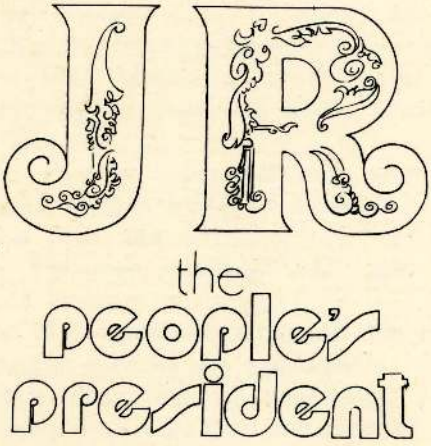

A *VARUNA* PUBLICATION

EAMON KARIYAKARAWANA
AND NEIL SRI WIJESINGHE

JR

the people's president

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This year the people of Sri Lanka celebrate fifty years of adult franchise.

During that half century they have proved on more than one occasion that the ballot can be more decisive than the bullet and, accordingly, strengthened the nation's trust in the democratic process.

To them, therefore, this book is respectfully dedicated.

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PREFACE

TO WRITE THE LIFE OF J. R. Jayewardene, as Boswell said of Dr. Johnson, is both arduous and presumptuous.

J. R. is an inscrutable man; he speaks little and prefers to keep his thoughts to himself. It is often said of him that he is shrewd. He has been shrewd, not in the sense of being cunning but of being careful. And, to be careful one has to be vigilant and patient and, generally, think several moves ahead of the others. Like a General in the field of battle only he would know the plan of his campaign and, quite often, even when in retreat, none would be the wiser as to his next manoeuvre. J. R., the General, has finally triumphed. It has been a 'long march' to victory. One knows the milestones that he had to pass, but not so clearly the trenches and the barricades that marked his way. Hence is our task arduous.

It is true that J. R. is now in the fulness of his life, politically. That itself means that the greater part of his service to the people is yet being rendered. And, that is why we feel it presumptuous on our part to write his life at this juncture. Nor do we pretend to be equal to the task.

This effort is, therefore, merely to record in outline the development of a statesman in pace with the development of his own nation and the manner in which he influenced the growth of the latter. For, it is men like him who ultimately create history.

His broad forehead, his square jaw, his sharp brow, his beak nose and deep–set eyes portray a stern regal aspect.

An unmarked bust of his could easily be mistaken for that of Julius Caesar, Stern he is, and unbending before misplaced authority. Take, for example, his encounter with Admiral Bromley in London, in March 1948. The imperious Admiral who was placed in attendance on Sir Oliver Goonetilleke, Sir John Kotelawala and J. R. – the first Asian Ministers of the Commonwealth to attend the Conference on Sterling Assets in England – was feeling outraged when the guests from Ceylon expressed a desire to meet the King before leaving England.

Bromley was aghast at the very idea and firmly refused even to consider the request.

'Is he not the King of Ceylon?' asked J. R. 'Surely his Ministers have a right to see him.'

'No' repeated the Admiral to whom the very idea of George VI, King and Emperor, deigning to shake hands with a colonial subject appeared impossible.

'Well' retorted J. R., 'if the King will not see his Ministers, then, his Ministers will have to change their King.'

To Bromley this sounded like high treason. He looked hard and long at these three brown men and, then, turned round and left. The very next day the Ceylonese Ministers received invitations to the Ball – the first after the war – at Buckingham Palace. At the Palace, they were accorded a special and private interview with the King and Queen before their Majesties met the other distinguished guests.

A similar incident, in London again, is worth recounting as further proof of J.R.'s quality of being stern and unbending before misplaced authority.

In October 1951, J. R., as Minister of Finance, was Ceylon's representative at a Commonwealth Conference called to discuss the Balance of Payments problem with the British authorities. Richard (later Lord) Stokes who had just returned from Iran after discussions with Premier Moussadeq on the issue of the nationalization of Britain's oil installations was in the Chair and, obviously, in high dudgeon.

At the conclusion of the deliberations Chairman Stokes prepared a communique which he wanted the participants to endorse at once. J. R. suggested that the Conference be adjourned for the next day so that the document could be studies before it was signed. Stokes refused to adjourn and insisted that the document be signed that day itself.

J. R. replied that several Commonwealth Ministers had come from thousands of miles away and spent several days already and that a delay of a few hours more would make no difference to them. J. R.'s stand was supported by many of the other Ministers present. However, Stokes remained unmoved.

J. R. pushed his chair back and saying, 'Don't think you are dealing with Persians in Abadan. If you do not adjourn the meeting, I am leaving this Conference and you can do what you wish,' picked up his papers and rose to go.

That saved the day. The meeting was adjourned, and J. R. was acclaimed for his guts by one and all.

Both Stokes and Bromley became good friends of J. R. later, and Stokes personally conducted him on a tour of the London Exhibition that was then on.

With all his stern exterior, J. R. was also a man with a warm heart. Once, when Dudley Senanayake was Prime Minister, the two friends were returning from an official visit to Matara when a child who suddenly ran onto the road somewhere near Ahangama was knocked down by their car. J. R, first to get out of the car, took the child in his arms and rushed him to the Galle hospital, in a Police vehicle. J. R.'s anxiety to get prompt attention to the child in his arms was so great that he did not see the low lintel at the entrance to the hospital.

When Dudley Senanayake arrived at the hospital he was surprised to see the child in plaster and J. R. with bruises on his forehead.

J. R.'s humanitarianism is best reflected by his pet dog that used to lie at its master's feet under the table in his office room, at home. This creature, born with one eye blind, was discovered whining and whimpering in pain and awaiting des-

truction in his veterinary surgeon's clinic. J. R. and Mrs. Jayewardene took the miserable creature home, nursed him and looked after till he died at his ripe old age of sixteen.

J. R. never forgets his friends, to whatever station in life they belong. Once he wanted to attend the funeral of an old supporter of his. As the man had been murdered by his enemies, J. R.'s intention to attend the funeral appeared somewhat tactless and even politically unwise. Therefore, J. R.'s friends pleaded with him not to go.

It was quite plain that they were anxious about J. R.'s safety and of the image of his party. But, J. R. could not forget a man who had helped him when alive, and he promptly left to pay his respects to the dead man.

Slander, brick-bats and bombs have failed to deter him in his service to the cause of truth, honour and freedom. The setbacks he had to face during his 'March to Kandy' in October 1957, the Police thuggery he had to confront at Dedigama in July 1973 and at Slave Island and Attanagalla in October and December that year and at Anuradhapura in January 1974 and at Colombo in May 1975 never stopped him in his tracks. In fact, they only spurred him on, their effect strengthening his will and his courage and the will and the courage of the people themselves who ultimately gave him an unprecedented mandate to lead them to a just and free society to which J. R. has now unequivocably committed himself.

His plans are for the future of a truly self-reliant country. Let future historians assess that role. Our attempt is to record his service upto the present moment, within the limitations of these pages.

Our grateful thanks are due to Mr. T. V. Goonetilleke, Parliament Librarian, but for whose ready assistance this book would have taken a longer time to come out.

Eamon Kariyakarawana
Neil Sri Wijesinghe

PROLOGUE

IN THE ANNALS of Sri Lanka the story of great men comprises a veritable record of distinction. For they, in their time, have rendered undying service to their country, nation and religion. Among them have been warrior kings who had won their laurels in the field of battle and mighty rulers who had won the hearts of their people through wise and virtuous reign. There have been many, both layman and monk, who had laid down their lives for their country and their religion. Even in modern times, we have seen our history amply embellished with magnificent examples of noble and selfless leadership. The men who fought for the country's deliverance from the yoke of British colonialism and led the people to political independence and eventual integration as a homogeneous nation are among the greatest of these leaders, one of whom is yet with us today. He is Junius Richard Jayewardene, "Dicky" to his friends and just "J. R." to the people at large.

J. R., the eldest in a family of eleven, was born on September 17, 1906. His father, King's Counsel E. W. Jayewardene, was a Judge of the Supreme Court. His mother was Agnes Helen Wijewardene.

To say that J. R. is one of our elder statesmen is to make a general statement that would be unfair being untrue. For J. R. is as much a statesman as a patriot. An able lawyer, an engaging speaker, an outspoken politician, he is a devout Buddhist too.

The Jayewardene family is well known as a family of lawyers. J. R's father and uncles – Hector, Valentine, Quintus, Godfred – have all adorned either the Bench or the Bar. It was almost natural, therefore, that J. R. himself chose that profession where he quickly earned a reputation best described by his colleagues and clients in their reference to him as the "the lawyer son of a lawyer father". The lawyer son, however, was not to be enchanted long by the prospects of the collar and bands or by the lure of easy lucre. For there were other demands of a national scope that drew him gently but irrevocably into the hurly burly of politics.

It was a time when the subject people of Sri Lanka had begun to realize increasingly the need to break away from White Hall and had launched the struggle for independence. J. R's father and lawyer uncles were themselves already in the fray. Politics was, therefore, not something strange to J. R., and he took to it as a duck takes to water. It has been half a century of full-time politics since. Few, if any, of his contemporaries are yet with us. Fewer, still, have any of them remained as steadfast to their principles as he. As a man of vision his views have always escaped the bounds of parochialism, for he has always remained aware of the realities of a changing world. That is why he says that his party will always be the United National Party, for that Party can never rest static or dead with him at its helm.

J. R. is a man with an incisive mind—a special asset to his political party. His extraordinary capacity to organise and to lead has been manifest even in his youth. None but he could have given new life and energy to a dying Ceylon National Congress in the early 'forties—a performance which he repeated in another sphere in another time. Young J. R's efforts in the struggle for independence even won him the endearing sobriquet "Ceylon Nehru". His service to the Ceylon National Congress as its Joint Secretary from 1940 to 1948 and his service to the cause of national independence should comprise a separate chapter in the history of this country.

An economist need not necessarily be a politician. A politician, however, has to be an economist as well, for politics in the modern world is a direct involvement in international financial policies. J. R., an earthy economist, has proved the worth of that accomplishment. A rational evaluation of his Six Year Plan, which he as independent Ceylon's first Minister of Finance proposed, would show how far-sighted he has been.

The Colombo Plan is another abiding memorial to the man and his genius. It is not only Sri Lanka that has profited by the Colombo Plan, but almost all the needy countries of South Asia. The men, materials and expertise that Sri Lanka alone has received as outright aid in over a dozen different spheres of development including that of education, health and transport services are incalculable.

Petty-minded leaders brook no opposition. J. R., on the other hand has proved on more than one occasion his capacity to accept both victory and defeat with equanimity. At the debacle of 1956 when the U.N.P. representation in Parliament was decimated to eight members, many of its supporters including several senior men abandoned the Party which they believed was dead and needed only a decent burial. To J. R. that death did not necessarily entail a burial, and he in his own imperturbable manner set about the task of resurrecting it. And he did it, as only he could do, with devastating effect. And, of the new-born U.N.P., he remained the organiser, architect, live-wire and hero. Unlike many others in any of these roles who would have demanded the richest plum of office, J. R. was satisfied with a seat behind the Party leader. That is the democrat he is; the man who knows the law and abides by it; the man whose political and personal integrity has always been beyond reproach.

A Sinhalese with the heart of a Sinhalese, J. R's love for his mother tongue was not born of political motivation. He was the first to move that Sinhala should be made the official language of this country, and that was in the State Council in nineteen hundred and forty three. It was he who

first pointed out—and that too to the State Council—the need for a national anthem and a national flag which could truly be held as our own. Putting practice before precept he himself wore the national dress on public occasions.

By nature and upbringing J. R. could not be anything else but honest and modest. Born into a devout Buddhist family his childhood was spent among parents and visitors whose conversations often centred on religious matters. This laid the foundation to his life of virtue. His deeper knowledge of the Dhamma came through wide reading and close acquaintance with those who knew the Dhamma. The books and papers he has written on Buddhism reflect his keen understanding of the subject. His service to Buddhist causes has also been remarkable. Apart from being the Administrator of the Anagarika Dharmapala Trust, the Secretary of the Bauddha Mandala Tripitaka Fund and Honorary Treasurer of the London Vihara Society, he has taken personal interest in the development of the Kelaniya Raja Maha Vihara, and also donated some of his lands to Buddhist institutions.

Even as a student J. R's accomplishments were varied. At Royal College he excelled in both studies and sports, winning his colours in cricket, rugger and football, and he played tennis and boxed. At the Law College he carried away the awards for legal research and oratory. Even his initiation into active politics came while he was a student.

J. R's legal training may have given logic to his reasoning, and political experience finesse to his arguments. But, it is the courage of his convictions that has made him a convincing speaker. His impact on the San Francisco Peace Conference of 1951 is one of the earliest examples of his capacity to persuade even the diehards and the dogmatic. His unprecedented victory at the 1977 hustings is one of the latest examples of his capacity to win friends and influence people.

He has been a man of indomitable courage. Victory has not intoxicated him, nor defeat daunted him. At elections to the country's legislature he has lost only once—a circumstance which he turned into an opportunity to recoup his

losses and consolidate his forces with the grit of a General who has been forced to retreat.

The success of this manoeuvre has now become manifest in the power and position he holds as the first elected executive President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. The modest Leader of the Opposition has become the humble Head of State.

2. S.P.C.—80464

THE TRADITION

JR'S PARENTS trace their roots to two powerful families—the Jayewardenes and the Tudugalas of the 18th and 17th Centuries respectively.

J. R's father, Eugene Wilfred Jayewardene, is a lineal descendant of Don Adrian Wijesinghe Jayewardene who held office under the Dutch as well as the British during the second half of the 18th Century.

Born in Welgama near Hanwella, Don Adrian was orphaned at the tender age of three. Some years later, while still a boy, he gravitated to Colombo which was then held by the Dutch. The boy's bearing impressed the Commandant at Colombo who promptly secured him a post in the Lascoreen Corps where Don Adrian finally rose to the rank of Aratchy.

Don Adrian's opportunity to prove himself came when a British Army contingent under Colonel James Stuart landed somewhere on the Western coast and was reported to be marching on Colombo. The Dutch found Don Adrian as the fittest man to be sent out to gather intelligence. Rising to the occasion he undertook the mission despite its inevitable hazards.

Things went well until he was finally taken captive and ordered to be executed. However, his honesty and integrity earned him a reprieve which in fact proved a gain to the Britishers themselves after the capitulation of Colombo. They sought his services in many fields, particularly in active military engagements. Before long his skill, bravery and general use-

fulness was recognized by Lord Hobart, Governor of Madras, who appointed him provisionally as **Guide Muhandiram** in 1798. In 1800 when Governor North sent General Mac Dowall on an embassy to the King of Kandy, Don Adrian was chosen as Guide to the embassy. On that occasion General Mac Dowall introduced him as **Tomby Mudaliyar,** the first to style him so. The new appellation endearingly transformed into "Tambi Mudaliyar" seems to have caught on, for some of the numerous encomiums paid to him during that period refer to him definitively as Tamby Mudaliyar while one even calls him "Tamby Mudaliyar alias the Guide Mudaliyar".

In 1803, Don Adrian was confirmed as Muhandiram of the Governor's Gate and Mudaliyar of the Guides, and in 1808 was appointed Mudaliyar of the Chilaw Korale.

