backward community seeking redress for these grievances. Their leadership remained aristocratic and conservative in outlook.

It was after independence that Kandyan influence on Sinhala nationalism began to make itself felt. By 1956 a new leadership had emerged. Populist in outlook they found a natural home in the SLFP. Curiously, though, when the Kandyan influence in the SLFP reached a peak after the 1960's, it was under a more traditional

aristocratic leadership.[4] But aristocratic resuscitation did not mean a return of conservatism. On the contrary it was receptive to populist pressures and socialist ideology.

There are three points of significance in the Kandyan influence on the growth of nationalism. Firstly, Kandyan pressures were the guiding influence in the development of policy on the questions relating to Indian plantation labour in Sri Lanka. At times these pressures have developed vehemently and unabashedly racialist overtones. The rigid tests devised for Sri Lanka citizenship have eliminated a substantial portion of the Indian plantation labour from the voters' lists. This had the effect of giving the Sinhalese population in the Kandyan areas a disproportionate share of the seats in Parliament. (With the delimitation of 1959, the Kandyans with just 26% of the population had 44% of the seats). Secondly, in the 1970's the Kandyan influence has served to radicalise land policy in general and to impose state control and ownership on plantations in areas where population pressure is severe. These initiatives have assumed the form of a passionate search for a redress of historic grievances. Thirdly, Kandyan influence has been basically anti-capitalist in outlook, an understandable development given the animosity of the Kandyans towards the enterprising outsiders who have dominated economic activity in their regions—whether they were low-country Sinhalese, Indians, Moors or Europeans. There are very few Kandyans in the indigenous capitalist class, and this no doubt has facilitated the easy reconciliation of aristocratic leadership and socialist ideology.

It would be evident from this brief essay that nationalism in Sri Lanka is a thing of a myriad shapes and forms. Just as it has kept changing over the last three quarters of a century, it could be confidently predicted that the one point of consistency in the future would be this infinite changability. And the impact of nationalism will continue to be at once cohesive and disruptive.

There will be those who, despite all the evidence to the contrary, insist on the exclusive rights of the brand of nationalism they advocate or adhere to, to the status of nationalism proper. And they will insist that all other varieties are spurious, defective and less than comprehensive. But it would be more realistic to remember that there are as many versions of nationalism as there are of socialism, and—more importantly —there are as many roads to nationalism as there are nowadays to socialism.

4. This influence has been especially strong since 1970. It is a point worth noting that in 1975, the President of the Republic of Sri Lanka, the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Chief Justice and the Governor of the Central Bank are all Kandyans.

VIII

THE ECONOMY OF SRI LANKA 1948-73*

H. M. GUNASEKERA

I. MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS OF THE PERIOD

Three major developments characterising this period, which influenced the performance of the economy to a remarkable degree were: the rapid population growth; the foreign exchange crisis; and, the increasing role of the government in the economy.

(a) Population Growth

During the period under review, Sri Lanka's population increased rapidly. So much so, that the country has been described as the "example *par excellence* of... population explosion".[1] The population almost doubled from 6·6 million in 1946 to 12·7 million in 1971, growing at an annual average rate of 2·3 per cent.[2] This population upsurge has been due to the juxtaposition of a "primitive birth rate with a modernised death rate".[3] The crude death rate, halved from 21·5 per thousand in 1945 to 10.7 per thousand in 1953 due largely to a successful anti-malaria campaign, continued to decline further during the rest of the period reaching 7·6 per thousand in 1971, because of the improvement and countrywide diffusion of health services.[4] The birth rate which was 39·7 per thousand in 1947, had declined to 30·0 per thousand in 1971.[5] The slower decline of the latter led to a widening gap between the two rates and a consequent high growth rate of population.

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* I am grateful to Mr. N. Balakrishnan for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper. The responsibility for any errors that may remain is, however, entirely mine.

1. Gavin W. Jones and S. Selvaratnam, *Population Growth and Economic Development of Ceylon.* p. 20, (Colombo, Hansa Publishers, 1971).
2. Department of Census and Statistics, *Statistical Pocket Book of the Republic of Sri Lanka.* Colombo, 1973.
3. Mrs. Joan Robinson, "Economic possibilities of Ceylon" *Papers by Visiting Economists.* Colombo, Planning Secretariat, 1959, p. 39.
4. *Administration Report of the Registrar General.* Colombo, 1965; Department of Census and Statistics. *The Pocket Book, op. cit.*
5. Since early 1960s however, the crude birth rate has declined faster, dropping from 35 per thousand in 1961-63 to 29.6 per thousand in 1970-72. The main reasons for this have been the continuation of an earlier trend of the postponement of marriage, and the decline in marital fertility among women over 25 years. There has been a certain amount of family planning activity in Sri Lanka during this period, carried out earlier by a private voluntary association and since 1965 by the government. It is difficult, however, to say exactly to what extent these activities have been responsible for the drop in the crude birth rate (*vide*, U.N.-UNESCO-WHO, *Family Planning Evaluation Mission to Ceylon* 1971).

A major outcome of the demographic trends of this period was the large scale additions to the population of young dependents in the age group of 0–15 years. Their proportion in the population rose from 37 per cent in 1946 to 42 per cent in 1963 and was 39 per cent in 1971. This situation resulted in a high dependency burden to the economy which, in turn, led to a severe curtailment of the economy's ability to improve the average living standards of the population and divert resources to increasing its productive capacity. The adverse impact of the demographic pressures of these years was also felt in the sphere of government fiscal operations and balance of payments because of the government's commitment to a policy of large scale social welfare expenditures disbursed mainly on a per capita basis and because of the economy's heavy dependence on imports for most of its essential consumer goods.[6] The strain on the economy due to fast population growth was particularly strong because of the spread of the "revolution of rising expectations" and the sluggishness of the economy.

One of the major problems causing increasing and serious national concern which emerged during this period was unemployment.[7] "The emergence of chronic large-scale unemployment was due to the contrast between the fast growth of population and the inertia of the economy in the face of adverse trends in the world market".[8] As the years went by, increasing numbers were added to the country's labour force when the delayed effects of the high birth rates in the past began to work themselves out. The average annual addition to the labour force which was around 54,000 in the period 1946-53 had increased to about 110,000 in the period 1963-71.[9] The economy's employment opportunities however, did not expand sufficiently to provide full employment, as seen from the high rates of unemployment recorded by various estimates. According to the I.L.O. Survey of 1959, the unemployment rate ranged between a 'low' estimate of 10·5 per cent of the labour force or 340,000 persons and a 'high' estimate of 12·8 per cent of the labour force or 450,000 persons.[10] Nine years later, the Labour Force Survey of 1968 estimated unemployment as 450,000 persons or 11·0 per cent of the

6. For a discussion of these implications and of the possible gains from lower population growth rates *vide* Jones and Selvaratnam *op.cit.*

7. The country has been aware of the existence of a serious unemployment problem since the late fifties. The *Ten Year Plan* (1959-68) was prepared from the point of view of providing employment to growing numbers. Solving the unemployment problem was one of the major targets of the *Five Year Plan* (1972-76), and was the subject of study by two major international organisations in recent years (*vide* Peter J. Richards *Employment and Unemployment in Ceylon* (Paris OECD 1971), and ILO, *Matching Employment Opportunities and Expectations: A Programme of Action for Ceylon*. 2 vols. (Geneva 1971).

8. ILO *Matching Employment . . . op. cit.*, p. 17.

9. S. Selvaratnam, "Impact of population Growth on Employment and Training in Sri Lanka" *Report of the National Management Seminar on Population and Family Planning* Colombo, 1972, p. 30.

10. ILO "A Survey of Unemployment and Underemployment in Ceylon" *International Labour Review* 38, March 1963, pp. 247-257.

labour force.[11] A higher figure of 546,000 persons or 14 per cent of the labour force was given by the Socio-Economic Survey of 1969/70 conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics.[12] More recently, a still higher estimate 743,000 or 18·1 per cent of the labour force has been given by the Labour Force Participation Survey (1973) of the Central Bank of Ceylon.[13] Although at first sight these figures seem to indicate a significant increase in the *rate* of unemployment, they must be interpreted carefully. The estimates, excepting two, are not strictly comparable, mainly because of different definitions given to the term unemployment. The two strictly comparable estimates—the ILO "low" estimate of 1959 and the Labour Force Survey of 1968—indicate only a small rise of the unemployment rate from 10·5 per cent to 11·0 per cent over the decade 1959-68.[14] Perhaps in more recent years the rate may have increased faster due to the greater contrast between fast increasing labour force and the stagnating economy. At any rate, even if the unemployment rate did not increase rapidly but hovered around 10-11 per cent of the labour force, such a rate in itself can be considered as quite high by any reasonable standard.

A disturbing feature of Sri Lanka's unemployment problem during these years has been its heavy concentration among the young age groups. According to the Socio-Economic Survey of 1969/70, a proportion as high as 83 per cent of the total number unemployed belonged to the age category of 18-24 years. The rate of unemployment for this category was 35·6 per cent of its labour force, which was almost three times the rate for the country's labour force as a whole. Even more disturbing was the high rate of unemployment among the educated youth. As reported in the above survey, over 27 per cent of the total number unemployed had obtained the GCE ordinary level or higher educational qualifications, while another 45 per cent had received middle grade (about 8-9 years) schooling. The unemployment rate within each educational category of the labour force showed a tendency to be positively related to the level of education. Thus, for the no schooling and primary school categories, the unemployment rates were 8 per cent and 15 per cent respectively while for the middle school and G.C.E. ordinary level categories they were 39 per cent and 63 per cent respectively.[15] Hence, in the words of the I.L.O. mission, "the more a young person had been educated, the greater the likelihood that he or she will be unemployed"[16]. The above figures may be deceptively high because of the delay before new entrants to the labour force get their first jobs and because of possible exaggeration of educational qualifications. It is quite likely however, that even after allowance is made for

11. As quoted in Jones and Selvaratnam, *op. cit.*, p. 174 (The Survey is unpublished).
12. Department of Census and Statistics: *Preliminary Report on the Socio-Economic Survey of Ceylon* 1969-70. (Colombo, 1971).
13. Central Bank of Ceylon, *The Determinants of Labour Force Participation Rates in Sri Lanka* 1973. Colombo, 1974. Other estimates of unemployment available for this period are: The Consumer Finance Surveys of 1963 (13.8%) and of 1973 (24%); Population Census of 1963 (8.0-10.8%) and the Rural Employment Survey of 1964 (12.5%).
14. According to Richards these figures cannot be "interpreted as showing a large increase in the rate of unemployment". He showed that unemployment was rising only among two major groups—educated women and estate labour. (Richards *op. cit.*, p. 63).
15. ILO, *Matching Employment... op. cit.*, Table 8, p. 28.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

such possibilities, the unemployment rates among the educated young age groups would remain high. This situation could partly be attributed to the scarcity of white-collar jobs. By 1970 there were "far too few white-collar jobs to satisfy those leaving school with qualifications which only a few years earlier would have obtained them this type of employment almost automatically".[17]

(b) The Foreign Exchange Crisis

A major constraint on the growth of Sri Lanka's economy during the last decade and a half has been the acute foreign exchange scarcity. Its effect on the economy has been cripplingly severe because of the economy's heavy dependence on imports for most of its capital goods, raw materials, and essential consumer goods. In the period 1972-73, despite stringent import controls, the ratio of imports to the GNP was 18 per cent. Almost half the imports consisted of essential food items while 44 per cent consisted of raw materials and capital goods. The latter's ratio to the total gross domestic capital formation in these years was 44 per cent.[18] Although this kind of heavy dependence on imports was true of the economy even in the early years of the period under review, no serious problem was faced on account of it because the country's commodity terms of trade was better, population pressure less severe, and the import requirements for industrial purposes more limited. Since the early sixties however, due to a chronic scarcity of foreign exchange, the economy has been starved of essential imports resulting in a fall in the living standards of the people and in the tempo of economic activity.

From 1957 through 1970 there has been a basic deficit in the balance of payments except for a small surplus in 1965. The surpluses witnessed in the years after 1970 have been achieved by means of severe import and exchange controls and, as such, do not reflect an improvement in the underlying basic disequilibrium.

The main factor behind this state of imbalance has been an adverse trade balance. What occurred in this respect may be seen from Table 1.

Since the mid-fifties, the merchandise export income has not shown any increasing trend. At best it has been constant. This situation has obviously been due to a decline in export prices because the export quantity has shown a tendency to increase. On the other hand, the value of imports has increased in the first half of this period and thereafter tended to remain at a high level. Table 1 shows that the rise in the import value in the first half of this period has been due to an increase in the quantity of imports while in the later years it has remained high because of escalating prices. Thus the trade balance in the sixties and afterwards has been mainly due to a significant deterioration of the country's terms of trade. The commodity terms of trade index declined from 144 in the years 1957-60 to 81 in the period 1969-72. The export earnings were badly

17. Ibid., p. 16, Note however, the following observation made by Richards (*op. cit.*, pp. 13-14) "Unemployment is heavily concentrated in the young age groups. Nevertheless, the picture of the open unemployed as wanting white-collar jobs is wide off the mark as many of the open unmployed are not particularly well educated and have no unreasonable job ambitions".

18. Central Bank of Ceylon: *Annual Report* 1973.

hit by the fall in the prices of tea and rubber—the two commodities which together contributed about 70 per cent of the merchandise export earnings of this period. The average f.o.b. price of a pound of tea dropped from 63 to 41 SDR cents in the period 1954-58 to 1969-73. Similarly, the price of a pound of rubber fell from 30 to 19 SDR cents over the same period.

TABLE 1

Value, quantity and price of merchandise exports and imports 1949-72

Period	Exports			Imports			Terms of Trade
	Value (million SDR)(a)	*Quantity Index*	*Price Index*(b)	*Value (million SDR)*(a)	*Quantity Index*	*Price Index*(b)	
1949-52 ..	322	74	117	286	86	82	144
1953-56 ..	370	82	126	320	97	86	147
1957-60 ..	364	83	121	393	126	86	144
1961-64 ..	375	96	110	359	106	87	128
1965-68 ..	364	101	109	365	101	106	103
1969-72 ..	317	99	117	380	97	146	81

Source: Central Bank of Ceylon, *Annual Reports.*

(*a*) Since the par value of the US Dollar has changed in recent years, these values are expressed in terms of the SDR units of the IMF.

(*b*) These indices have been prepared in terms of Rupee prices. Hence the indices may somewhat overestimate the level of prices after the devaluation of the Rupee in November 1967.

The government has tried to overcome the balance of payments disequilibrium by various ways. Import and exchange controls were imposed and have existed for the past decade and a half. Through these controls the use of foreign exchange has been restricted to the import of most essential goods and services. In the absence of an inflow of private long term capital, the government has made use of foreign assistance mainly in the form of long term and short term loans. These loans, however, have resulted in a growing burden of debt servicing. Interest and repayment arising out of both long term and short term loans have increased significantly from a mere Rs. 33 million or 1·6 per cent of all foreign exchange earnings in 1961 to a staggering Rs. 1157 million or 41 per cent of all foreign exchange earnings in 1973.[19]

The government has continued to resist the repeated demands from the IMF for a general devaluation of the rupee as a corrective measure, for fear of a fall in the living standards of the low income groups.[20] There has however, been a partial devaluation. This came as a result of the dual exchange rate system introduced in May 1968, and continued to date. Under this arrangement, an exchange rate with a premium (of 65 per cent now) is adopted for certain imports not directly connected to the

19. Central Bank of Ceylon: *Annual Reports.*

20. Although there was a devaluation in November 1967 it was prompted more by the United Kingdom's devaluation of the pound sterling at that time than by a desire to correct Sri Lanka's balance of payments disequilibrium, because United Kingdom was Sri Lanka's most important trading partner.

consumption pattern of the masses and for certain "non-traditional" exports while the lower official exchange rate is adopted for all other exports and imports.[21]

While it is true that the foreign exchange crisis has been due, largely, to a deterioration of the country's commodity terms of trade, it has also partly been due to the lack of far sighted policies aimed at making the economy more resilient to such exigencies. For example, the better opportunities in the early fifties were not used for the purpose of diversifying Sri Lanka's exports. Even the industrial development that has been taking place in the last decade or so has not been properly planned to make it export oriented and less import intensive. Consequently, after a quarter century of independence, the country's export base has hardly changed from what it was in 1948—the heavy concentration on the three primary commodities of tea, rubber and coconut. In 1948-49 these three items contributed 90 per cent of merchandise export earnings. In 1971-72 the proportion was almost the same.[22]

(c) The Role of the Government

During the quarter century under review, the size of the government sector and its control and influence over the ownership, allocation, and distribution of resources in the economy increased considerably.[23] This increasing role came to be exercised not only through an ever expanding budget but also through the ownership and operation of economic enterprises, direct controls, and economic planning.

A crude measure of the size of the government sector in the economy is the ratio of government expenditure to the GNP. This ratio increased from 21 per cent in 1947-48 to 34 per cent in 1970-71. In absolute terms, the government expenditure increased nearly sevenfold from Rs. 593 million to Rs. 3,975 million and on a per capita basis from Rs. 85 to Rs. 311.[24]

This rapid expansion was due mainly to the current expenditures which increased from Rs. 433 million to Rs. 3,095 million over this period resulting also in a rise in their share of total expenditures from 73 per cent to 78 per cent. Capital expenditures rose from Rs. 157 million to Rs. 800 million but their proportion in the total fell from 26 to 20 per cent.[25] Most of the current expenditures of this period went into social

21. W. M. Tilekaratne: "How the FEEC Scheme came to be Introduced". *Research and Industry*, (Colombo, Industrial Development Board, 1970); Dayapala Wijewardana: "The Problem of a Multiple Currency System in a Developing Economy with special reference to Sri Lanka" *Staff Studies, Vol.* 3, *No.* 1, April 1973. Colombo, Central Bank of Ceylon.

22. In 1973 there was a significant change. The share of these products in total merchandise exports fell to 79 per cent due to a sharp increase in minor exports—particularly of gems and to a lesser extent due to a fall in coconut exports. The increase in gem exports has been due to the special incentives given by the State to such trade. The export of other "non-traditional" items has also been given such encouragement lately. Nevertheless, it is too early to say whether a definite breakthrough has been made in the diversification of Sri Lanka's exports.

23. The term "government" here means only the central government and hence excludes local government.

24. Central Bank of Ceylon: *Annual Reports*.

25. Central Bank of Ceylon: *op. cit.*

services and transfers to the private households. Thus, social services-consisting mainly of free education and free health services to the public, and transfers excluding interest on public debt-came to 55-63 per cent while social services and food subsidies alone came to 45-52 per cent of current expenditure.[26] Since most of these measures were provided on a per capita basis, rapid population growth of this period resulted in a substantial rise in the level of these expenditures.

The heavy emphasis of government expenditures on social welfare has been the outcome of strong socio-political pressures. In the context of a system where the political decision making process consisted of a Parliamentary democracy based on universal adult suffrage and where the mass of the voters lived on the verge of poverty[27] and trade unions were strong, it was inevitable that the political parties seeking to win or retain political power came to stress policies of this nature.[28]

Mounting current expenditures not only prevented the government from devoting more of its available resources into immediately productive investment but also resulted in inflationary budgets.[29] This was because of the lag in government revenue in the face of the government's commitment to expand expenditures. While government expenditure rose sevenfold from Rs. 593 million to Rs. 3,975 million, government revenue increased only fivefold from Rs. 601 million to Rs. 2,815 million over the above period, resulting in persistent and ever widening budget deficits.[30] The deficit which was Rs. 222 million or 15 per cent of total expenditure in 1957-58 had increased to Rs. 936 million or 27 per cent of expenditure in 1970-71. Since these deficits were financial largely by borrowing from the banking system, particularly, from the Central Bank, they led to an increase in the country's money supply. In the early years of liberal import policy with little or no import restrictions, this expansionary policy led to the draining away the country's foreign assets. Since early sixties however, when stringent

26. *Ibid.*

27. On the basis of "two arbitrary 'poverty lines' of annual per capita incomes of U.S. $50 and US $ 75 (in 1971 prices) 33.0 per cent and 63.5 per cent respectively of Sri Lanka's population lived under poverty conditions in 1969. (Montek S. Ahluwalia, "Income Inequality: Some Dimensions of the Problem" *Finance and Development* Vo. II, No. 31 September 1974, p. 5, IMF and World Bank Group, Washington D.C.

28. See Donald R. Snodgrass, *Ceylon: An Export Economy in Transition* (Homewood, Illiois, Richard D. Irwin Inc., 1966). Marga Institute, *Welfare and Growth* (Colombo, 1974).

29. "Unwilling or unable for political reasons to cut welfare expenditures including those designed to hold down the price of food—any attempt to cut the subsidized rice ration would invite political disturbances and electoral defeat—the government continued, in effect, to pump money into the economy" Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations*, 3 vols. (New York, Pantheon, 1968), Vol. I, p. 356.

30. The composition of government revenue changed significantly during these years, particularly after 1960. Due to import restrictions and falling export prices, customs duties which contributed over half the revenue in the fifties declined in relative importance. Their contribution was around 30 per cent in the 1970-71 fiscal year. The share of domestic indirect taxes had increased from a mere 6 per cent in 1948-49 to 24 per cent in 1971-72 mainly due to the Turnover Tax introduced in the early sixties. Non-tax revenue also had increased from 22 to 25 per cent over these years. The share of direct taxes however, remained more of less constant around 16 per cent. Although these taxes seem to have increased more or less at the same rate with the GNP, there was a case for higher taxes on wealth and "nonearned" incomes in view of increasing domestic industrial activity and inflation.

import controls came into being, its impact has been mainly one of domestic inflation. The Colombo Consumers' Cost of Living Index (1952=100) registered an increase from 103·5 in 1960 to 165·4 in 1973.[31]

The government's role in the economy increased far beyond what is indicated by the crude measure of the ratio of its expenditure to the GNP. For example, the ratio partially excludes the expenditures of the commercial enterprises undertaken by the government in increasing numbers during this period through the medium of Public Corporations. These activities resulted either from the nationalisation of existing private enterprises or from entirely new ventures. Under the United National Party government which held power in the early years of independence, direct participation by the government in commercial activities was kept to a minimum in accordance with its heavy bias towards private enterprise. Since 1956 however, there has been a radical change. The voting into power of the People's United Front led by S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike this year marked the beginning of a trend under which the less privileged classes of the society were able to have an increased influence over government policies.[32] Hence the government has played an increasingly interventionist role in the economy since this year. Soon after assuming power, it nationalised the country's bus transport service and the Colombo harbour. It also started several new government industrial enterprises to produce items such as sugar, plywood, leather products, caustic soda and chlorine, cotton yarn, ilmenite, bricks, tiles, and hardboard. This trend was continued further under the regimes of Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike (1960-64 and 1970—). In the early sixties her government nationalised insurance and banking businesses, and the distribution of petroleum. More government Corporations were launched to undertake a wide variety of activities pertaining to the production and distribution of goods and services, to the financing of such activities and also related to the export-import trade. Over the period 1956-73 the number of government Corporations increased to 84. The total capital invested in these corporations stood at Rs. 5,624 million in 1973.

Another dimension in which the government influence over the economy increased were the regulatory measures, which had a significant impact on the economy. Among these measures there were, firstly, those relating to the distribution of goods and services. In order to ensure a fair distribution of essential commodities which became increasingly scarce over these years the government adopted a policy of rationing by regulation in place of the free market mechanism. For example, when the country was hit by an acute shortage of foreign exchange in the late fifties, strict import and exchange controls were imposed and exchange came to be rationed for essential

31. This index, however, grossly underestimates the extent of inflation that prevailed in the economy, because of several major weaknesses built into it. Most notably, it covers only the Colombo working class group of consumers. Even here, some of the major items of expenditure are subsidised by the government. Moreover, its weights have not been revised to take account of possible changes in recent years.

32. For a discussion of the Socio-political forces at work behind the economic scene during these years see: Myrdal, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 343-360; Marga Institute, *op.cit.*, sections 1-3.

purposes on the basis of a system of licensing.[33] On the domestic front, the distribution of imports and essential goods domestically produced came to be entrusted to co-operatives and authorised dealers. There have been problems of smuggling, foreign exchange frauds, black marketeering and corruption usually associated with such controls. Nevertheless, in the context of overall scarcities and poverty of the majority of the people, these regulations have benefited large sections of the society. Secondly in pursuance of the policy of greater equality in the distribution of income and wealth, the earlier policy of socialisation of the means of production was supplemented by other measures in recent years. The Land Reform Law of 1972 for example, sought to restrict individual ownership of land by fixing a ceiling of 25 acres for paddy land and 50 acres for highland. Under this Act the government has acquired 559,377 acres of privately held land and given a part of it over to landless individuals, collective and co-operative farms and to the State Plantations Corporation.[34] No systematic scheme has however, been devised to ensure efficient long term development of the acquired land. This measure, despite its limitations, has fulfilled to some extent the long standing need for land reforms in Sri Lanka. Although an attempt was made in this direction in 1958 by the enactment of the Paddy Lands Bill, its purpose was limited to the fixing of maximum land rent payable by tenant farmers and to granting greater security of tenure to such farmers.[35] Another measure falling into the area of redistribution of income and wealth was the ceiling on House Property Law of 1973 which limited the maximum number of houses an individual could own to two, and made provision for surplus houses to be purchased by tenants while the Rent Act of the same year brought all houses under rent control with substantial reductions in rent. In 1972 the government introduced a ceiling of Rs. 24,000 per year on individual disposable income, requiring the excess income to be contributed to a compulsory savings fund.[36] A capital levy was also introduced in 1972.

While for the most part government participation in economic activities took place in a variety of haphazard ways, some attempt was also made at economic planning.[37] With an increasing realisation of the need for planned economic development, there was an increasing progress made in the machinery of planning. Independent government in Sri Lanka started with hardly any administrative machinery specially set up for such activity. By the early sixties however, a Department of Economic Planning had been set up. In 1965 a separate Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs with separate departments in charge of Foreign Aid and Plan Implementation, was set

33. Central Bank of Ceylon: *Annual Reports;* J. G. G. Motha: *The Impact of Import Policies on the Economy of Ceylon* (Unpublished) Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford, 1971, gives a detailed account of the working of these controls.

34. Agrarian Research and Training Institute: *New Settlement Schemes in Sri Lanka* (Colombo, 1974), p. 155.

35. This Act was amended in 1974 to include tenancy on highlands too under its purview.

36. This income ceiling has since then been raised to Rs. 30,000 per year with effect from 1975.

37. An exhaustive study of Sri Lanka's planning efforts, especially from the point of view of employment, is found in Birgen Moller: *Employment Approaches to Economic Planning in Developing Countries with Special Reference to Development Planning of Ceylon (Sri Lanka).* Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies Monograph Series No. 9, Stockholm 1972.

up under the direct supervision of the Prime Minister himself. A Cabinet Co-Ordinating Committee on Economic Questions was also formed at this time. In the early seventies, regional planning offices were also set up and the Department of Plan Implementation was raised to the status of a separate Ministry. In the late sixties, the Ministry of Planning began a system of project evaluation and also prepared, for the first time, an input output table for the economy.

The actual achievements of planning were however, quite modest. The *Ten Year Plan* (1959-68)[38] which was the first planning document of a serious nature prepared in Sri Lanka, was never implemented, due to political turmoil following the assassination of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike. The Three Year Implementation Programme (1962-64)[39] drawn up by the government of Mrs. Bandaranaike too could not be fully implemented because the Parliament was dissolved in 1964 following the government's loss of a vote of no confidence. During the second regime of the United National Party (1965-70), the emphasis was on the implementation of selective programmes in a few strategic areas of the economy rather than on a long term plan.[40] The cornerstone of this government's development strategy was its Food Drive, launched for the purpose of making Sri Lanka self- sufficient in rice and subsidiary foods. This emphasis was due not only to the UNP's traditional preference for agriculture over industry but also due to the acute scarcity of food in these years and because of the possibility of finding a partial solution to the acute foreign exchange scarcity through import substitution in food. Statistical data indicate a marked increase in the output of rice, chillies, onions and potatoes.[41] Nevertheless, the overall economic problems of the country continued to worsen. The government failed to realise its expectation to win the General Elections of 1970 on the strength of the success of the Food Drive.

A five year development plan (*The Five Year Plan*, 1972-76) was prepared and implemented by the United Front government led by Mrs. Bandaranaike which came into power in 1970.[42] It was aimed at three main problems which were in urgent need of attention at this time, namely, the foreign exchange problem, large scale unemployment and poverty among the mass of the population. Hence its development strategy centred around peasant agriculture and agro-based industry. Other important aspects of the plan were, the diversification of exports, expansion of the tourist industry and the emphasis on labour intensive techniques of production. The plan's main targets were a growth rate of 6.0 per cent per annum and the reduction unemployment from 14 to 7 per cent.

38. National Planning Council: *The Ten Year Plan* 1959.
39. The Department of National Planning: *The Short-Term Implementation Programme*, 1962.
40. Moller: *op. cit.*, p. 238.
41. Gamani Corea "Economic Planning, The Green Revolution and the 'Food Drive' in Ceylon" in Wilfred L. David (ed) *Public Finance, Planning and Economic Development: Essays in Honour of Ursula Hicks*, (London & Basingstoke, McMillan, 1973) pp. 273-303.
42. Ministry of Planning and Employment: *The Five Year Plan*, Colombo, 1971.

In the two years 1972-73 the actual performance of the economy fell short of the targets. The average growth rate was only 3.1 per cent.[43] A food crisis developed in 1973 and unemployment appeared to have increased. In fairness to the Plan, however, it must be pointed out that its successful implementation was thwarted *inter alia* by the crippling increase of import prices due to world market scarcities, currency realignments, and the fuel crisis of 1973. Import price index (1967=100) rose from 150 in 1971 to 209 in 1973.[44] Export earnings stagnated too. A move to reduce welfare expenditures to raise resources for the plan was rejected by the Government Parliamentary Group.[45]

Looking back, the planning efforts of Sri Lanka seem to have failed due to several actors, mainly the lack of continuity of effort and the lack of a suitable machinery for plan implementation. Frequent changes in government and of high ranking personnel has led to the discontinuity of plans and programmes. The existing bureaucratic machinery created under the colonial regime for the purpose of centralising the country's political control, was clearly inadequate for the successful implementation of plans, because of its inefficiency, red tape and alienation from the common people.[46] Above all, there was no commitment by the nation as a whole to a given programme of economic development. Perhaps, in the plural society of Sri Lanka, the divisive elements of politics, creed, caste, and language may have been too powerful to bring about such a unity of purpose.

Although the domains of the public sector and the private sector were never clearly demarcated, planning activity accepted the basic framework of a mixed economy. Hence, even as the role of the government expanded, encouragement was given to the private sector through fiscal incentives such as generous capital allowances tax holidays and indefinite loss carry over benefits.[47] Foreign investment too was invited from time to time on the basis of certain terms and conditions. It is difficult to say however, to what extent these concessions were responsible for the expansion of the private sector. As pointed out by the Taxation Inquiry Commission of 1967, some of these concessions may even have been superfluous in view of the prevalent captive market due to import controls.[48] Further, it has been shown that the recent

43. Central Bank of Ceylon: *Annual Report* 1973.

44. *Ibid.*

45. In December 1974, the Five Year Plan came to be abandoned and replaced by a crash programme of investment.

46. In order to "transform the existing bureaucracy ridden administrative system into something better" and to achieve "an economic breakthrough in food production and ultimately in everything else too" a new administrative device known as the District Political Authority was set up in late 1973. Under this, in each of the 22 Administrative Districts of the island a District Political Authority was established with a member of the National State Assembly being appointed as its head. The Authority was given power to make and execute decisions related to government activity of the district, and a block sum of money was given to it by the central government for this purpose. (*Vide* the articles in the *Ceylon Observer Magazine Edition*, 2nd, 9th and 16th December 1973).

47. *Report of the Taxation Inquiry Commission.* Sessional Paper No. X—1968, Part II.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

import substitution in industry in Sri Lanka has led to an undue concentration of wealth among a few families.[49] If at all, the private sector's role in the economy has been inadequate not so much due to the insufficiency of fiscal incentives as due to the uncertainty of its future in the economy and the economy's heavy bias towards present consumption vis-a-vis future consumption.

II. ECONOMIC GROWTH AND RESOURCE USE[50]

(a) Growth

Sri Lanka's GNP at constant prices increased from Rs. 4,003 million to Rs. 6,269 million in the period 1950-60.[51] This works out to an annual compound growth rate of 4.6 per cent. Allowing for a population growth rate of 2.7 per cent per annum, the per capita GNP increased at the rate of 1.9 per cent, per annum. It rose from 521 rupees to 633 rupees. Since the commodity terms of trade were in general favourable to the country, the real national income behaved more favourably. It increased from Rs. 4,510 million to Rs. 6,699 million and with it per capita national income rose from Rs. 587 to Rs. 677.

During the period 1961-73, the GNP at constant prices rose from Rs. 6,425 million to Rs. 10,383 million.[52] This yields an annual compound growth rate of 4.1 per cent. Since the population growth rate for this period was 2.3 per cent per annum, GNP per capita increased at the rate of 1.8 per cent. The terms of trade however, were unfavourable to Sri Lanka in these years. Consequently, the real national income increased only from Rs. 6,274 million to Rs. 9,212 million. Real national income per capita rose from Rs. 617 to Rs. 700.

Table II summarises the trends in the different sectors of the economy over these two periods. As the table shows, the different sectors grew at different rates, resulting in a change in their relative importance in the economy. In particular, the agricultural sector's growth rate has lagged behind those of others. Consequently, its share in the GNP has declined from 49.8 to 44.7 per cent in the period 1950-60 and from 40.7 to 32.6 per cent in the period 1961-73. The industrial sector (i.e. Minning and Quarrying Manufacturing, Construction and Electricity, Gas and Water) showed a higher growth rate which has resulted in an increase in its share of contribution to the GNP

49. N. M. Perera, Minister of Finance: *The Budget Speech* 1975, Government Publications Bureau, Colombo. In this budget speech Dr. Perera pointed out, "..... In a recent survey conducted on the total investment in the industrial sector where capitalisation is over Rs. 1 million, it has been found that out of a total investment of Rs. 275 million as much as Rs. 205 million is held by only 11 family groups". Referring to the tax holiday (for five years) companies he said "In all but one the profits for the five years exceeded the capital investment, in some cases amounting to between 300 & 500 per cent of capital" (p. 35).

50. It will be noted that the discussion in this section is given in terms of two sub periods—1950-60 and 1961-73. The reason is mainly the lack of a continuous series of data which is reliable and comparable, extending over the entire quarter century under review. The division is appropriate too, because the period after 1960 was really different from the one preceding because of the emergence of a 'closed' economy, domestic industrial development, and several other developments largely unknown in the earlier period.

51. Data from Snodgrass, *op. cit.*

52. Data from the Central Bank of Ceylon: *Annual Reports.*

TABLE II

Industrial Origin of GNP 1950-60 and 1961-73 (millions of rupees)

Sector	1950	*Percentage of G.D.P.*	1960	*Percentage of G.D.P.*	*Percentage increase G.D.P. 1950-60*	1961	*Percentage of G.D.P.*	1973	*Percentage of G.D.P.*	*Percentage increase G.D.P. 1961-73*
Agriculture, Forestry, Hunting & Fishing	1,963.7	49.8	2,716.7	44.7	38.3	2,613.5	40.7	3,387.6	32.6	29.6
Mining & Quarrying ..	6.2	0.2	5.8	0.1	—	31.8	0.5	266.6	2.5	731.25
Manufacturing	154.6	3.9	314.2	5.2	103.2	745.9	11.6	1,417.2	13.6	90.0
Construction	278.8	7.1	571.7	9.4	105.0	268.6	4.2	516.2	3.0	92.0
Electricity, Gas and Water ..	17.6	0.4	47.6	0.8	76.4	10.4	0.1	31.3	0.3	210.0
Transport, Storage & Communications	294.1	7.5	347.3	5.7	18.0	565.7	9.0	1,018.7	10.0	80.0
Wholesale & Retail Trade ..	325.0	8.2	473.0	7.8	45.5	839.4	3.5	1,383.2	13.3	65.0
Banking, Insurance and Real Estate	14.0	0.4	52.5	0.9	278.5	58.5	0.9	141.9	1.43	140.0
Ownership of dwellings ..	281.7	7.1	406.5	6.7	44.3	224.2	3.5	318.1	3.0	42.0
Public Administration & Defence	199.6	5.1	482.8	8.0	141.0	323.5	5.2	566.6	5.4	75.0
Services	406.9	10.3	654.6	10.8	60.9	783.3	12.2	1,379.4	13.0	76.0
G.D.P.	3,942.2	100.0	6,072.7	100.0	54.0	6,664.8	—	10,426.4	—	62.26
Net Factor income from abroad						—40.1		—43.9		
G.N.P.						6,424.7		10,382.5	100.0	61.58

Note: The figures for 1965-60 are at current factor costs while those for 1961-73 are at constant factor costs. This difference was unavoidable because of the unavailability of figures for 1950-60 at constant factor costs. Although it was possible to use current factor price figures for the period 1961-73, the above figures are more meaningful due to the high rate of inflation that prevailed over this period. In contrast, the price level increase in the preceeding period was very mild. It should be noted, however, that no comparison is made on the basis of these two sets of figures.

from 11.6 to 15.5 per cent in the earlier period and from 16.4 to 21.4 per cent in the latter period. The Service Sector (i.e. Transport, Storage and Commerce, Wholesale and Retail Trade, Banking; Insurance; and Real Estate, Ownership of Dwellings; Public Administration and Defence; and Services) also increased its share.

Agricultural Sector.—This sector remained the single most important contributor to the GNP and the most important source of employment in the economy despite the slow growth rate it recorded over these years. Its dominant position was reflected particularly in terms of employment. The share of the total gainfully employed labour force of the economy directly employed by this sector was 52.6 per cent in 1946, 52.9 per cent in 1963 and 50.4 per cent in 1971.[53]

The low growth rate recorded by the agricultural sector (see table II) was mainly due to the sluggishness of plantation agriculture (i.e. Tea, Rubber, and Coconut). Due to its stagnation and the faster growth rate of the rest of the agricultural sector, due to mainly—paddy cultivation—the share contributed by plantation agriculture to the total agricultural output declined steadily from 74 to 51 per cent in the period 1950-60 and was only 31 per cent in 1973.[54] This decline however, was less marked in terms of employment. Direct employment in the plantations sector had declined only from 29 to 25 per cent of the total gainful employment over the entire twenty five years under review.

Although both demand and supply factors have led to the slow growth in plantation agriculture, the demand side seems to have had the more deterrent effect. This is because the two most important industries of this sector—tea and rubber—were adversely affected by continuing erosion of prices during most part of this period in the face of generally increasing output. Tea production increased by 60 per cent from 316 million pounds in 1950-51 to 497 million pounds in 1965-66.[55] The f.o.b. price of a pound of tea fell from Rs. 3.30 in 1955 to Rs. 2.22 in 1967. Since the cost of production of tea did not fall correspondingly, the profit margins have sagged. In the last few years there has been a drop in the rate of fertiliser use in tea plantations and a decline in output.[55] In 1973, due to a fall in production, Sri Lanka's tea exports fell short of her quota fixed under the Agreement of the Inter-Governmental Group on tea.[56].

The rubber industry too has been hit by falling prices. The f.o.b. price of a pound of rubber declined steadily from Rs. 1.65 in 1960 to 97 cents in 1967. In the subsequent years too, except for 1969, it remained low before bouncing back to the 1960 level

53. Department of Census and Statistics: *Census Reports* 1946, 1963, and the *Statistical Pocketbook* 1973. The above figures may not be strictly comparable due to differences in the definitions of sectors, adopted in the census reports.

54. Snodgrass: *op. cit.*, p. 128, table 63. Central Bank of Ceylon: *Annual Report* 1973, p. 28.

55. Since 1966 except for 1968, however tea production has shown a declining tendency.

56. Starting with the Mauritius Tea Agreement of 1969 there has been a tea supply restriction scheme among major tea produces of the world under the aegis of the Food and Agricultural Organisation. Each country participating in the scheme is given a quota of supply for each year *vide* P. C. Bansil, *Ceylon Agriculture: A Perspective* (Delhi Dhanpat Roi & Sons, 1971) pp. 194-195.

in 1973.[57] The output of rubber which fluctuated in the fifties in response to fluctuating prices rose steadily from 96,000 tons in 1961 to 157,000 in 1970 due mainly to a rubber replanting scheme started by the government.

The behaviour of the coconut industry has been somewhat different. Here the problem has been mainly one of an inelastic supply. Although coconut prices have not shown any definite increasing trend, they seem to have been favourable in general. Production, however, increased only very slowly. The average annual output increased only by 20 per cent from 2,248 million nuts in 1951-53 to 2,697 million nuts in 1971-72. Rapid increase in the domestic consumption of this commodity in contrast to its stagnant supply led to a rapid decline in the share of exports in the total output of the commodity. This share dropped from 56 per cent in 1955-57 to 36 per cent in 1971-73. The acreage under coconut increased only by 6 per cent from 1,070,942 to 1,152,428 acres over the period 1946 to 1962 and then remained constant.[58] The yield per acre too has increased only very slowly. Some of the problems affecting the industry were the slow breeding of new varieties of coconuts by the Coconut Research Institute, the shortage of capital and poor extension services and the chronic under utilisation of fertiliser.[59] These problems have been particularly severe because, unlike tea and rubber, the coconut industry is mainly a small holders' industry—almost 70 per cent of the holdings being owned by small holders.[60]

During the period under consideration, the government tried to help the plantation industry in several ways, the most significant of which were its replanting schemes based on cash subsidies and fertiliser subsidies to the producers. In the case of rubber it is mainly this replanting scheme which has saved it from possible disaster due to declining prices. The tea replanting scheme seems to have progressed satisfactorily but has not yet begun to yield benefits on a significant scale. For coconut, the scheme has been too slow. The tea industry has been further assisted by a factory modernisation scheme begun in 1966 and by a tax rebate scheme.[61]

The most noteworthy change that occurred within the agricultural sector over these years was the rapid increase in paddy production, which is the predominant form of activity in peasant agriculture. Peasant agriculture which had been neglected during the growth of plantations and was relatively unimportant even in 1948, came to receive increasing attention from the government in subsequent years and has come to occupy a significant place in the economy in recent years. Due mainly to the rise in paddy production, its share of the total output in the agricultural sector has increased from 26 to 69 per cent over the period 1950-73.[62] Paddy

57. The price of natural rubber shot up in the world market in 1973 due to the supply of synthetic rubber being adversely affected by the oil crisis (Central Bank of Ceylon. *Annual Report* 1973, p. 233).
58. Department of Census and Statistics: *Census of Agriculture* 1952, Part III, Table I; *Pocket Book, op. cit.*
59. I.L.O. *Matching Employment.....op. cit.*, p. 63.
60. Census of Agriculture, *op. cit.*
61. Central Bank of Ceylon, *Annual Report.*
62. Snodgrass: *op. cit.*, p. The Central Bank of Ceylon: *Annual Report* 1973.

production increased by 160 per cent from 25 million bushels to 65 million bushels, growing at 8 per cent per annum over the period 1952-53 to 1971-72.[63] The area harvested increased from 1,027,000 acres to 1,647,000 acres while the average yield per acre rose from 29 to 46 bushels over this period.[64] The rapid increase in paddy output has made it possible for Sri Lanka to reduce its rice imports from 50 per cent to 28 per cent of total consumption over the period 1955 to 1970 despite rapid growth of of population.[65]

The steady progress of paddy production at a rate unsurpassed even by the most modern sectors of the economy[66] is quite remarkable in view of the fact that it is mainly a peasant activity. Most of this progress can be attributed to government policies directed towards the rejuvenation of the peasant sector. One such policy was the extension of the area under paddy cultivation by means of irrigation projects and peasant colonisation schemes. Since the supply of cultivable land in the Wet Zone had been exhausted (the acreage under cultivation here increased only by 0.4 per cent in this period) it became necessary to open up new lands in the Dry Zone. The acreage under cultivation in this area increased by 41 per cent over this period. By mid 1968 the number of colonists settled in the Dry Zone had increased to 80,000 while the acreage newly brought under paddy was 200,000.[67] The policies of extensive cultivation were accompanied by policies of intensive cultivation too. A guaranteed price scheme for paddy has existed since 1948. Peasant farmers have been supplied with an extension service, a fertiliser subsidy and also with credit facilties. New high yielding varieties of paddy have also been introduced. The Paddy Lands Act mentioned earlier sought to help tenant farmers by fixing maximum rents and guaranteeing security of tenure.

In addition to paddy, the production of a variety of subsidiary foods also increased particularly after 1960 when their imports were either restricted or banned altogether. The quantity index of highland crops (1962=100) increased to 161 in 1970.[68] As pointed out previously, Sri Lanka became self sufficient in potatoes, onions and chillies during these years, although shortages occurred now and then due to adverse weather conditions and other difficulties.

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63. Department of Census and Statistics: *Statiscal Abstract; Statistical Pocket Books* 1973.

64. *Ibid.*

65. Department of Information *Samajavaadee Gamana*, (Colombo, 1958) p. 9, Marga Institute, *Co-operative System of Small Farmer Credit in Sri Lanka*, (Sinhala Translation) 1971, p. 92.

66. The growth rate of plantation agriculture fell far short of that of paddy production. For example production of tea industry consisting mostly of large estates (described as "one of the most efficient industries of the world" (Bansil *op. cit.*, p. 186) grew at only 4% per annum in the period 1950-51 to 1965-66.

67. Bansil : *op. cit.*
The following observation illustrates the high degree of interest shown in paddy cultivation after independence : "The increased interest in paddy cultivation after independence is illustrated by the fact that the extent of paddy land increased by approximately 400,000 in the 84 year period from . . . 1862 to . . . 1946, and by a further 400,000 in the 20 year period between 1946 and 1966", *Report of the Land Utilisation Committee*, 1967, p. 20.

68. Department of Census and Statistics: *The Pocket Book, . . . op. cit.*

These, undoubtedly, were significant achievements. Nevertheless, much remained to be done for making domestic agriculture a dynamic sector capable of rapidly increasing the living standards of the peasants. Despite the progress recorded so far, the majority of peasants still live on the verge of poverty. According to, the Socio-economic Survey of 1969-70, the per capita income of 46 per cent of rural households was less than Rs. 400 per year.[69] The same survey indicated that while the rate of unemployment in the rural areas was 15 per cent of its labour force, 69 per cent of the total number unemployed in the whole island, belonged to the rural sector. Moreover, a large number of families in the rural areas are in debt.[70] Landlessness and small size of cultivation plots are other constraints faced by the peasants. According to the Census of Agriculture 1962, 41 per cent of prepared paddy holdings covering 17 per cent of land under such holdings consisted of plots under one acre.[71] This situation has probably worsened since then because the cultivable land in the rural areas has increased more slowly than the growth of rural population and the density of such population per acre of cultivable land increased from 1.34 persons in 1946 to 2.02 persons in 1969.[72] There is also an acute shortage of other inputs such as water, fertiliser and credit. Scant attention has been paid to activities such as dairy farming and animal husbandry in general, which are necessary for a more diversified peasant agricultural base.

A vigorous policy directed towards rapid development of the peasant sector is necessary not only for alleviating poverty among the mass of the population but also for reducing the pressure on the balance of payments through a successful programme of import substitution in all essential foodstuffs. Raising productivity in peasant agriculture particularly in the Dry Zone is also necessary to raise the low benefit-cost ratios of the peasant colonizations schemes in which vast amounts of scarce investment funds have been sunk in the past.[73]

Industrial Sector.—The high growth rate seen in this sector was almost wholly due to the progress made in manufacturing and construction—the two sectors which contributed 90-95 per cent of industrial production. In the period 1950-60 the combined output of these two sectors increased from Rs. 433 million to Rs. 870 million at current prices, with the sectors' share in the GNP rising from 11 per cent to 14.6 per cent. Employment increased from 359,724 to 398,930 persons or 12 per cent to 12.4 per cent of total employment in the economy.[74]

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69. *Socio-Economic Survey—op. cit.*

70. In 1957, 54% of rural families were in debt while the average debt per family was about 34% of average annual family income. Department of Census and Statistics. *Survey of Rural Indebtedness Ceylon* 1957, Table 2.

71. Department of Census and Statistics. *Census of Agriculture* 1962. Vol. III, Table IV.

72. Jones & Selvaratnam, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

73. A good example in this respect was the Gal Oya Colonization Scheme. A committee of Inquiry which made an exhaustive study of this scheme reported "Our detailed findings have revealed some striking fatures to which close attention must be paid by policy makers in the future. The first is the poor benefit cost ratio of the colonization element of the Gal Oya Project". *Report of the Gal Oya Project Evaluation Committee.* Sessional Paper No. I, 1970, p. 240.

74. Department of Census and Statistics—*Census Reports.*

The manufacturing sector, however, was small in this period. Industries of this period were mainly of small scale, and associated mostly with the primary sector. They included, handloom textiles, coir, oil and milling, plumbago mining, rubber goods soap, cement, and electricity. The index of industrial production rose from 92.4 in 1954 to 135 in 1959 (1952=100).[75]

The growth of a large industrial sector seems to have been discouraged by the existence of a free trade policy and a policy of non-participation in industry by the government, the latter being true in the first half of the fifties. As there was no balance of payments problem until late in the decade, the country's requirements of manufactured goods were imported.

In the period 1961-73 the value added in manufacturing and construction rose from Rs. 1,015 million to Rs. 1,933 million, at constant prices. The share of contribution to the GNP increased from 15.8 to 18.6 per cent. Employment increased from 398,930 to 459,800 persons or from 12.4 to 15.7 per cent of the total employed labour force in the economy.[76] During this period manufacturing activity became increasingly buoyant due to two factors. Firstly, the stringent import controls in existence since early sixties, gave rise to a captive market for manufactured goods. To meet the demand for scarce imports, local import substitution industries mushroomed behind the protective wall of import controls and high tariffs. The high import intensity of these industries was not a barrier to them because raw materials and capital goods could be imported under these regulations, some even at tariff concessions.[77] Secondly, since 1956 the government has embarked on a deliberate policy of industrialisation in which the government sector itself assumed the sole responsibility of setting up heavy industry. We have already referred to the state economic enterprises that were begun after 1956. It would suffice here to mention that by 1973 the government had set up 25 Industrial Corporations. The total investment of these ventures rose from Rs. 92 million in 1956 to Rs. 2,414 million in 1973 with gross output rising from Rs. 50 million to Rs. 1,074 million at current prices.[78]

There were however, several drawbacks in the pattern of industrial development of this period. Firstly, it was heavily biased towards the manufacture of consumer goods. Secondly, industrial activity was highly import intensive. Thirdly, these industries catered almost exclusively to the local market as a result of which they were of little or no help in enhancing the economy's foreign exchange earnings. Fourthly, they were highly capital intensive, because of which the manufacturing sector has helped little to solve the unemployment problem of the economy. Industrial progress

75. Snodgrass: *op. cit.*, Neil Dias Karunaratne. *Techno-Economic Survey of Industrial Potential in Sri Lanka* (Colombo, Industrial Development Board of Ceylon, 1973).
76. Department of Census and Statistics. *op. cit.*
77. This does not of course mean that they had no difficulties on account of foreign exchange scarcity. On the contrary, as the years went by they found it difficult to expand or produce at capacity levels due to insufficient availability of imported inputs. (see, The Central Bank of Ceylon : *Annual Reports*).
78. Central Bank of Ceylon: *Annual Reports;* For a survey of Sri Lanka's industrial development vide Neil Dias Karunaratne. *A Techno-Economic Survey of Industrial Potential in Sri Lanka;* the articles by Karunatillake, Kanesalingam, Divatia, and Jayawardena in *Research and Industry, op. cit.*

of this period has suffered from a lack of planning and co-ordination by the government. Even the government run corporations lacked advanced planning and systematic management and only a handful of them have so far been able to play a commercially viable role.

Service Sector.—A relatively high growth rate was seen in this sector too particularly after 1961. The most noteworthy expansion was seen in the Banking and Insurance and the Wholesale and Retail Trade sectors. Banking activity in the economy spread rapidly after 1960 with the establishment of the People's Bank by the government to cater specially to the rural sector and the co-operative societies. The expansion of domestic agriculture and import substitution activity in industry were particularly helpful for the progress of banking business and trade and for their extension beyond foreign trade and plantation sectors which were their traditional areas of concentration.[79]

(b) Resource Use

During most of the years under consideration there has been a tendency for the economy's use of resources to exceed the amount generated, as shown by the existence of a recurrent balance of payment deficit since 1957.[80] Although both aggregate consumption and investment increased, the former continued to remain at a very high level throughout. Thus in the period 1950-60, it rose from Rs. 3,615 million to Rs. 5,929 million whereas the GNP at current market prices rose from Rs. 4,171 million to Rs. 6,476 million.[81] Consumption had increased by 64 per cent in contrast to a 55 per cent increase in the GNP. Gross Domestic Capital Formation increased from Rs. 382 million to Rs. 785 million. In the later years, however, a part of this investment was financed by the inflow of foreign resources. In the period 1959-60 for example, the rate of investment in the economy was 13.5 per cent while domestic saving was only 9 per cent of the GNP. In the period 1961-73, consumption increased from Rs. 5,838 million to Rs. 14,246 million or by 144 per cent while the GNP at current market prices increased from Rs. 6,696 million to Rs. 16,816 million or by 151 per cent.[82] Gross Domestic Capital formation rose from Rs. 1,102 million to Rs. 2,630 million with slight occasional fluctuations. As a ratio to the GNP however, it did not show a rising trend although it reached somewhat high levels in the years 1968-70. For the period 1961-73 as a whole the average rate of capital formation in the economy was 16.0 per cent. Since the average domestic saving rate was only 13.5 per cent, foreign resources continued to finance a part of Sri Lanka's domestic investment throughout these years.