After a life of devoted service to the Government, as a field Commander, Administrator and Adviser, he passed away on February 18, 1830—an eventful life made possible by the far-seeing decision that Colonel Stuart had the courage to take in 1796, when he granted Don Adrian a deserving reprieve.

Don Adrian, founder of the Jayewardene family, had only one issue—a son. The son, Don Abraham, succeeded his father to the Mudaliyarship of Chilaw with a range of influence extending from Colombo to Puttalam. Don Abraham had four sons—Cornelius, Philip, Alexander and James Alfred. Cornelius became the Mudaliyar of Anuradhapura, while Philip and James Alfred entered the legal profession. James Alfred also served as Deputy Coroner of Colombo.

James Alfred who married into the family of Muhandiram Wijekoon of Kalutara sired six sons and three daughters. The upbringing of the children fell largely on the hands of the mother as their father died while they were quite young. Gentle, yet firm, she brought them up—every one of them—to be honest, earnest and charitable.

Five of the sons of James Alfred took to law. They were Hector Alfred, Eugene Wilfred, Adrian St. Valentine, Quintus and Sextus, generally referred to as the "Quintuplets of the

Ceylon Bar". Men of determination, they rose in their spheres like blazing meteors and passed away. Only Theodore Godfred, the second son chose a different path. He chose as his tools the theodolite and the set square and the field life of an Army Colonel. However, one trait above all came common to all six brothers, and that was their active interest in the civic and political life of the country.

Hector, born on July 22, 1870, was the eldest son and was junior in his family only to his sisters Jane and Agnes. He died on October 16, 1913 at the early age of forty-three. After a particularly brilliant career at Royal College he entered the halls of Law at Hulftsdorp which turned him in 1893 into an advocate of exceptional skill, his courage and resourcefulness drawing him a practice that became the envy of many a senior at the Bar.

Law, as was the custom of the time, became a natural stepping-stone to politics, and Hector found himself elected to the New Bazaar Ward of the Colombo Municipal Council in 1897. He represented this ward till the hand of death suddenly took him away denying him the further opportunity of representing the Educated Ceylonese in the Legislative Council.

Two contributions by him to the legal literature of the country stand out as examples of his legal acumen: his valuable work on the Law of Mortgage and the New Law Reports compiled and edited by him during a period of several years.

James Alfred's second son was Theodore Godfred. Born on June 17, 1872, T. G. had a rather delicate childhood ridden with frequent ill-health. His schooling, first at Wesley and later at Royal, ended when he was seventeen and this prevented him from showing any talents for special academic achievement. Illness, however, did not dampen his spirits; in fact, it urged him on to a more robust and manly career quite different from that of his brothers.

In 1895, T. G. joined Government Service as Assistant Factory Engineer in the Public Works Department. By the time he ceased to be Assistant Factory Engineer and, in 1910,

retired from Government Service, he had not only proved his efficiency as a construction engineer but also had shown a plodding governmental institution that any job could be easily and expeditiously done if only the will to do it were there.

T. G. with the power of will that all the members of his family had been endowed with extended his field life to a training in the armed forces. Starting as a volunteer in the Ceylon Light Infantry he won the prize for revolver shooting year after year, a record which has yet not been broken in Ceylon. His career in the Army was topped by being conferred the rank of Colonel and Commander-in-Chief of the Ceylon Light Infantry, a position which, till then, had been reserved for Europeans.

After his release from the Army, T. G. took to politics, and in 1925 found himself chosen as a city father representing the New Bazaar Ward which his brothers Hector and E. W. had represented earlier. He was Member of the Municipal Council till 1931. From 1933 to 1936 he was Member for Balangoda in the new State Council, during which period he devoted his time mainly to the development of agriculture in the country.

James Alfred's third son was Eugene Wilfred, the father of our hero, and we shall refer to him in greater detail by and by.

The fourth of these famous sons was Adrian St. Valentine. Born on February 14, 1877. Valentine like his other brothers had his education at Royal College and like his elder brother was chosen to be the editor of the College Magazine.

Valentine, after leaving Royal, entered the Law College where he topped the list at the Final Examination winning a special prize for his thesis on Roman Dutch Law. He took his oaths in 1901 and his success as a lawyer proved to be phenomenal. He had his early practice at Galle from where he went to England and joined the Inner Temple and returned to the Appeal Court back in Ceylon.

Valentine took silk in 1921, and a year later was appointed District Judge of Colombo. The final chapter of his distinguished service to the country and also of his life closed on 20 May

1927, just one year after his elevation to the Bench of the Supreme Court.

His two notable contributions to our law literature are the Law of Partition and the Law of Registration of Deeds.

While a practising lawyer, Valentine was also active in politics. He was first Secretary and later President of the National Association and founder member of the Ceylon Reform League.

Valentine's two younger brothers were Quintus and Sextus. Junius Quintus, born on 28 November 1879, died on 21 April 1906 at the early age of twenty-six. Educated like his brothers at Royal and Law College, Quintus' career at the Bar was limited to three years when the cruel hand of death plucked him. He took up practice at the Kandy Bar where he won respect and confidence of not only his clients but also of his colleagues.

Justus Sextus, the youngest of these talented brothers, was born on January 28, 1881. Educated at Royal where he carried off most of the prizes and scholarships open to him, he proved himself to be on a par with two of his elder brothers by being elected co-editor of the College Magazine and President of the College Literary Club. In the fullness of time he too read Law and enrolled as an advocate in 1904.

He started practising at Galle where his brother Valentine had already made a name for himself, but soon afterwards settled in Colombo and built up an extensive practice.

Not to be outdone by his brothers, Sextus too had his fling at politics which, however, was not to be very successful. His attempt to beat Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan to the Ceylonese Seat in the Legislative Council ended in failure.

Sextus' work on "An Analysis of Holland's Elements of Jurisprudence" remains to us a record of his wide knowledge of the law. But the working of his legal mind is best reflected, according to a story recounted by a lawyer friend of his, in his reply to a question: What is your religion? A Christian by birth, he readily replied: "I am a Buddhist Christian, because I am a practising lawyer. In our courts in Ceylon law and

equity are administered together. Buddhism is law, Christianity is equity. Both must go together".

We shall now get back to Eugene Wilfred Jayewardene, the third son of this remarkable family. E. W., as he was popularly known, was born on June 11, 1874, and his distinguished scholastic career at Royal was equalled only by his brilliant record at the Bar.

At college, E. W. carried off almost all the coveted prizes and scholarships that Royal could offer—the Junior Exhibition, the Turnover Prize, the Director's Prize, the Old Boys' Prize and the Todd Prize. He was the first of the Jayewardene brothers to be selected Editor of the College Magazine, an honour not only in recognition of his literary bent but also of his popularity in school—a compliment which he reciprocated by remaining a loyal Old Boy and taking an active interest in the affairs of the College unto his last.

E. W. left Royal in 1893 and following the footsteps of his brother Hector joined the Law College and passed out as an advocate in 1897. Until his death on November 28, 1932, he graced that branch of the "gentlemanly professions" with elan, elegance and excellence. One of the ablest and most popular lawyers of his day his sincerity of purpose, his gentleness and humility of character won him not only a large clientele but also the confidence and respect of his colleagues at the Bar.

In 1906, E. W. was appointed Acting Commissioner of Requests and Additional District Judge of Colombo. In 1907, he took a holiday in England where he kept terms at the Inner Temple. It was in London that the inner man was really revealed, when, presiding over the annual Ceylon Dinner on December 20, 1907, E. W. gave a masterly exposition of some of the genuine grievances of his people back in Ceylon, grievances engendered by bureaucratic indifference and mismanagement. Here was mirrored the basic feelings of a man who was soon to try his hand as a social reformer, for the parallel field of politics appeared to him as a rather narrow arena where the public interest was often given way to personal bickering.

This is how he entered civic service as Member of the New Bazaar Ward in the Colombo Municipal Council. His tenure as city father which began in 1920 had to end in 1925 on his elevation to the Supreme Court Bench.

A man of many parts, E. W. took a keen interest in sports and other extra-curricular activities. He was a regular spectator at College sports meets and the annual Royal-Thomian cricket encounters. Joining the Ceylon Light Infantry as a volunteer he rose to the rank of Captain by the time he gave up his military service in 1915.

In 1924 he was appointed King's Counsel and, thus, became one of the earliest recipients of that honour. And, among the Silks of the day, he was one of the more distinguished whose services were sought after and valued by the Bench.

However, E. W's place in the social history of Sri Lanka has been decided not so much by his contributions as a judge and jurist as by his creation of a notable family whose members in their own turn created history.

E. W's marriage to Agnes Helen Wijewardene in 1905 not only laid the foundation to that noble family but also gave it the cultural harmony which is a pre-condition for noble achievements. It was a marriage of Christian discipline and Buddhist morality. Agnes Helen Wijewardene came from a family of practising Buddhists who traced their ancestry to the Tudugalas of the 17th Century. Mr. J. H. O. Paulusz, a former Government Archivist, in a monograph written by him has traced the family connection back to Vidiya Bandara and King Parakramabahu VI.

Agnes' ancestor was Tudugala Madduma Rala who held high office in the Uva Disawani around 1656. His progeny, Tudugala Appuhamy, was the Disawa of Sabaragamuwa. Down the line they were all men of power and responsibility.

Agnes' father was Muhandiram Don Philip Tudugala (1844—1898) who took the additional name Wijewardene as was the custom when Imperial Honours were bestowed. Don Philip married a daughter of Dep Weerasinghe who was a successful businessman. They had nine children, two of

E. W. Jayewardene, K.C.

whom were daughters. The Muhandiram died while Agnes was yet a child and the family was looked after by the eldest son Don Alexander Wijewardene.

"Like father, like son" goes the saying. So was it with the Wijewardene boys who proved to be shrewd men of business. It was one of them, Don Charles, who bought the Dinamina Group of newspapers and resold it to his more enterprising brother D. R. Wijewardene who was a patriot, besides. He built up the prestigious "Lake House" group of newspapers and used it not only for the expression of, but even the creation of, public opinion throughout its long and useful existence. D. R's role in the Independence Movement is now recorded history.

The E. W. Jayewardene–Agnes Wijewardene union turned out to be a union of minds as well, each enjoying the cultural and intellectual values of the other, distilled through generations of gentle breeding. These values they jointly instilled into the minds of their own children—seven sons and four daughters—the eldest of whom was Junius Richard Jayewardene, the subject of this book.

E. W's second son C. E. (Corbert) Jayewardene, like his elder brother, studied law and after a fairly long practice became District Judge of Colombo, and after retirement reverted to the Bar. He has now received ordination as a Buddhist monk, Sedawatte Dhammaruci.

The third and fourth in this family were girls—Helene and Dulcie. The fifth, A. W. Jayewardene, practised at the Bar in England.

The sixth, H. W. Jayewardene—the youngest Queen's Counsel probably in the whole of the Commonwealth—has distinguished himself as the doyen of the Appeal Court Bar. President of the Bar Council for sometime, H. W. was a member of the United Nations Commission set up to inquire into the alleged "crimes of the Shah of Iran".

The seventh member of this accomplished family is R. P. Jayewardene a Fellow of the American College of Cardiology. He is a former President of the Ceylon Medical Association.

M. B., the eighth member of this family, is a professional planter, and E. W., the ninth, holds an important position in Air Lanka, the national airline.

THE INDIGNANT NATIONALIST

JUNIUS RICHARD, the eldest son of E. W. Jayewardene was born on September 17, 1906 at Park House in Park Street where all but one of E. W's eleven children were born. The boy was apparently named Junius after the father's younger brother who had been bestman at the wedding, and Richard after D. R. Wijewardene, a younger brother of the mother, who was a law student and was then staying with the child's parents at Park House.

J. R's early years were spent mostly under the care and tutelage of the mother as his father's growing practice at the Bar and interest in the Reforms Movement made great demands on his time. His schooling began in 1911 at Bishop's College and later at Royal College, Colombo, a place where all the Jayewardenes had their education.

At College, his achievements were not confined to the academic sphere alone. He shone at studies and at sports, and during his last years at Royal carried away an armful of prizes including those for General Merit, Reading and the Form prizes and the prize for the Best Student of the year. In addition, **he was also a College Prefect.**

J R's achievements in the field of college sports are varied. He played cricket for the college team, captained the rugger team, wielded a powerful racquet at the tennis courts and also boxed losing only to Danton Obeyesekere at the finals of the House Championship. Danton, later, became Ceylon Champion and captained Cambridge University at Boxing.

In 1925, J. R. played for the winning team at the annual Royal-Thomian match, when Royal beat its sister college by an innings. That is a matter of record. That J. R. was bowled for a duck is also on record along with his great catch at the boundary which helped Royal eventually win by an innings.

Apart from sports, J. R. took a keen interest in social and literary activities during his college career. He was the organizer of the Royal College Social Service Union, and along with T. S. Fernando, who later became President of the High Court of Appeal and World President of the International Commission of Jurists, a joint editor of the College Magazine.

Besides T. S. Fernando, the others who were among J. R's contemporaries at College and later shone in life were Messrs. S. C. Fernando and R. H. Wickremasinghe, civil servants, Messrs. R. G. Senanayake, Shirley Corea, Stanley de Zoysa and T. B. Panabokke and Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, parliamentarians, and Justin Kotelawala, Senator. Politically some of them may have differed from J. R. but their friendship and personal regard towards each other never waned.

Having passed his London Matriculation Examination in 1925 J. R. left Royal and joined the Ceylon University College where he read English, Latin, Logic and Economics. His selection of these subjects was an obvious pointer to his ambition to do law. However, he remained at the University College for only a short time leaving, nevertheless, a lasting impression on the University's Union Society. At that time the Society was run according to the dictates of the University administration and had no established rules or regulations for the conduct of its affairs. It was left to J. R., with the advice of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike who had just returned from Oxford, to draw up a constitution for the Union. One of J. R's colleagues at the University College and one of J. R's closest friends, though political antagonist, was Dr. N. M. Perera, the late leader of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party.

It is known that during this period of time the world was going through an unprecedented economic depression. Even so, it is also known that parents of social eminence, regardless

of the fluctuation of their fortunes, were during this same period of time fondly seeking an education for their children in the hallowed halls of Oxford and Cambridge. It is to the lasting credit of E. W. Jayewardene that he preferred to disagree and sent his children to schools in Colombo and proved that it was the quality of the student that really mattered. All seven of his sons, one could assuredly say today, did as well as, if not better than, the best who read their classics or their law abroad.

It was in 1928 that J. R. joined the Law College which, in a way of speaking, was a matter of course for the Jayewardenes. His father and grand-father had been through its portals, and so had his uncles. At home the subject discussed more often was law, and the books and brochures he was surrounded with were almost invariably on law.

He closed his first year at Law College by winning in 1929 the Hector Jayewardene Gold Medal for Oratory and the Walter Perera Award for Legal Research, a record yet unbroken. For although many, including his brothers H. W. and C. E. did win these awards in later years, none has yet been able to carry them away in one and the same year. He proved to be equally proficient on the playing fields where he brought credit to his team and his College.

During the latter half of 1928 J. R. was elected Prime Minister of the Law College Parliament. What that was to portend may not have occurred to anyone then. However, it certainly must have given him that gentle push he needed to wade down the shallows of student debates into the mainstream of national politics.