III. SOCIAL WELFARE

In contrast to the disappointing performance of the economy in terms of the usual tests of economic efficiency and growth rate of the GNP per capita, remarkable progress was made on the front of social welfare during this period. "A health service which though not in all respects comprehensive, was unusually so by Asian standards"

79. Central Bank of Ceylon: *Annual Reports.*
80. *Vide, supra,* discussion on foreign exchange crisis.
81. Snodgrass: *op. cit.*, Table A-2.
82. I.L.O. : *Matching Employment . . . op. cit.*

created by the state resulted in a remarkable improvement in the average health standard of the population. The crude death rate declined from 21.5 per thousand in 1945 to 7.5 per thousand in 1970. The infant mortality rate dropped from 140 to 51 per thousand live births in the same period. Maternal mortality rate declined from 16.5 to 1.2 per thousand live births.[83] The average life expectancy at birth increased from 43.9 years to 64.8 years for males and from 41.8 years to 66.9 years for females over the period 1946 to 1967.[84] A comparable advance was made in the sphere of education too. Due to a system of free education provided by the government from kindergarten through the university there was a rapid expansion of educational opportunities to all classes of the population, particularly the vast majority of the low income group. The literacy rate increased from 37.8 to 82.6 per cent in the period 1946-69 while the proportion of population with secondary school education rose from 9.8 to 30.4 per cent.[85]

Other social welfare measures introduced by the government over these years included large scale subsidies and price controls, pensions and poor relief. The rice subsidy in particular, although it has been "an expensive way of helping the poor and an economically vulnerable"[86] measure, has led to the improvement in the nourishment of the recipients at least in calories and to the prevention of starvation seen in some other less developed countries. Due to a deliberate policy of wage increases to workers and a policy of progressive income taxation, significant progress was made in the sphere of income redistribution. The Gini Concentration ratio of income distribution declined from 0.50 in 1953 and 0.49 in 1963 to 0.41 in 1973.[87] According to a recent study of 18 countries by a World Bank group, the growth rate of income share of the lowest 40 per cent of income receivers in Sri Lanka for the period 1963-70 was 8.0 per cent per annum.[88] This rate was the fourth highest for this income group among the 18 countries studied.

These achievements have indeed been commendable. They have not only fulfilled a sense of social justice but have also helped to maintain the stability of the country's socio-political system. Furthermore, in providing an extensive programme of free education and free health facilities, they laid a strong basis for the long run increase of the economy's stock of human capital. Their continuation into the future would no doubt be necessary, at least from the point of view of view of social justice, but perhaps on a more selective basis to help only the really needy groups among the public. It should be stressed however, that neither these achievements nor their necessity on humanitarian grounds should blind the policy makers from the need for at least an equal emphasis on a sound programme of diversifying and developing the economy. In the past these welfare measures may have enabled the politicians to play the game of politics by merely tinkering with economic planning. But now the contrast between the expectations of the people for higher living standards and the economy's ability to fulfill such expectations is so great that a sustained programme of economic development designed to transform the whole economic structure seems to be an urgent necessity.

83. Administration Report of the Registrar-General, *op. cit.*
84. Department of Census and Statistics: *Pocket Book, op. cit.*
85. Department of Census and Statistics: *Census* 1946; *Socio-Economic Survey. op. cit.*
86. I.L.O., *op. cit.*
87. Central Bank of Ceylon: *Survey of Sri Lanka's Consumer Finances,* 1973, p. 62.
88. Ahluwalia : *op. cit.,* pp. 5-6.

IX (1)

BUDDHISM IN POST-INDEPENDENCE SRI LANKA

KITSIRI MALALGODA

The Buddhist 'revival' of the nineteenth century apparently had potential for development into a mass nationalist movement, but it was only in the years after independence that Buddhism in fact entered the political arena. The movement towards national independence, as has frequently been noted, was an elitist and secular one organised by leaders belonging to several religions, and their political agitations were focussed mainly on reforms of the constitution. In trying to account for the manner in which Buddhism entered the political arena in the post-Independence years, one has to take into consideration the vitality and strength that this religion derived as a result of changes which occurred under colonial rule, but between the colonial and post-colonial periods it is possible to discern some significant differences.

The Buddhist revival of the nineteenth century was very much a product of the colonial order—an order which differed radically from the traditional Sinhalese-Buddhist kingdoms. In place of the interdependence of Buddhism and political authority which had prevailed under traditional kingdoms there was now a separation of the two. The persistence of Buddhist practices and organizations, therefore, depended on voluntary efforts rather than on state patronage. The British, in contrast to their colonial predecessors, professed a policy of religious liberty, and this policy, however qualified or attenuated it was in actual practice, nonetheless had significance in that it allowed the free operation of voluntary efforts to promote Buddhism. Without such freedom (which was not available in the Portuguese and early Dutch times) and without indeed a separation of political and religious (Buddhist) establishments the formation of new and autonomous monastic fraternities in the low country—and in particular non-*goyigama* fraternities—would have been impossible at the time.

As in the formation of new monastic fraternities so in the campaign against Christian missionaries, voluntary efforts and associations played a vital role. In organising these associations, the Buddhists consciously followed the Christian ones that they opposed. "If you ask how we should organise our forces", Olcott advised them, "I point you to your great enemy, Christianity, and bid you look at their large and wealthy Bible, Tract, Sunday School, and Missionary Societies—the tremendous agencies they support to keep alive and spread their religion. We

must form similar societies, and make our most practical and honest men of business their managers".[1]

There were, to be sure, many Buddhists who expected direct support from the colonial government for the maintenance of their religion, or who remained demoralised by the lack of it, or who complained that the government or its agents were actively working against Buddhism. But the Theosophists remained unimpressed by these arguments. Olcott repeatedly asked Buddhists how and why they expected the colonial government to support their religion if they were not keen to support it themselves. His one-time colleague and representative in Sri Lanka, J. B. Daly, asserted: "The English Government never yet interfered with the religion of any of its dependencies. The English people would not tolerate it; the parliament would not tolerate it; the Queen would not tolerate it; if an Agent or an official tries to do so, he acts outside his authority, without the sanction of Government. Leave those who want to interfere to me, and I shall deal with them".[2]

Thus voluntary self-help, in a background of formal religious neutrality on the part of the government, was the means with which Buddhism was revived in the nineteenth century, and changes in social stratification which had occurred under colonial rule provided the social base of the revival. The formation of new monastic fraternities was preceded or accompanied by the upward mobility of some non-*goyigama* castes, and the new social strata (entrepreneurs, lawyers, teachers, journalists and the like) which had come into being as a result of economic and social changes introduced under British rule supplied the leadership of associations such as the Buddhist Theosophical Society, Maha Bodhi Society and the Young Men's Buddhist Associations. The nature and aims of these associations were such that westernised laymen were more capable of handling them than were the monks. It was no accident, therefore, that Olcott stressed the necessity of making "our most practical and honest men of business their managers".

The emergence of the lay intelligentsia necessarily implied a displacement of monks from some of their traditional positions of leadership. The role of monk was defined by the lay leadership in a narrow 'religious' sense, and they defined their own position as leaders of Buddhist organisations too in a non-political sense. At the level of ideology this was perhaps a result of their commitment to nineteenth century British liberalism; and at the level of practical politics they deliberately avoided—after the temperance agitation and the communal riots of 1915—confrontations with colonial authorities who were consistently suspicious of mass movements.[3] In the early part of the twentieth century there were Buddhist leaders like D. B. Jayatilaka and W. A. de Silva who gained prominence in politics, but they felt it necessary to try to keep their two major spheres of public activity—politics and religion—separated from each other. A similar stance was maintained by D. S. Sena-

1. *Old Diary Leaves*, Iv (1882-1892) (Madras, 1931), p. 120.
2. *The Buddhist*, 16 January 1891.
3. K. M. de Silva, 'The Formation and Character of the Ceylon National Congress', *Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies*, X (January-December 1967) 72-74.

nayake, who soon after independence, firmly resisted growing demands for special concessions to Buddhists.[4] He was also a strong critic of 'political monks', and a major target for the latters' attacks.[5]

But already in D. S. Senanayake, one is able to discern the search for inspiration from the pre-colonial past and traditional sources of legitimacy—in his grand schemes to restore irrigation works (Minneriya, Kahagama, Minipe and Parakrama Samudra etc.) and, at a less official and more personal level, a major Buddhist shrine (Mahiyangana) in Raja Rata. Though Senanayake himself was not inclined to take it, it was but a short step from there—in view of the age-old practices that kings of Sri Lanka had resorted to in order to gain legitimacy and popularity[6]—to extend state support to Buddhist activities; and not long after Senanayake's death such extension was in fact made on the occasion of the preparations for the celebration of the Buddha Jayanthi. The formal proposal to celebrate the Buddha Jayanthi with the active initiative and participation of the government came from the then ex-prime Minister, Dudley Senanayake, and was accepted by the government headed by Sir John Kotelawala. The Lanka Bauddha Mandalaya was appointed by the government in October 1954 to organise and direct the Buddha Jayanthi activities, and it embarked on an ambitious and costly programme of activities continuing into the Jayanthi year 1956-1957 as well as well beyond it. Since that time both the United National Party and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party have proclaimed protecting and supporting Buddhism as one of their major aims, and each has at different times accused the other of failing to practise it. Thus post-Independence politics clearly indicates a departure from the principles of the separation of politics and religion and the formal religious neutrality of the government.

This convergence of Buddhism and politics has been viewed as a solution to the problem of identity of an independent new nation,[7] though in a multi-religious society such as Sri Lanka the identification of the nation with the majority group necessarily produced problems regarding the position of the minorities. It was in fact the all too natural desire to win the support of the majority that induced politicians to promise a privileged position for Buddhism just as it was the frustrations of competition with the minorities that drove the Buddhist leadership—as represented in particular by the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress—to agitate for special concessions to Buddhists. Open competition between different religious groups, to protect and if possible extend their own interests, within a broad framework of 'free enterprise' in religion (with the government taking a stand of formal neutrality) had prevailed since the late nineteenth century, and although the Buddhists, through organisations such as the Bud-

4. Donald E. Smith, 'The Sinhalese Buddhist Revolution', in Donald E. Smith (Ed.) *South Asian Politics and Religion* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1966), pp. 456-457.
5. Walpola Rahula, *Bhikshuvage Urumaya*, 2nd ed. (Colombo, 1948), pp. viii-xi.
6. On these, see Edmund Leach, 'Buddhism in the Post-colonial Political Order in Burma and Ceylon', *Daedalus*, 102 (1973) 34.
7. H. Howard Wriggins, *Ceylon: Dilemmas of a New Nation* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1960) pp. 171-174.

dhist Theosophical Society, had made significant progress in this competition, they were not entirely in a position to congratulate themselves. In the field of education, for instance, Christians continued to hold their supremacy with regard to both the number of schools under their management and the amount of grants that they received from the government for the maintenance of those schools; and in the public service, business and professions, Buddhists remained under-represented in proportion to their numbers in the population. Their explanation of this situation—elaborated at length in documents like the report of the Buddhist Committee of Inquiry (1956)—was that the competition between different religious groups had never been an 'open' one but had always been heavily biased against Buddhists, and their solution to it was state intervention in place of 'free enterprise'. Neither the explanation nor the solution would have appealed very much to early leaders like Olcott or Daly who were entirely willing to accept the challenge of competition and who were primarily concerned with building voluntary and autonomous organisations among Buddhists which would be strong enough to compete with the Christian ones. Thus, as among politicians so among Buddhist lay leaders, one notices a difference in attitudes and strategies between the colonial and post-colonial times.

A similar change was also noticeable among a sizable section of monks. They derived no satisfaction out of having been kept in the background not merely by the colonial authorities but also by the Buddhist lay leadership who had assigned to them a narrow 'religious' role. Walpola Rahula's *Bhikshuvage Urumaya* ('The Heritage of the Monk') which was published just before independence and at the early stages of the debate over 'political monks' was a forceful rejection of this restricted role in favour of the varied social roles—as teachers, scholars, literary men, artists, physicians, advisers to laymen, peace-makers, agitators and patriots, etc.—that monks had played in the course of the history of Sri Lanka. The aspiration, clearly, was to recapture the lost social supremacy. Rahula not merely had no objections to the term 'political monk'; he viewed the rise of 'political monks' as significant and desirable a process as the emergence of *grantha-dhura* (vocation of books, as against the *vidarsanā-dhura* or the vocation of meditation) in the early history of Buddhism.

The new attitudes and aspirations found expression in new organisational forms. Among the monks, over and above the more traditional *nikāyas* or monastic fraternities which had multiplied since the nineteenth century making their recruitments mainly on the basis of ascriptive criteria such as caste and locality, there now emerged new organisations like the Eksath Bhikkshu Mandalaya (United Council of Monks) and Eksath Bhikshu Peramuna (United Front of Monks) which cut across *nikāya* and caste boundaries and followed the idiom and tactics of Colombo-based national political associations and interest-groups. Similarly among laymen the early emulation of Christian organisations and practices—as was explicitly advocated by Olcott—was followed by new organisations of a distinctly more political character—the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress, the Bauddha Jatika Balavegaya, etc.

The activities of these new organisations helped to bring together what had in the immediate past been by and large kept separate; politics and religion on the hand,

and the lay leadership of those elements that gave Buddhism in the post-Independence years a prominence which it had lacked in the earlier decades.

This prominence, however, did not necessarily entail greater strength for Buddhist organisations in the long run. On the contrary, government intervention, for which the Buddhist leadership itself had agitated, gradually undermined the strength of voluntary organisations and institutions which had been developed over several decades. The nationalisation of schools led to the extinction of organisations like the Buddhist Theosophical Society, and the Buddhist leadership thereby lost a good deal of their independent power, influence and patronage in the field of education. Within a few years of the elevation of Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara Pirivenas to university status, monks lost control over these institutions and the two new universities came to have very little continuity with their past except merely in their names. In religion and education, as in other spheres like the economic, government intervention inevitably resulted in greater power being concentrated in the hands of the professional politician and the bureaucrat and a corresponding decrease in initiative and activity independent of centralised control. Had the controversial recommendations of the Buddha Sasana Commission of 1959 (which included the creation of an incorporated body with wide powers over the order of monks in such areas as recruitment, adjudication of disputes, dismissals from the order, residence and education, employment, participation in social and political activities, collection of funds and building of monasteries, and publications on Buddhism) been implemented, the process of centralisation and bureaucratisation would have gone very much further.[8]

8. For an account of the controversy over the Sasana Commission, see Donald E. Smith,. 'The Political Monks and Monastic Reform 'in Donald E. Smith (Ed.), *op. cit.* pp. 500-508. Rather ironically the Sasana Commission met with qualified or full support from the Ramanya and Amarapura Nikayas and sustained opposition from the Siyam Nikaya. Historically, the Siyam Nikaya has had close links with secular authorities and had also sought centralised control of the order of monks while the origin of the other Nikayas was possible, *inter alia*, precisely because there was no central authority to regulate the affairs of the order in colonial times.

IX (2)

HINDUISM AND ISLAM IN POST-INDEPENDENCE SRI LANKA*

K. M. De Silva

The interaction between religion and politics, a notable feature of early twentieth century Sri Lanka was sustained throughout the agitation for independence and indeed gathered momentum since independence. Its impact on the balance of religious forces has been far-reaching and deeply significant. The Sinhalese-Buddhist majority is in firm control in most spheres of life, and the position of the religions of the ethnic minorities—Hinduism and Islam—must be reviewed in this context. Two points need special mention: there has been much less of an atmosphere of confrontation in the relations between Buddhism and Islam in recent times than between the former and Hinduism. Nevertheless—and this is the second point—Buddhist-Hindu rivalry has been much less significant as a point of contention between the Sinhalese and the Tamils than ethnicity and language. In this sense it affords a striking contrast to the situation in pre-independence British India where "communalism" was often defined largely in terms of the deep-rooted hostility to each other of religious communities. The political aspects of the confrontation between the Sinhalese and Tamils are reviewed elsewhere in this volume, and in this chapter our concern is limited to a brief analysis of the interaction between Buddhism and Hinduism—the religious facet of the complex theme of the tension between Sinhalese and Tamil nationalisms—and the interaction of the Sinhalese and the adherents of Islam.

Hinduism†

The recovery of Hinduism from the pervasive pressures of an aggressive Christianity had begun a whole generation earlier than that of Buddhism. In a sense Hinduism was in a more advantageous position from the point of view of resistance to missionary encroachment in that it was possible to draw on the tremendous resources of Hinduism in India. Nevertheless in the first half of the 19th century—and for that matter even later—the missionary organizations were much stronger in Jaffna and its environs than in most other parts of the island.

* Very few published works of any substance or quality on the minority religions of Sri Lanka have appeared recently. The Revd. James Cartman's work on *Hinduism in Ceylon* (Colombo 1957) is still the only monograph of any substantial value on the subject, while there has not been a single monograph or book on Islam in Sri Lanka.

† I am greatly indebted to my colleague Dr. S. Pathmanathan for all his help in gathering material for this section of the present chapter.

The leadership in the Hindu recovery in Sri Lanka was given by Arumuga Navalar[1] and the structure of Hindu society in contemporary Sri Lanka bears his imprint to a remarkable extent in its strength and flaws alike. The two main points of emphasis in his programme of revival were: a concern to prevent conversions of Hindus to Christianity, and secondly to preserve the orthodox form of Saivism.

In opposition to the Christian missionary groups entrenched in the Tamil areas of the country he built up a network of Hindu schools for imparting religious and secular education. His work in this sphere was consolidated and expanded by eminent Hindu leaders of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, most notably Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan. The *Saiva Paripālana Sabhai* (established by Navalar) and the Hindu College Board of Management eventually administered more than 150 schools (both primary and secondary). The large majority of these were taken over by the state in the early 1960's.

The preservation of the orthodox form of Saivism had two aspects: the renovation and restoration of Hindu temples, and the publication of Saivite religious texts, in both of which Navalar was the pioneer.

Hinduism had suffered much greater damage at the hands of Christianity than Buddhism, and nearly all the Hindu temples in the Jaffna peninsula and the littoral had been destroyed by the Portuguese and the Dutch, and those that had survived were in a state of decay and delapidation in the nineteenth century. The Hindu temples of Sri Lanka, unlike those in India, are of modest proportions and have rather slender resources for their maintenance, due partly at least to the fact that the renovation and re-establishment of the temples—often financed by wealthy Sri Lanka Tamils—was not followed by a restoration of the lands that had belonged to them in pre-colonial times. The rehabilitation of Hindu temples has been continued in contemporary Sri Lanka and is a prominent feature in Hindu life in all parts of the island.

Among the Hindus the village or local temple has been and still continues to be the centre of cultural activity with the annual festival the most notable religious and cultural event of the year. While in recent times secular entertainment such as the cinema has tended to become a rival attraction to the cultural activities of the temples, the increasing popularity of the practice of holding wedding ceremonies in temples has undoubtedly helped to sustain the position of the temples as the predominent centre of cultural activity in the Hindu villages.

Hindus in Sri Lanka today are, with the exception of a few North Indian traders in Colombo, Saivites belonging to the Siddhantha school of Saivism which is dominant in South India. Perhaps Navalar's greatest contribution to the recovery of Hinduism was the publication of a large number of Saivite religious texts which have helped substantially in preserving the ideals and heritage of the Hindus in Sri Lanka primarily, and India as well. Some of these publications are still in use as texts for religious instruction in schools.

1. Despite the massive contribution made by Navalar to the Hindu revival in Sri Lanka there has been very little by way of scholarly work on the man and his career.

There have been no new developments or controversies in doctrinal matters in Sri Lanka Hinduism in recent times.

The crucial flaw in Navalar's work—and this became evident in the years after independence—was that he was not a social reformer. The Hindu revivalist movement which he led strengthened orthodoxy and did little to soften the rigours of the Hindu caste system, which unlike its Sinhalese counterpart had not merely a social sanction, but a religious one as well, and untouchability virtually non-existent among the Sinhalese was very much a problem in Hindu society in Jaffna. The *vellālas* among the Hindus are the equivalent of the *goyigama* among the Sinhalese, and like the latter they are not a thin upper crust, but a substantial section if not a majority of the Hindus.[2] They have used the sanctions of Saivite orthodoxy to maintain their caste privileges at the expense of those in the lower rungs of the caste heirarchy. Largely because the Harijan communities were themselves divided on the basis of caste and did not have any organization to mobilise their resources effectively for bargaining for their rights, the potential, if not latent, tensions in this situation did not emerge still after independence, and after the mid-nineteen fifties.

The attitude of the Buddhist Sinhalese to the Hindus has been essentially ambivalent. Religious sentiment should have drawn them together because of the traditional links between the two religions in Sri Lanka society. If religion was not a divisive factor, ethnic politics was. After 1956 there was always an undercurrent of hostility between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. When the latter sought to rouse public opinion (especially international opinion) against the Sinhalese majority their campaign for justice was vitiated by the orthodox Hindu resistance to the amelioration of the conditions of the Harijans. Sinhalese politicians and Buddhist activists diverted attention to the social evils of untouchability to the great embarrassment of the Tamils.

There has been a positive improvement in the position of the Harijans in recent times but it would be unfair to attribute this to Sinhalese solicitude on their behalf, for that concern was never disinterested. It was largely owing to the efforts of the Tamil political leadership itself that a movement for the removal of the disabilities suffered by the Harijans was initiated, and long before Sinhalese politicians and Buddhist activists interested themselves in the problem.[3] Substantial progress has been made since 1955: cafes and restaurants in urban areas (particularly) have permitted entry to Harijans; and more importantly—despite occasional and well-publicised efforts at resistance—one by one the large temples have opened their doors to them. Nevertheless there are still some areas in which the temple entry movement and the Harijan campaign for equality have not succeeded.

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2. On the caste structure in the Tamil areas of the north Sri Lanka see, M. Banks, 'Caste in Jaffna' in ed. E. R. Leach, *Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon and North-West Pakistan*. Cambridge Papers in Social Anthropology No. 2 (1960) pp. 61-77.
3. The Federal Party's first convention in 1951 had a list of basic aims which included "the regeneration and unification of the Tamil-speaking people of Ceylon by the removal of all forms of social inequalities and injustices, in particular that of untouchability wherever it exists". quoted in R. N. Kearney, *Communalism and language in the politics of Ceylon* (Duke University Press, 1967), p. 100.

Islam

In contrast to Hinduism and Christianity, Islam has had a record of harmonious relations with the Buddhist Sinhalese both in the coastal areas and in the Kandyan region. In the latter region Muslims had been afforded a refuge against the vigorous hostility of the Portuguese and the harrassment of the Dutch. There they had been integrated into Kandyan society though they retained, nevertheless, their religious and cultural identity. In the early years of British rule the position of the Muslims of Sri Lanka improved quite considerably and they became in many ways a privileged group.

In the nineteenth century, like the Buddhists and Hindus, the Muslims too faced the challenge of Protestant Christianity, but to a much greater extent than both the former the Muslims were notable for a refusal to succumb to the blandishments of Christianity. The resistance to conversion to Christianity persisted throughout the nineteenth century but the survival of Islam in Sri Lanka had been secured in a sense at the expense of the social and economic advancement of the Muslims. Since the education provided in the schools was primarily an English education there was among the Muslims of Sri Lanka an attitude (natural to a conservative and cohesive community) of rejecting it because of the presumed danger of the impact of a foreign culture on Islam. Besides education was not only in English but also largely Christian in content, and for that reason they were not prepared to endanger the faith of their children even if it meant sacrificing the material benefits that an English education brought. This manifestation of their zeal for their ancestral faith had rather regrettable consequences, and by the third quarter of the nineteenth century the more enlightened Muslim leaders were profoundly disturbed to find their community sunk in ignorance and apathy, parochial in outlook and grossly materialistic.

The arresting of the decline in vitality of the Muslim community has been associated for long with the "charisma" of Arabi Pasha[4] an Egyptian exiled to Ceylon, who jolted them out of their conservative seclusion. But much more important were the foresight and tactical skill of a local Muslim leader—M. C. Siddi Lebbe a lawyer by profession and social worker by inclination—who brought the Muslim community to the point of accepting the need for a change of outlook. Like Arumuga Navalar, Sidde Lebbe saw the supreme importance of education as a means to the regeneration of his community. The revitalising process initiated during this phase continued during the first half of the twentieth century.

Like every other ethnic and religious group in the country the Muslims found themselves called upon to define their attitude to the agitation for the transfer of power. The Sinhalese-Muslim riots of 1915 [5] had been a traumatic experience for the latter, and this strengthened the trend towards collaboration with the British which was, in any case, quite strong among the Muslim leaders. There were occasional misgivings

4. Arabi Pasha, the leader of the abortive uprising against the Western powers in Egypt in 1882 spent 19 years of his life (from 1883 to 1901) as an exile in Sri Lanka.
5. For discussion of the riots of 1915 and their historical significance see, 'The 1915 Riots in Ceylon: A Symposium'. *Journal of Asian Studies* XXIX (2) 1970 pp. 219-266.

about this policy such as, for instance, after the First World War when the Khilafat[6] movement in India had its repercussions among the Muslims in Sri Lanka as well, but the local version of it never developed the positively anti-British tone that it had in India and the Sri Lanka Muslims did not turn away from the traditional policy of association with the imperial power. Indeed, throughout the next two decades the Muslims formed part of a phalanx of minorities under Tamil leadership which accepted the need for collaboration with the British in return for the protection and consolidation of the rights of minorities as the price for accepting the transfer of power. It was not till the early nineteen forties on the eve of the transfer of power that the Muslims broke away from them to support the Sinhalese leaders in their political campaigns for independence.

This policy of co-operation with the government of the day has been pursued by the Muslims after independence as well. And in this too they were, for the most part a contrast to the Hindus and Tamils in general. There was no support from them for the agitation for a federal political structure; on the contrary they have been among the most vociferous critics of such a move.

What they have attempted to do is to safeguard, sustain and advance their distinctive cultural identity. They have sought and obtained state support for this in two distinct fields: the consolidation and recognition of the personal laws of the Muslims; and in education. Here again, and more especially with regard to the former it was a trend which began from the earliest years of British rule.

The Muslim Marriage and Divorce Registration Ordinance 27 of 1929 (operative from 1937) set up a system of domestic relations courts presided over by Muslim judges (*quazis*) and explicitly recognized the pure Muslim law of marriage and divorce; and the same process may be observed in respect of inheritance, in the Muslim Intestate Succession and Wakfs Ordinance of 1931. The provision of the latter Ordinance relating to Muslim charitable trusts (Wakfs) was superseded by the Muslim Mosques and Charitable Trusts or Wakfs Act 51 of 1956, while the Ordinance of 1929 was repealed by the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act 13 of 1951 (operative from 1954) which enhanced the powers of the *quazis* who were given an exclusive jurisdiction in respect of marriages and divorces, and the status and mutual rights and obligations of the parties concerned. The Wakfs Act of 1956 established a separate government department with a purely Muslim Executive Board. The personal law of the Muslims have been preserved under the Republican Constitution of Sri Lanka.

It was in education that the greatest gains have been made, and this was especially so after 1956. The list of concessions won by the Muslims is remarkable. Special government Training Colleges have been set up for the Muslims. Arabic is taught in government schools as a language to Muslim pupils by qualified *moulavis*, appointed by the Ministry of Education and paid by the state. Muslim children had the right (till 1974) to pursue their studies in any one of the three language media—Sinhalese, Tamil or English—a privilege no other group in the country enjoyed. A

6. A Muslim movement to preserve the Turkish *khalifah* (*caliph*).

new category of government Muslim schools has been established apparently in recognition of the cultural individuality of Muslims as distinct from the Tamils whose language is the home language of the great majority of Sri Lanka Muslims. The usual practice had been to categorise schools on the basis of language of instruction in them and the Muslims formed part of the Tamil-speaking school population. In the new 'Muslim' schools the sessions and vacations are determined by the special requirements of the Muslim population. The establishment and expansion of these schools, it must be emphasised, vitiates the principle of non-sectarian state education which has been the declared policy of the government since 1960.

The concessions made to the Muslim community have been introduced partly at least in recognition of the fact that they lagged behind the other ethnic and religious groups in Sri Lanka in education. Thus some special assistance from the state may be justified as a temporary measure, even though the handicaps they suffered from were, as we have seen, largely self-inflicted. But the sensitivity to the special Muslim identity has no doubt been strengthened by the fact that a Muslim has been Minister of Education for over eight years in the period 1960 to 1974. And more importantly some Sinhalese politicians have not been disinclined to use the resources of the state to build up the Muslims as a counterweight to the Tamil community in a game of checks and balances which is an intrinsic element in the process of government in a plural society—*divide et impera*. This has been facilitated by the fact that the Muslims, in striking contrast to the Tamils, have no distinct political parties of their own contesting seats to Parliament in competition with, if not in opposition to, the main national political parties. Instead their political organizations work in association with and as adjuncts of the latter. The result is that the Muslim minority though numerically much smaller than the Tamils have greater bargaining powers electorally than their numbers warrant.

One of the benefits they have won through their electoral influence is the strong pro-Arab and anti-Israeli tilt in Sri Lanka's foreign policy. No doubt this fits in well with the ideological commitments of the SLFP and its left-wing allies, but it is significant that they have succeeded in obtaining "national" support for sectional interests in foreign policy, in contrast to the Tamils and Roman Catholics whose foreign connections and interests, real or alleged, have made them suspect to the Sinhalese Buddhist majority. These achievements are a tribute to the political acumen of the Muslim leadership and the restraint and moderation they have demonstrated in the pursuit of their objectives. But their greatest tests lie ahead of them, in handling the increasing prestige and influence that will devolve upon them in the context of the Arab resurgence and the unprecedented financial strength of the oil-producing states.

IX (3)

THE ROLE OF SRI LANKA CHRISTIANS IN A BUDDHIST MAJORITY SYSTEM

FR. PAUL CASPERSZ, S.J.

It has often been felt by sociologists of religion that it is unfair to analyze religious groups in terms of sociological categories for the obvious reason that essential aspects of religion have, by the very nature of what religion proposes to be, to elude sociological analysis.[1] How far it eludes such analysis only religionists can tell. In Sri Lanka the difficulties are compounded because of the diversity of religious experiences and traditions; these difficulties must be borne in mind in the course of the analysis that is here attempted.

Furthermore, it would seem rash and presumptuous to explain the role of a group so heterogeneous as the Christians in Sri Lanka—in denominational affiliation, in social status or class, language, caste, direction and degree of politicalization. For there would be as many roles as there have been, are, and will be, Christians. Indeed, to the extent that each Christian acts out his Christian status vis-a-vis a whole array of other social actors, there are as many role-sets as there are Christians. The brief analysis here attempted, therefore, is only a generalization.[2]

The generalisation may be stated in the form of two clear hypotheses: first, that the role of Christians until about a decade ago was to achieve, preserve and confirm the specific identity and distinctness of the minority Christian group.[3] not only in regard to all other religious groups but also in regard to the nation (however difficult the former, and even illogical the latter, enterprise); second, that in very recent years the role is being increasingly viewed as an outward and adaptive one in terms of the achievement of a national socio-cultural equilibrium by means of the

1. "The sociologist studies religion as one of many socially significant phenomena. This study will often lead him to analyze in detail religious propositions, insofar as they are relevant to the social situation, and will try to understand their social causes and consequences, and the manner in which they relate to the institutional fabric of society. None of this will ever enable him to judge these propositions on their own merits". Peter L. Berger, "Religious Institutions", in N. J. Smelser, ed., *Sociology: An Introduction* (New York: John Wiley, 1967) p. 334.
2. As such, the documentary support of several assertions is often not produced and is sometimes merely indicated.
3. Within the Christian group itself, there have been strong pressures at least until recent times, for sub-group specificity, e.g. among the Catholics vis-a-vis all other Christian groups.

fostering of creative inter-action, on the one hand, of the four main religious groups in a situation of accepted religious pluralism and, on the other, with the ideologies of secularism and Marxist socialism.

Role is the behaviour enactment consequent upon a status. The status of the Christian group is that of a minority in a social system in which the Buddhists are the majority. In the system the percentage of Catholics is 6.9, other Christians 0.8, Buddhists 67.4, Hindus 17.6, Muslims 7.1, and all others 0.1.[4] It is significant—though the fact does not appear to have been noticed by, still less perturbed, the Christian group—that the percentage of Christians has steadily decreased since the census of 1946 when it was 9.1. In 1953 it was 9.0, in 1963 it recorded 8.3, While in the 1971 census it showed a further decrease of 0.6, registering only 7.7 per cent.

One explanation of the decrease is probably the emigration of Christians. The present writer has not been able to secure the religious distribution of postwar emigrants, but it is his impression that the Christians, especially the Burghers, are more than proportionately represented in it (for the reason that they have been more than proportionately dissatisfied with the ongoing changes in the social system since Dominion Status): in the census of 1971 the Burghers who are nearly 100 per cent Christian were only 44,250 or 0.3 per cent of the population.

A second explanation of the decrease is that more than a third of the Christians are urban and their literacy and level of education proportionately to their numbers are higher than in other religious groups: the pressures of urban living, literacy and education seem to have outweighed the classic Catholic resistance to limitation of births, though, in the absence of figures, it is not possible to say whether the limiting factor has been the use of contraceptive devices (in opposition to official ecclesiastical directives) or abstention resulting from the rationalization of procreative processes (itself a result of the greater influence of western culture on the Christian than on other religous groups).

It was earlier suggested that the role of Christians until the 60s was conceived in terms of its minority identity. In the sociological studies of minority groups it has often been found that they manifest a fierce desire to protect the cohesiveness of the group in the face of threats, real or imaginary, of being taken over by the majority. Within the Christian group in Sri Lanka this minority consciousness was strengthened by the presence within it of a large percentage of Tamils, who are themselves a linguistic minority in the social system. The Tamil Christians, therefore, had a double reason to pressurize for a 'hands-off the Christians' attitude: one, because they were Christians, the other, because they were Tamils. This sheds light, incidentally, both on the efficiency of the Christian schools in Tamil areas and on the loyalty of the Tamils to them.

In the first decade and a half after Dominion Status the role of Christians was essentially a continuance of the role as it was played since the establishment of the Christian Church in Portuguese times. It is all too facile to criticize this role in the

4. *Census of Population* 1971, *Preliminary Release No.* 1.

light of the perceptions of a later period. When the first converts were made—by means fair, dubious or foul—the predominant concern of the pastors, who were Europeans, was to protect their faith from the influence of other faiths. At a time when religion was so deeply imbedded in secular culture as to be wholly indistinguishable from it, the Church set about the establishment of an alternative culture for the Ceylonese who adopted the Christian faith. The search for separate identity from other religious groups and from the rest of the nation had begun.

The dream of the formalization of culture through widespread schools for the people was still far-off in all parts of the world and therefore the first attempts at the building of a specific Christian culture in Lanka were through the medium of stone. Don Peter cites a letter of 1622 about the Jesuit Church in Colombo:

> 'It is built in Corinthian style, and is well proportioned and handsome. The facade is magnificent, and if it is not the best, it will certainly be the second best in the whole of India'.[5]

The style of all these early stone instruments of culturalization was, so far as we know, western, and was in sharp contrast to the Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim styles of architecture. Added to the influence of architecture was the gradual introduction—fostered by the early and the later schools—of western languages, western names and surnames, western music, western dress and habits of eating. It may of course be contended that similar cultural specificity had already made the three existing religious groups inter-distinguishable, and hence that there was nothing strange about the quest for the specificity and distinctness of a fourth group. What was unique, however, was that this fourth group by its Western character soon began to distinguish itself not merely from each of the three existing groups taken separately but from the three of them taken together. The other three were Eastern, Ceylonese; this one Western, Portuguese, and later Dutch or British.

Brought into the country as a new way of life for all takers by the white foreigners, led for four centuries by foreigners sometimes of the same nationality as the foreign rulers or, in later days, by local clergy trained by the foreigners, the Christian Church succeeded in establishing not just a cultural uniqueness for the Christians but a western cultural uniqueness. The westernized and westernizing culture was a social advantage to the Christians when the country was under the western imperial power. As late as 6 January 1887 at a ceremony in Colombo constituting the Catholic hierarchy of Ceylon, Archbishop Bonjean pronounced "an eloquent allocution ending with acclamations to the Pope, to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, to Mgr. Agliardi (Apostolic Delegate to the East Indies) and to Queen Victoria, in which the clergy and people joined".[6] The imperial government could not but take note of such a show of loyalty. In 1948 it was no longer possible to acclaim the foreign overlord. Instead, a directive from the Archibishop exhorted Catholics "to decorate their houses,

5. W. L. A. Don Peter, *Studies in Ceylon Church History* (Colombo: The Catholic Press) 1963, p. 45.
6. *The Ceylon Catholic Messenger*, 5 January 1947, p. 4.

churches and schools during the Independence Week, prominence being given to the Papal Flag and the National Flag".[7] Even in independent Ceylon the Church leaders sought to maintain the old cultural specificity.

It could be objected that the westernization of the Christians affected only a minority among them—those in the upper social and income brackets, who lived in Colombo and a few other towns and spoke English—and that the majority of Christians continued to live according to the culture of their forefathers even after they received the water of baptism. Even as late as 1970 the Houtart Survey estimated that the social distribution of Catholics was as follows: upper classes 4 per cent, intermediate classes 28 per cent, lower classes 68 per cent.[8] Numbers, however, did not call the tune during the long period of the search for Christian identity. In both State and Church, society was hierarchically constituted and thus the dominant pressures of the Christian upper classes were felt all down the line of the social stratification of Christians. Indeed, when numbers began to tell after universal franchise was introduced in 1931, it did not take very long for the role to be questioned and a new role to be sought.

If the western character of the specific cultural identity of the Christians caused tensions between them and other religious groups and between them and the nation as a whole, the pro-*status quo* character of the group (certainly of its leaders who exercised an autocratic control over the rank and file) made the Christians liable to a charge of dubious loyalty in the minds of all those who challenged the *status quo*. The challenge came first from the nationalists, then from the socialists.

There is probably in all religious institutions an inbuilt conservatism, an inherent fear of disturbing the existing order. The order may not be the ideal one, but at least the religious institution has learnt to live with it and hence fears its change. When the institution is old, highly organized, well financed, centralized—as in the case of the Christian institution—the pressures to conserve are enhanced. On the eve of independence, the editorial in *The Ceylon Catholic Messenger* could hardly have been more unequivocal:

> 'Let our Independence then be marked by conformity with the established order which it is beyond the right of mere mortals to alter for disturb; let our new Government stand the supreme test—that of fidelity to the moral law which it can violate only at its own peril. And let the chief contribution of the Catholics to the political progress of the country be the realization of this great desideratum'.[9]

According to the accepted interpretations of its phenomenological reality,[10] religion is concerned with the ordering of human life in society in accordance with some ultimate right order. During the colonial and post-independence periods

7. *ibid.*, 1 February 1948, p. 4.
8. Francois Houtart, *Summary of the Survey of the Catholic Church in Ceylon* (Colombo: Quest No. 43), p. 32.
9. *The Ceylon Catholic Messenger*, 18 January 1948.
10. e.g. the interpretations of Durkheim, Weber, Mircea Eliade, Berger, van der Leeuw.

the Christian Church defended order, but made insufficient assessment of the rightness of the order. The concept of order is more static than dynamic, and the Church defended it. The concept of the rightness of order is more dynamic than static, and the Church was uncritical about it.

The concern of the Church over its specific identity vis-a-vis the other religious groups and the nation was so over-riding that the Church made no significant attempt at a courageous solution of the contradictions within the Christian group itself. These contradictions were present first for detection and then for resolution in the fields of the integration of social classes and castes within the group, of the rural with the urban Christians. Christian parish priests and vicars in rural areas did not see their role as a socially catalytic one, nor did the chaplains on the estates do anything significant to secure conditions of elementary humanity for the estate labour. An exception in the Christian record of non-initiation of social change would probably be the Social Justice Movement started in Colombo in the late 30s by the Peter Pillai group but "this was a group that was basically reformist within the framework of capitalism and foreign exploitation."[11] Peter Pillai in his later years showed himself to be increasingly uncomfortable with the social and educational policies of the more people-oriented political groups: it was also a period during which he was the chief theoretician of the Christian group.

The concept of the role in terms of an identity search explains the position taken by the Church in the field of education in the contemporary period.[12] Free education was opposed because it would break the bonds that bound the better schools to the Christian managements and thus expose Christian children to the influence of Buddhist and secularist cultures. Swabasha was opposed because more English, better taught, was a characteristic of the urban Christian schools and constituted their chief advantage to the children of the affluent non-Christian patrons. The take-over of schools was violently opposed because it was felt that with the schools would go the last bulwarks of the identity of Christians in the nation. In the Christian school structure Houtart[13] sees the validation of a socio-political order by an educational system resting on religion. The present writer would consider this the latent function or the unintended consequence of the Christian school system. Its manifest function or its intended consequence was the achievement and consolidation of identity. By fulfilling it the Church certainly opened avenues of upward social mobility to many urban working-class and lower middle-class Christian families. That the three major educational reforms mentioned were a similar move towards a levelling of educational opportunity, but over a wider range, the majority of Christian leaders did not or was unwilling to see—until the middle of the last decade.

11. Tissa Balasuriya, "The Catholic Approach to Religio-Cultural Integration", *Satyodaya* (Kandy), No. 18, August 1974, p. 5.
12. In a wide-ranging study, *Religion and Ideology in Sri Lanka* (Bangalore: TPI, 1974), cf. esp. pp. 212-216, 265-297, Francois Houtart presents and evaluates the relevant documentary evidence.
13. *ibid.*

The change in the perception of the role of Christians was stimulated by several factors. The exogenous factors were first those inducing change in secular society all over the world. "Vastly improved conditions of travel and transport, the growth of the mass communication media, the spread of conflicting ideologies, rising educational standards for increasing numbers of people, higher levels of consumption, the emergence of youth culture, the appearance of a third world: all these factors make it impossible for Lanka not to be a society in transition".[14] Within the Church the greatest single factor promoting change was the Vatican Council, 1963-1965.[15]

The endogenous factors were chiefly the growth of popular participation in government after 1931, the expansion of education through schools and the electoral progress, the dissemination of Marxist ideas and the evolution of a strategy for the socialist development of the country. In the earlier period the Christians did not see their role as being that of initiators of change. Now they were forced to follow the changes in secular society.

The Houtart Survey, seeking a generalized picture as to how Catholics situate themselves in their national social context, from its valid interviews of 1361 persons (responding out of a sample of 1500 persons) selected from 50 parishes situated in the six Catholic dioceses, concluded to two tendencies in the Catholic population. The first, accounting for more than half the Catholic population, was a dynamic and forward one, "characterized by a hope in the future and by an acceptation of the social changes". The second, accounting for about a quarter of the population, was a static and conservative one. The remaining quarter had no convictions in either direction.[16]

In Christian circles much is sometimes made of the fact that the Christian schools nurtured a generation of the elite which led the country to independence from the colonial regime. That the British were largely able to talk to a group of upper and middle-class leaders together—regardless of the fact that the group contained individuals divided according to religion, root language and caste—was, it is alleged, the result of the Christian schools where these leaders were educated together. However, even apart from the fact that some elitist leaders experienced their Christian educational background to be rather an embarrassment, the charge is sometimes heard that it was precisely this background that served to distance the elite from the masses. The Church played its part in the formation of the elite. Its role now is to form them again—without the aid of the schools which have now almost completely been removed from Church control—to work alongside and with the people. A reformed Christian elite will still have a useful role to play in the present phase of the

14. Paul Caspersz, "Sri Lanka: A Society in Transition", *Impact* (Manila), 7:10, October 1972, p. 339.
15. cf. especially "The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" in Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (London: Chapman, 1966). The "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions" (*ibid*) is, however, much less satisfactory.
16. *Opinions and Attitudes of Catholics in Ceylon*, Part II (Louvain: Centre de Recherches Socio-Religieuses, mimeograph, 1970), p. 16.

country's development. Part of this role is to understand what the country now requires. The conditions for the successful fulfilment of the role have been well expressed by Zarina Bhatty:

> "Contributions that a minority community will make would therefore depend on how well it can redefine its distinctiveness and mould it into forms which are in harmony with the changing environment and have a creative context".[17]

The greater contact which the Christian group had and still has with the culture of the West, and its greater assimilation of that culture—once a source of suspicion of the group—can now lead it, if it is joined to the sympathetic perception of social change, to contribute vitally to the rationalization and modernization of the country's socio-economic structure. If Sri Lanka, like the rest of the world, is moving into a new technological era, Christians will perhaps be better placed than other religious groups both to understand and to adjust to the demands of the new era.

Will Herberg's thesis that the three main religious groups in America—Protestants, Catholics, Jews—are equi-legitimate expressions of American religion, indeed of American society, is well known. Christians in Sri Lanka have been there long enough to seek to be an equi-legitimate expression of the country's life and character. With the Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims and all who are concerned about society Christians should seek to hammer out a national equilibrium of culture without which it will not be possible to achieve the type of nation which most of the inhabitants of the country probably desire.

17. Zarina Bhatty "The Role of Minorities in Indian Development", *Religion and Society* (Bangalore), 20:4, December 1973, p. 77.

X

THE DIALECTIC OF RELIGION AND POLITICS IN SRI LANKA

DONALD E. SMITH

In this article I propose to sketch in broad strokes the political role of Buddhism in the twenty-seven years since independence. The subject is a fascinating one which has attracted a substantial amount of research over the past decade, and this literature makes the inclusion of extensive factual detail in this essay unnecessary.[1] It is therefore possible to devote primary attention to the development of a scheme of interpretation.

The comparative study of religion and politics in developing areas points up some seeming paradoxes. On one hand, it is clear that a multifaceted process of secularization of the polity has been taking place since the early nineteenth century. On the other hand, religion has been a powerful factor in the emergence of mass politics, in some cases attacking directly the secular values and assumptions associated with the concept of a modern polity.[2] How do these apparently opposing processes relate to each other?

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The process of secularization in relation to the political system is itself a complex phenomenon, and it is possible to distinguish analytically at least four major aspects of the process:

1. *Polity-separation secularization* refers to the institutional separation of polity and religion and the denial of the religious identity of the polity. This aspect of secularization involves government's rejection of its traditional role as promoter and defender of the faith, and the rejection of religious ideas as the basis of its legitimacy.

1. See particularly: Heinz Bechert, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft*, vol. 1 (Alfred Metzner Verlag, 1966); the chapters on Ceylon by D. E. Smith, A. Jeyaratnam Wilson and C. D. S. Siriwardane in Donald E. Smith, ed. *South Asian Politics and Religion*, (Princeton University Press, 1966); Gananath Obeyesekere, "Religious Symbolism and Political Change in Ceylon", and S. U. Kodikara, "Communalism and Political Modernisation in Ceylon", both in *Modern Ceylon Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1970.

2. These two themes are considered in the context of South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, and Latin America in D. E. Smith, ed., *Religion and Political Modernization* (Yale University Press, 1974).

2. *Polity-expansion secularization* involves the expansion of the political system into areas of society formerly regulated by religion. The polity thus extends its jurisdiction into areas of education, law, economic activity, etc., which were subject to religious norms and structures in the traditional system.

3. *Political-culture secularization* refers to the transformation of values associated with the polity; secular notions of political community, the legitimacy of the polity, and the meaning of politics replace traditional religious notions in the thinking of many people.

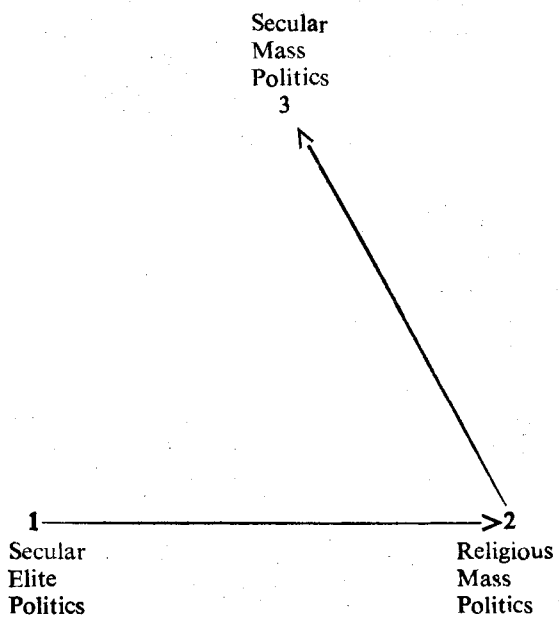
4. *Political-process secularization* is the decline in political saliency and influence of religious leaders, religious interest groups, religious political parties, and religious issues; and also the weakening of religious identity and ideology of the actors as a consequence of participation in the political process. For example, the waning influence of religious political parties and/or their increasingly secular orientation would both be manifestations of political-process secularization.[3]

Much could be said about the interrelationships among these four aspects of secularization, but we cannot pursue the point here except to note that the first two (polity-separation and polity-expansion secularization) are largely initiated and implemented by modernizing governmental elites, foreign or native, while the latter two aspects (political-culture and political-process secularization) are related to numerous factors not readily subject to governmental policy and control.

The importance of religion in the politics of developing societies is related to its centrality in the traditional culture of the masses. Stated in its simplest terms, in the traditional setup, religion is a mass phenomenon, politics is not; but the use of religious symbols can make politics meaningful to the masses, it can be the vehicle of mass politicization. Once mass political participation becomes an established pattern, the religious factor tends to decline. Politics generates its own values and offers its own rewards, which are likely to be political, social, and economic; the "crutch" of religion becomes unnecessary to the maintenance of the political process in which the masses are now involved, although isolated religious issues may become politically relevant from time to time.

The notion of dialectic—thesis, antithesis, synthesis—posits a dynamic, causative relationship between phases which occur in sequence. I propose it here only as a useful way of viewing this twenty-seven-year span of independent Ceylon's political history. To my mind, the growth of mass political participation must be reckoned one of the most significant changes in Ceylon since 1948, and the notion of dialectic is useful in explaining the relationship of religion to this process. The dialectic proceeds from Secular Elite Politics to Religious Mass Politics to Secular Mass Politics.

3. These four definitions, and a fifth not relevant to the case of Sri Lanka, are found in *ibid.*, p. 8.



It is hardly necessary to add that, although there are some notable turning-points, this is a general interpretive scheme and no precise dates mark the end of one phase and the beginning of another. Let us now proceed to fill in some of the historical data.

SECULARIZATION UNDER BRITISH RULE

The secularizing impact of British rule on Ceylon was so profound, and sustained over such a long period, that it required considerable effort for the Buddhist layman in 1948 even to imagine how different life had been in the traditional Sinhalese kingdoms of the past. The richness and antiquity of the Buddhist tradition was there, preserved in the *Mahavamsa* and in the architecture and sculpture of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, but it was no longer regarded as politically relevant.

Prince Vijaya, grandson of a lion and a princess, landed in Lanka on the precise day the Lord Buddha passed away, but not before he had designated it the chosen place where his religion would be established, entrusting it to the protection of the king of the gods. The fusion of Buddhism and Sinhalese national identity was in evidence as early as the second century B.C. when King Dutthagamani fought to liberate the northern part of the island from Hindu Tamil invaders; his battle cry: "Not for kingdom, but for Buddhism". Coronation rituals and the possession of certain relics conferred legitimacy on Sinhalese rulers, and they in turn ceremonially offered the whole kingdom to the sacred tooth relic. The chief function of the king was to protect and promote the faith; he was chief patron of the Sangha as well as responsible for overseeing its discipline. The traditional religio-political system, which had survived innumerable political upheavals previously, came to an end in 1815.

The British government pledged in the Kandyan Convention to continue royal protection of Buddhism, even while continuing its official connection with the Church of England. But the overwhelming fact is that the traditional system, in which religion had played a major legitimizing and integrating role in the state, had come to an end. The bureaucratic colonial structure which the British erected was secular in its organization, purposes, and spirit, and had no *essential* connection to either Buddhism or Christianity. Vestiges remained, but the process of *polity separation secularization* had clearly begun.

Polity-expansion secularization proceeded with the extension of secular legal codes and courts, and legislation with far-reaching effects on the social structure, such as the abolition of *rajakariya*. Of critical importance was the great expansion of governmental responsibility in the area of education, as government schools and state-aided missionary schools with their essentially western curriculum displaced the monastery schools in which Buddhist monks had instructed the young in the Dhamma and the skills of literacy throughout Sinhalese history.