A gentle push was quite sufficient. For, this was a time when the winds of nationalism were at gale level whipping up the currents of anti-imperialist agitation, and none but the politically frigid would have failed to sense the growing public urge for independence from British colonial rule. Giving life and meaning to the Independence Movement were the finest of men of the day, and among them were J. R's father and his uncle D. R. Wijewardene and a host

of patriots including F. R. Senanayake, D. B. Jayatilleke, Sir James Peiris, D. S. Senanayake, Sir Francis de Zoysa, T. B. Jaya and E. W. Perera.

Across the Palk Strait, in neighbouring India, the "Quit India" Movement was gathering momentum, and men of the stature of Mahatma Gandhi, Motilal Nehru, Moulana Azad Khan, Subhas Chandra Bose, Tilak Gokhale and Rajendra Prasad were leading the anti-British campaign.

It was this national feeling that J. R. first gave expression to by defying his Law College authorities on one memorable occasion. The Law students decided to hang a portrait of Mahatma Gandhi in the Law College hall. The eager students acting on their own commissioned David Paynter, the well-known Ceylonese artist, to paint the portrait. The artist had to be paid, and a hat-collection was decided on. When a few students refused to contribute, the organizers looked up to J. R. for a solution, and J. R. in his own inimitable way solved the problem by paying the artist out of the allowance he received as Private Secretary to his father. Then came the next obstacle in the form of the Principal who was aghast at the very thought of this project, for to him it amounted to near treason. It was most unthinkable that the loyal subjects of the British Sovereign should attempt to honour a man who had publicly refused to co-operate with the Government and had accordingly been held a rebel.

Undaunted, J. R. undertook to hang the portrait himself—with or without permission—and he certainly would have kept to his word had the authorities not relented finally. That was J. R's first taste of real victory. The occasion called for celebration. And, on December 29, 1930, at a well-attended function, Gandhi's portrait was unveiled by Sir Francis de Zoysa, K. C. and Mr. C. E. Corea. The Vote of Thanks was moved by J. R.

This incident was also J. R's first direct conflict with the establishment and more such conflicts were to come while he was yet a law student.

The political awakening in the country had by this time given rise to an assertion of various rights, the most assertive of which was the right of workers to organize themselves. Trade union activities had yet not received legal recognition, but its incipience was evident in several areas like the harbour, the Government Factory and the Municipal workshops. The men behind these organizations were young and educated and fired by a new political ethos that had given a new value to the dignity of labour and a right to demand its recognition.

Among the more notable of these early trade union leaders was A. E. Goonesinghe. In March, 1930, Goonesinghe brought out the tramcar workers on strike. Wanting public sympathy, the strike dragged on for months with no impact on the employer and no satisfactory solution in sight. Economic difficulties forced some of the strikers to get back to work one by one, and the strike was almost doomed to be a failure.

It was then that J. R. stepped in. The first thing he did was to explain to the public, at tramcar halts the justness of the workers' cause and exhort them to boycott the tramcars and ride by bus. He even used his father's car to transport passengers free of charge. His example drew active support from his Law College friends who came in increasing numbers to express their solidarity with the strikers. The result was obvious; the strike, turning out to be a total success, added a new feather in J. R's cap.

J. R. also enjoys the honour of organizing a protest meeting against the Governor of the day. In early 1931, the Governor suspended Mr. R. L. Pereira, the Member for Colombo South, from taking part in the deliberations of the Legislature. This was nothing but a high-handed act on the part of the Governor. The Law students rallied round J. R. and decided to call for a public protest. The public meeting that followed, convened by C. E. Jayewardene, T. F. Jayewardene, J. R. Jayewardene and Stanley de Zoysa, was presided over by T. B. Jayah and addressed by Messrs. C. W. W. Kannangara, G. G. Ponnambalam, Aelian Pereira and A. W. H. Abeysundera.

Incidentally, J. R. the Law student and budding politician who frowned on the foibles of the society he belonged to, had a laugh at it as well. Few are aware of his youthful histrionic talents. Let it, therefore, be recorded that his roles in **The Wandering Jew** and the **Tyrant,** two social satires of the day, gave promise of an equally successful career which, however, was not pursued.

J. R's father, the eminent judge and jurist, and public man later, was a stern disciplinarian. He expected from his sons the fullest accord with the accepted rules of public conduct. He conceded them the right to disagree and protest provided it was done in a dignified way. Further, studies had to come first. About J. R's conduct as a law student, both inside and outside the lecture halls, E. W. may have had reason to feel concerned. For here was his son challenging authority. Nevertheless, his paternal concern must have changed to an inner feeling of satisfaction and even pride when the son's exploits turned out to be born of conviction.

On 18 March 1932 J. R. took his oaths as an Advocate before Justices Garvin and Akbar. His active progress at the Bar, though short-lived, gave promise of a bright future. He even appeared before his father on several occasions, the first being a murder case in which he pleaded for the accused and won. That was in April 1932.

However, E. W. did not live long enough to see the progress of his most promising son. With his death, just six months later, the responsibility of bringing up the family fell on J. R's shoulders. The family, by this time, had shifted to a new house called *Vaijayantha* (now the Chinese Embassy) on Turret Road.

Before long, the up-and-coming young lawyer found a bride. She was Elina Rupasinghe who lived next door to J. R's close friend and school-mate, Percy Peiris. As J. R's brother, H. W., reminisces "the visits to Percy became increasingly frequent and one day the engagement was announced". The wedding took place at *Braemar,* Ward Place, on 28 February 1935 and the Bar was fully represented. Francis de Zoysa, the leader of the Bar and old friend of J. R's father,

made a speech and presented a silver tea service as a gift from the Bar. D. R. Wijewardene and Mudaliyar N. A. de S. Wijesinghe were the attesting witnesses.

Elina, only child of Gilbert Leonard Rupasinghe, a wealthy landed proprietor, was a girl of gentle disposition. Read widely and well-versed in Sinhala and Sinhala literature, she takes time off even now to reading. Art, culture and gardening are her hobbies.

Her father has been a devoted Buddhist and a great benefactor of several Buddhist organisations. His endowments for scholarships for deserving students at the Vidyodaya Pirivena, Ananda College and Royal College are but a few examples.

Elina's mother Nancy Margaret Suriya-Bandara was the daughter of John Edward de Silva Suriya-Bandara, C.C.S., who retired as Police Magistrate, Kalutara.

Elina's greatest virtue, the virtue that becomes the perfect lady, is the care and devotion she extends to her husband and it is the virtue that begets a gracious heart and a radiant charm that even now fills the President's home.

Elina has not kept herself away from the social and political world of her husband. Head of various social service organisations, she has been closely connected with the Biyagama Children's Home. She is also the President of several U.N.P. Women's organisations.

Their son Ravindra, a product of Royal, has shown his colours, in the family tradition, at both studies and sport. Having won his awards for marksmanship at the College Rifle Association competitions, he led the Ceylon team to the Tokyo Olympics of 1966, and to several Commonwealth meets and the Asian Meet in Bangkok.

Today, he is a qualified pilot and a captain in the Ceylon Light Infantry to which his uncle and grand-father belonged. Ravindra has finally chosen to take to planting as a career. He has three sons, Pradeep, Rukshan and Amrik.

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IN THE EARLY nineteen thirties, aspiring young men with a good public school education and the correct social connections found the legal profession an 'open sesame' to easy fame and fortune. With the added qualification of a gift of the gab their rise in the profession was assured to be meteoric. An honorary membership in an exclusive club and a lovely bride with a handsome dowry which included a house in Colombo's Cinnamon Gardens and more came with the kudos of professional achievement.

It was natural, therefore, that E. W. Jayawardene wished his eldest son to make a name for himself at the Supreme Court bar. With E. W.'s death and the burden of his large family shifting onto J. R.'s shoulders, it became all the more essential that the young lawyer establish himself soon. This J. R. did in a short space of seven years during which time he built up a steady practice that no longer required him to wait for briefs. His experience as Junior to H. V. Perera and R. L. Pereira—the lions of the bar—had brought dividends. His performance in some of the famous cases of that time, the Bracegirdle Case and the White House Murder Case for example, had proved his capabilities.

This also meant that J. R. now had the time and the freedom to enter the more interesting and more satisfying arena of national politics. In fact, his heart had all along been there. His involvement with law had only been a passing infatuation. Therefore, when destiny called he was more than willing to oblige.

J. R. had lived with politics and had, therefore, known it inside out. His first impressions were probably set when, at the tender age of five, he witnessed the colourful welcome accorded to Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan on his election to the seat of the Educated Ceylonese in the Legislative Council of 1911. Incidentally, it was J. R.'s uncle Hector Jayewardene who was mainly instrumental in getting nomination for Ramanathan.

A forceful speaker, Hector was a natural draw at public meetings at that time. He was Member for New Bazaar ward

in the Colombo Municipal Council, a ward previously represented from the very inception of the Council by his father James Alfred. After Hector his brother E. W. had taken over the wardship for sometime to be picked up later by another brother, Theodore Godfred, who remained a city father till July 1940.

Apart from their interest in local government, J. R.'s father and uncles had also been in the thick of popular agitation for constitutional reforms. This made E. W.'s house a frequent venue for discussions on topical subjects, and men of the stature of F. R. Senanayake, D. S. Senanayake, Sir D. B. Jayatilaka, Sir James Peiris and Francis de Zoysa were among the regular visitors. Apart from them there were also his uncles D. R. Wijewardene and A. St. V. Jayewardene who were closely connected with the political movements of the day.

With the passage of time germs of communal dissension had crept into the Ceylonese body politic. Though no general rash erupted—the riots of 1915 too not being directly traceable to communal sources—suspicion of each other's intentions began to take root jeopardizing the possibilities of a united struggle. Even so, the riots became a blessing in disguise, for the crimes committed by the British Government and the brutality with which they were committed became an eye-opener to the more intelligent leaders. The Senanayake brothers, F. R., D. S. and D. C., along with several others including W. A. de Silva and Batuwantudawe had been taken into custody. Here was a situation that had to be tackled with organised concerted action. E. W. Jayewardene moved in the matter and his efforts climaxed in the now historic Conference of 13 and 14 December 1918 which, the very next year, gave birth to the Ceylon National Congress bringing together the scattered forces of the then defunct Ceylon Political Association.

The formation of the Congress was moved by E. W. Jayewardene and seconded by E. T. de Silva, followed by a lengthy address in its support by Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam.

This was the environment in which J. R. grew up. He looked on, an eager listener, his formative mind taking in everything that was said and done.

The Ceylon National Congress became the rallying point for the freedom fighters and its membership included leaders of all racial groups in the country. This wider representation had its obvious impact on the British rulers who finally conceded a more representative Legislative Council in 1924 which, to some extent, succeeded in arresting the free rein of the Governor and the Executive.

At the elections to the new Council E. W. Jayewardene contested the Colombo North seat. That he lost to Victor Corea is not important; that it gave his son J. R. his first stint at electioneering is all that matters. Unfortunately, it did not draw J. R. fully into the political melee, for the very next year E. W. Jayewardene had to give up active politics on being appointed a Supreme Court Judge and J. R. had to serve him as his Private Secretary.

This does not mean that J. R. was deaf or blind to the gale of nationalism that was gathering volume right around him. Its effect on J. R. was not just unavoidable but unmistakable. For apart from the patriots of his own soil there were also the giants of the Indian scene. C. R. Das, Subhas Chandra Bose, Shaukat Ali, Tilak Gokhale, Surendranath Bannerjea, Vallabhai Patel, Motilal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad and Mahatma Gandhi were now setting memorable examples of self-sacrifice.

The only discordant note that jarred on J. R.'s sensibilities was the passive manner in which the local leaders were now reacting to the wishes of White Hall. This was in direct contrast to the active non-co-operation movements pursued by the Indian patriots. Now a law student with an independent mind, J. R. snatched at every opportunity that came his way to express his indignation. His role in the tramcar workers' strike which A. E. Goonesinghe launched in March 1930 was his first expression of conscientious objection to the arrogance and obstinacy of the white employers. That he personally

assisted the workers to picket and even used his father's car to transport commuters and win public sympathy for the strikers is a matter of record worthy of special note in that that it helped veer a failing enterprise towards a resounding success.

J. R.'s next two conflicts with the establishment came in quick succession. His confrontation with the Law College authorities over the matter of Gandhi's portrait was related in fuller detail earlier. The episode closed with a public celebration on 29 December 1930.

Then, in early 1931, came the R. L. Pereira incident, where the Governor's hasty action in suspending the irrepressible lawyer and Member for Colombo South from the deliberations of the legislature led J. R. and his colleagues to make a public protest.

Having left Law College and having acquired a name in the profession and sufficient economic stability J. R. kept his longed for tryst with politics. The forthright stance of the Indian leaders had been a profound influence on him and, along with his colleagues from the Law College, he had been advocating a similar approach to the political question. He was totally disillusioned of the stand taken by the local leaders who were apparently satisfied with meagre constitutional reforms. What was required, he argued, was complete political independence.

The Ceylon National Congress had itself become a platform for petty personal bickering. To many of its leaders, politics being a mere past-time, some measure of legislative control was sufficient recognition of their agitations. Unable to work with them or see eye to eye or even seek a compromise several of the more honest leaders had resigned in disgust. It even appeared as if the role of the Congress had come to an end and the curtain had fallen on its political drama with the enactment of the Donoughmore Constitution of 1931. Whatever it may be, the fact remained clear that the ranks of the freedom fighters were in utter disarray and the original goals had been completely lost sight of.

To J. R. here was a situation that had to be taken in hand. And, in December 1938, when he joined the Congress he had only one aim before him—to give life and vigour to the ailing, failing Congress. With him came his friends J. E. Amaratunga, F. C. de Saram, C. P. J. Abhayawardena and H. A. Kottegoda. Dudley Senanayake, an old friend, was already there in the State Council.

* * *

IN JOINING the Ceylon National Congress J. R. had chosen one of two alternatives. There was at that time a defiantly Marxist 'Youth League' organised by and composed of a select group of young radicals who had had their education abroad and were influenced by the writings of Marx and Engels. Avowedly anti-imperialist in aim the Youth League appealed to the new intelligentsia who were seeking a medium to disseminate their theories of socialism. N. M. Perera and Colvin R. de Silva, two of J. R's close friends, were already members of the League.

Though J. R. was taken up by the enthusiasm of the Youth Leaguers his aversion to their violent revolutionary ideology kept him away from it. The efforts made by his two friends to win him over made little impression on him, for J. R. was of a different mould and a different temperament. He wanted his, goal achieved through force of reason, and his Buddhist upbringing demanded a peaceful resolution of the problem. So, N. M. and Colvin went their own way and J. R. his, while they remained the closest of friends though politically poles apart.

To J. R. Buddhism was not just another 'ism' to be freely mouthed for political gain. He lived it. He spent a good part of his time and money for the Buddhist cause and even served the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress as Assistant Secretary since 1936. He was also the Secretary of its Tripitaka Publication Committee. The work he did those days along with men like Sir D. B. Jayatilaka, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, D. S.

Senanayake, P. de S. Kularatne and Gunapala Malalasekera in the field of Buddhist education was yet fresh in his memory. At that time, for want of a permanent headquarters, they had to meet at Ananda College for their discussions.