SECULAR ELITE POLITICS

As it developed, the most prestigious sector of this system of western education utilized English as the exclusive medium of instruction and prepared students for admission to university either in Ceylon or England, after which they made their way into government service or the professions. Some came from families of landed wealth but most from humbler social circumstances, from Sinhalese Buddhist and Hindu Tamil and other communities, but the English-educated elite which evolved was remarkably homogeneous in terms of its values, for the common cultural imprint of England was deep.[4] The Christians, a minority of 9 per cent, contributed a substantial number of leading families to the elite, and Christian dominance in education as well as the religious association of the rulers and of western culture, combined to create the high prestige of Christianity in Ceylon.

The English-educated elite of Sinhalese background in particular became increasingly cut off from the culture of the masses. English was literally the mother tongue of several generations of certain Sinhalese families, and while they might have remained nominal Buddhists this was a vestige which bore little relationship to their highly Anglicized lifestyle.

As we have noted, British rule produced fundamental changes in Ceylonese society in terms of polity-separation and polity expansion secularization. Its English educational system produced impressive results also in terms of *political-culture secularization* as the secular values of British liberalism and parliamentary democracy were absorbed by the elite. The process was very incomplete, however, for it never went beyond the urban westernized elite to produce a transformation of values among the rural masses. By and large, traditional religious and caste values remained supreme in the village.

4. On the impact of western education, see Michael M. Ames, "Westernization or Modernization: the Case of Sinhalese Buddhism", *Social Compass*, vol. 20, no. 2, 1973.

Politics was a monopoly of the English educated class, and their posture vis-a-vis the British government was a moderate one.[5] Law degrees from England, participation in an expanding economy in Ceylon, and faith in the progress of parliamentary institutions were among the factors which inclined the elite toward a conservative brand of politics. Ceylonese nationalism was a very mild affair, without the mass mobilization, non-violent and violent conflict, and massive arrests which shook India over a period of three decades. Remarkably, even the institution of universal suffrage in 1931 did not make Ceylonese politics less a monopoly of the elite. For the most part the politicians dealt not with the masses, but with the local notables (landlords, caste and village leaders, etc.) who could deliver blocs of votes in exchange for patronage.

Independence dawned in 1948, the Union Jack was hauled down and the Lion Flag was raised to the stirring roll of drums. But the era of Secular Elite Politics went on without marked change, and would continue as long as all players observed the cardinal rule of the game, namely, that nothing be done to make participants out of spectators.

RELIGIOUS MASS POLITICS

The more sensitive intellectuals of the western educated elite were troubled by their image if not identity as brown Englishman. In an age of nationalism, of renascent Asia, it was uncomfortable to claim one's place in the sun as the class most like the displaced foreign rulers in all the former British Empire. But undoubtedly, had the new governmental elite succeeded in maintaining a high degree of cohesion (a most difficult assignment in any political system), the dramatic changes would have been postponed for some years. As it turned out, the frustrated aspirations of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike led to his departure from D. S. Senanayake's cabinet and the founding of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party.

The political genius of Bandaranaike lay in his systematic rejection of the westernized cultural image over a period of years, in religion, language, and dress, and in the creation of a political program based on the supremacy of a Sinhalese Buddhist national identity. In short, he embraced the cultural symbols of the majority of the population; he appealed *directly* to the rural masses. He promised to make Sinhalese the sole official language, and to restore Buddhism to its "rightful place" in state and society. It was a populist appeal sacralized by reference to a glorious Buddhist past.

Bandaranaike's overwhelming victory in 1956 might perhaps have happened if the conflict involved only the westernized elite and the Sinhalese Buddhist masses. But the situation was immeasurably complicated by majority-minority conflicts and communal grievances provided much of the emotional power of Bandaranaike's movement.[6] For various reasons, the Ceylon Tamils and the Christians had both

5. See Marshall R. Singer, *The Emerging Elite*, (M.I.T. Press, 1964); and Tissa Fernando, "Elite Politics in the New States: The Case of Post-Independence Sri Lanka", *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 46, no. 3, 1973.

6. See Robert N. Kearney, *Communalism and Language in the Politics of Ceylon* (Duke University Press, 1967).

done far better in the educational and economic competition than their numbers would have predicted. The All-Ceylon Buddhist Congress, in its famous report, *The Betrayal of Buddhism*, interpreted these facts as part of a sustained conspiracy on the part of British imperialism to relegate Buddhism and the Buddhist community to a markedly inferior position. Thus a post-independence Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism identified several enemies: a westernized elite, religious and linguistic minorities, and British imperialism.

The organized role of the *bhikkhus* (Buddhist monks) was another dramatic innovation in Ceylon politics. Though still endowed with high social prestige and accorded the greatest deference by individual laymen, the *sangha* had witnessed the steady erosion under foreign rule of its once impressive prerogatives of societal regulation and political influence. This traditional religious elite had every reason to overthrow a system which had made it increasingly irrelevant, although the monks' political activism was clearly contrary to Vinaya requirements of monastic discipline. Bandaranaike's clerical allies, the United Monks Front led by Rev. M. Buddharakkhita, waged a vigorous and effective campaign on his behalf. Buddharakkhita by virtue of his position as chief priest of the Kelaniya Temple, had access to considerable wealth, some of which he diverted to the political campaign. As vice president of the SLFP he was a member of Bandaranaike's inner circle, and he saw himself as the power behind the throne. He and his colleagues in the United Monks Front leadership did in fact wield great power after the 1956 victory, constituting a kind of supra-cabinet. The political monks proved to be the most aggressive advocates of Sinhala Only, opposed the search for compromises with the Tamils, and were a factor of some importance in the bloody Sinhalese-Tamil clashes of 1958. Bandaranaike and Buddharakkhita became locked in a personal feud and power struggle behind the scenes. Bandaranaike was killed by a monk in 1959, and Buddharakkhita was convicted as the arch-conspirator of the assassination plot.

Communal issues continued to be important in the first administration of Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, particularly in the nationalization of the aided schools in 1961, which ended Christian dominance in the field of education. An important symbolic act was the replacement of an Anglican Christian, Sir Oliver Goonetilleke, by a staunch Buddhist, William Gopallawa, as Governor General of Ceylon in 1962. By 1964 most of the grievances of the Sinhalese Buddhists had been attended to, and minority domination of certain departments of the civil and military services had come to an end.

Mrs. Bandaranaike's formation of a coalition government with the Marxist LSSP in 1964, however, alienated the more conservative Buddhists, monks and laymen alike. Monks played an important part in the 1965 elections, predominantly on behalf of the UNP which won a plurality. The new government, formed with the support of the Federal Party, pledged itself to the restoration of communal harmony, and a Tamil occupied a cabinet post for the first time since 1956.

SECULAR MASS POLITICS

The UNP had learned a lot since 1956, and it was anxious to establish its fundamental Sinhalese Buddhist identity. Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake therefore pledged to restore Buddhism to its ancient glory and strengthen the Sangha. One specific measure which was enacted substituted the Buddhist sabbath days for Sundays as public holidays.

The government focussed primary attention on the economic problems which had been mounting over the previous decade, and made creditable progress in dealing with several of them. As the 1970 elections approached, however, it appeared that the relative improvement in the economy only served to underline the plight of the growing ranks of the educated unemployed. The adoption of Sinhalese and Tamil as media of instruction and the great expansion of university education after 1956, designed to create equality of opportunity and aid the disadvantaged majority, had produced far more graduates than the economy could absorb.

Mrs. Bandaranaike and the SLFP moved steadily leftward in response to these growing economic problems. Allied with the LSSP and the Communist Party she won a decisive victory in 1970 and formed a leftist government with a Marxist minister of Finance. The 1971 insurrection, which shook the government and the people of the island as no other event since independence, was led by young Marxists who had already decided that the leftists in power were opportunists and moving too slowly, and that the solution to Ceylon's economic problems lay in violent revolution.

The Ceylonese electorate today is largely literate and highly politicized; an amazing 80 percent of qualified voters participate in elections. The gravitation of politics toward economic issues, which has meant a significant swing leftward, also means the emergence of Secular Mass Politics in Sri Lanka. The Constitution finally adopted in 1972 declares: "The Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the State to protect and foster Buddhism...." It is ironic that this symbolic victory of Buddhism came fifteen years after its real political victory, and at a time when religion is clearly being pushed into the background by economics.

We have earlier in this article provided illustrations of polity-separation, polity-expansion, and political-culture secularization in the history of Sri Lanka. It is only to this latest period right up to the present that we can apply the fourth category: *political-process secularization*, the decline in political saliency and influence of religious leaders, religious interest groups, religious political parties, and religious issues; and also the weakening of religious identity and ideology of the actors as a consequence of participation in the political process.

It would be foolish to attempt any long-range predictions, but a major resurgence of political Buddhism in Sri Lanka seems unlikely in the near future for the following reasons:

1. The Sinhalese Buddhist majority is now in firm control of most areas of social, economic and political life. It was the anomoly of this community's minority-like status in various respects which generated much of the emotional commitment to its most important symbolic system, Buddhism.

2. Buddha statues have spring up in many public places, the symbolic enthronement of Buddhism has been achieved in the Constitution, and no important new goals have been articulated by influential Buddhist leaders. Buddhism, unlike Islam contains no ideology of a comprehensive sacral society such as still inspires a Quaddafi in Libya. A movement of religio-political resurgence cannot prosper or even survive without clear objectives.

3. As argued above, the centrality of the economic crisis in Sri Lanka has made a deep impression at all levels of society. The country's economic problems are likely to be prolonged, and an increasingly literate and politicized electorate may well come to regard all religious issues in politics as so many red herrings. The frustrations generated by growing economic ills may lead to an increase in inter-group conflict, but even when this takes the form of communal conflict it is unlikely that Buddhism per se will play the important role in politics it once did.

XI

SRI LANKA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DURING TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

DONALD R. SNODGRASS

Introduction

The first quarter-century of Ceylonese independence began with high hopes for economic achievement, based on what then appeared to be enormous assets: a literate, well-fed population; a competent public administration; prosperous export industries which had amassed large Sterling balances supplying tea, rubber, and coconut products to the wartime Allies; well-developed economic and social infrastructure. It seems a fair judgment that achievement has fallen short of these hopes. Production has grown slowly and foreign exchange has been in critically short supply during most of the period. Ever-worsening overpopulation has constituted a treadmile against which all development efforts must struggle. It is true that the period has seen some notable achievements—in spreading social services to the entire population, lessening interpersonal income inequality, and increasing food production. Yet the increasing emphasis on averting a food crisis by growing more food domestically, rather than buying it abroad with the earnings of viable export industries represents a lowering of the sights of economic policy which reveals how difficult the past 25 years have been for the Ceylonese economy.

Ceylonese economic development in 1948-73 can usefully be divided into two subperiods of roughly equal length. In 1948-60 Ceylon failed to realign its export economy so as to cope with a new and less favorable set of factor growth rates and satisfy the social demands of a politically articulate populace. The critical event of the era was the failure to correct the worsening foreign exchange position after 1955 This omission forced severe restrictions on imports and other foreign payments, beginning in 1961. In the 1960-73 era, the nation struggled to escape from a new perennial foreign exchange crisis. The economy, everywhere constrained by import shortages, grew much less rapidly—but the position of the lowest income groups did improve substantially.

Development in 1948-60

The 1948-60 experience and its historical background have been analyzed elsewhere.[1] This was a period of significant, if unsustainable, economic growth. Real

1. Donald R. Snodgrass, *Ceylon: An Export Economy in Transition* (Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1966).

Gross National Product rose by about 90% (equivalent to 5.5% per annum); with a small improvement in the barter terms of trade between the end years of the period, real Gross National Income practically doubled.[2] Despite the addition of more than two and a half million souls to the population, living standards did rise significantly. Private consumption per head (valued in 1959 prices) can be reckoned at Rs. 376 in 1948 and Rs. 516 in 1960. Private consumption was supported by government transfer payments which consistently exceeded tax and other payments by households to the government.[3] Public consumption outlays more than doubled in real terms, as competing regimes broadened the coverage of education, health, and other social services. The average Ceylonese of 1960 was thus distinctly better off than his counterpart of 1948. But adequate provision had not been made for maintaining this improvement after 1960.

In the long run, what did not happen in 1948-60 may be more important than what did. To sustain moderate growth after 1960 would have required that export earnings be plowed back into investment in other sectors of the economy. Instead consumption claimed most of these flows while investment generally remained below 10% of GNP until 1956, even then advancing only to 13% by 1960.[4] Major increases were achieved in paddy production (which doubled between 1947-49 and 1959-61) but progress in refurbishing existing export industries or diversifying into new areas in either agriculture or industry was far more modest. So the structure of production changed little as population grew and, after 1955, the foreign exchange problem worsened rapidly.

In 1956-60 moderate downturn of export prices (from an historically high level) was juxtaposed on rapid increases in import volume financed by expansionary fiscal policy.[5] External assets dropped from Rs. 1,275 million at the end of 1956 to Rs. 541 million four years later. No government of that turbulent period dared to risk its political life by taking the unpalatable measures which could have stemmed the tide, so by the time the problem was finally tackled, in early 1961, supply of foreign exchange had fallen to a crisis level.

The main immediate effect of population growth in 1948-60 was to push up private and public consumption needs, diminishing the investible surplus. The employment

2. See the Appendix for the numbers upon which all estimates of economic growth in 1948-73 are based.

3. Snodgrass, pp. 272-73.

4. According to my national accounts estimates (Snodgrass, p. 269) the only year in the 1950-55 period when gross fixed capital formation exceeded 10% of GNP was 1953, when it briefly touched 11%. Estimates of the Department of Census and Statistics (cf. Snodgrass, pp. 240-43) give higher ratios because they underestimate GNP.

5. Export prices fell only 12% from 1955 peak to 1958 trough, after which they recovered slightly. But import volume rose 35% between 1955 and 1960. See Central Bank of Ceylon, *Annual Report of the Monetary Board to the Minister of Finance for the Year* 1973, Colombo, 1974, Tables 50 and 51.

problem began to command attention only after a 1959 sample survey indicated a worsening situation.[6]

Income distribution changed little during this period—at least between 1953 and 1963, the years for which survey data are available.[7] The share of the highest decile of income recipients did decline, but those of the deciles just below the top rose, leaving overall pretax inequality unchanged. Considerable levelling of welfare disparities probably did occur as a result of broadened government social programs.

Development in 1960-73

The years since 1960 have seen much slower economic growth than those before. The growth rate of real GNP dipped below 4%. The permanent foreign exchange crisis necessitated frequent international borrowing to finance an import bill from which all luxuries, and then increasing quantities of more essential goods had been purged.[8] Gross foreign assets nevertheless continued to slip away until 1972. Generally lower export prices contributed to Ceylon's woes through 1968, at which prices strengthened, even exceeding the 1955 boom level during the 1973 upset of world commodity prices. The Dudley Senanayake regime of 1965-70 was able to obtain net official loan receipts averaging Rs. 200 million in 1966-70 (perhaps because of payments lags, aid receipts reached even higher levels in 1971-72).[9]

Offsetting these increased means of import finance, however, were dramatic increases in import prices, resulting from rising world prices and successive rupee devaluations. Whereas import prices had risen by only 46% in 1948-60 (and not at all in 1951-60), the rise in 1960-73 was a startling 152%. Much of this increase occurred in 1973, as a result of world grain shortages and the withholding of supplies by petroleum exporters. Imports had to be restricted almost as severely in the early 1970's as they had been in the early 1960's; the import volume index for 1973 stood at its lowest level since 1949.[10] Thus it is not surprising that per capita levels of income, private consumption, and even public consumption increased only marginally in 1960-73.

With the capacity to import so severely constrained, the necessity to develop means of earning or saving more foreign exchange was even more urgent in 1960-73 than it had been in 1948-60. Yet progress along either line continued to be slow—in part because export industries and import-substituting industries themselves continued to be heavily dependent on imported intermediate and capital goods. Rubber output

6. See "A Survey of Employment, Unemployment, and Underemployment in Ceylon", *International Labour Review*, March 1963, pp. 247-57. The Survey showed 10.5% of the labor force to be unemployed, with 45.4% of those employed in rural areas and 29.0% in urban areas unable to find 40 hours of work per week on a year-round basis.

7. Central Bank of Ceylon, *Survey of Ceylon's Consumer Finances*, Colombo, 1954; *Survey of Ceylon's Consumer Finances* 1963, Colombo, 1964.

8. Official foreign debt soared from Rs. 294 million at end-1960 to Rs. 2,795 million at end-1973. Central Bank, *Annual Report* 1973, Table 38.

9. *Ibid.*, Table 47.

10. *Ibid.*, Table 51.

did go up on the strength of the replanting campaign but tea production levelled off in the face of stagnating, price-inelastic world demand and increasing competition from other producers. Coconut output continued to fluctuate from year to year with no apparent trend. Real value added in manufacturing grew by fits and starts, averaging only 5.3% a year.[11] Tourism added a tiny element of dynamism, but in general economic restructuring proceeded so slowly that Ceylon was forced to think more and more about growing her own food. Fortunately it did prove possible to raise paddy output by another 50%, after the doubling of 1948-60. Production of subsidiary foodstuffs also increased, so food supplies generally remained adequate for the growing population. Indeed, nutrition seems to have improved somewhat as compared to two decades before: average daily calorie intake rose from about 2,000 to 2,200, while consumption of fruit, vegetables, eggs, and milk all increased.[12]

In 1960-73 the full force of population growth hit the labour market. The population between 15 and 65 years of age—roughly, the working age range—soared from about five and a quarter million to seven and a half million. Despite gaps in the available statistics and difficulties of interpretation, it is evident that the growth of labour supply during this period far outran the demand for labour being generated by the slowly growing economy. By any measure, labour surplus increased by leaps and bounds. Estimated open unemployment climbed from 370,000 in 1959, to 550,000 in 1969/70, to a staggering figure of 793,000 in 1973.[13] Underemployment, by any definition, undoubtedly increased. And labour force participation rates, particularly for women, declined as "discouraged workers" abandoned the unrewarding search for employment.[14] As a result of its long-standing commitment to extensive free education through the university level, Ceylon also became an outstanding example of the growing global phenomenon of educated unemployment.

While Ceylon found it difficult to increase income per head in 1960-73, it did substantially equalize income distribution. Since 1963 inequality among earners and spending units has been cut sharply; the shares of the top two deciles have fallen while those of the bottom eight have risen.[15] Further progress was also made in welfare-redistributing tax and benefit programs.[16] Thus, despite the slow growth of mean

11. Central Bank *Annual Reports* for 1968 (p. 39) and 1973 (Table 5).
12. Based on food balance sheets for 1952-53 (Snodgrass, p. 321) and 1971 (*Statistical Pocket Book of the Republic of Sri Lanka* 1973, Colombo: Department of Government Printing, 1973, p. 57).
13. "A Survey of Employment..."; International Labour Office, *Matching Employment Opportunities and Expectations. A Programme of Action for Ceylon*, Geneva, 1971; and Central Bank, *Annual Report for* 1973, pp. 11-12.
14. Declining participation rates through 1968 were found for some groups by P. J. Richards in his *Employment and Unemployment in Ceylon*, Paris: Organization for Co-operation and Development, 1971, pp. 49-53. Data from a 10% sample of 1971 census returns (*Statistical Pocket Book* 1973, pp. 10-11, 25) suggest subsequent further declines. A crude indicator is the falling ratio of persons whose usual economic status is employment to total population ages 15-64 which is shown in successive population censuses: 58.2% in 1953, 55.6% in 1963, 50.7% in 1971.
15. See Central Bank, *Annual Report for* 1973 pp. 10-11; also Richards, pp. 149-70, and Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, "Distribution of Income and Wealth in Ceylon", Bangkok, mimeographed, 1972. H. N. S. Karunatilake "Changes in Income Distribution in Sri Lanka". Central Bank of Ceylon, *Staff Studies*, vol. 4, No. 1, (April 1974) pp. 1-23.
16. See Lal Jayawardene, "Sri Lanka", in Hollis Chenery and associates, *Redistribution with Growth*, London: Oxford University Press, 1974, pp. 273-79.

income, low-income families did see improvements in their material well-being. This is an achievement which many faster-growing economies cannot claim.

Conclusion

Until the recent shift of focus from economic growth measured by GNP per head to income distribution and the redressal of poverty, Sri Lanka was widely regarded as a laggard in development. Now, however, a "revisionist" school of development economists is recasting her as a success because of her social development achievements.[17] The issue is only partly one of values; there is also the question of what patterns of development are sustainable through time.

We have noted that economic growth slowed after 1960. The same can be said of most social advances. The major improvements in education and health were made before 1960, when government outlays for social programs rose to 8% of GNP.[18] Thereafter, social development's share of GNP slowly declined as it became increasingly difficult even to maintain the newly-won standards of service. The only social development criteria by which performance in 1960-73 exceeded that of 1948-60 are reduction of income inequality and rises in the absolute incomes of the poor. We need to ask how these improvements came about and whether they are sustainable in the future.

It appears[19] that higher payments to paddy planters and other small scale producers were the major factor raising the earned incomes of the poor in 1963-73; these in turn originated in efforts to grow more food in view of the foreign exchange shortage. This reallocation of resources and slanting of incentives toward subsistence could certainly be expected to reduce inequality. Over the 1963-73 decade it also increased the absolute incomes of the poor substantially.[20] Whether it can continue to do so in the longer run, however, is questionable.

Over time, raising the incomes of any substantial part of society requires growth in national income. Raising national income requires a relative shift of resources *away* from paddy production and other relatively low productivity uses.[21] And this in turn requires export earnings and capital inflows to finance investments which will restructure the economy. It is this that was not achieved in 1948-73, and with saving and investment rates still low and the foreign exchange and overpopulation problems worse than ever, prospects for achieving it in the near future appear dim. Until some way is found to make the economy grow fast enough to finance sustained social progress, Sri Lanka will serve as a better illustration of the limitations of a direct approach to problems of social equity than of its benefits.[22]

17. The Chenery and associates volume cited in the preceding note consistently takes the "revisionist" view.

18. Snodgrass, pp. 269, 388-89; Central Bank, *Annual Report for* 1973, Tables 8 and 36.

19. See Jayawardene *op cit.*

20. Jayawardene estimates (p. 278) that real income and social benefits received by the lowest four deciles of households rose by 58% in 1963-73, compared to an average of 35% for all households. I cannot reconcile these figures with my own estimates (based on official data) that real GNI per head rose by only 10% in 1963-73, real private consumption by 20%, and real public consumption by 10%.

21. When population growth is allowed for, GNI growth becomes a necessary condition even for maintaining existing income per head. See Gavin W. Jones and S. Selvaratnam, *Population and Economic Development in Ceylon.* (Hansa Publishers, Ltd., Colombo, 1972) for an analysis of the economic costs of population growth.

22. For a similar view, see Arun Shourie, "Growth, Poverty and Inequalities", *Foreign Affairs*, January 1973, pp. 340-52.

APPENDIX

Extimates of Economic Growth, 1948-73

				Growth rate (%)		
	1948	1960	1973	1948-60	1960-73	1948-73
Population (000)	7,244	9,896	13,251	2.6	2.3	2.4
GNP at factor cost (Rs. millions)						
In current prices	3,000	6,287	15,155	6.4	7.0	6.7
Deflator (1959=100)	90.7	100.0	146.0			
In 1959 prices	3,307	6,289	10,383	5.5	3.9	4.7
Real GNP per capita (Rs.)	457	636	784	2.8	1.6	2.2
GNI at factor cost (Rs. millions)						
In current prices	3,000	6,287	15,155	6.4	7.0	6.7
Deflator (1959=100)	93.3	98.6	164.5			
In 1959 prices	3,214	6,278	9,212	5.7	3.0	4.3
Real GNI per capita (Rs.)	444	634	695	3.0	0.7	1.8
Private consumption (Rs. millions)						
In current prices	2,400	5,020	12,203	6.3	7.1	6.7
Deflator (1959=100)	88	98.3	157.2			
In 1959 prices	2,727	5,107	7,763	5.4	3.3	4.3
Real private consumption per capita (Rs.)	376	516	586	2.7	1.0	1.8
Public consumption (Rs. millions)						
In current prices	300	911	2,043	9.7	6.4	8.0
Deflator (1959-100)	96	100	142			
In 1959 prices	313	911	1,439	9.3	3.6	6.3
Public consumption per capita (Rs.)	43	92	109	6.5	1.3	3.8

Source Notes:

Population: See Snodgrass, p. 307; *Statistical Pocket Book* ...., p. 9; Central Bank *Annual Report for* 1973, p. 12.

Current price estimates: 1960 and 1973 figures from Central Bank *Annual Reports* for 1968 (pp. 37, 42) and 1973 (Tables 4, 8), respectively; 1948 estimates from an earlier series (see Snodgrass, p. 240), raised slightly to improve comparability with later Central Bank data.

Deflators: 1960 and 1973 deflatois for GNP and GNI implied in Central Bank data: 1948 GNP and GNI deflators based on Snodgrass, p. 398, and other data on 1948-50 price trends; private consumption deflated by Colombo consumer price index (see Snodgrass, p. 397, and Central Bank *Annual Report for* 1973, Table 54); public consumption for 1960 and 1973 deflated by central government employees wage rate index (see Central Bank *Annual Report for* 1973, Table 60), and for 1948 deflated by 1950-59 price relative implied in Snodgrass, pp. 269, 271.

Real estimates: GNP and GNI in 1960 and 1973 from Central *Bank Annual Reports* for 1968 (pp. 39-40) and 1973 (Tables 5 and 6); all others deflated as described in preceding note.

Indicators of Social Development, 1948-73

Literacy of population age 10 and over (% of total)

	1953	1963	1971
Male	80.7	85.6	85.2
Female ..	55.5	67.3	78.1
Both sexes ..	69.0	76.9	70.7

Source: *Statistical Pocket Book* 1973, p. 9.

Life expectancy at birth

	1946	1953	1962	1967
Male	43.9	58.8	61.9	64.8
Female ..	41.6	57.5	61.4	66.9

Source: *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Vital statistics

	per 1,000 *of population*			*per*, 1,000 *live births*	
	Births	*Deaths*	*Natural Increase*	*Maternal deaths*	*Infant deaths*
1945	35.9	21.5	14.4	16.5	139.7
1950	39.7	12.4	27.3	5.6	81.6
1955	37.3	10.8	26.5	4.1	71.5
1960	36.6	8.6	28.0	3.0	56.8
1963	34.1	8.5	25.6	2.4	55.8
1968	32.0	7.9	24.1	1.8	50.2
1972	29.5	8.0	21.5	1.2*	45.1

*1971

Source: *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Health facilities (per 100,000 of population)

	Hospital beds	*Doctors*	*Nurses*
1948	260	9.5	13.1
1960	294	12.3	34.2
1972	288	15.7	38.1

Sources: *Economic and Social Development of Ceylon* (*A Survey*) 1926-1954, Colombo, 1955, p. 99; *Statistical Abstract of Ceylon* 1961, Colombo, 1961, p. 75; *Statistical Pocket Book* 1973, p. 32. All data refer to government institutions only.

Distribution of income among income recipients

% of total income accruing to:	1953	1963	1973
Top 10% ..	42.49	39.24	29.98
Next 10% ..	14.16	16.01	15.91
Next 20% ..	18.33	20.44	23.21
Next 20% ..	12.02	12.37	15.85
Bottom 40% ..	13.00	11.94	15.05
Gini concentration ratio ..	.490	.491	.402

Source: Central Bank, *Annual Report for* 1973, p. 10. Gini concentration ratios calculated from decile shares.

XII

THE MARXISTS AND THE ULTRA MARXISTS OF SRI LANKA SINCE INDEPENDENCE

CHARLES S. BLACKTON

The Marxists Parties in Sri Lanka's Politics

The politics of Ceylon since independence evolved within a British-style parliamentary system, reinforced by a tradition of tolerance rooted in Buddhism and Hinduism. In this climate of security and semi-consensus, several respected Marxist parties functioned led by able leaders, who have at times defended parliamentary democracy against legislative or executive threats. The revolutionary record of these parties has been slight, and only older members of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (L.S.S.P.) ever languished in imperialist jails and then only during World War II for the little known crime of "revolutionary defeatism".

Marxist leadership has come typically from the older elites of wealth, caste, low country Sinhalese stock, private schools and university degrees. Some learned their Marxism in the seminars of British scholars. A certain Fabian restraint carried over in their later practices of politics [1]

Marxist politicians after 1947 confronted five chronic problems in the political struggle.

(1) The choice between parliamentary and revolutionary strategy in the effort to gain national power.

(2) The issue of Marxist unity between the LSSP and the Communist Party

(3) Frequent secessions by left-wing splinter groups.

(4) The alternatives within parliament, of maintaining Marxist independence as a minor element of the Opposition, or of collaborating (as minority partners) with the semi-Marxist Sri Lanka Freedom Party as a means of shaping government policies.

1. Works on Marxist Parties of Ceylon include: Robert N. Kearney, "The Marxist Parties of Ceylon", in P. Brass, and M. Franda, *Radical Politics in South Asia*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1973;) Calvin A. Woodward, *Growth of a Party System in Ceylon*, (Providence, R.I. 1969;) W. Howard, Wriggins, *Ceylon, Dilemmas of a New Nation*, (Princeton, N.J., 1960;) George J. Lerski, *Origins of Trotskyism in Ceylon*....1935-42, (Stanford, Calif., 1968;) Leslie Goonewardene, *Short History of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party*, (Colombo, 1960;) Hector Abhayavardhana, "Categories of Left Thinking in Ceylon", in *Community*, Colombo, No. 4, 1963; Charles S. Blackton, "Sri Lanka's Marxists", *Problems of Communism*, Jan.-Feb., 1973.

(5) Increasing the Marxist voter-base while maintaining rapport with a predominately rural, Buddhist society.

At the first meeting of the Ceylon Parliament after the 1947 election, only eighteen Marxists, sporting red ties, and led by Dr. N. M. Perera (LSSP) took their seats. The best organized parties in Ceylon their prestige enlarged by the 1947 general strike, they included in addition to the LSSP and the Communist party (led by Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe) a small Bolshevik-Leninist group (Dr. Colvin R. de Silva's) which had broken from the LSSP in 1945.[2]

Turning points in modern Marxist History[3]

In the twenty years that followed, the evolution of Marxism was shaped by a series of turning points in the national experience. In 1952, the Marxist opposition parties seized their first opportunity to take politics into the streets, when Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake, acting on advice of an International Bank mission attempted to reduce the crippling burden of the rice subsidy. As public protests rose Marxist unions were mobilized to stage a one-day mass work stoppage (*hartal*), Turbulent demonstrations following the *hartal* prompted police to fire on crowds causing fatalities and leading to fateful political repercussions.

The resignation of the moderate Senanayake, to be replaced by his formidably conservative cousin, Sir John Kotelawala, ushered in a period of severe repression of Marxists. But it laid the grounds for a virtual voters' revolution of the Buddhist Sinhala-speaking economically under rewarded village elites: *bhikkhus*, school-teachers, ayurvedic physicians and local officials. This materialized in 1956 in the electoral victory of the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna. Socialism became respectable and non-alignment in international affairs opened the way for relations with the communist world. This was the first government to award cabinet posts to Marxists.[4]

Cooperation between the MEP and the LSSP ended in 1957 and the CP's "critical support" terminated in 1959. Periodic renewals of this alliance with the SLFP (the MEP's successor) reflected the aim of moderate Marxists to seek alliances with a mass-based, progressive party. This combined with fear of a return of the United National Party (UNP) and, following the abortive Army coup in 1962, of threats of right-wing dictatorship.

A major attempt to reforge left unity took place in 1963 when Philip Gunawardena's following (now called MEP) joined the LSSP and CP in establishing the United Left Front (ULF). The demons of divisiveness haunted this compact from the outset.

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2. The voters of Sri Lanka have been consistently non-Marxist. The Marxist parties percentage of the popular vote declined from the 20.5% of 1947 to a nadir of 13.0 in the 1970 General Election. See Kearney, "Marxist Parties of Ceylon" in Brass and Franda, *op. cit.*, 405.

3. While sources on the history of events since independence are limited, the works of scholars inclu ding Wriggins, Kearney, and Lerski, and Woodward, (see Note 1) are valuable.

4. Philip Gunawardena, and P. H. William de Silva.

Left-wing Communists broke away declaring that the ULF compromised basic principles. Almost simultaneously the ULF was shaken by the ideological war between the Soviet Union and the Peoples Republic of China, leading to fission by the N. Shanmugathasan section of the Ceylon Trades Union Federation (CTUF). Then in 1964 Dr. Perera encouraged by the joint efforts of T. B. Ilangaratne (SLFP) and Bala Tampoe (Ceylon Mercantile Union), negotiated an alliance with the SLFP, the most crucial step in Marxist politics since 1947.[5]

The LSSP "purist", Edmund Samarakkody, seceded to form a sprinter group the LSSP moderates were denounced as "golden brains" who had become "left fakers",[6] and the Fourth (Trotskyist) International withdrew its recognition from the Sama Samajists because they had allied themselves with a bourgeois party. Within the SLFP, the allocation of three cabinet posts to Marxists was anathema to the right-wing which joined the UNP in Opposition, and helped defeat the SLFP-LSSP Coalition in December, 1964, on an opposition motion leading to a General Election.

In the 1965 General Election, a conservative victory, economic discontent and the *sangha's* fear of Marxism influenced the results. The LSSP and CP survived, but only Philip Gunawardena of the smaller Marxist faction won a seat, and he, having boxed the political compass, was allied with the conservative UNP. The ousted left-wing Marxists, however, continued active below the level of parliamentary politics, cultivating dissatisfied young radicals.

The United Front Coalition

Although "centrist" Sama Samajists demanded that the Communists be brought into the alliance, and questioned whether the "Leftward moving progressive elements" in Mrs. Bandaranaike's following had socialist aims, the LSSP was drawn further into the SLFP orbit while reciprocally radicalizing that party's program, so that the SLFP in platform and rhetoric became a progressive-socialist party. In 1967 the CP achieved its aim of joining the Coalition and some LSSP-R elements were recruited. This was the birth of the United Front (UF) Coalition. During the UNP Government's five years (1965-1970), the UF developed lines of attack based on socialism, resurgence of the Buddhists, and primacy for the Sinhalese majority. In the sixties UF Marxist made a serious effort to form ties with Buddhism–the religion of the Sinhalese majority. Some leaders attended festivals and offered *dāna*. This symbolized adjustment with SLFP policies and the ideas of the late S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike. In return they gained powerful posts in the shadow cabinet.

While left wing Marxists condemned the parties for "their capitulation to parliamentarianism", N. M. Perera and S. A. Wickremasinghe insisted that mass interests could be advanced through such peaceful political means as long as an open demo-

5. According to an article of Roshan Peiris, *Ceylon Daily News*, March 2, 1973, T. B. Ilangaratne, and Bala Tampoe, of the Ceylon Mercantile Union played an important part in the arrangements.

6. Comments of Wilfred Perera, in *Young Socialist*, III, no. 4, October, 1965. Samarakkody eventually abandoned the LSSP-R to create the miniscule Revolutionary Sama Samajist Party.

ratic situation continued to exist. Even the embarassment of a rift between the CP and the LSSP-SLFP over the 1968 Czechoslovak crisis did not break the Coalition which the CP viewed as "the mainstream of the anti-imperialist and progressive forces in Ceylon".[7]

Emergence of Ultra-Marxism[8]

But a serious, little noticed dissent with this view was rising. Another nucleus of Marxism far from parliament was developing, partly from left-splinter groups. Disenchanted youth, enemployed or disadvantageously employed, had begun to share their grievences.

Ultra-Marxism of the young was a widespread response to the gap in opportunity and life-style between the western-educated elites of wealth and caste and the Sinhala-speaking peasant majority. This group, expanding in one of the most extreme population explosions in Asia, faced rising economic inequities.[9] Attempts by UNP and SLFP Governments to generate jobs and the revenues and productivity to maintain a welfare state had been cumulatively unsuccessful. But among frustrated youth ranging from disfunctionally trained B.A.'s to redundant farm labourers, despair was tempered by anger. In such an exploitable climate Marxist students at schools and universities came forward with stirring solutions. Marxism had become respectable, and revolutionary ideas politicized many especially the new rural element among university students. Through these youths in the sixties, some of the traditional conservatism of village Ceylon was eroded and an appetite for simplified confiscatory socialism created.

University students in the early sixties joined campus CP and LSSP societies and study groups where they were told that the dated curricula they studied was designed for privileged youth, that after achieving the B.A., there would be few "desk jobs" for them, and that the corridors to job security were closed except to young Ceylonese of wealth and high caste.

Gradually, however, some of the youthful anger caused by this gap between promises of politicians and the dead-end realities began to be directed against the Marxist parties which had imperceptably merged with the establishment. Young critics began to blame them for the slow rate of progress towards socialism; for their

7. Cited in Kearney, *loc. cit.*, p. 430.

8. Recent work of H. A. I. Goonetileke, *The April* 1971 *Insurrection in Ceylon A Select Bibliography* (*July*, 1973) Louvaine, Belgium, contains 346 items dealing with the crisis. It is invaluable. Factual and interpretative reports include: Politicus [W. A. Wiswa Warnapala,] April Revolt in Ceylon, *Asian Survey*, Berkeley, California, 12, No. 3, March, 1972; S., Arasaratnam, "The Ceylon Insurrection of April, 1971", *Pacific Affairs*, 45, No. 3, Fall, 1972; A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, "Ceylon: The People's Liberation Front and the Revolution that failed", *Reprint Series, Center for Developing Area Studies*, No. 23, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec; Charles S. Blackton, "Sri Lanka's Marxists", *Problems of Communism*, Jan.-Feb., 1973, Washington D.C.

9. It has been suggested that population increase was especially high in the Kegalle and Kurunegala areas where insurgent activity was intense during the 1971 insurgency. See Howard Wriggins, and Frank Ceo, *Demographic Change and the Youth Insurrection in Sri Lanka*, May 1971 (Mimeographed) 54.

growing associations with bourgeoise political power and parliamentary methods to the exclusion of revolutionary alternatives, and for allowing repeated fragmentation of left-wing purists off into political limbo. Admired in the early sixties, UF Marxist leaders began to appear as mere cocktail communists, more given to social democracy than to revolutionary objectives. Viewed by young people without prospects, far below the prosperous circle of 'Sravasti' and amiable inter-party associations among *goyigama, karāva* and *salāgama* M.P.s, the Marxist leaders were almost indistinguishable from the non-Marxist elites.

This criticism was exaggerated, but Marxist leaders in this period committed the error of ignoring trends among the young and underestimating their potential for radical action. The oversight speeded the transition of the youth movement from the discussion-group level to secret, revolutionary conspiracy. In those obscure gatherings, young dissenters seem to have concluded that (a) the UNP, SLFP and UF governments were incapable of fulfilling their campaign promises, (b) this demonstrated the inadequacy of the parliamentary system and therefore (c) Marxists must return to revolutionary means to build a better society. The most influential of the groups affected by these ideas in the mid-sixties was the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) or Peoples Liberation Front, "a clandestine ultra-left group organized in a cell-system".

The genesis of the JVP and its climax in unsuccessful insurgency in the spring of 1971 are public knowledge. What will be treated here is an examination of the interaction of the new Ultra Left with the established Marxist parties subsequent to the traumatic experience of the 1971 uprising.

Interactions of The new left with the established Marxists

This was uniquely a revolt of youth, of Sinhalese Buddhist origins and approximately national proportions of caste membership, though, locally, inter-caste conflicts played some part. Some leaders were middleclass or from village elites, the sons of the devotees of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike. The followers were largely lowerclass, unemployed or deprived youth from the lower-middleclass. Undergraduates-numbering thousands in campus branches of the JVP proved to be summer soldiers (only some 200 are thought to have served as fighting men). But most JVP were literate products of free state education. Their common grievance was that the promises dating from 1956, from the UNP, and from the United Front had not materialized. Marxist lectures had taught them to believe bourgeois programs never would be achieved.

The revolt was aimed against the Government, the elites, and the Marxism of opportunism and compromise. It failed in more than the military aspects because the narrow base of the movement did not include labor unions or many adults of any category over the age of 35, because of surviving conservatism and populist nationalism, because of massive foreign aid, because of poor planning and fuzzy thinking, because the mass of Ceylonese rejected it, because it was premature.

The eruption of the Ultra-Left was nevertheless the watershed of modern Ceylonese history. The rebels of 71 would partly shape the future. Despite adolescent aspects, vagueness of precept and plans, and disregard for individual rights, the JVP stated clearer than any party manifesto the call for united action to build a self-reliant Sri Lanka on egalitarian lines. The deprived youth may intuitively have acted in the na me of the future poor of Sri Lanka.

Marxist Parties and the Constitution of 1972

While parliamentary democracy survived the insurgency of 1971, some of is safeguards did not live through the legislation passed since 1972. Beginning in 1970, the Ceylon Parliament, as a constituent assembly, debated the components for a new constitution. Through twenty-two months, bridging the period of the JVP insurgency and its repression by the resurgent Armed Forces and police of Ceylon, Colvin R. de Silva shepherded the measure to its inevitable acceptance by the massive UF majority dominating the Navarangahala. It was promulgated on May 22, 1972. The constitution establishing the Republic of Sri Lanka was a victory for the Ceylonese parliamentary Marxists, most active in its formulation. For them May 22, 1972 was the beginning of real independence as the electoral revolution of 1956 had been for Buddhist-Nationalists.

But while the way was opened for measures most Communists and Sama Samajists supported (limitations on income and property-holdings, Janatha committees to oversee local and regional affairs, for example), some of the most important subsequent legislation such as the Criminal Justice Commission Act, and the Press Act, seriously disturbed and even disrupted the Left.

So events after 1970 raised questions about the future of meaningful democratic politics in Sri Lanka. Economic crisis hampered the new national programs. The chronic threats of ethno-linguistic, class-caste and ideological disunity remained the unsolved concerns of all factions. Within this complex political setting, the country's Marxist parties faced transformed and interelated problems, the strands of which run through both the past and present of Ceylonese Marxism.

The Dilemmas of Marxism in Sri Lanka

One problem had its origins in the social and educational background of Marxist party leaders and their past commitment to multi-party parliamentary democracy. Accustomed to employ Fabian socialist rather than revolutionary methods, their policies had usually been more ecumenical than their rhetoric, a condition which brought them advantages and power incommensurate with their small numbers and narrow voter-base. They gained a national podium, vast press coverage, and the opportunity to advance socialist measures and to radicalize the SLFP. Some Marxists doubted that alliance with the Sri Lanka Freedom Party would permanently advance the cause of Communism. Yet the LSSP and the Keuneman group in the CP remained active in the UF, despite the concern of some that post-1972 press and security legislation might be used against them if the SLFP decided to exclude the Marxist parties from the Government.

This uncertainty pointed up a second, related dilemma. By choosing to retain their ties with the still partly bourgeois SLFP, Marxist politicians brought upon themselves the wrath of the left-radicals and "purists" who admitted no alternative to violent social revolution. Social and generational cleavages of the past decade had aggravated this conflict into a most serious danger to the major Marxist parties. Whereas in the early 'sixties most undergraduates belonged to campus LSSP groups, many students in the years since despaired of victory for socialism under UF Marxist political leaders, and turned to Marxism-Leninism or Maoism. So the old Marxists had a tiger by the tail. If they moved leftwards to preserve Marxist unity in Sri Lanka they threatened their vital link with the mass-based SLFP. But if they stood pat they confirmed the charges of purists and young activists. The continuing afflictions of this dilemma were implicit in the endorsement by UF Marxists of legislation which advocated (a) mass political participation and (b) strong measures against subversion. Overt clashes between CP elements, and internal dissent within the LSSP indicated the persistence of this difficulty.

United or fissiparous, parliamentary or insurrectionary, the Marxists faced another major problem. This was their inability to gain large political support in the villages. Peasant Sinhalese had been mobilized to the blue banner of the SLFP in the 1956 electoral campaign. The influence of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike after his assassination in 1959, became an almost religious force among rural Buddhists, and few Marxists daredto challenge his memory or the right of his widow, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, to lead the populist, semi-socialist SLFP. It is noteworthy that peasant Sri Lanka, though some of its youth joined the JVP, generally supported the SLFP while according a substantial minority of its votes to the conservative-Liberal United National Party.

Buddhism, the faith of the majority, which was singled out for special status under the new constitution at the special insistence of the majority SLFP within the United Front, presented the Marxists, as atheists with difficult questions of interpretation, tactics and strategy. Was the Middle Path a congruent philosophy with which Marxism could cooperate to the mutual advantage of both, against capitalism, Christianity and the Western Imperialism? Was it, on the other hand, an obsolescent form of anti materialism, increasingly irrelevant in an era of modernization and technology? Or was it, Buddhism, perhaps the lion in the Marxist's path to political power?

Since the revival of the 19th Century, Buddhist influence had grown stronger among the Sinhalese of all classes. Buddhism had shown more adaptability to change than had many other creeds. Recent renewed interest in the *Kalama Sutta*—stressing individual empirical investigation—and growing Buddhist interest in the need for a new life model suggested that Buddhism would be able to adapt to new social forms. Buddhism has had within it progressive forces. Though many of the most political and pragmatic *bhikkhus* have been trained in Western countries, and favour constitutional modes of progress, there has been some rapport between the *sangha* and leading members of the LSSP and CP. The fact that such leaders occasionally paid public homage at the Dalada Maligawa may have reflected residual cradle reverence

for the religion of their young days. By joining forces with the SLFP, the Marxist parties had advanced their political fortunes, and worked with SLFP Buddhist members of the UF to legislate an eventual socialist state for Sri Lanka.

Yet clearly, Buddhism has been a major force for Marxists to reckon with in national politics. The Siyam *Nikāya*, largest of Sri Lanka's religious orders, had shown marked anti communist views and after 1970 again begun to warn against Marxist influence in UF policy formation, and against legislation which seemed to centralize power in the hands of the UF Coalition.

The events of 1971 suggested a third perspective on the interaction of Buddhism and Marxism in Sri Lanka. The resistance of rural Buddhist society to the predominantly Buddhist JVP was significant. The insurgent JVP flouted the non violent principles of Buddhism, and some novices and a few *bhikkhus* of higher ordination took up arms against the Government. If this reflected a loss of religious dynamism and Buddhist appeal among contemporary youth, the result would be the creation of an enormous vacuum, which Marxism would seek to occupy. An indication of this might be seen in the move by some CP members to leave the UF and form a "third force" in the national society. The majority of political Marxists, on the other hand, clung to their hard won power and leverage, by remaining shoulder to shoulder with the SLFP and the Buddhist majority. On balance, the question of the parties' responses to Buddhism may pose the deepest dilemma for the Marxists of Sri Lanka.

Conclusion

If the events of 1971 bonded the Keuneman Communists and the LSSP closer to the U.F., post-insurgency legislation caused the majority (Wickremasinghe) CP to move into periodic bouts of opposition. Marxists remained disunited, and secession to the ideological left resumed even if the revolutionary alternative had died in battle.

Though the most severe criticism of the JVP came from the establishment Marxists, the latter realized, as they watched the armed forces smash the insurgents, that a revolutionary opportunity was being wasted, and that fratricide among the Left had taken place. After the uprising, Marxist alternatives narrowed: (a) continued coalition with the SLFP, (b) independent opposition in the National State Assembly under less favourable conditions, or (c) resort to revolution perhaps with the heirs of the JVP against a state power far greater than existed in 1971. The important, rarely discussed, relationship between Marxism and Buddhism remained uncertain. The *sangha*, hostile towards Marxism in 1965, began to show this tendency again after the Constitution of 1972. With the decline of capitalism, and Christian culture as targets for both Marxists and Buddhists, Marxism and Buddhism seemed likely to come into eventual confrontation with one another for the shaping of Sri Lanka's future.

A long period of cultural civility and British style in politics ended with the insurgency of the Ultra-Marxists. The increasing tendency towards proclamation of Emergencies became confirmed. The spiralling series of undergraduate strikes had climaxed in tragedy. And the enlarged influence of the police and the armed forces, along with increased centralization of power, and chronic economic problems had turned Sri Lanka into an almost typical "developing nation".

XIII

PROBLEMS OF COMMUNALISM IN SOUTH ASIA

HOWARD WRIGGINS

In South Asia, men and women group themselves for political action on the basis of many loyalties, but they mainly identify with one another politically along regional, ethno-linguistic, religious, caste and clan lines. These we shall consider "communal" grounds for solidarity in the broad sense. Geertz calls them "primordial sentiments" deriving from the givens of social existence.[1] They are sources of identity which can be the focus of intense loyalty. They often are the take off base for aggressive group action against others. They may be the single most important source of defensive solidarity against such assaults where competition is acute for a larger share of socio-political status, for political influence or for very scarce economic resources.

To explore these communal differences as is done here is not to find satisfaction in local differences. Rather, we seek to identify areas where creative political leadership will have to be applied if these differences are not to become sources of national weakness.

It has long been assumed that these communal affinities are to be found mainly in the least modern areas of South Asia. Yet communal outbursts in many cities of South Asia lead one to wonder whether these identifications are likely to erode as societies become more urbanized. Indeed, it may be that with rapid urbanization and the communal mixing that goes along with economic growth, communal awareness may become all the more important, as seems to be the case with contemporary ethnic politics in the United States or the re-emergence of regional sub-nationalisms in Scotland, Wales or Quebec.

Regardless of whether communal differences are bound to diminish, to be replaced by economic and class differentiations, it may be helpful to make some comparisons between problems of communalism since Independence in Sri Lanka with those of several other states in South and Southeast Asia.

We shall first compare the numerical patterns of different ethno-linguistic and religious groups in four former British territories. We shall then consider analytically a number of areas of public life where communal differences are posing difficult problems to regional leaders. The contrasting approaches the different regimes have

1. C. Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution" in his *Old Societies and States* (Glencoe, Free Press, 1963) pp. 108-109.

adopted in efforts to cope with the problems they inherited and, in some cases, have themselves exacerbated, will then be discussed along with a few generalizations about the dynamics of continued communal awareness and contention.

The Numbers: In the case of Sri Lanka, the outstanding characteristic of the communal structure is the numerical preponderance of the Sinhalese majority, comprising some 71 percent of the population. The Ceylon Tamils, for the most part resident in the island for over a thousand years, number roughly 11 percent. Though concentrated in the North and Northeast many fill important roles in the professions, business and public service throughout the island. The Moors represent some 6 percent of the population, located mainly along the coasts and in major coastal towns. The Indian Tamils form roughly 10 percent.[2] Isolated on the estates in the hill country they were effectively disenfranchised shortly after Independence. A number of them are being repatriated each year to India; a smaller number are annually receiving Sri Lanka citizenship and are beginning to enter political life once again in a limited way via the franchise.

The pattern in Sinhalese areas has been complicated by a significant historical differentiation between low-country and up-country Sinhalese resulting from centuries of foreign rule in the low-country while the Kandyans, isolated in the hills, retained more of their semi-feudal social characteristics. In some respects this distinctiveness has diminished since Independence but in political life "up-country"—"low-country" differences remain a live issue. Each group has its spokesman within the major parties and its promoters in offices and other places where opportunities may be found. Jobs, land reform policies and resource allocations are anxiously scanned to see which of the two has done best in any particular political episode or period between elections.[3]

Present-day Pakistan's ethnic and communal structure is somewhat similar. Nearly 70 percent speak Punjabi, the bulk of them concentrated in the rich irrigated Punjab plains. Their preponderance is confirmed by their important positions in the civilian bureaucracy and army. Sindhi, the second mother tongue language, is spoken by some 14 percent, located mainly in the rural and town areas of Sindh and in Karachi city. Urdu, the official language of partitioned Pakistan is spoken by a reported 16 percent, though it represents the mother tongue of only 9 percent, over half of whom are concentrated in the Karachi area. Pushtu is the language along the mountainous frontier separating Pakistan from Iran and Afghanistan, spoken by roughly 9 percent of the people.[4] These last pose a special problem to Islamabad. The governing elite in neighbouring Afghanistan is also composed of Pushtu ethno-linguistic background and its spokesman are dissatisfied with the Durand Line frontier drawn between

2. *Statistical Abstract* [Government of Ceylon] 1967-8, pp. 32-33.
3. For careful, succinct descriptions of these and other differentiations, see B. H. Farmer, *Ceylon: A Divided Nation* (O.U.P., 1963); R. N. Kearney, *Communalism and Language in the Politics of Ceylon* (Duke University Press, 1967). Aiso A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, *Politics in Sri Lanka* (London, MacMillan, 1974), Chapter 2.
4. *Census of Pakistan*, 1961. [Government of Pakistan] Statement 7-B, Section IV-46 Vol. 3.

Afghanistan and British India in 1893. They periodically stimulate dissatisfaction through calls for Pushtunistan (or Pakhtunistan), a proposed independent country of Pushtu-speakers which could only be realized at the expense of Pakistan.