So, bloody revolution was the alternative that J. R. rejected. The Congress, on the other hand, was cast in a more effective and sober role. Besides, it was also a more cohesive group with a broader outlook. In that respect it also differed from the various sectarian groups that had sprung up, like the Labour Party of A. E. Goonasinghe and the Sinhala Maha Sabha of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike. That the Congress' leaders were interested only in immediate superficial gains, such as membership in the Legislature and also, possibly, ministerships was a different matter. In pursuit of these ambitions they may have even stooped so low as to resort to the caste, racial and religious cry. Even so, these were aberrations that one could correct, and J. R. decided to give a try, because the Congress, by general resolution, stood for full political independence.

As a member of the Congress the first thing he decided to do was to bring about some measure of unity among its leaders and to define the movement's priorities. The first was essential to show the Colonial Office that the Ceylonese had a united front or at least a semblance of common accord. The second was necessary to build a principled political party with a single steadfast goal—the goal being total and unconditional self-government.

To bring about the essential unity the vacillating leadership had to be replaced with more purposeful and dynamic individuals. This task, however personally unpleasant, inevitably devolved on J. R. and his colleagues when, on assuming membership, he found himself promptly elected to the Executive Committee of the Congress. And, accordingly, at the annual conference held in December 1938 at Panadura he set the ball rolling.

That J. R. meant business became more than clear at the very first meeting of the Executive Committee on 24 January

1939. On that day a crucial motion was placed before the Committee—a motion that proved beyond doubt the divergent attitudes of the new members and the old. The motion, moved by E. A. P. Wijeratne and seconded by F. C. de Saram, read:

> "That the Executive Committee of the Ceylon National Congress is of opinion that the Hon. Sir Baron Jayatilaka should resign from the office of Home Minister if Mr Banks resumes duties as Inspector General of Police. In the event of Sir Baron's resignation from his office, this Congress is of further opinion that the other Congress members on the Board of Ministers should not resign."

The names of those who were present at that meeting which was unusually well attended and was held at Sir Baron's residence at *Treleaven,* Union Place, are worthy of historical record. With J. N. Jinendradasa, Vice President, in the Chair there were the Hon. D. S. Senanayake, Hon. W. A. de Silva, Hon. C. W. W. Kannangara and Messrs H. W. Amarasuriya, Susanta de Fonseka, George E. de Silva, R. S. S. Gunawardana, E. A. P. Wijeratne, W. R. Wijemanne, H. M. U. Banda, D. A. Jayasinghe, N. Wickremaratna, J. R. Jayewardene, W. F. B. Perera, C. P. G. Abeyawardena, P. P. Siriwardena, N. de Alwis, A. M. Clement Dias, Allan Senanayake, Thomas Amarasuriya, E. A. V. de Silva, F. C. de Saram, H. Sri Nissanka, A. W. A. Abeyasundera, Stanley de Zoysa, D. M. D. Wilson, U. L. Perera, R. T. Kuruwita Gunasekera, S. P. Wijewickrema, L. M. Gooneratne, A. Tantrigoda, P. D. S. Jayasekera, F. P. Senaratna, R. G. Senanayake, J. E. Amaratunga and Victor C. Perera. The President, Sir Baron, was not present.

Those who spoke against the motion were D. S. Senanayake, W. A. de Silva, H. W. Amarasuriya, A. Tantrigoda, D. A. Jayasinghe and U. L. Perera. The voting was 12 to 14 and the motion was defeated. 20 members abstained from voting.

J. R. in the course of his speech examining the whole position said that it was in the public interest that Sir Baron and Mr Banks should not work together while the reasons which made it impossible for Sir Baron to work with Mr Banks still existed.

'In a letter to the Governor Mr Banks had stated that the friendly relations between the Minister and himself were ruptured and that he was forced to abandon the policy of trust which formed the basis of their official dealings. These were strong words.

'In expressing their opinion that Sir Baron should resign they were not passing judgment on Sir Baron. They were supporting the correct view expressed by the Minister of Home Affairs that he had decided to resign.

'Under the Constitution there might be no necessity for Sir Baron to resign. Legally there was no necessity. There was, however, a difference between conventions of the Constitution and the law of the Constitution. The conventions of parliamentary procedure demanded that Sir Baron should resign. There were no solid or convincing reasons for his not resigning, except a desire to remain in office.

'Clinging to office was an acquired taste, and by habit persons might learn to relish it. However painful the process of quitting office might be, in the interests of future political traditions in this country, it should be done even now.'

At this same meeting J. R. was appointed to the Committee set up to draft a programme of work for the Congress and outline the policy it should follow.

It is a pity that the motion was lost, the 'old gang'—as S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike was to call them later that year—preferring the path of least resistance. J. R., as he was to prove in several similar situations long later, was not shaken by the outcome of the voting. For he had a goal to reach and that goal required the patience and perseverance of the ruggerite he was. He took it in his normal stride, and on 27.11.1939 when he, along with Dudley Senanayake, was elected Joint Secretary of the Congress for the ensuing year he wrote to all members of the Executive Committee summoning them for a meeting on 19.2.40 —

> .... Greater than love of race, we feel, is the love of humanity. The economic distress which has overcome the people of our beloved Sri Lanka, whether these people be Sinhalese,

Tamils or Mohamedans, call urgently to us, to utilise our time, our energy and wealth, to find a remedy. We earnestly call upon you to help us, to close together our ranks, to weed out those who are not with us and to make this once great organisation again sensitive to the smallest whisper of the humblest and the lowliest.'

To J. R. and to his youthful colleagues the political aim of the Congress remained unmistakably the winning of independence. He had realised that begging for independence was not going to move the hearts of the rulers at White Hall. Other measures were necessary. Further, the older leaders had to be brought in line with his thinking. This, however, was no easy task considering the stubborn attitude then adopted by the seniors and clearly expressed by George E. de Silva, Chairman of the Reception Committee, during the 1939 Congress meeting at Kandy. George E. de Silva made it plain that independence should be sought through formal representations to White Hall.

On that very occasion J. R. disagreed. Though yet a new member he expressed pointedly and fearlessly his indignation at the beggarly attitude advocated by the Chairman and even felt ashamed to learn that that attitude yet prevailed in some quarters in the Congress. The future will measure us, he said, not by what we say but by what we do to achieve our goal. It would, therefore, be better to bury the Ceylon National Congress rather than enliven it under these principles. The day India and Ceylon achieve independence will see the sun set on the British Empire. For, 'independence, he asserted, is our heritage. We should win it through our own endeavours'.

The year 1940 brought J. R. that valuable opportunity of meeting the leaders of the Indian Independence Movement. An occasion that J. R. has held close in cherished memory, it gave added inspiration and meaning to his own role in Sri Lanka.

On 15 March 1940 J. R. left for India, along with P. de S. Jayasekera and J. E. Amaratunga, to attend the Annual Sessions of the Indian National Congress at Ramghar. They

were the delegates of the Ceylon National Congress and he was their spokesman. This visit was to provide J. R. with a direct and personal link with the Indian leaders about whom he had only heard till then.

He made use of this visit to meet and discuss with Mahatma Gandhi, Subhas Chandra Bose, Rabindranath Tagore, Jawaharlal Nehru and other Indian leaders the various problems that the two countries were faced with. He also took this opportunity to obtain a first-hand knowledge of the Indian plans and programs for the achievement of swaraj.

On arrival at Calcutta he told the Indian press that 'the young men of Lanka are determined to make Congress an organisation of the masses and for the masses'.

The Congress sessions at Ramghar lasted one week, and more than a lakh of people attended the proceedings which included a Khadi Exhibition—an exhibition not only of hand-woven and hand-made goods but also of a wide variety of the provincial agricultural and industrial products.

For the Congress sessions the simple village of Ramghar had bloomed almost overnight into a self-contained township replete with all civic amenities and communication media. Even the roads had been widened. At the entrance to the Congress town a model of one of Asoka's pillars, over a hundred feet high, had been erected as a tribute to India's greatest monarch and disciple of India's noblest son Gautama the Buddha. The Indian people had always held this noble Teacher in great veneration, Ramghar was in the province of Bihar where, as Rajendra Prasad, the retiring President of the Indian National Congress, told the delegates from Ceylon, 'every particle of dust is sanctified by the touch of the feet of Gautama the Buddha'.

The Sessions left a deep and abiding impression on J. R. Here was a living organisation which drew its nourishment from the common people who in turn drew their inspiration from its sincere and selfless leaders. These were leaders who lived with the masses and identified themselves with the

needs and aspirations of the poor and the down-trodden and exemplified the qualities of self-abnegation and simplicity.

As J. R. himself was to write later, 'we in Ceylon can learn many things. Firstly, the idealism and complete absence of racial or personal feeling, which characterized the political discussions at Ramghar, were a contrast to the petty methods prevalent among us. No man or woman we met, leader or follower, talked except in terms of ideals, of social and economic reconstruction, of a new world order, based not on exploitation but according to a planned economy. In the field of politics, the masses of India are being trained to think, not in terms of race or religion but in terms of social equality, equal opportunity for all, and anti-imperialism. Can we in Ceylon close our eyes to these great movements so close to our shores. Is it not the duty of our leaders, our men of letters, our newspapers and all those who love this country, to quicken the awakening consciousness of our people, and help them too to feel the impulse of the idealism which animates India today?'

The J. R. who returned from India was now a more mature man brimming with new ideas for the political emancipation of the country, and determined to put these ideas into practice. His first aim was to broadbase the Congress by branching it out into the country. As it was, the organisation was more or less limited to the city and its membership was largely composed of the elite and those who were directly involved in politics. It was, therefore, necessary to bring its message to the masses and have them drawn in to active participation.

The drive to expand the branch organisations was begun in April 1940, and by the end of that year 25 branches were set up in various areas including Anuradhapura, Kelaniya, Hambantota, Chilaw, Minuwangoda and Badulla. By the end of 1941 there were 40 branches in existence and by 1944 the number increased to 60. Frequent conferences were held with branch representatives and their views sought on all matters of importance.

Following the Indian example the younger members of the Ceylon National Congress decided to hold its annual sessions thereafter in rural areas. Exhibitions of local handicrafts, national food preparations and hand-woven cloth were also decided upon. This was meant to give a boost to local cottage industries and help provide a popular market for indigenous produce and also create a keener sense of nationalism among the various sections of the people. A competition was also arranged, with handsome prizes for the best design for a national dress.

Accordingly, the next session of the Congress was held at Mirigama in December 1940, followed by the sessions of 1941, 1942 and 1943 at 'Swarajya Pura' in Dummaladeniya, 'Gaminimatha Pura' in Kelaniya and 'Rohanamatha Pura' in Ambalangoda respectively. Every one of these sessions included an exhibition of local arts and crafts and indigenous agricultural produce. The thousands of men and women, young and old, who thronged to these sessions finally returned, to their villages with a greater awareness of the Congress, endeavours and with a greater sense of patriotism.

In pursuance of the Congress' aim of promoting national cottage industries, it had set up under its own aegis a host of rural training centres for hand-loom textile weaving, mat weaving, coir work etc. This also helped the Congress leaders to come in touch with the rural people and learn of their interests and wants. Some of these centres were in fact opened by J. R. himself. The Rural Development Centre at Udupila—one of the pioneer rural industrial projects—was managed for two whole years at his own expense until taken over by the Government.

Social reform was another of the Congress' main aims. In 1940 the Ceylon National Congress decided to campaign for the austere observance of weddings, funerals and other social events, the adoption of a simple dress, the abstinence from liquor and gambling and the patronizing of local industry. Putting practice before precept J. R. himself took to the national dress and, unlike many other leaders, he wore it

on almost all occasions in preference to the then fashionable coat and tails.

J. R. who made 'national independence' the clarion call of the Congress came to be known among the people as 'Ceylon Nehru'. His interest in creating a political consciousness among the people went even further embracing the rights and needs of the working class too. Ere long he organised and led the trade unions of the workers of the Ratmalana Railway Workshop and the Kolonnawa Government Factory. He also took over the presidentship of the United Colombo Municipal Workers' Union and the United Kelaniya Workers' Union.

To bring home to the masses the value of total political freedom, J. R. used his pen too with consummate skill. His contributions to the local press are worth compilation as a seperate volume. A translation of one of his articles to the *Sinhala Bauddhaya* during the height of the second World War would suffice to reveal the man and his mind. He wrote:

'This is a time of war. Nevertheless, our eyes have been opened to some matters, mainly the fact—

1. that we are slaves;
2. that the obvious aim of the agents of British imperialism in Ceylon is to protect and promote the vested interests of the British Empire; and
3. that our Ministers and Members of the State Council are powerless in implementing their resolutions for the welfare of the people.

These are facts which, primarily, make us look twice at the foreign power that governs us.

It is this alien rule that has been politically fatal to us year in and year out. As in the past, this alien rule will be fatal to us in the future too. What does independence mean? It means the end of foreign rule in Ceylon; that Ceylon is free of being administered by the British Parliament through its Colonial Secretary and the Governor. The British Parliament rests on its exploitation of India and the other

colonies to maintain the standard of life way back in Britain. Therefore, pursuation will not succeed in getting England's White Hall to give up imperialism. And, therefore, we must discard for ever this practice of begging for political power.'

Again, writing to the *Sinhala Bauddhaya,* he said,

'In politics, raising the communal cry would be a step backward. We should be ready now to lead our people on the correct path. Communalism in politics would only bring about a step back. The larger section of the peasants and workers of both Sinhala and Tamil communities remains oppressed and hungry. The have-nots exceed the haves in number. National solidarity comes when the haves and the have-nots, the farmer and the landowner, the worker and the Company boss work hand in hand. Hence, either the staus quo should be allowed to remain or totally done away with, for the benefit of one class. If the existing social system were to continue, the lot of the common masses will never improve; if it were abolished, it would entail the creation of a better social order, and let that be our goal'.

From 1944 onwards the Congress decided to hold March 2nd as National Independence Day, for it was on the 2nd of March 1815 that the Kandyan Convention ceding the sovereignty of the yet independent territories of the Island to the British Crown was signed. Accordingly, on 2 March 1944 the Ceylon National Congress held public meetings all over the country. Addressing one of these meetings at Kandy, J. R. said, 'The Ceylon National Congress intends to win the maximum independence it can win. The independence that Ceylon seeks will have to be equal to what Britain herself enjoys and not something which is in any way subordinate to it. In view of Ceylon's ancient and cultured past and in view of its 2300 years of sovereignty, what Ceylon needs is complete independence'.

The bold trend adopted by J. R. and his group also brought about a set-back to the progress of the Congress when some of its senior members resigned in protest. Among them was

D. S. Senanayake who stuck to the view that the Congress should be satisfied with Dominion Status as an interim arrangement.

By this time the Congress had grown into a considerable political force, and in 1940 had eight of its members in the Colombo Municipal Council.

The Municipal elections were fixed for December 1940. J. R. who had joined the Congress in December 1938 and had been elected its Joint Secretary in December 1939 was now the Congress' candidate for the New Bazaar (East) Ward. This was a Ward which from the very inception of the Council in 1865 had been represented from time to time by members of J. R.'s family—his grand-father first and his father and uncles thereafter.