Of course, prior to 1971 and the separation of Bangladesh, the sharpest differentiation was between Bengali-speakers in the "East Wing" and those others in "the West". The former represented in fact a majority of the total population of "old" Pakistan. Many communal difficulties contributed to preparing the ground for separation, including nearly all the issues identified below.[5]

In Sri Lanka, the ethno-linguistic differentiation between Sinhala-and Tamil-speakers is reinforced by the parallel cleavage between Sinhalese Buddhists and Tamil Hindus. Differences between the Christians on the one hand and Sinhalese Buddhists and Tamil Hindus on the other have also generated jealousies, for the former often had access to education and to opportunities which the other communities were not trained for or, during the colonial period, often were not invited to fill. Their concentration along the western coast gave them at one time a disproportionate role in political, legal, administrative and business life. In the new Pakistan, by contrast, one religion encompasses all the communities, though there are persisting differences over the proper nature of the Islamic state and the Ahamayadia minority from time to time has been the target of public hostility.[6]

In Malaysia, communal divisions lead to a 44-36-11 percent split between Malays Chinese and Indians, with Indigenes in Sabah and Sarawak representing another 8% and 'others' 2 percent.[7] While in Sri Lanka the Sinhalese preponderate numerically more decisively than does the majority community in any of the other countries, in Malaysia, the balance between the two major communities is such that each is indispensable to the well-being of the other. To be sure, some Chinese were involved in the "emergency" in the early 1950's, and the Malays' claim to represent truly indigenous national origins gives the latter an advantage of legitimacy which its numerical strength confirms. Yet the greater organizational energy, higher skill level and superior wealth of the Chinese community gives their activities a sense of deserving a larger role in public affairs than they have as yet obtained.[8] The problem is not made easier by the fact that religious cleavages parallel ethno-linguistic differences, for Malays are Muslims and the Chinese are Buddhist/Confucians.

As is to be expected, India's communal pattern is more complex. India has always been a multi-lingual and highly differentiated society, yet numerical proportions are

5. For a careful discussion of the background, see R. Jahan, *Pakistan, Failure of National Integration* (Columbia University Press, 1972).
6. The most recent outbreak occurred in June 1974. For a discussion of the background to this differentiation, see L. Binder, *Religion and Politics in Pakistan* (University of California Press, 1961).
7. Government of Malaysia, *Census* 1970.
8. Cynthia Enloe discussed this in *Multi-Ethnic Politics: The Rise of Malaysia* (Berkeley, Center for South and South East Asia Studies. Monograph No. 2, mimeo; see also Rabushka, op. cit., pp. 28-31.

important in India as well.[9] The Hindi speakers, account for only 30 percent of the total population at most, while the next four largest language groups, the Bengali speakers in the east, Marathi speakers in the west, and Telegu and Tamil-speakers in the south, represent no more than 7.5-8 percent apiece. Many other groups make up the balance.[10] In such a pluralist setting the very multiplication of innumerable groups would be likely to induce a good deal of group negotiating, a fluid formation and reformation of political coalitions directed toward group self defence and efforts to influence policy.

In sum, it is possible that the mere pattern of size and distribution of communities in any one polity will help define how leaders are likely to approach their own communal problems. But numbers in themselves are clearly not a sufficient explanation for communal relations, for different leaders have approached their cleavage problem in quite different ways. Before looking briefly at these contrasting approaches, it would be well to identify more precisely areas of public life where communal differences have posed problems to leaders and their polities.

State Organization: First in prominence, in the idiom of modern politics as Morris-Jones puts it, has been the problem of state organization.[11]

At Independence, the sub-continent was partitioned and two separate states organized on the basis of Muslim-Hindu differences. Thereafter, during the first two decades of Independence, India's leaders reluctantly redrew frontiers between a number of different states along linguistic lines, altering the structure of the Indian federation in response to linguistic communal pressures. More recently, several states have had to be partitioned in order that more ethno-linguistic communities could have "their own" states within the Federation. The very multiplicity of group pressures and the federal structure and political process mean that no one group can aspire to the degree of preponderance the Sinhalese have achieved in Sri Lanka and the Punjabis are accused of seeking in Pakistan. Moreover, since no one issue can gain full national attention at any one time, it is highly unlikely that all public forces could become crystallized around one communal issue, as occurred in Pakistan in 1970 and 1971, a development making accommodation between contending communal elements all the more difficult.[12]

Linguistic-communal pressures have forced far more drastic organizational changes in Pakistan. The most dramatic "reorganization" since the original Indo-Pakistan partition was the break-away of Bengal from Pakistan in 1971 and the setting up of two separate national states where one had existed before. How Bengali

9. R. Kothari, *Politics in India* (Boston, Little Brown, 1970), p. 322. For a subtle and profound analysis of pluralism and national integration in India see Ainslee Embree's article of that title in *Journal of International Affairs* Vol. 27, No. 1, 1973.

10. From *Census of India*, 1961 as reported in Kothari, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

11. In *Government and Politics in India* (London, Hutchinson University Library, 3rd ed. 1971, 280 pp.), Chap. 2.

12. For a discussion of this perspective in relation to India see, Myron Weiner. *The Politics of Scarcity : Public Pressures and Political Response in India.* (Chicago, 1962) *passim* and conclusion.

aspirations for independence grew so intense when Bengalis had been among the early enthusiastic proponents of Pakistan deserves much study in itself. But once such a reorganization had occurred, it has become an object lesson for other leaders in the area, though it is likely that different statesmen will draw contrary policy conclusions.

In the former West Pakistan, successive—and alternating—efforts to find an appropriate political structure suggest how intractable regional communal problems may still be there. Right after Independence, West Pakistan was organized into four provinces and a number of smaller territories in the mountainous north. Subsequently, in 1955, the four provinces were consolidated into "One Unit" to centralize administration and improve the West wing's ability to bargain with the majoritarian Bengalis. While this appeared to satisfy the leadership in Karachi and then Islamabad, it was intolerable to the principal minority communities. As a result, one of the first steps of Ayub's successors was to abolish "One Unit" and again defer to ethnic and regional particularity by re-establishing four major provinces within a formally federal political and administrative structure.[13]

Malaysia, too, had to undergo major state reorganization in the name of maintaining a tolerable ethno-linguistic balance. In the early 1960's the question arose as to whether to include Singapore in Malaya. Had the largely Chinese population of Singapore been added, the Chinese would have become a real majority. Accordingly, Sabah and Sarawak, non-Chinese in composition, were added to peninsular West Malaysia in the name of ethnic balance, and together are known as East Malaysia.[14] Singapore, brought in at the same time, subsequently was ejected from Malaysia. This reduced Malay fears that the more dynamic political leaders of Singapore would gain preponderance. But the Chinese found themselves numerically downgraded, confirming their conviction that the Malay majority was determined to maintain its political preponderance.

In Sri Lanka, there have been insistent demands by Ceylon Tamil spokesmen, for the kind of federated structure that now obtains in India and Malaysia, Ironically these aspirations were closely paralleled by appeals by up-country Sinhalese for a federal constitution put forward at the time of the Donoughmore consultations in 1929/30.[15] But no post-Independence government in Sri Lanka has been willing to undertake the structural changes such a response to ethnic imbalance would require. After all, the Sinhalese argue, Sri Lanka is very small, with only 13 million people (about the size of an Indian district). Federal structures imply costly overheads and unforeseeable political difficulties. As the Sinhalese have pressed their campaign to make Sinhalese the sole official language and Buddhism the state religion, Ceylon Tamil leaders have pressed all the harder for the kind of cultural and administrative

13. For an interesting discussion of Sindhi and other regionalisms in Pakistan, see Hafeez Malik, "Problems of Regionalism in Pakistan", forthcoming.

14. For a discussion of the politicization of East Malaysia see, Dr. Margeret Roff's *The Politics of Belonging : Political Change in Sabah and Sarawak* (O.U.P., 1974).

15. K. M. de Silva, (ed.) The University of Ceylon, *History of Ceylon* Vol. III (University of Ceylon Press Board, 1973) pp. 402-3.

autonomy a federal arrangement would allow. Some even have called for independence.[16] In turn, the very demands the Tamils have made for a federal solution have contributed to the anxieties of the more distrustful among the Sinhalese, who fear that the Tamils are really trying to partition the country. The Bangladesh experience only intensifies their worries. This matter, therefore, represents a thoroughly vicious circle.[17]

Communal differences have generated other familiar issues.

Language Competition: Debates over which language or languages shall be recognized as official have been intense and protracted. In some instances, they have been at the core of political contention, as in Sri Lanka in the 1956 election and subsequent communal riots in 1958. "Urdu only" was one of the first issues that raised doubts in the minds of Bengalis about the representative character of the government of the original Pakistan. In the new Pakistan, as recently as 1973, language disturbances broke out in Sindh over the proper scope for Sindhi in addition to the officially recognized Urdu. In Malaysia, the question of the official language has evoked more passion than any other single issue since the "emergency".[18] In India, efforts of the 30 percent of the population centred in the Gangetic Plain to make Hindi the national language have precipitated intense political protests, particularly in Dravidian language areas in the South, but also in Marathi, Bengali and other non-Hindi-speaking areas of the north.

In all these instances, language is thought to be the key to many values. It is not only the individual's mode of contact with his social world. Language is the source and expression of *his* culture, distinguishing him and his kind from all those "others". In a highly status-conscious part of the world, the position accorded to his language reflects on his own location in the society's status structure. Language is the crucial means for communicating—and evoking —a shared group awareness. It is the adhesive consolidating that sense of solidarity indispensable for exerting political leverage in political systems where the ascriptive group remains the most important basis for effective collective action.[19]

Language skills are of critical economic significance as well. In all four polities whichever language was designated as the "Official Language" usually became the language of public administration. Jobs in the public service tended to be preferred above ohers for their security, high status and opportunities for income. Accordingly,

16. For an authoritative and balanced analysis of Tamil claims and political tactics see A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, "The Tamil Federal Party in Ceylon Politics". *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies* July 1966 (Vol. IV No. 2) pp. 117-37; and his "Ethnicity, National Development and the Political Process in Ceylon", in B. Grossman, (ed). *South East Asia in the Modern World* Vol. 33 Schriften des Institute für Asienkunde, Hamburg, 1972, pp. 151-164.

17. For a discussion see S. U. Kodikara, "Communalism and Political Modernization in Ceylon", *Modern Ceylon Studies* Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1970.

18. Enloe on Malaysia, op. cit., p. 25.

19. For a further discussion of the importance of language to the individual and group approach to political life in South Asia, see the author's ***Ceylon : Dilemmas of a New Nation*** (Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 242-3.

when a language is made the "Official Language" great career advantages go to those for whom that language is their mother tongue. The language used in the school system, then, becomes of critical importance to ambitious parents, for the language of education determines quite decisively the range of opportunity open to their children. The extended debates and resulting decisions regarding language of instruction have, in their turn, played back into the communal situation, intensifying group self-consciousness and competitiveness.

It should be pointed out that while the ethno-linguistic cleavages are being consolidated by these processes, separating the linguistic group from another, ancient status, caste or other hierarchical cleavages within these linguistic communities are likely to become less acute. Traditional village-against-village or district-vis.-district suspicions tend to diminish in the more inclusive ethno-linguistic strife. As high status leaders seek to mobilize numerically significant lower-status groups or as several hitherto socially distant caste groups ally together to press their political fortunes, what have up till now been quasi-sacred hierarchical relationships become secularized and lose their hitherto unchangeable character. The inherited status structure may be ignored in the face of immediate political imperatives. Accordingly, from the inclusive, national or big-city view, communalism may be devisive. But seen from the village, rural district or town perspectives, newer, larger combinations may emerge within each language group, bridging hitherto unbridgeable social or Political distances in an unprecedented solidarity.

Economic Dimensions of Communalism: Communal differentiations have also been important to economic life. At Independence, it could be argued that in most parts of the economy, particular ethno-linguistic groups tended to specialize in their own specific economic activities.

In Malaysia, for example, during the colonial era, immigrant Chinese came to to man the newer economic enterprises in tin mining, rubber plantations and commerce in the towns and cities. The Malays, by contrast, preferred to continue traditional peasant pursuits while a few of their elite were recruited into the lower rungs of the British bureaucracy.[20] In India, the Marwaris were traders, entrepreneurs and eventually industrialists. Middle class educated Tamils and Bengalis were heavily represented in the public services, Gujeratis in textile manufacture. Many castes still perform economic tasks deriving from traditional caste roles, particularly in rural areas.

To be sure, these are oversimplified stereotypes, but they do suggest the ease with which economic roles are seen as reflecting communal differences. In such cases, economic competition and stratifications often intensify communal hostilities as these, in turn, intensify economic tensions.[21]

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20. I am indebted to Margeret Roff for suggestions at this point, as well as elsewhere in the discussion of Malaysia. For details see Rabushka, *op. cit.*, p. 24; and for background, William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1967).

21. For qualification of this argument as it applies to Malaysia, see, C. Enloe, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-23 on "economic stratification and ethnicity"; see also, G. Ness, *Bureaucracy and Rural Development in Malaysia* (Berkeley, 1967), p. 46.

Migration: Communal awareness has generated resistance to migration. During the past five years, for example, there have been increasing protests in India against the further migration of non-Marathi speakers into Bombay or Bengalis into Assam. Other "sons of the soil" movements seek to prevent "outsiders" from migrating into "their" preserves.[22] In Pakistan's Sindh, there have been protests against the earlier influx of Urdu-speaking refugees from U.P. in India at the time of partition and more recently, the immigration of Punjabis into scarce irrigated land. Hostility to settling Biharis from Bangladesh is even more intense. In Sri Lanka, newly irrigated land in the dry zone lying between areas now inhabited by Sinhalese in the south and Ceylon Tamils in the north has become an increasingly contentious apple of discord.[23]

Caste Communalism: In India, caste plays only a small part at the federal level, but is one of the main sources of political energy in the states, where language and other communal issues are also important. Indeed, state politics cannot be understood without an awareness of the intense competition between sub-castes or *jatis*, as each group tries to improve its relative standing vis-a-vis others closest to it in the many-tiered hierarchy of sub-castes which has far more reality in political life than the traditional four-fold *varna* distinctions dear to Indologists.[24]

In Sri Lanka, too, caste stratifications remain socially and economically important, though they have been less conspicuous in political life except when party candidates are about to be chosen. However, in the 1971 youth rebellion, resentment among the *vahumpura*, *batgam*, *durāva* and *radhā* caste communities against the majority *goyigama* caste played a part in motivating that youthful uprising, and it was not entirely accidental that the leadership came mainly from the thrusting *karāva* community.[25]

Leadership Strategies: Space does not permit a detailed discussion of how these four governments have handled their many communal problems. It is often difficult to distinguish policy design from actual historical results. But certain contrasts can be quickly noted.

In both Sri Lanka and Malaysia, governments began with moderate policies reasonably responsive to the sensitivities and aspirations of the minority communities.

22. For a discussion of migration in India and reactions to it see, M. Weiner, "Socio-Political Consequences of Interstate Migration in India". in Wriggins and Guyot, *op. cit.*, Chapter 6.

23. B. H. Farmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66.

24. For a thoughtful discussion, see the work of Lloyd and Suzanne Rudolph, particularly their *The Modernity of Tradition* (1967) and Rudolph, "The Political Role of India's caste Associations". *Pacific Affairs*, March 1960. A different view is argued by A. H. Somjee, "Caste and the Decline of Political Homogeneity". *American Political Science Review*, LXVII (3), September, 1973.

25. For details see the work of Bryce Ryan, *Caste in Modern Ceylon* (Rutgers University Press, 1953) and Janice Jiggins, *Family and Caste in the Politics of the Sinhalese*, 1947-1971 (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Ceylon, Peradeniya, 1973). For a more detailed analysis of the youth uprising, see H. Wriggins, and C. H. S. Jayawardane, "Youth Protest in Sri Lanka" in Wriggins and Guyot, *Population, Politics and the future of Southern Asia* (Columbia, 1973) Chap. 10. Compare this analysis with Wiswa Warnapala [Politicus] "The April Revolt in Ceylon", *Asian Survey* March 1972 (Vol. XII, No. 3) pp. 259-274.

In Sri Lanka by the 1950's, however, governments became far more attentive to the sense of grievance and the aspirations of the majority Sinhalese, and the Ceylon Tamil minority's position rapidly eroded. In Malaysia, too, the aspirations of the Malay majority came to play an increasingly important role at the expense of the hopes of the younger, more ambitious among the Chinese. In contrast to Sri Lanka, however, adroit political bargaining between the components of the multi-communal Alliance Party led to mutually acceptable arrangements for jobs, education and resource allocations until late in the 1960's. By 1969, this convenient arrangement seemed to have broken down when the election of that year precipitated acute ethnic rioting. Parliament was suspended for nearly two years. The outburst had seemed so threatening to spokesmen of all ethnic groups that party and parliamentary activity was resumed only after all had agreed that communal issues were *not* the proper subject of political debate and agitation.[26]

So long as spokesmen for each ethnic group were assured of their respective following, as was the case in Sri Lanka under D. S. Senanayake and, for a time, under his son Dudley, and in Malaysia with the Tunku Abdul Rahman for the Malays and his counterpart in the Chinese community, moderation made it possible for leaders to construct a more inclusive political following from both communities. But when leaders arose *within* each community to challenge the moderate men who hitherto had transcended communal differences, aspiring politicians found issues of language, religion, job defense, etc. the best ways of arousing a popular following. Such issues helped them to undercut the position of those who had worked out compromises among the communities up till then. Thus, communal conflict resulted from the political strategies aspiring leaders were tempted to use in their own rise to influence.

To be sure, competitive politics was not the sole explanation for this intensified communal consciousness. Growing literacy, a vernacular education which often recalls past periods of strife, economic growth which mixes hitherto separated communities in close working and living proximity also make their contribution. But it seems unlikely that the intensity of communal antagonisms would have been as great in either of the countries under consideration had aspiring political leaders been able to resist the temptation to play on these sensitive issues. Whether the agreed mutual self-restraint of the activists in Malaysia's numerous parties will persist without very substantial government intimidation remains to be seen. And where there is such restraint, can the grievances of the more numerous populist elements be adequately voiced in the political process?[27]

In undivided Pakistan, once the language issue was dealt with, there was a brief though confusing period of representative politics, when Bengali interests received considerable attention in the capital. Subsequently, and particularly in the latter days of the Ayub regime, Bengali grievances grew in intensity, mainly because limited

26. I am indebted to Margaret Roff for this point.

27. For more details see, H. Wriggins, "Impediments to Unity in New Nations: the case of Ceylon". *American Political Science Review* (Vol. LV No. 2, June 1961, pp. 313-321; and R. N. Kearney, *op. cit.*, C. Enloe, *op. cit.*, preface.

political processes did not provide sufficient representation for Bengali spokesmen, even though by then Bengal was receiving a substantially larger share of investment resources than had been the case before. How the federal structure in the "new" Pakistan responds to communal sentiment will depend as much on the skill and style of political leadership as on the formal allocation of resources. Electoral events in the summer of 1974 were more promising. India's communal problems require constant attention.

Those of us who know the "communal" problems of New York, Chicago, Detroit or London cannot point the finger in praise or blame. One can only hope that the steps taken today and during the next five years will be looked back upon by future generations as wise, timely and duly considered, with each country's and its constituent groups, long-run best interests held in view.

XIV

THE PARTY SYSTEM IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE: AN ASSESSMENT

CALVIN WOODWARD

The history of political parties in Sri Lanka is a comparatively short one. The party system has been in operation for less than thirty years, or a little over forty if one relates its origin to the parties and associations which formed and were active under the Donoughmore Constitution. One may well question the propriety, analytically, of essaying an assessment of an entity of such shallow historical depth. The evolvement of the party system has surely not yet reached final form; in character it may change dramatically, its growth may be aborted or it may fall victim to a system-destructive event. It may be, in short, too soon in the life of the party system to characterize or assess it.

The problem posed by this is compounded by the inherently dynamic quality of political parties themselves. The present generation of scholars was made alert to this by Sigmund Neumann[1] and Maurice Duverger,[2] the pioneering efforts of whom did much to advance the study of modern political parties. Seen in their light, parties are highly adaptive and responsive organisms, shaping, and in turn being shaped by, the environment in which they act. Ideologically and organizationally, parties, in their internal and external relations, are persistently changing units. They can be captured analytically in a moment of time, their biographies can be recorded, but their future is predictable with scarcely a modicum of certainty. Who in 1947, for example, would have thought it possible that the parties of Philip Gunawardena and J. R. Jayawardene would, within twenty years, combine in a coalition, or that a party would emerge and wrest power from a parent-party so entrenched as the United National Party became in its early years? Such, however, are experiences natural in the life of parties.[3]

The assessment of the party system of Sri Lanka must be respectful of the limitations which the nature of party and the brevity of the Ceylonese party experience

1. "Why Study Political Parties?" and "Toward a Comparative Study of Political Parties", in Sigmund Neumann (ed.), *Modern Political Parties*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1956, pp. 1-6, 395-421.
2. *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State* Nethuen and Co., Ltd. London, 1954.
3. The opportunistic bent of political parties is strongly argued by S. J. Eldersveld, *Political Parties: A Behavioural Analysis*, Rand McNally and Co., Chicago, 1964.

impose. Mindful of this, there are nevertheless at least two good reasons why one should proceed with an attempt to assess the formative period of the party system in Sri Lanka. First, the years since independence comprise an eventful and productive period in the growth of the Sri Lankan party system.[4] The difference between the party system of today and that of 1947 is both vivid and essential; the progress made may in fact be uniquely remarkable. Second, the element of time is not in all ways a crucial variable. As has been mentioned, all parties and their systems evolve eternally. Analytically, the assessment of the Ceylonese party experience is not different from that which might be done on more established party systems of greater historical depth. The similarity is explicitly confirmed by Sir Ivor Jennings, in his careful study of the growth of British parties. "It must not be assumed," Sir Ivor concluded, "that the party system of the present generation is in its final and permanent form". On the contrary, he argued, the British party system "... is in perpetual evolution..."[5]

The evolvement of the British party system transpired in alliance with the parliamentary system of government. The growth and development of both systems were essential to the viability of British democracy. A similar relationship appears to be manifest in the political development of Sri Lanka. The durability evinced by the democracy established at independence is undoubtedly Sri Lanka's most notable political achievement. Election campaigns have been competitive and orderly, power has peacefully been passed from incumbent to rival party coalitions, parliament has been an articulate and productive forum, and voter turnout, which is among the highest in the world, has reflected the depth of public support for both the party system and parliamentary democracy. To say this is not to ignore the frequent proclamation and extension of states of emergency, the communal discord and riot, the insurrection and other more or less severe challenges which have tested the strength of the democratic system over the years. The evidence to which the sceptic and the cynic could with reason refer is considerable. There is also a good body of thoughtful scholarly and informed opinion which considers the Ceylonese polity to be both vulnerable and volatile. Few would deny that this polity exists in a state of "dangerous equilibrium" as A. Jeyaratnam Wilson has said,[6] and surely it faces the kinds of challenges to the political order described by Robert Kearney.[7] But the essential point should not be missed: that is, that the Ceylonese democracy has so far managed to deal with problems which, the common fare of the new states, have elsewhere eventuated in the failure of the democratic experiment.

The vitality of parliamentary democracy, the enduring viability of the political system, directly relate to major changes which parties and the party system have undergone.[8] Initially, the form of the party system was of patent fairly typical of new

4. For a history and analysis of the development of the party system till 1965 see my book *The Growth of a Party System in Ceylon*, (Brown University Press, Providence, 1969).
5. *Party Politics: The Growth of Parties*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1961), p. 2.
6. *Politics in Sri Lanka*, 1947-1973, (MacMillan Press, Ltd., London and Basingstoke, 1974).
7. *The Politics of Ceylon (Sri Lanka)*, (Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1973).
8. Neumann suggested in 1956 that the "development of a responsible party system could well be the secret of a successful transition from colonialism to political self-rule". *op. cit.*, p. 420.

states emerging from colonial custody. Common to that was the sovereignty assumed and exercised by the dominant forces participant in the struggle for independence. Too often, however, the custodians of the new order tended either to assume a monolithic power or to disintegrate under the pressure of internecine discord and the strains of government. Both of these tendencies were at work in Sri Lanka in the years after independence when, what I should like to refer to as "the first party system", that which existed from 1948 to 1956, was in operation. A comparison between that party system and the contemporary one, the relevance of both to the survival of democracy, form the content of this paper.

The First Party System

The configuration of the first party system and the nature of the parties of which it was composed raised serious doubts about the survivability of the democracy then extant. The formation of the United National Party and the strong government it provided for eight years were, of course, positive—even essential—achievements. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, for one, was well aware of the symbiotic relationship between the foundation of the UNP and the stability of the early Ceylonese democracy. The UNP gave Ceylon, he said, "the stability of government which was needed particularly at the beginning of a new era of freedom."[9] The coin, however, had another side. Ominous was the fact, and Bandaranaike was cognizant of it, that the UNP contained in its ranks almost all the liberal, democratic forces in the First and Second Parliaments. Referring to the party situation as it existed before 1951, Bandaranaike said that in Parliament there was "only one party, as all the important opposition parties are those which, owing to their Marxist beliefs, have no faith in democracy or the parliamentary system as we understand those terms."[10]

The revolutionary design and objective of leading opposition parties at this time was manifest. Colvin R. de Silva proudly acknowledged the fact. "In the Opposition" he said, "there are three revolutionary parties".[11] He was referring, of course, to the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, the Communist Party and his own Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India. The linkage of these parties to international and revolutionary movements was also an admission proudly made. Moreover, these parties announced their lack of confidence in the new political system, particularly their distrust of the UNP to manage it democratically. "We suffer no illusions", De Silva said, "about the possibilities of a Parliamentary regime".[12] Over these years, Marxist parties remained sceptical participants in the parliamentary drama, their leadership advocating revolutionary goals and means, and their militant membership kept mobilized for any exigency that might develop.