Of the nine candidates put forward by the Congress eight won, four of them including J. R. uncontested. This victory provided the Congress not only with a useful platform for its social and political propaganda but also with an opportunity to work as an organised political party, and it was left to J. R. to organise this group into a single formidable force. The honour of proposing Dr Ratnajothi Saravanamuttu as Mayor was also his.

Three years later came J. R.'s first opportunity to enter the State Council. Sir D. B. Jayatilaka who had been Member for Kelaniya since 1931 had to give up his seat by the end of 1942 on being accredited to New Delhi as Ceylon's High Commissioner. The consequent by-election was fixed for 18 April 1943.

J. R., the Congress candidate, had to face a formidable rival in E. W. Perera, the hero of 1915. E. W. was a mature politician, a senior patriot, a seasoned campaigner in the field of elections and a man who was held in great esteem by the country for his role in forwarding the grievances of the Sinhalese, during the aftermath of the 1915 riots, to the authorities in Britain.

J. R., on the other hand, was facing his first election battle. Even so, this younger candidate had other advantages.

He was young, and Sir Baron himself who considered J. R. his political protégé declared to his supporters in Kelaniya that J. R.'s youthfulness should itself be considered a qualification and that the young advocate with prospects of a brilliant future should really be his successor at Kelaniya. E. W. was further handicapped in that he had already been defeated at Horana. The fact that he was of a different faith also may have prejudiced the predominantly Buddhist electorate. This became obvious from the enormous support J. R. received from the Buddhist clergy who, for the first time in Ceylon politics, openly rallied around him. The Congress leaders themselves, to a man, worked for J.R.

The result of the election could have been easily predicted. J. R. polled 21,765 votes to E. W.'s 11,570. There were no election symbols at that time. Each candidate was assigned a colour, J. R.'s was white and E. W.'s was green.

J. R. took his oaths as a Member of the State Council on 25 May 1943, and was assigned to the Executive Committee of Home Affairs. Some of his Congress colleagues were already there; D. S. Senanayake, for example, was the Leader of the House and also Minister of Agriculture and Lands, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike was Minister of Local Administration, John L. Kotelawala was Minister of Communications and Works, George E. de Silva was Minister of Health, C. W. W. Kannangara was Minister of Education, G. C. S. Corea was Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce and A. Mahadeva was Minister of Home Affairs. There were also Dudley Senanayake, the Member for Dedigama, R. S. S. Gunawardena, the Member for Gampola, M. D. Banda, the Member for Nuwara Eliya, M. C. M. Kaleel, the Member for Colombo South, A. Ratnayake, the Member for Dumbara, P. de S. Kularatne, the Member for Balapitiya and G. G. Ponnambalam, the Member for Point Pedro and Siripala Samarakkody.

The interest that J. R. showed in the affairs of his constituency became apparent the very next day when he moved: 'that in the opinion of this Council the Government

should take immediate steps to construct rural hospitals at Biyagama, Malwatuhiripitiya and Embaraluwa'.

When some members of the Imperial Forces who were stationed in Ceylon attacked some innocent villagers in Kiribathgoda area, J. R. was up on his feet condemning the violence and calling upon the Government to exert greater control over its armed personnel. That was an incident where several of his constituents had been injured by African soldiers on the rampage.

'It is very easy, Sir, for us—most of us in Colombo—to be very complacent about these matters' he said, addressing the State Council and the Ministers in charge. 'But if we are in a village, an unarmed village, into whose midst has been planked a colony of these men masquerading as soldiers, really gangsters masquerading as soldiers, who can at any moment come into your house and molest your women, I think we will appreciate that the state of mind of these villagers is not only one of anxiety but of alarm and fear.

'...If the Governor is not able to control the Armed Forces in this country, to prevent them from carrying out these marauding trips against the villagers, he should resign his job and go home'.

J. R.'s membership in the State Council provided him with the best possible opening at that time to focus the attention of the British authorities on the burning questions of the day. The training he had received in logic and law, his first-hand knowledge of the life and thinking of the masses and his personal identification with their aspirations made him a difficult member to be easily ignored. Though a fresher in Council he was a man with an incisive mind who knew what he said and stood for, and many a senior Member who had a correct estimation of his forensic prowess preferred compromise to confrontation with him.

For J. R. was a lucid thinker, and plain speaking was his forté, a qualification which marks him out from among the voluble pedants then and now. J. R. had the knack of dealing with his opponents gently but severely, with the essential

bite and sting but without rancour and, as we have seen in more recent times in the National State Assembly in 1977 and 1978, even the most intractable opponent would finally succumb to J. R's disarming smile and feel silly for raising his hackles.

Of the motions he brought before the State Council one cannot but recall his early effort to enthrone Sinhala as the Official Language of this country. On 22 June 1943 he gave notice of a motion to the effect –

'That with the object of making Sinhalese the official language of Ceylon within a reasonable number of years this Council is of opinion –

(a) that Sinhalese should be made the medium of instruction in all schools;

(b) that Sinhalese should be made a compulsory subject in all public examinations;

(c) that legislation should be introduced to permit the business of the State Council to be conducted in Sinhalese also;

(d) that a Commission should be appointed to choose for translation and to translate important books of other languages into Sinhalese;

(e) that a Commission should be appointed to report on all steps that need be taken to effect the transition from English into Sinhalese.

The motion was taken up for debate on 24 May 1944. At the request of the Tamil Members of the House, J. R. willingly accepted an amendment to the motion allowing for the use of Tamil on a par with Sinhalese. J. R.'s speech that day showed the genuine desire he had to honour his mother tongue—not for personal reasons but for the greater good of the greater number.

'My motion' he said, 'seeks to displace English from the position it has held for over 125 years as the official language of this country. It is argued by those who know only English, that if we displace English and make Sinhalese and Tamil the official languages, we shall be shutting out a large world of literature and culture from our people. They little understand that that world of literature is already a closed book to 90 per cent of our people. We are today, after so many years of English as the official language, in a position to measure its achievement in this country. It is true that we have produced

a number of famous lawyers, doctors and judges and possibly legislators, but in the field of literature, of science, of culture, we have been entirely barren of achievement.

'It was not so when the native language was the language of the Government. I think that history records that wise men both from the East and the West came to the shores of Lanka to read the books that were preserved in the sanctuaries of the Buddhist Sangha. If one reads the travels of Hsuan Tsang, Marco Polo and Fa Hien and the lives of great Western philosophers such as Dr Dhalke and Rhys Davids and others, we would find the contribution that this country made to world literature when we had our own language as the official language.

'If we look again at our educational structure, we will find that we are spending over Rs. 20,000,000 a year for maintaining a system of education which creates two classes. Over 80 per cent of our schools educate our children in Sinhala and Tamil, while only about 6 or 7 per cent of the children are given an English education. But the official language is English and that is why this country is always in danger of being governed by a small coterie who go through these English schools, whereas the vast majority who go through the Sinhalese and Tamil schools must always be in the position of hewers of wood and drawers of water'.

The next day, before the motion was put to the House, J. R. summed up with the words—'...Language, Sir, is one of the most important characteristics of nationality. Without language a nation stands a chance of being absorbed or of losing its identity. With language, it has a chance of living for centuries. It is because of our language that the Sinhalese race has existed for 2400 years, and...composed as we are in this House, on the eve of freedom as a free country, we should prepare for a national official language'.

The motion was duly carried, 27 voting for and 2 against. That it was not implemented is in no way a reflection on J. R. It only proved that the State Council, for all its Constitutional rights and powers, was merely a tool of the British

Raj and that the Council's views were not necessarily binding on the Imperial Government.

In fact, this had already become clear when, on an order issued by the Governor on 18 June 1940, the leftist leaders Philip Gunawardena, N. M. Perera, Robert Gunawardena and Leslie Gunawardena were taken into custody under the Defence Regulations.

The arrest of these leaders caused a furore in the Council, for the question was raised whether the Governor or the Chief Secretary could usurp the powers of the Minister of Home Affairs who alone was responsible for advising the Governor on matters of internal State Security. The Home Minister—in fact, the entire Board of Ministers—had even called for the release of the detenus. But the adamant Governor had decided to ignore that advice and even override the Constitution.

On 3 November 1943, Susantha de Fonseka, the Member for Panadura, moved –

> 'That this House expresses its strong disapproval of the conduct of His Excellency the Governor in not releasing on the unanimous request of the State Council, and in accordance with the advice tendered to him by the Minister of Home Affairs and his Executive Committee, and by the Chairman of the Board of Ministers, the detenus at present under detention under Defence (Miscellaneous No. 3) Regulations, and condemns his action as a violation of the spirit of the Constitution and of the Royal Instructions.'

On 1 December 1943, J. R., speaking on the debate that ensued, analysed the powers of the Governor, and quoting copiously from a wide array of sources, showed clearly that the Governor's action tantamounted to not only an utter disregard of the Constitution but even to a flagrant violation of an Imperial Order.

'We know very well that the Governor is today not the Commander in Chief,' said J. R. 'By a directive issued by the War Cabinet, the Governor's powers as Commander in Chief were taken away . . . . Therefore, the Governor cannot say that he is the Commander in Chief . . . . He has nothing to do with the direction of the war . . . .

'The only excuse that the Governor can offer is : "I have certain information upon which I have come to the reasonable

conclusion that certain people should be detained". The Hon. Minister of Home Affairs and the other Ministers of the Board of Ministers have told the Governor: "Release these people!" In other words the original information upon which these persons were detained has now ceased to exist, and the Governor, therefore, in maintaining these people in jail is continuing their detention upon some information which he has received from an outside and unauthorized source. I say that that is a violation of our Constitution. It is a violation of the terms of our Constitution and of the spirit of our Constitution.

'...I think Members should bear in mind, in considering this motion, that we are not merely criticizing an individual. When we criticize the Governor for acting against the spirit of the Constitution, we are establishing our own rights. We are saying that he has encroached upon certain rights we possess. We may have very few rights, but we have certain rights...

'The House must be jealous in safeguarding the rights it has, and though it may be a time of war—I think in time of war, no less than in peace, liberty must be cherished—and if we have given an individual certain powers, certain rights, then we must see that that individual exercises those powers, those rights, according to law; that he does not abuse them...'

Let it go on record that Dudley Senanayake, who also contributed to this debate and even castigated the Governor for deciding to be a petty dictator and for perpetrating "one of the greatest acts of Facism", moved an amendment to the original motion suggesting the deletion of the words "and condemns his action as a violation of the spirit of the Constitution and of the Royal Instructions". Referring to this amendment, J. R. said that he was sorry such an amendment was moved. 'If that amendment is passed the whole purpose of this motion will be nullified. I feel that Members of this House are jealous of the rights they have and in passing this motion (unamended) we are not so much condemning the action of the Governor as saying, "we have certain rights and we are anxious that

those rights should be preserved whether there is war or peace".

Whatever the shortcomings of the Donoughmore Constitution, it had granted adult suffrage and territorial representation to a fair degree so much so that it helped develop a keener political consciousness among the people. Its creature, the State Council, was intended to give a training to the people in the art of administrative and legislative control. Even so, the Governor with his special powers and the Chief Secretary with his direct communication with White Hall, though expected to check ministerial extravagance, were themselves guilty of hot-headed conduct as was demonstrated by the detention of the leftist leaders.

Despite the inherent inconsistencies and other faults of the Constitution, the Ceylonese legislators acquitted themselves as men of political acumen and farsight. They proved beyond doubt their ability to manage their affairs without guidance from Westminster.

It was natural, therefore, that the Board of Ministers sought to obtain a greater share in the Government. Their memorandum on the subject was, however, laid up for consideration after the end of the war. With the end of hostilities the expectant Ministers were offered not what they sought but a new Reforms Commission headed by Lord Soulbury and charged with the task of examining and reporting on the need and nature of a new Constitution for Ceylon.

To the Ministers and to the National Congress this was just a sop to Ceberus. They promptly decided to boycott the Commission and draw up a separate Constitution of their own. The final draft of the Ministers' Constitution was presented to the House and passed, moved by S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike and seconded by J. R. The debate on that motion must have been keenly followed by the Commissioners who were already in the country.

'In the struggle for freedom', J. R. said, addressing the State Council, 'there are many methods that can be followed. There is the method of the mild Hindu, the Hon. Minister

of Home Affairs (A. Mahadeva), who wants us to hang our harp on the willow tree and sit by the waters of Babylon and weep, saying "What can we do? What can we do? Let us go before the Soulbury Commission. Let us tell them that we want this and we want that," knowing all the time that the Soulbury Commission comes here with limited terms of reference...

'There are those who believe with the Leader of the House (D. S. Senanayake) that we should proceed by constitutional methods. No country in the world has yet won its freedom by constitutional methods, by going before Soulbury Commissions and by going before Secretaries of State and saying "This is our right, please give this to us. We will accept whatever you give". No country has yet won its freedom that way.

'...In a few years to come—may be even in our lifetime —that Empire would have come to dust as other empires have, and when that situation arises, we must be ready with our people to seize the rod of office and to rule in a free Ceylon. It may be that the growing Indian movement will lead to the liquidation of that Empire. But we cannot keep quiet, and we cannot sit with folded arms and think that freedom will come by the Soulbury Commission or by making speeches in this House. We must lay it down clearly and emphatically... that our goal is freedom, not internal self-government.

'When the goal is quite clear, when the people of the country are infused with a spirit of freedom...then, Mr. Speaker, the march of Ceylon cannot be stopped; the march to the goal of a free Lanka cannot be stopped'.

The final draft of the Constitution embodying the proposals of the Ministers was finally passed by the Council. J. R. referring to the role of the Ceylon National Congress in the struggle for freedom assured that its aim remained full independence for the country, and that once that aim was achieved the Congress would have fulfilled the purpose of its existence. 'The Ceylon National Congress supports the Bill', he added, 'because it here means a rejection of Reforms; it means that Reforms where, whatever stage of development we may

have reached politically, political power rests ultimately **with** the people of England is rejected'.

Alluding to S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, the mover of the Bill, J. R. identified him as 'one who has been the Secretary of the Ceylon National Congress for a large number of years, one of its ex-Presidents, though he is only an ex-member today, and one who has been for many years in the forefront of the struggle for freedom'.

J. R.'s membership in the State Council was limited to about four and a half years. But the young member was irrepressible whenever the question of freedom was taken up in the Council, or whenever matters pertaining to the country and the people in general were taken up. His arguments during the Budget Debates of 1943, 1944 and 1945 were all based on the premise that our misfortunes were largely connected to our being a subject race exploited by an imperialist, capitalist, colonial power.

To J. R. there was no greater shame than to be dictated to and looked down upon by a foreign master. The freedom he sought, as Tagore dreamt, was—

Where the mind is without fear.
Where the head is held high.

Even when the question of representation at the San Francisco Peace Conference was mooted, J. R. was quite vehement that Ceylon attend that Conference as an independent country. His motion to that effect was passed in the State Council on 16 May 1945. During the course of the debate an amendment was moved to have the term "independent" deleted from the original motion. J. R.'s reply was as sharp as a rapier. 'I need refer only to the amendment' he said in reply. 'I cannot accept the amendment because the word *independent* forms a very important part of my motion. I do not want Ceylon to be represented at the Peace Conference as India is represented. I do not want her representatives to be mere hand-maidens of the Colonial Office. If the Board of Ministers do not press for the representation of

Ceylon as a seperate country, and the Colonial Office accepts that, then what is there to prevent Sir Clifford Figg, for instance, being asked to appear on behalf of Ceylon?''

J. R. was in the thick in the popular struggle for economic, social and religious liberation as well. In fact, through a motion tabled in the State Council on 14 November 1944, he called for the industrialization of the country, for that, he felt, was the only way to raise the living standards of the people and to ensure a prosperous future.

He was also one of the first to demand that a national flag should be adopted in place of the Union Jack. He made this suggestion in a formal motion before the Council in May 1945. That same year, he moved for the abolition of capital punishment. The first of these suggestions was accepted in 1948, just after independence, and the second several years later by a Government of free Ceylon.

His suggestion, first made when the Free Education Bill was debated, that even school books should be given free, had to await realization until he took over the reins of office as President of a free and Democratic Socialist Republic.

After the second World War, when retrenchment created a serious problem of unemployment in the country, it was J. R. who suggested the setting up of Employment Exchanges and the granting of a retrenchment allowance to ex-servicemen.

He was also the first to suggest that a three day holiday be granted to public servants for the Sinhalese and Hindu New Year.

Regarding the language problem, J. R. chaired the Parliamentary Committee which visited India to study the problem which was more complicated there, and submitted a valuable report that would have solved the bitter conflicts that we were to see in this country, had the recommendations in the report been accepted and implemented.

J. R. was a man who, impelled by his logic, stood with unrelenting courage for what he always considered as right and just, when such action was patently disadvantageous to him. It was J. R. and Dudley Senanayake who sponsored

the entry of the Communists, S. A. Wickremasinghe, Pieter Keuneman, A. Vaithialingam etc. to the National Congress at the Ambalangoda sessions in 1944, knowing full well how D. S. Senanayake would react. And, D. S. walked out that day. But J. R. was not the man to give in. He even supported Pieter Keuneman's candidature for the Municipality. His relations with the Left were excellent, and the Left had reciprocated by supporting him at the Kelaniya by-election. If, later, the Left had not broken away from him it certainly would have been for the better for the Left. But that was not to be. J. R. continued, moving with the current, weathering the storms, active in power and active in retreat, while the Left continued in its fissiparous progress to end in a motley array of splinter groups—C.P., L.S.S.P., N.L.S.S.P., B.L.P.I., V.L.S.S.P., M.E.P., C.P. (Peking), P.L.F. etc.—which were thrown out lock, stock and barrel from the arena of parliamentary politics ultimately in 1977.

BUDDHISM AND PRAGMATISM

ALTHOUGH the Board of Ministers and the Congress had officially decided to boycott the Soulbury Commission, they had agreed unofficially to assist the Commissioners. The Ministers themselves, notably D. S. Senanayake, played host to the Commissioners and made use of that opportunity to keep them informed of the demands of the country.

In September 1945 the Soulbury Commission Report was published and the very next month a White Paper was issued containing the recommended Constitution. It was made known that the disunity between the Sinhalese and the minority communities was the main snag that prevented the granting of self-government, and that the country would be granted Dominion Status if the leaders prove their political integrity. This also depended on the acceptance and satisfactory working of the Soulbury Constitution itself. Presumably, to ensure that this was done and to assure the leaders that the promise of freedom would be kept, the British Government had several discussions with D. S. Senanayake. By now it had become plain to the Ministers and to the Congress that this was a stage that had to be gone through, for it was patently wiser to accept the gesture of goodwill extended by the British authorities rather than to carry on with any campaign of non-co-operation where the results were doubtful in view of the divisions in the native political camp. One could not fight Imperial Britain, now in its first flush of victory after World War II, with a divided leadership.

Accordingly, in December 1945, the White Paper was debated in the State Council and adopted.

There were, of course, those who advocated the total rejection of the Soulbury Constitution, on the ground that it provided only partial responsibility to the Ceylonese people. Even so, J. R. was convinced of the genuineness of the British Government's pledge, and he saw with unerring eye that the new Constitution was really a step towards full responsible government. Addressing his comrades who were in the vanguard of the struggle for freedom, J. R. called upon them to accept the proposed Constitution for the time being and to forget racial differences and rally round as a united nation so that no obstacles may stand in the way of their march towards ultimate independence. 'The whole continent of Asia is moving forward' he said. 'In India the Indian leaders were seeking popular support to get the Britishers out of India. Burma too will soon achieve self-government.

'We are now at a decisive moment in history. Generations to come will hail this day as the day the people of Lanka entered the portals of freedom after 130 years of colonial subjugation. Today, along with other nations of Asia, we have folded up our tents and started our march to the front. No one can say: "thus far and no further" to a nation on the march.'

The new Constitution provided for a system of Cabinet government in a bicameral legislature, and this required a distinct party system. It is true that there were various political parties already in the country. But they were never strong enough or representative enough to cater to the people as a whole. In fact, the second State Council which lasted until 1947 had even discouraged the growth of distinct parties with ideological interests. For the Committee system that prevailed under the Council structure catered to personalities and not to parties. Sir Ivor Jennings himself observed that the State Council 'was designed to suit a legislature without parties'. The Congress, with all its good intentions, had failed to make the mark. Renegade leaders had left it more or less

crippled. D. S. Senanayake, for example, the acknowledged father-figure of the nation at the time, was stubbornly refusing to rejoin it. Many of the Tamil leaders who had abandoned the Congress after the Sravasti Conference in 1921 had set up their own organisations, and the Muslims too had their various blocs, primarily the Muslim League and the All-Ceylon Moors' Association. Another former active member, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, had his own Sinhala Maha Sabha, and the Marxists had their separate groupings.

Now, with the General Election—the first since 1936—round the corner, the need for a single, powerful, nationalist party became imperative. Above everything else, there was the Marxist Left to contend with—a force that had grown into a compelling threat due to its solid connections with the trade unions and its popular leadership.

The initiative for the recouping of the scattered forces of the original Ceylon National Congress was ultimately left to D. S. Senanayake and a section of the Congress. They decided to hold a series of discussions which culminated on 6 September 1946 with the passing of a resolution to form the United National Party. The main organisations represented at the discussions were the Congress, the Sinhala Maha Sabha, the All-Ceylon Muslim League and the Moors' Association. The Tamil leaders who took part included A. Mahadeva and S. Natesan.

D. S. Senanayake, the most senior politician, was made President, and J. R. and Sir Razik Fareed became Joint Treasurers. Although the U.N.P., as originally set up, was a common front for the various groups that comprised it, its pan-communal base provided it with the collective influence necessary to face the polls on a broad ideological consensus.

As a member of the Executive Committee of the U.N.P., J. R. was called upon to serve on the Nomination Board to select the party candidates for the ensuing election. His service on that Board and as Executive Committee member, in addition to his role in the preparation of the Party Manifesto, took his entire time.

The elections were held in August–September 1947. The U.N.P., the largest of the contending parties, fielded 98 candidates for 74 seats, and had 42 of them elected. To provide for a stable government the U.N.P. decided to coalesce with the independents—12 of them, 8 of whom finally joined the U.N.P.—and a year later, with G. G. Ponnambalam's group of 5 from the Tamil Congress.

The Cabinet of Premier D. S. Senanayake in the new U.N.P. Government included four members of the Sinhala Maha Sabha, four from the Ceylon National Congress, one from the Muslim League, two Tamil Independents and A. E. Goonasinha. When the Tamil Congress came in, Ponnambalam was given the portfolio of Industries, Industrial Research and Fisheries.

J. R., the Treasurer of the U.N.P., became Finance Minister—the youngest Finance Minister in the Commonwealth and the longest to hold that portfolio in Ceylon.

The election, though contested on a party basis, was swayed more by individual personal considerations. J. R. who won quite comfortably at Kelaniya polled 17,246 votes to the 10,206 that his closest rival polled. His rival was the Sama Samajist Bodhipala Waidyasekera. Among the other U.N.P. stalwarts who had been returned were D. S. Senanayake from Mirigama, John L. Kotalawala from Dodangaslanda, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike from Attanagalla, Dudley Senanayake from Dedigama and A. Ratnayake from Wattegama.

In the new government which took office in October 1947 J. R. had as his colleagues in the Cabinet—

D. S. Senanayake, Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs

S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, Minister of Health and Local Government

R. S. S. Gunawardena, Minister without Portfolio

J. L. Kotalawala, Minister of Transport and Works

George E. de Silva, Minister of Industries and Fisheries

A. Ratnayake, Minister of Food and Co-operative Undertakings

C. Suntheralingam, Minister of Commerce and Trade

T. B. Jayah, Minister of Labour and Social Services

C. Sittampalam, Minister of Posts and Telecommunications

E. A. Nugawela, Minister of Education

Dudley Senanayake, Minister of Agriculture and Lands

O. E. Goonatilleke, Minister of Home Affairs and Rural Development

L. A. Rajapaksa, Minister without Portfolio.

On the front benches of the Opposition were men of the calibre of Dr. N. M. Perera, Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, G. G. Poannambalam, S. Thondaman, Pieter Kueneman, S. J. V. Chelvanayakam, H. Sri Nissanka, Philip Gunawardena, W. Dahanayake, R. G. Senanayake, E. F. N. Gratien and T. B. Subasinghe.

It was a galaxy of erudition and talent—the brightest stars of the political firmament of the day. J. R., himself in his mettle, gave no quarter in the thrust and parry of political debate. His short but active experience in politics and in trade unionism, the forensic skills he had honed to a razor's edge at the Supreme Court bar, the organisational talents he had gathered through his work in the Congress and the Party and the constitutional, administrative and legislative acumen he had acquired during his membership in the State Council and its Executive Committees stood him in good stead. For this was not a forum for the political parvenu.

The fledgling U.N.P. had itself grown into a genuine political party within a matter of months after taking over the reins of power. J. R., the man behind the U.N.P.'s early success and, in fact, in all its successes thereafter, found himself in September 1948 appointed to the Working Committee of the Party and to the Committee for the drafting of the Constitution of the U.N.P. Youth Leagues. In addition, he served on the Board appointed to raise a 30 lakh fund for the party.

J. R. presented his Appropriation Bill for 1947–48 on 1 December 1947. His was the first Budget Speech in Ceylon's Parliamentary history. Even the box in which the Finance Ministers bring their speech was first introduced by him here. His speech moving the Second Reading of the Bill was a model of reasoned analysis—an analysis of the finances of the country and the development plans of the Government.

'Mr Speaker, Sir,' he began, 'in the Bill which I have had the honour of presenting to the House, Honourable Members will see only the figures which the Government has decided should appear or be spent in the financial year 1947–48 under the different Ministries. They represent the framework or the skeleton of the work to be done. It will be my task as well as the task of other spokesmen on behalf of the Government to give this framework flesh and spirit and life, so that you may measure in terms of human comfort and happiness the financial proposals I place before you...'

Speaking of the sources of the country's revenue which he said was proportionately five or six times that of the provinces of neighbouring India, he stated that he asked himself: "Have we reached the stage when the present channels which bring in revenue are at saturation point? Have we exhausted the methods which increase our revenue? Are we making the best use of the money that flows into our exchequer and that too for the benefit of the humblest and the lowliest?

'These questions presented themselves to me, and I thought I could not act better than by following the advice of that great Teacher, the Buddha, when He said —

> Divide the wealth you earn into four parts; of that wealth one quarter should be spent on maintaining yourself and your family; two quarters should be spent on future investments to your business in order to develop it; the fourth quarter you should save for a time of depression.

'These were some of the matters that I wished to place before the House for its consideration. To those who want a

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bloody advance along a broad front of social improvement, these proposals may not keep pace with their wishes. But the broad and sober body of public opinion within the House and outside will realize that we do not intend to stop or to starve any of the progressive social and economic schemes of development such as free education, free milk feeding and free meals for children, subsidies on essential goods, salary increases and war allowances, keeping the cost of living steady and the great agricultural and industrial projects, already begun, to increase the national wealth. While holding to these principles we shall further attempt to close from both ends the gap which seperates the standard of living of the great mass of our fellow citizens from that of a small privileged minority'.

J. R.'s ultimate aim was to transform the colonial economy into a truly independent source of national development. With this aim in view he formulated a Six-Year Plan and he presented it to Parliament with his Budget for 1948–49. Having explained the various aspects of economic and social development contemplated by him and the broad targets of achievement aimed at, he added: 'I have placed before you the National Plan for the development of our country covering a period of six years. We have passed the stage of mere hopes and aspirations and the academic discussion of economic principles. We have made up our minds that future progress must be according to a well-defined Plan devised to secure an equally well-defined object...We have now reached, and in many places travelled some distance along, the stage of carrying out our plans in practice. This is the most extensive and difficult portion of our work—of our common work. The final stage is that which brings to the people the fruits of the fulfilment of this plan in terms of increased wealth, comfort, health, security of employment and the leisure to "tune the mind to the rhythm of the Universe".

'...Members must agree that the very essence of the plan is the bringing into productive use, as early as possible, the wealth with which nature has so richly endowed us;

the land that lies uncultivated and the raw material that is buried unmanufactured.

'...We are not content with providing only the material needs of life. While our plans for economic development will change the material environment, the aims and ideals of our educational system will seek to mould the citizen to play his part in the changed society that he will inherit.

'...What nobler goal can we have, can anyone else have, than that of raising the standard of living of our people, which, though ahead of many countries in Asia, is still deplorably behind the civilized standards reached by those who were free while we remained in bondage?

'...Remember that at long last we have arisen again. The present and the future is ours, to shape, to mould to our heart's desire; to make or to mar.

'...We do not seek a solution to our problems in the context of Western theories alone. Let us not forget that we, a nation which in the past contributed our share to the culture and civilization of the East, had and still have a heritage of our own. Material wealth and comfort did not attract us completely. Our philosophy stressed the development of the human mind rather than the mere acquisition of worldly riches. Let us then "be lamps unto ourselves. Hold fast to the Truth as a lamp. Hold fast as a refuge to the Truth. Look not for refuge to anyone beside ourselves".

It was left to J. R. during his tenure as Minister of Finance to solve the question of drawing rights on our Sterling and Rupee Assets abroad. By the end of 1948 Ceylon's foreign assets amounted to nearly Rs. 900,000,000. After independence, J. R. had several discussions with the British Government in regard to the control of our assets in Britain. As a result of his personal intervention Ceylon was allowed to draw on these Assets by Agreements signed in 1948 and 1949, and later in 1950 all constraints on the control of these Assets were withdrawn. These provided the funds that gave a sound foundation for the agricultural and industrial schemes that were part and parcel of J. R.'s six-year plan.

It was also left to J. R. to set up, in 1950, our own Central Bank with advice and guidance from Sir John Exeter, a renowned economist. The organisation of the Central Bank and the legislation setting it up was all done and approved during the early part of J. R.'s term of office.

The road to economic independence was, thus, laid open. Political independence had already come with the opening of the second Session of Parliament by the Duke of Gloucester on 2 September 1948. The ceremony took place at a special hall at Torrington Square, renamed Independence Square.

Ceylon's connection with the British Empire had lasted 133 years. During the early days of British occupation there had been several attempts at rebellion and every one of those attempts had been mercilessly crushed and British control re-asserted. Even after legislative reforms, there had been occasions that had given rise to mutual displeasure and mistrust. However, as time went on, more enlightened administrators took their seats in the Colonial Office and helped regain the confidence of the people, so much so that when independence came the people gladly opted to remain within the British Commonwealth and even retain the British monarch as Ceylon's titular Head of State and Sovereign, and the Privy Council as Ceylon's ultimate Court of Appeal.