The remainder of the Opposition in the First Parliament consisted of communalist parties and a number of independents. Neither the Ceylon Indian Congress

9. House of Representatives, *Debates*, Vol. X, col. 698.
10. *Speeches and Writings*, (Government Press, Colombo, 1963), p. 138.
11. House of Representatives, *Debates*, Vol. I, col. 365.
12. *Ibid.*, col. 195.

nor the Ceylon Tamil bloc led by S. J. V. Chelvanayakam "rejoiced" over independence and both had little faith in the democracy of the new system. The ability of the Opposition to balance the Government was, in any case, seriously impaired by the fact that it was numerically weak and divided. Often in these early years, Opposition elements fought so bitterly among themselves that rarely could unity be achieved for an anti-Government stand. Co-operation between parties of the Opposition was as difficult to realize as was a workable relationship in Parliament between the Goverment and Opposition.[13]

The potential for alternative government afforded by the formation of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party in 1951 was dampened by the "dictatorial majority" by which the UNP was returned in the election of 1952: a majority enhanced by the wreckage of the Ceylon Indian Congress as a result of the enactment of citizenship laws which in effect disfranchised Indian Tamils. After the election of 1952 especially, a one party trend appeared to be leading inevitably, as it was elsewhere among new states toward the institutionalization of a monolithic party system. This was confirmed in some minds by certain actions taken by the UNP which appeared, or was alleged, to be motivated by an urge to entrench itself irrevocably in power. The rhetoric by which this fear was expressed perhaps exaggerated the case. Similarly, the UNP may have been unfair in regard to the charges for which it indicted oppositional elements. Nonetheless, the UNP placed no more trust in the Opposition than did the latter in it. It exploited the political profit of an Opposition it considered to be anti Buddhist, internationalist, communalist and communist. Moreover, it took steps and maintained vigil against what it alleged to be revolutionary preparations initiated by Marxist parties. Bandaranaike was prone to interpret this guardianship of the UNP as being purposely self-serving. The UNP leadership, he said, "... under the pretext of the need to protect democracy, resorted to various undemocratic and even anti-democratic methods to keep themselves in power".[14]

The victory of the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna in 1956, the smooth transfer of power to that new force by the UNP, tend to belie certain of the charges made against the UNP in its early years. Rare is the party which, having the means, hesitates to assume power absolutely. There were instances to regret, and many were the faults and defects, but the Ceylonese democracy may forever be beholden to the Senanayakes and the initial period of UNP rule. Nevertheless, the eight years of the first party system comprise a politically tense period. The party system was precariously poised between poles of dictatorship and revolution. While opposing tendencies may often usefully produce a balancing effect that pulls to the centre, they may also induce a mortal confrontation. The fear, quite obviously, was that the first party system might be pulled apart from two different directions. The fear was made especially real by the fact that there was no viable non-revolutionary alternative to the UNP. Until the SLFP organized a coalition, voters had no means to express a loss of confidence in the Government without, at the same time, undermining the parliamentary system.

13. See A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, "Oppositional Politics in Ceylon (1947-1968)", *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 54-69.

14. Bandaranaike, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

The importance of the MEP triumph was that it brought to power a party in which voters had confidence and which in turn was committed to parliamentary democracy.

The stress of two potentially fatal tendencies was made more disturbing by the fact that the popular underpinning of parliament and the party system was tenuous and undeveloped. Parliament was not a meaningful institution so far as the mass of voters were concerned, primarily because the parties which managed it were not effectively functioning as intermediaries between the people and their political institutions. Parties were largely notable-determined units linked organizationally to voters through a myriad of personal influence structures which at the level of the constituency were committed personally to party candidates. Voting behaviour was personalistic as electors cast ballots for local notables with little regard for their party affiliation. Personal trust in a candidate, for a variety of mainly ascriptive reasons, took priority over questions of policy, issues or platforms. For their part, parties decided policy in caucus, cabinet or council without serious consultation with voters.

Parties were meaningful political units, however, at the level of Parliament where they were used to service the ambitions of elected notables. They were serviceable components, in this vital way, of the parliamentary system, because they produced the permanent alignments needed to make the parliamentary system work. They were instrumental, as well, in inducing the decline of the politically independent notable, by making that position unprofitable to the political careerist.

Parties thus performed useful services during this initial period of party growth in Sri Lanka. What they did not do, however, is equally important. Their failures, more than their success, mark distinct this early phase of party development. Most serious were the sociological defects of parties during this period. Voters were only indirectly linked to parties and the parliamentary alignments they formed. Because of this, neither had meaning to voters and neither enjoyed a substructure of popular support. Secondly, the notable-determined nature of parties kept them aloof from currents of public opinion. This, of course, affected most deeply the governing party. It was not until later, however, that the UNP came to understand that its defeat in 1956 was directly attributable to the fact that it had lost touch with the pulse of the people. There was substance to the charge that N. M. Perera made in 1948. He said then that the UNP appeared to assume a "Divine Right to rule".[15]

The negative aspects of the first party system can be exaggerated. The custodial bias of this predominatly UNP era helped politics to adapt to the mechanics of parliamentary democracy. Moreover, it ensured order and an orderly transition to democratic politics.[16] Importantly, the strength evinced by the UNP may well have dissuaded revolutionary parties from pursuing an ideologically chosen path.

15. House of Representatives, *Debates*, Vol. I, col. 60.

16. W. Howard Wriggins, speaking of the first ten years of independence, wrote in 1960 that the Ceylonese had " ...managed many intricate problems in a decade of relatively orderly government". *Ceylon: Dilemmas of a New Nation*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1960), p. 458.

The Contemporary Party System

The contrast between the contemporary party system and its predecessor is sharp. Comparatively it reflects the extent and essentiality of the growth experienced by the party system since its origin nearly thirty years ago. While further growth may modify its present character, the contemporary party system is distinguished by three principal qualities: (1) its bipolarity, structurally and functionally, (2) its capacity to effect alternative government, and (3) the centrality of political view which governs the spectrum of parties effectively engaged in the political process.

The form of the party system is, of course, obviously multiparty. Except for the fact that one party is no longer dominant, there has been no significant change numerically in the surface structure of the party system since the SLFP emerged in 1951. Appearances to the contrary, the party system has become bipolar in two important areas of its operation. In the first place, election contests at the constituency level are predominantly biparty. In every election, beginning with that of 1956, and excepting that of March 1960 when political forces multiplied and were in disarray, the percentage of the vote taken by the first two candidates in almost every constituency exceeded 90% of the vote.[17] Equally important is the fact that candidates involved in these biparty contests were associated with one or the other of the two party coalitions or ententes that have done fairly regular battle at elections since 1956.

In Parliament, the organizing principle inherited from the Westminister model has not consistently produced a stable bi-party division. A clear distinction between Government and Opposition has often been blurred by the tactical preference of some Marxist and communalist parties to operate, at times, in parliamentary limbo. Since 1956, however, parliamentary power has pivoted about the two principal political coalitions which in constituencies effect biparty election contests. The biparty electoral pattern is thus replicated in parliament in alignments which form or approximate a workable, though erosive, Government-Opposition division. The UNP and the SLFP, of course, are the kingpins of the biparty pattern. They are the cores about which smaller, sometimes satellite, parties gravitate to produce both electoral and parliamentary coalitions. These coalitions are, in turn, the key to the capacity for alternative government which the party system has come to assume. The fact that every election since 1956 has returned to power a party or coalition rival to that of the incumbent, strongly suggests that this capacity has, in fact, become institutionalized.

There are several critical dates and events that mark the development of this capacity. There is first, quite clearly, the success of the SLFP-led coalition in the election of 1956. Above all, it demonstrated the possibility of alternative government. The election of July 1960 proved that the SLFP was not an ephemeral phenomenon; that its political base of power went deeper and that it was not solely dependent upon the personal charisma of its founder. Its survival was at issue a year earlier when some opinion, at least, considered it to be finished as a mass party. The re-emergence of the UNP in the election of 1960 equally proved its vitality to sceptics and others

17. Woodward, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

alike. More important perhaps, was its return to power in 1965 when it, in addition, demonstrated its ability to forge electoral coalitions as impressive and expedient as that put together by the SLFP. Implicit in the construction of coalitions by both these parties is the improvement in relations among all parties. The conclusion of no-contest pacts, the delegation of cabinet posts among intensely ambitious leaders and the workability of coalition governments evince the kind of sophistication and cooperation which generally were lacking in the first party system.

The construction of these coalitions has been facilitated by the fact that durable components of the party system have all tended to adopt, at least on important questions, a centrist political view. The party system now operates within a consensus generally supportive of parliamentary democracy. The two pivots of the party system, the UNP and the SLFP, mobilize a mass social base along similar, though not identical, politically liberal, moderately socialist and traditionalist, lines. The election of neither eventuates in fundamental change. The "coalition-draw" of these two parties has helped pull formerly radical and revolutionary parties toward the centre. The pressures and opportunities natural to politics have, over the years, modified the revolutionary parties of the first party system. All of them have now served in governing coalitions and indicate, by their platforms and action, support for the system. The original Marxist parties have been encouraged, at no little expense and effort, to amputate their recalcitrant, revolutionary sections. This has, for one thing, released an inner tension that long disturbed the external relations of these parties. Their explicit adoption, finally, of a parliamentary orientation acknowledges, at the very least, their security within the parliamentary system. At the same time, the fatality at the polls of the revolutionary elements purged from these parties manifests the un-responsiveness of public opinion to a revolutionary solution of political and social questions. Their regular defeat is one more measure of popular support for parliamentary democracy.

The underpinning of the contemporary party system is also deeper and firmer than that of its predecessor. Intense political competition has compelled systematically useful changes on the part of parties and these have helped to solidify their foundations. In the first place, they have become consumer-oriented, socially determined units. All parties have developed increasingly sophisticated formal organizations that link them directly with voters. Ideological questions and policy decisions are now taken with an ear to voter demands and platforms are devised to sell in the marketplace of votes. The intimacy that has developed between parties and voters is reflected in the strong party-orientation of the Ceylonese electorate.[18] While personal considerations still weigh in elections, the decisive factor now appears to be parties, their platforms and the issues they raise. These developments, the fact that voters have felt their power to elect and defeat governments and thereby influence policy directly, have underscored public support for the party and parliamentary system.

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18. This is the thesis of my article, "Sri Lanka's Electoral Experience: From Personal to Party Politics", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (Winter 1974-75), pp. 455-471. See also A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, *Electoral Politics in an Emergent State*, (Cambridge University Press, 1975).

The inability of new parties to take root is further evidence of the firm popular footing on which the established party system rests. Substantially, the party system is composed of the same parties today as in 1951 after the formation of the SLFP. The disorder that followed the break-up of the MEP, and the consequent effort by various leaders of that coalition to found their own parties failed to give birth to a single durable party. Some short-lived personality parties later saw fit to join, or to permit their absorption by, larger, more established parties. This failure of new parties, the precipitous decline in voter support for politically independent candidates, suggests that most elements of public opinion are content with the faculty of durable parties to articulate and represent their interests. The traditionalist garb in which the contemporary party system is clothed, its use of indigenous language, give it, as well, the aura and appearance of a peoples' servant. The first party system did not convincingly convey this important image.

The strengths of the contemporary party system developed in response to the weaknesses of the earlier one. Obviously, the present party system has deficiencies of its own and is confronted by serious challenges which it is obliged to master. Foremost of these is the consumer-orientation which governs party competition. Parties, quite frankly, might not only outbid each other for votes, but also develop demands which go beyond the capacity of the society to satisfy. The insurrection of 1971 may well reflect one instance of this. Certainly it counsels caution and, if possible, a slowdown in the spiraling inflation of promises that parties have been making since the election of 1956. The fear is that the imperatives of party competition will not permit a vitality needed arrestation or reduction of promises to voters.

Parties also, especially their coalitions, still tend to be collections of odd bedfellows. The SLFP, in particular, is pulled between two wings, one seeking accommodation with its Marxist partners, and the other pulling toward the parent-UNP from which the party originally emerged. Given the overwhelming majorities by which the SLFP has been returned, this inner tension might not be all together a bad thing. The UNP has often been so decimated at the polls that the prime restraint on the SLFP has come from within itself. In this sense, the party acts as both Government and Opposition. This is an oddity, but it is nonetheless systemically useful because the UNP has consistently enjoyed greater support among voters than that suggested by the small number of seats it sometimes wins, most notably in the elections of 1956, July 1960 and especially that of 1970. The empathy that exists between the UNP and the conservative side of the SLFP may therefore help compensate for the distortion of the public will which results from the special circumstances of electoral coalitions and the electoral system itself.

The mold of other Sinhalese parties has hardened more than has that of the SLFP. The cohesion of the UNP, however, is challenged every time its fortunes decline. It is pulled within, not so much by ideological wings, but by ambitious factions and leaders seeking a surer road to power than that provided by the UNP during a political ebbtide. Traditional Marxist parties appear to have settled major differences within and among themselves. As the Labour Party did in Great Britain in the course of its evolution, the LSSP, MEP and CP have gradually deradicalized. Differences of

opinion excite debate in both parties and internal alignments form and divide on questions of tactics and policy. Inner-party tension, to some degree, stems from the contrast between the mundane needs and orientation of party followers and the visionary goals of the party intelligensia. This may be a strain endemic to working class parties. The British Labour Party has still not calmed a similar debate in its own ranks.

The position of forces potentially disturbing to the system has radically changed over the years. Importantly, they have been ostracized from the established party system, or at worst, cast to the less damaging periphery of that system. Revolutionary parties, however, are still operative, though they have been able to attach to themselves only marginal public support. The marginality of that support, however depends on the ability of established parties to remain responsive to the demand, emanating from their constituencies. Outcast parties, such as the CP (Peking), the "purists" of LSSP schisms and the recently proscribed Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, remain at the fringe awaiting the failure of the established party system. The FP, stronger now than in the first party system, exists in two worlds. In the legitimate one of parliamentary democracy, it gives cautious, calculated support to the Sinhalese party system. In the less legitimate one beyond parliament, it threatens the Sinhalese party system by using potentially system-disturbing devices and strategies. It has, however, served in a Government and, if conditions can be made right, may not be averse to serving in one again in the future. Despite its periodic withdrawal, the FP has been instrumental in maintaining a political association between Ceylon Tamils and the Sinhalese through the nexus of the party system. Its extra-parliamentary activity, like the politically-motivated strikes of Marxist parties, may be more system,-supportive than damaging. Such behaviour can often serve to warn parliamentary majorities of the real power at the disposal of a party whose minority status in Parliament may be an inaccurate expression of its true political strength. Extra-parliamentary tactics, may provide a useful mechanism, available to all parties, to correct a parliamentary imbalance, or to keep the party system mindful of the need not to go beyond the delicate consensus on which the Ceylonese democracy has been carefully built.

Questions of a communalist nature and a political rhetoric whose content may have valid grounds pose problems for the contemporary party system. Communal divisions have been more intense since 1956, and formerly inter-communalist parties have found need to cater to the interests of the majority community. Political rhetoric has its communalist bent, though much of it, as before, is directed against Governments for conduct alleged to be arrogant, arbitrary, or indicative of dictatorial inclinations. Now that the capacity for alternative government is ensured,[19] however, the validity of rhetorical criticism can be effectively assessed in the court of public opinion and a verdict rendered at the polls. The fear, of course, is that persistently bitter exchanges can damage public confidence in the party system or that Governments can be induced to engage in irresponsible conduct in defense of their position. Similarily, parties may be led to promise "impossible dreams" to convince voters of

19. While it is too early to evaluate fully its effect on the party system, the recent constitutional change seems definitely to have strengthened the position of Governments.

the insincerity or aloofness of an incumbent rival. This danger, more now than before, is the special burden borne by the contemporary party system.

The contemporary party system and the one from which it descended, share a heritage of particularly Ceylonese gift. A certain historical continuity is to be expected. The growth manifest in the contrast between the early and contemporary party systems, however, is provocative. The party systems of longer established democracies, such as Great Britain, the United States and Canada, took more years to attain a comparable level of growth. The principle of alternative government, for example, was effectuated more expeditiously in Sri Lanka than in these older democracies. The capacity of the Canadian party system to author alternative government was not confirmed until thirty years after Confederation. The impressive electoral machine directed by Sir John A. MacDonald, which fathered Confederation in 1867, held almost unbroken political sway nationally from 1854 to 1896. In the United States, an opposition party founded under Thomas Jefferson appropriated the office of president from the Federalist Party eleven years after the union was established. It took another twenty four years to dislodge the Jeffersonian Republicans from that office and to consolidate the biparty pattern since extant. The process of alternative government was slow to take root in Great Britain following the Great Reform which initiated modern party development. Between 1830 and 1875, the years of the great "Liberal supremacy", the Conservative Party realized office only once, under Sir Robert Peel from 1841 to 1846. Equally arresting is the fact that the central offices of the two great parties remained embryonic until the 1870's. In Sri Lanka, party organization grew at a more rapid pace than it did in the mother of parliamentary democracy.

The Ceylonese party system, of course, had over a century of modern party experience from which to draw and on which to model itself. The UNP and the SLFP, quite specifically, looked for example to the mass parties of Great Britain and the United States. Similar tutors and models, however, invited the emulation of party architects in all the new states, yet in perhaps none of them save Israel has a party system worked as well as that of Sri Lanka. In Asia, certainly, the Ceylonese case is exceptional. "Asian politics are caught in a profound dilemma", Lucien Pye noted in 1966; "they can neither get along well with political parties nor work well without them".[20] It is to the credit of the Ceylonese party system that neither of these poles describe the first quarter century of party experience.

20. "Party Systems and National Development in Asia", in Joseph La Polambara and Myron Weiner (eds), *Political Parties and Political Development*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1966), p. 369.

XV

FROM CEYLON (1948) TO SRI LANKA (1975)

K. M. DE SILVA, A. JEYARATNAM WILSON,
C. A. WOODWARD, W. HOWARD WRIGGINS

This study of Sri Lanka in its socio-economic and political aspects provides a microcosm for the examination and analysis of other similar or related societies in South and Southeast Asia. There are, no doubt, differences arising especially from the fact of smallness. But transitions and upheavals are in process all around and the dynamics of change in Sri Lanka have their analogues in the "broken backed states", "states at risk" and "nations in dangerous equilibrium" in near and distant places. The essayists in this volume have attempted to portray the stability that accompanied independence and the rapid changes that followed in its wake in the twenty five odd years thereafter.

A quarter of a century is a useful point to look back as well as to look forward. What is distinct in the case of Sri Lanka is that the processes of change, with all their strains and stresses, have taken place within an orderly framework. The democratic system has functioned despite restrictions placed on it by hardpressed governments. We cannot say that this has been the case with the neighbouring states—India, Pakistan, Burma, Malaysia and in recent times Bangladesh. We cannot be certain that the stability that underlies rapid change will last. There are many 'ifs' the future has in store. But to look back on twenty five years of peaceful evolution, of governments holding together an ethnic mosaic that has within it sources of disintegration, while containing social discontent within safe bounds, are achievements that few of the new states of post-World War II can lay claim do. Despite many difficulties that loom ahead these are no mean accomplishments.

Howard Wriggins places the Sri Lanka situation in the context of South Asia when he compares the island's multi-ethnic problems with those of the neighbouring countries. In many ways his essay sets the pace for the rest of us who have written on related problems. Very rightly, Wriggins concludes that "communal" situations are not the proprietary monopolies of only South Asian states.

The notable tranquility that preceded and accompanied the transfer of power, the craft and diplomacy so reminiscent of Cavour, Garibaldi and Mazzini that "induced" independence, the farseeing nature of British diplomacy in easing the way to orderly independence are set out in K. M. de Silva's contributions on the subject.

Questions naturally arise concerning how the opportunities and responsibilities of independence were dealt with. The errors are stark but the accomplishments are not altogether unsatisfactory. The problems of a multi-religious and polyethnic society are commented on by Kitsiri Malalgoda ("Buddhism in Post-Independence Sri Lanka"), Donald E. Smith ("The Dialectic of Religion and Politics in Sri Lanka"), and K. M. de Silva ("Hinduism and Islam in Post-Independence Sri Lanka"), while the thorny question of Christians and privilege is examined by Paul Caspersz ("The Role of Sri Lanka Christians in a Buddhist Majority System"). The issue of the Tamils and separatism is dealt with in K. M. de Silva's contribution ("Nationalism and its Impact"). Many of the essays refer to the Tamil question directly or tangentially. It is crucial to the problem of Sri Lanka's unity as well as Sri Lanka's survival as a single national entity. The future has many question marks in this uncertain area. C. R. de Silva and V. K. Samaraweera in their "Leadership Perspectives 1948-1973: An Interpretive Essay" pull these perplexing questions together in an effort to provide an overall perspective while the divisive trends of a plural society are looked at by K. M. de Silva in his "Nationalism and its Impact". As he points out, "nationalism in Sri Lanka is a thing of a myriad shapes and forms;" that its "one point of consistency in the future", perversely, it its "infinite changeability" and he concludes with paradoxical yet sustainable propositions to the effect that "the impact of nationalism will continue to be at once cohesive and disruptive".

Social welfarism is a byword in local politics and the conflict between parties centres on this local problem while religion, race, and caste are, as well, close to the centre of political dynamism. It is not without significance that the two leading statesmen who guided the island's destinies in its formative phase, Don Stephen Senanayake and Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike both came from the most conservative of environments. Don Stephen Senanayake inspired adequate confidence in Whitehall to obtain independence with goodwill and thereafter to reconcile the minority ethnic and religious groups within the national fabric of a Buddhist majority system. Solomon Bandaranaike with his western outlook and commitment to liberalism drew rural masses into political participation and while evoking the Sinhalese Buddhist "revolution" steered it within the safe confines of national unity. In the hands of an extremist leader, Sri Lanka's situation might have been no different from Biafra, Bangladesh or Cyprus. Dudley Senanayake provided the synthesis of the old and the not so old, the heir to his father's policies and the eclectic who adopted much of Solomon Bandaranaike's pragmatism. Mrs. Bandaranaike, for her part, has accomplished the unusual feat of accommodating the traditional marxists (Trotskyists and Moscow Communists) within the parameters of her social democratic Sri Lanka Freedom Party. Under her premiership, left of centre socialist policies are being put through by her United Front government utilising Parliament as the arena for debate and for shaping the majority votes required to attain these goals. Barring India, it cannot be said with any certainty that any other South Asian polity has had statesmen who have been so similar and yet so different within a limited span of twenty five years—a kind of continuity and change.

During the years of independence, and particularly after the Bandaranaike 'revolution' of the mid 1950's, Ceylon's rural population showed greater political involvement and discrimination than the rural population in any other Southern Asian state. At each election they rejected the incumbents and insisted that the Opposition be given a chance to rule, since those who had been in control had not been able to deal with economic, political or other issues in a way to satisfy enough of the people to gain a majority. A major issue for the future will be how such an awakened, politicized rural population can be sufficiently "satisfied" to permit continuity of a regime beyond a single term in office.

The dynamics of political confrontation, of bi-polarity in politics is examined by Calvin Woodward in his "The Party System in Comparative Perspective: An Assessment". Impressed by the rapid development of the party system, Woodward compares the Ceylonese experience favourably to that of other new states and that of the established democracies during the early years of party politics. Jeyaratnam Wilson draws attention to the change and continuity in foreign policy that has, despite its ups and downs, now become common ground between the major parties. Wilson further examines the question of the system's durability in his "The Future of Parliamentary Government". He concludes that the form that Parliament will take will be conditioned by the results of the next elections. Whatever the outcome, it is a safe guess that the trend will be increasingly authoritarian.

How does a system so fluid and yet so stable sustain itself? V. K. Samaraweera assesses the situation in his interpretation of "The Role of Bureaucracy". The steel framework was maintained much as it had been in pre-independence times until 1956, when the floodgates were breached. Thenceforth, impersonality, inflexibility distance and a lack of sympathy-characteristics of the old British trained higher civil service have given way to flexibility, fear of political authority inducing bureaucratic indecision, responsiveness to political pressure accompanied by a foreboding apathy. Blame for this partly lies on political leadership that draws back from taking firm decisions. Consequently, as Samaraweera states, a spoils system has replaced merit and selection through the competitive process. Not that there was a complete absence of favouritism under the old order. But jobbery and nepotism have become endemic in the post-1956 phase—race, caste, religion and politics directly influencing the choice of administrators. The change, as Samaraweera very rightly points out, was "inevitable" in that "the bureaucracy could mirror the values dominant in the socio-political process in the island". One can only hope that there will be a return to a more appropriate balance. Sri Lanka in this respect may fall short of the standards of India and Malaysia. But will these states be able to adapt and change in the effective way that Sri Lanka's bureaucracy has responded to social and political upheaval?

Inextricably intertwined with bureaucracy and politics is the state of the economy. The plight of an export-import economy seeking to switch to light industries in the post-1956 phase and struggling to sustain itself on expanding paddy cultivation are analysed by H. M. Gunasekera in his "Economic Changes in Sri Lanka 1948-1973". Based on extensive statistical data covering many years Snodgrass takes the whole period in one sweep. A productive, dynamic economy is

vital to sustain orderly political change, whether under democratic or authoritarian rule. Despite his references to the optimistic pronouncements of other economists Snodgrass has his own misgivings of the future. "With saving and investment rates still low and the foreign exchange and overpopulation problems worse than ever", Snodgrass argues that the prospects of raising national income "appear dim". This indeed is one of the most critical dilemmas that Sri Lanka faces now and in the near future. Failure to solve the economic problem spells political and national disaster. Again this is a problem that faces other states in the neighbouring area as well. Whereas Malaysia has successfully kept her population within some limits that thus far have been supported by its export-import economy, India's problems are staggering while Bangladesh appears to be overwhelmed by numbers. In contrast, Sri Lanka's smallness gives her an advantage.

However, it is the persisting failure to grapple successfully with the economic problem that will in all probability change the course of Sri Lanka's politics in the coming years. New groups are making themselves more articulate, revolutionary solutions are projected by a radically different type of leadership that despises and rejects Parliament and all the paraphernalia that goes with it. The expected reaction from the conventional forces which could very well combine in a single grand national coalition is already evident. To compound matters, the separatist movement among the Tamils is gathering strength. The political threat in a sense has obliged the conventional parties to lay aside the problems of inter-ethnic rivalries—exploitable political issues only some years ago. The problems posed by a new leadership, coming as it does from the majority youth sector of the population, are investigated by Charles Blackton in his 'The Marxists and the Ultra Marxists of Sri Lanka since Independence". Blackton concludes that a long period of cultural civility and British style politics ended with the insurgency of the Ultra-Marxists.

It is not easy to conjecture what the future holds in store. In 1948, at independence, Ceylon could not have been a safer bet, the model colony. But sweeping changes accompanied by some turmoil have occurred since then. The one significant factor is that despite the turmoil, change has been accepted by those affected adversely, the exception being the Tamils. The years 1948, 1956, and 1970 are in this respect landmarks that heralded change, sometimes peaceful, on other occasions turbulent. But underpinning these has been a foundation of solidity. Given however the many variables, there are a number of possibilities—the abandonment of Parliament, foreign intervention nation-breaking revolutionary situations accompanied by endemic or sporadic violence. But this is little different from what has already taken place in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Burma and Malaysia. Sri Lanka can be proud that in the last twenty-five years a certain level of stability has accompanied change. That in itself is a claim to achievement.

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CONTENTS