As a free and independent country Ceylon embarked on its path to progress with overwhelming international goodwill. To guide its destiny became the lot of the U.N.P. which was at the helm of affairs at the moment. And, J. R., the Finance Minister and top Party executive, speaking on behalf of his Government and Party was candid enough to admit, in his Budget Speech, on 20 December 1949, that—

> 'To us, therefore, who are entrusted with the responsibility of governing, must be apportioned praise or blame for the manner in which we perform that task. Immediate results may not flow from our decisions, but we can lay down the general lines of progress and prepare the foundations on which the future edifice of a free, democratic and contented Ceylon can be built...'

* * *

IT IS OFTEN believed that Buddhism is a totally idealist philosophy, that the very ideal of Nibbana is attainable only by the recluse who has renounced worldly pursuits and that the layman, as layman, can never escape the bounds of Samsara—that inexorable cycle of births and deaths with its concommitant pangs of suffering. This is hardly true in the light of the Buddha's own admonitions to laymen, appearing throughout the Sutta Nipata, a collection of his general discourses. The story of his life also abounds with instances of lay men and women entering the various "stages" of the Path to Nibbana. The Parabhava Sutta and Sigalovada Sutta are two discourses which, in particular, illustrate the Buddhist way of life—a downright practical way even for the feverish world of our own times.

J. R. who has acquired his knowledge of Buddhism at the feet of the late Venerable Pelene Siri Vajiragnana Thero and the Venerable Narada Thero and through his own wide reading has so disciplined his private and public life in accordance with the tenets of Buddhism that whatever he does, he does it with a sound and objective purpose.

As a pragmatist, it is the utility value of whatever he decides on or bargains for that guides his actions and his Buddhist influence ensures that that action is right and righteous. His thoughts never stray into the realms of aimless fantasy. Vision, there is, but not that of the visionary but that of the social and political economist. It is the insight that makes him see through the motives of designing men both near and far away and allows him to use them where they would have used him instead.

J. R.'s pragmatism is evident on the international scene too. His personal preferences never influence his practical approach to matters of foreign policy. His rejoinder to Mr. McGhee, a U. S. Deputy Secretary of Foreign Affairs, at Washington, is illustrative of the quality so unusual in a professional politician.

McGhee was host at a Lunch given in honour of J. R. and his team who represented Ceylon at the San Francisco

Conference of September 1951, when someone at the table remarked that it was unfortunate that Ceylon should sell rubber to Communist China.

Taking up the hint, McGhee blurted out: 'You know that under the Battle Act passed by the United States Government Ceylon will be debarred from receiving American aid. If you do not sell rubber to China we can give you aid'.

J. R. thought for a moment. It was not that he did not know his own mind but that etiquette demanded a civil reply. Personally, J. R. had not been very happy about the Rubber-Rice Pact with China; not because of the political system obtaining in that country or because he thought that it was a lopsided bargain, but because of the repercussions it could engender in the "free world" to which Ceylon had then mainly looked up to for economic support. Besides, one could not gainsay the fact that the Pact was to Ceylon's benefit. So, J. R., the true diplomat he was, retorted with unnerving *sang froid:*

'If the American Government wishes to give us aid they can amend the Battle Act. We do not intend to barter away our freedom for aid from America or any other country'.

To many of the newly independent countries international relations meant an opportunity to satisfy their diffident ego by being on the invitees list for cocktails at the American Embassy or Russian Embassy; or an opportunity to say that they too have spoken at some international forum. Whether they were recognised or whether their voice had had any impact mattered little. What mattered was that they were there, and that bolstered their spirits despite the poor image they projected on the minds of the rest of the world.

That is what made him criticize his predecessor, Mrs.Sirima Bandaranaike, 'for travelling around looking for admiration abroad and doing nothing at home' and for undertaking to host the Non-Aligned Summit in 1976 in Colombo at a cost that almost equalled that of the entire Gal Oya project but bringing no benefit in return.

With the end of World War II a host of Asian countries found themselves politically independent but economically slave to a rapacious West. They were countries that had once been proud and self-sufficient. But now their vast natural resources lay waste having been ruthlessly exploited beyond any hope of replenishment, for the war cause in particular and for the upkeep of the colonial empire in general. And these countries were now poised on the brink of economic ruin.

On the other side of the picture were the affluent nations for whom the rest had shed their blood and sweat. They were not unaware of the grim reality that the poor nations were faced with, nor did they look askance with any deliberate indifference. It was merely that there was no imagination or initiative on the part of the latter to propose a feasible scheme whereby both parties would stand to gain. First and foremost was the need of a plan. Unlike the Marshall Plan which was financed by the United States for the rehabilitation of war-torn Europe and was providing generous donations of consumer goods and capital, what was required here was a scheme of indirect assistance to help these nations to help themselves.

J. R., to whom national interest was the governing policy in international relations, decided to use his imagination and take the initiative in the matter. His opportunity came when the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers' Conference was held in Colombo in January 1950.

Prime Minister D. S. Senanayake, in his capacity as Ceylon's Foreign Minister, took J. R. along with him to the discussions. Placing before the Foreign Ministers the case of the under-developed countries, J. R. explained the necessity and value of an international programme which could avert the difficulties that the Asian nations had to face with in carrying out the agricultural and industrial development projects, and which could secure to their products a favourable market in the developed countries within the Commonwealth.

J. R.'s strategy was aimed at obtaining, inter alia, the country's requirements in technological expertise, equipment and machinery and technical training from the developed

nations within the Commonwealth. This in return was to provide the donor countries with new markets for their industrial hardware etc. A business-like proposition it reflected J. R.'s thinking on the very concept of international relations. It was hailed by the member countries as immensely far-reaching even to the extent of keeping at bay the "spectre that was haunting Europe" and now Asia.

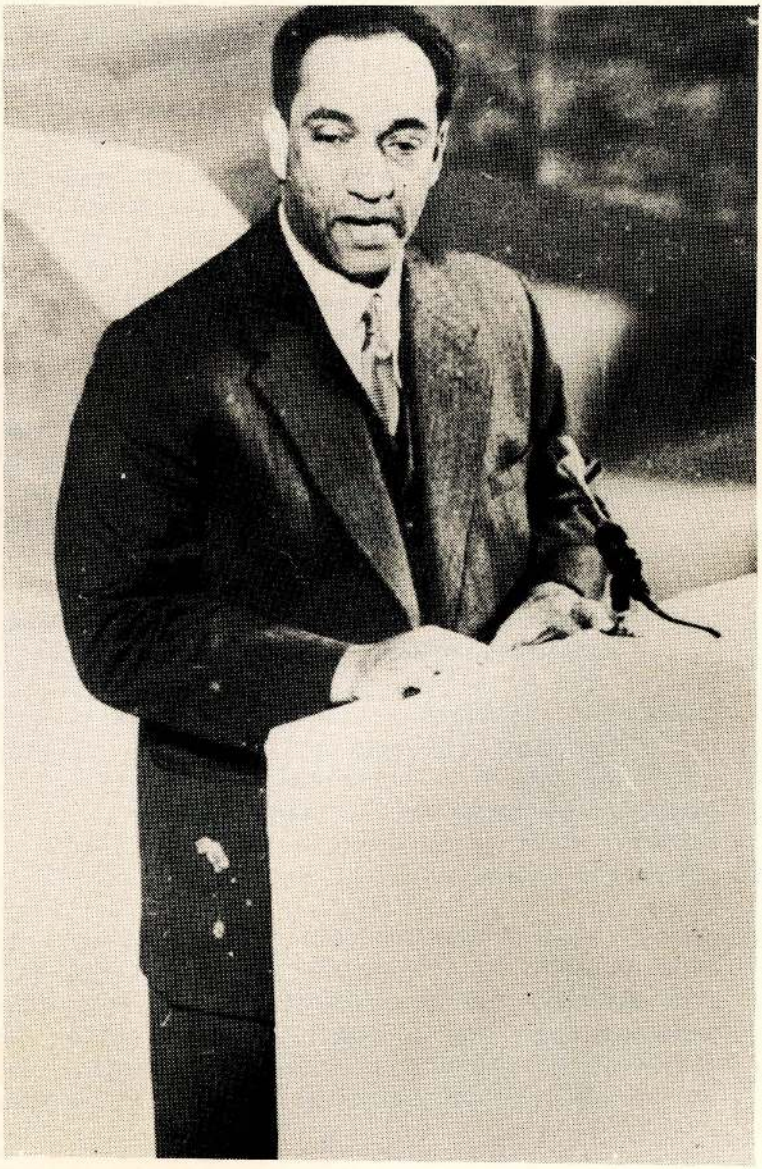
According to the *London Times* J. R. had made this proposal at a time when the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers' Conference held in Colombo was wallowing in words with no practical decisions reached. The proposal fired the imagination of all delegates because it is so immense in conception and is vital to the future stability of the Commonwealth'.

Neveretheless, at first glance, the proposal seemed to weigh against the donor countries in that that it expected more from them and that too in the form of substantial aid while their gains remained more or less speculative.

The first country to realize the real importance of this proposal was Australia. For Australia had the entire South-East Asian region as her neighbour and, in the light of her experience during the war, she felt that any threat to her independence could loom only through that region. She could not forget the battle at Coral Sea which, had it not been decisive, would have thrust her into Japanese hands. Therefore, Australia had decided to have closer relations with her neighbours, especially with Indonesia.

J. R.'s proposal gave Sir Percy Spender, Australia's Foreign Minister at the Conference, the further opening he needed to make his country's policy clear. He suggested that all governments represented at the Conference should jointly discuss J. R.'s proposal with a view to exploring its practicability. The consequent discussion proved to be so fruitful that the Conference ended on the following note:

> 'Executive decisions are not taken at Commonwealth meetings of this kind, but as a result of a valuable exchange of views which had taken place, recommendations will be submitted to Commonwealth Governments for the



At the San Francisco Peace Conference – 1951

furtherance of economic development in South and South-East Asia. These included a proposal for the establishment of a Consultative Committee representing the Commonwealth Governments interested in this area. It is contemplated that this Committee would hold its first meeting in Australia'.

The Consultative Committee met in Sydney in May, and J. R. led Ceylon's delegation to that eventful discussion which carried the original proposal to the realm of reality. The enthusiasm was so great that even would-be donors, Britain, Canada and New Zealand spoke strongly for the proposal. Sir Percy Spender, opening the discussion, made his country's stand amply clear. 'Australia' he said, 'strives to support the national sovereignty of our neighbouring states to enable them to establish themselves in the comity of nations and to help them to achieve economic security and to solve their internal problems. Our help is offered in the belief that political stability should be founded not merely on just and equitable government but also on economic prosperity'.

It was finally agreed that the United States too should be invited to join as a donor and that a blue-print should be prepared for an initial six-year period of economic development showing the quantum of estimated donor inputs.

The United States agreed to join, and by the time the next Conference was held in London, in September, membership rose from 7 to 17. The final plan—the Colombo Plan for Co-operative Economic Development in South and South-East Asia, so called by the fact that it was conceived in Colombo by J. R. and steadfastly supported by Sir Percy—emerged on 4 October 1950 as an on-going programme of development aid.

The original members of the Plan were Australia, Canada, Ceylon, India, New Zealand, Pakistan and the United Kingdom together with Malaya and Brirish Borneo. To these have joined, during the three decades of the Plan's existence, Burma, Vietnam, Laos, Indonesia, Thailand, the Phillipines, Singapore, the Republic of Korea, Bhutan, Afghanistan,

Maldives, Fiji, Bangladesh and Papua New Guinea, and also as non-Commonwealth countries outside the area, the United States and Japan.

The total expenditures under the Plan, encompassing both capital and technical assistance, have exceeded $ 50 billion. From 1951 to 1974 alone 105,880 students and trainees from the region have received scholarships and awards to improve their knowledge and skills in member countries both within and outside the region. Experts numbering 27,027 have served in regional member countries during that period. As a matter of fact, more Asian students and trainees have benefited from Colombo Plan scholarships and awards than from those granted by any other organisation. The same goes for experts. The major donor countries have been Australia, the United States, Japan, Britain, New Zealand, Canada, India and Korea.

Here in Sri Lanka there is almost no hospital, university, hydro-power project, agricultural centre, engineering complex, télecommunication system, technical school, irrigation scheme, rural development program, transport service or any other concern that is not grateful to J. R. for the money, machinery, equipment, rolling stock or skills that it has received through the auspices of the Colombo Plan.

It was at the same Commonwealth Foreign Ministers' Conference of January 1950, when that first seed of a suggestion for an economic and social development plan for South and South-East Asia was sown, that the idea of a free and independent Japan was originally mooted.

Since Japan's capitulation in August 1945, the Land of the Rising Sun had remained under the control of the United States Armed Forces. And the question of her freedom began to agitate the minds of the parties to the Potsdam Declaration of July 1945. In May 1945, J. R. had himself referred to that subject in the State Council.

President Harry S. Truman who wished to restore Japan its sovereignty initiated the San Francisco Peace Treaty Conference. However, it had been clear from the very outset

that Russia, one of the signatories to the Potsdam Declaration, was out to filibuster the proceedings by persisting for the return of the Kurile and Sakhalin Islands which she had ceded to Japan in 1904. It was not so much that Russia wanted these Islands but that it wanted to embarass the United States.

There were other countries too, Indonesia and the Phillipines for example, demanding full reparations for war damages caused by Japan. Burma even refused to attend the Conference on the same grounds. These were countries openly expressing their fear of a free Japan that might threaten world peace again.

On 6 September 1951, when J. R. who led the Ceylon delegation rose to speak, the atmosphere was tense. The whole world was listening. The U.S. Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, was in the Chair. In measured tones, resonant and sharp, J. R. began:

'I consider it a great privilege to be afforded the opportunity of placing before this assembly of fifty-one nations the views of the Government of Ceylon on the draft Treaty of Peace which we have been invited to approve. My statement will consist of the reasons for our acceptance of this treaty, and I shall also attempt to meet some of the criticisms that have been levelled against it. It is true that I can speak only on behalf of my Government, but I claim that I can voice the sentiments of the people of Asia in their general attitude towards the future of Japan. I need not deal with the events that led to the formation of the final draft of the treaty which we are considering. Mr. Dulles, the American representative, and Mr. Kenneth Younger, the British representative, have given us a full and fair account of those events, beginning with the capitulation of Japan in August 1945. It may, however, be mentioned that there was a serious conflict of opinion between the four major powers as to the procedure that should be adopted to draft the treaty. The Soviet Union insisted that the four major powers alone—that is, the Council of Foreign Ministers of the U.S.A., U.K., China and the U.S.S.R.

—should alone undertake it, and that the power of veto should be reserved to them if any others were admitted for the purpose of drafting the treaty.

'The United Kingdom insisted that the Dominions should be consulted and the United States of America agreed with this. They also supported consultation with all the countries that took part in the war against Japan.

'Among these countries, too, there was a difference of opinion as to the actual terms of the treaty actuated by various considerations, some by the fear of the raising of a new militaristic Japan, and others yet unable to forget the damage and the horrors caused by the Japanese invasions.

'I venture to submit that it was at the Colombo Conference of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers held in January, 1950, that for the first time the case of a completely independent Japan was proposed and considered. The Colombo Conference considered Japan not as an isolated case, but as part of the region known as South and South-East Asia, containing a large proportion of the world's wealth and population, and consisting of countries, which have only recently regained their freedom, whose people were still suffering as a result of centuries of neglect. Two ideas emerged from that Conference—one, that of an independent Japan and, the other, the necessity for the economic and social development of the peoples of South and South-East Asia, to ensure which, what is now known as the Colombo Plan was launched.

Mr Kenneth Younger has explained how, after that Conference, a Working Committee of Commonwealth High Commisioners worked on a draft treaty and later had consultations with the American representative, Mr Dulles.

'The treaty now before us is the result of these consultations and negotiations. It represents some of the views that my Government had, and some of them which it did not have. I claim that at the present moment it represents the largest common measure of agreement that could be attained

among the countries that were willing to discuss peace with Japan.

'The main idea that animated the Asian countries, Ceylon, India and Pakistan, in their attitude to Japan was that Japan should be free. I claim that this treaty embodies that idea in its entirety. There are other matters which are external to the question of Japan's freedom—namely, should that freedom be limited to the main islands of Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu and Shikoku, or should it extend to several minor islands in the neighbourhood? If not, what should we do with those islands? Should Formosa be returned to China in accordance with the Cairo Declaration of 1943? If so, to which Government of China? Should China be invited to the Peace Treaty Conference? If so, which Government? Should reparations be exacted from Japan? If so, the amount. How is Japan to defend herself until she organises her own defence?

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

'We feel that the allied matters I mentioned earlier are not insoluble if Japan is free, that they are insoluble if Japan is not free. A free Japan, through, let us say, the United Nations organisation, can discuss these problems with the other free nations of the world and arrive at early and satisfactory decisions. By signing this treaty we are enabling Japan to be in a position to do so, to enter into a treaty of friendship with the Government of China if she decides to recognise her, and I am happy to state, enabling her to enter into a treaty of peace and friendship with India. If we do not sign this treaty, none of these eventualities can take place.

'Why is it that the peoples of Asia are anxious that Japan should be free? It is because of our age-long connections with her, and because of the high regard the subject peoples of Asia have for Japan, when she alone, among the Asian nations, was strong and free and we looked up to her as a guardian and a friend. I can recall incidents that occured during the last war, when the co-prosperity slogan for Asia had its appeal to subject peoples, and some of the leaders of Burma, India and Indonesia joined the Japanese in the hope that thereby their beloved countries may be liberated.

'We in Ceylon were fortunate that we were not invaded, but the damage caused by air raids, by the stationing of enormous armies under the South-East Asia Command, and by the slaughter-tapping of one of our main commodities, rubber, when we were the only producers of natural rubber for the Allies entitle us to ask that the damage so caused should be repaired. We do not intend to do so, for we believe in the words of the Great Teacher whose message has ennobled the lives of countless millions in Asia, that "hatred ceases not by hatred, but by love". It is the message of the Buddha, the Great Teacher, the Founder of Buddhism, which spread a wave of humanism through South Asia, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, Siam, Indonesia and Ceylon, and also northwards through the Himalayas into Tibet, China and finally Japan, which bound us together for hundreds of years with a common culture and heritage. This common culture still exists, as I found on my visit to Japan last week on my way to attend this Conference, and from the leaders of Japan, Ministers of State as well as private citizens, from their priests in the temples, I gathered the impression that the common people of Japan are still influenced by the shadow of that Great Teacher of peace, and wish to follow it. We must give them that opportunity.

'That is why I cannot subscribe to the views of the delegate of the Soviet Union when he proposes that the freedom of Japan should be limited. The restrictions that he wishes to impose, such as the limitation on the right of Japan to maintain

such defence forces as a free nation is entitled to, and the other limitations he proposes, would make this treaty unacceptable not only to the vast majority of the delegates present here, but even to some of the countries that have not attended this Conference, particularly India, who wished to go even further than this treaty visualizes. If, again, the Soviet Union wishes the Islands of Ryukyu and Bonin returned to Japan, contrary to the Cairo and Potsdam Declarations, why should then South Sakhalin as well as the Kuriles be not also returned to Japan ?

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

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

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

This was the speech that turned the tide, making men on both sides of the Iron Curtain see reason and bringing tears of joy to the vanquished but proud people of Japan. A speech that touched the hearts of humanity, it was an exhortation to

righteous action even in international affairs—the righteousness that J. R. has now made a cardinal tenet of his own Republican Government at home.

Here was a man representing not a big and powerful country but one of the many under-developed ex-colonies. He was not even its Foreign Minister. And among the men he had to confront was Russia's Gromyko, a cold-steel diplomat. Yet J. R. commanded total attention and total agreement.

'Ablest Asian spokesman at the Conference was Ceylon's delegate, Finance Minister J. R. Jayewardene' said the *Times*.

'The generalized, philosophical argument for forbearance was ably stated by Ceylon's Finance Minister, Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, said the *San Francisco Chronicle.*

'A darkly handsome diplomat from the seldom considered Island of Ceylon spoke up resoundingly for international decency and magnanimity to a world that has of late known little of either. He was J. R. Jayewardene the rubber-rich Island's Minister of Finance. Dispassionately and with fine logic he tore Russia's wrecking crew to pieces in his address', said the *San Francisco Examiner.*

'The address of Mr. Jayewardene, Ceylon's articulate delegate will go down as one of the most historic of the Conference. He called Russia's bluff at every turn and quoted Buddha in an effective plea for a merciful peace for Japan', said the *Salt Lake Tribune.*

The Japanese Prime Minister, Shigeru Yoshida, wrote to J. R.—

'I was so moved by what you had to say at the San Francisco Peace Conference on Asia's aspiration to freedom and the magnanimous stand of the Ceylon Government toward Japan, that I feel I must send you a word of appreciation. Let me assure you that all Japanese have been greatly impressed by your noble utterance'.

With Dudley Senanayake

The most Venerable Rousen Takashina, Archbishop and Head of the Japan Centre of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, conveying his thanks to J. R., wrote with emotion :

> 'We, Buddhist Japanese, were all deeply impressed and moved to tears by your speech given before the 52-nation gathering which assembled in War Memorial House at San Francisco the other day.
>
> Ceylon is a well-known Buddhist country and you, her Chief Delegate to the San Francisco Peace Treaty Conference, quoted the Great Teacher—Buddha—to plead for a merciful peace for Japan, calling on all the skill of the oratory which won you prizes at Ceylon's Royal College. . Words fail indeed to express our hearty gratitude for your nation's absolute and profound Love of Buddhism shown towards us, Japanese'.

Time has not waned the love and admiration of the Japanese people that J. R. won for himself and through him for Sri Lanka. For it was only quite recently that another Prime Minister of Japan, Takeo Fukuda, reasserted the fact that J. R. 'played a key role in steering the Conference to the successful conclusion of the Treaty, which rehabilitated Japan in the international community and opened a way for the subsequent political stability and economic prosperity.' He added :

> 'The moving words he so eloquently spoke before the delegates from 51 nations gave a profound and moral encouragement to the depressed people of war-torn Japan'.

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LEARNING TO WAIT

WITH THE DEATH of Prime Minister D. S. Senanayake, his son, Dudley took over the reins in March 1952 and retained. J. R's services as Finance Minister. However, with the expiration of the life of Parliament, in April, Dudley Senanayake had Parliament dissolved although, as a new Government, he could have continued in office. That was Dudley, the democrat.

The next General Election took place in May and the United National Party was returned to power winning 52 of the 95 seats it contested. This was in spite of the fight put up by the Marxist groups and by the new-fangled Sri Lanka Freedom Party of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike who had crossed over to the Opposition on 12 July, 1951.

J. R. kept Kelaniya, polling 22,103 votes to his closest rival, Wimala Wijewardena's 15,868. The L. S. S. P's Vivienne Gunawardena who came third collected only 4,857 votes. Wimala was the S. L. F. P. candidate.

In Dudley Senanayake's second Government too J. R. was placed in charge of the national exchequer, and his task was not quite easy in the face of the S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike–led Opposition which comprised 43 members. The only advantage that helped him on was the abundance of the country's external assets which included substantial foreign reserves in dollars and gold. Even the previous year had shown a sizable growth in the external reserves to the tune of Rs. 108 million. All this meant a happy state of affairs.

with the value of the Rupee remaining stable. In fact, the Six-Year Plan launched in 1948 had been financed entirely from the country's own earnings without resort to any kind of foreign aid, and the Plan was nearing completion in September, and with his Budget of 1952—presented in July of that year – J. R. anticipated an uninterrupted continuation of the development program.

He did not want to burden the people with more taxes, and he did not want to withdraw the popular benefits doled out under the system of *laissez faire*. The subsidised rice ration remained at 25 cts. a measure and the flour at 23 cts. a pound. The fact that the Government had to pay three to four times that amount to import those commodities was ignored. And, as Dr. N. M. Perera observed, J. R. with his customary lucidity of expression and conciseness made it quite clear that, as things are, there was no need to fear any shortfalls in expected revenues.

However, the Korean boom began to abate, and spiralling world prices and the general trend of an increasingly adverse trade balance began to gather speed, and export earnings began to fall, and the original rosy hues on the horizon began to deepen into a glowing red.

A far-seeing Government, with caution in view, decided to reconsider its policies and revise its programs. And, accordingly, by the Throne Speech of 7 July, 1953, the Government proposed an increase in the price of rice: the measure given at 25 cts. was to be given at 70 cts. To cushion the impact of the increase in price, the Government proposed to give two measures to those who wished to have it.

Here was an issue for an opportunist Opposition to cry " blue murder ! " Out rolled their wagons—both literally and metaphorically—onto a path of blood and thunder. Not even J. R. could stem the movement. In a forthright explanation, he appealed for sane and sober judgment : 'We know very well', he said, 'that the decision was unpopular. Any decision which takes away benefits that the people enjoyed for a long time would be unpopular, particularly

in a democracy where an Opposition party can rouse that opposition. We came to a decision like that, as honourable members would realize, making ourselves unpopular and giving room for the Opposition to stir up animosity against the Government not light-heartedly, but because the inexorable march of events forced us to do so.

. . . But a decision like that has to be taken because any other decision would lead to irreparable damage . . . far greater harm to this country in the long run than the decision we have taken.

'We had to make a choice between present consumption and future development'.

But reason and logic and economic theory could not contend with obscurantism.

Whipping up public emotion, the forces of reaction unleashed a spate of wild disorder and violence throughout the country on 12 August, 1953. They called it a "hartal"—not the direct action of *satyagraha* based on truth and non-violence that Gandhi espoused nor even the direct methods of trade union action, but sheer unparalleled thuggery and intimidation and hooliganism.

The Government declared a state of emergency in the Western and Southern Provinces where public disorder was most rife, and a curfew from 6.30 p.m. till dawn was imposed in Colombo, leaving the Police to decide on curfew hours elsewhere as and when necessary. The Army and Police were placed on alert, and the Fire Brigade and various volunteer organisations were called up to be ready for service.

'Constitutional methods of propaganda against the Government were still available, but when attempts were being made to create anarchy and lawlessness the Government would act effectively' assured Premier Dudley Senanayake to Parliament.

Notwithstanding Government assurances of maintaining law and order widespread pandemonium prevailed. Looting took place in broad daylight. Utility services ended up in utter chaos with roads and railway lines blocked and

damaged, government buildings destroyed and machinery wrecked, schools set on fire and health, conservancy, telecommunication, postal, stevedoring, power distribution and transport services all ground to a halt. A general strike gathered dangerous momentum, and workers and students openly clashed with the Police and the Army.

Although the " hartal " was supposed to last only 24 hours the disturbances continued unabated for several days. The number of persons killed during the first three days in Colombo alone amounted to 21, while another 175 had been seriously injured, not including 40 Police personnel on the injured list. Over 380 persons had been taken into custody. These were Police figures and they had to be revised on receipt of more information. The figures for the outstations were even more alarming.

It is true that the curfew warded off a major calamity and, as Sir Oliver Goonetilleke admitted at a meeting at the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce a few days later, helped avert Colombo from being reduced to a shambles. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister's assurances of not succumbing to coercion or intimidation by any mischief-makers finally amounted to mere 'brave words which, unhappily, were not matched with the appropriate action.' *(Times of Ceylon*—17.8.1953).

Just two months after the mayhem, on 12 October, Dudley Senanayake handed in his resignation and Sir John Kotelawala took his oaths as Prime Minister. What led to Dudley's resignation can only be surmised ; his irresolute performance during the disturbances and its consequent toll on human life may have nagged at his conscience. One thing was true, he was ill, and that he was physically ailing and needed a protracted rest was his own excuse.

Whatever the real reason or reasons were, it stands out plain and clear that he was honest and that he did not hanker after personal power. If he so wished, he could have taken a temporary respite from his official responsibilities. But that was not his intention, as he himself explained:

'I feel that the pressure of urgency and the nature of some of the important long-term problems call for such close and continuous attention as will not permit of any rest to the Prime Minister in office. Nor will it be fair or reasonable to let the solution of these long-term problems be undertaken by a short-term Acting Prime Minister while the Prime Minister himself stays away on leave. I have accordingly decided, entirely on my own responsibility, to make way for another Prime Minister at this juncture'.

Perhaps Dudley's virtue of being over-sincere and over-modest had overtaken his own self-confidence to such an extent that he had almost convinced himself that he was not doing justice to the office he held.

* * *

SIR JOHN KOTELAWALA who took over as Prime Minister was a man with a grievance. He had been a senior politician and a close associate of the late D. S. Senanayake and a Vice-President of the United National Party at the time of the death of the Grand Old Man. One could not blame him, therefore, for believing that he stood next on the list. However, the man who was finally chosen to succeed D. S. was Dudley. Sorely disappointed, he expressed his bitterness in the publication : 'The Premier Stakes or How I was Led Up The Garden Path'.

Now, as Prime Minister, Sir John found himself in a different and more favourable atmosphere much of which he had himself built up by his personal influence and bearing. Unlike the time of the 'Premier Stakes' when the larger section of the U. N. P. was against him, he now commanded an increased following. His rugged leadership and his capacity to get things done had done the trick. Besides, he was well known for his iron will, and that appeared to be, somewhat mistakenly, the need of the moment.

The political currents and under-currents, the subtle manoeuvre and strategies and the hopes and despair that

marked the resignation of Dudley Senanayake, the appointment of Sir John Kotelawala and the eventual naming of the Cabinet became popular subjects for political commentators.

'An enjoyable drama' said the Janatha of 16 October, 'with what transpired behind scenes turning out to be no less enjoyable'

Dudley had not been in the best of health for some time, and gossip had it that he was thinking of resigning. The first to meet him and try to prevail upon him to carry on were Sir John Kotelawala, Sir Oliver Goonetilleke and J. R. They were the Ministers who were closest to him. Of them, J. R. was closer, the two of them having worked together for long years in the same social, political and religious circles. Dudley's refusal to listen to them was, therefore, more painful to J. R.

There were others too who had gone to see Dudley, thereafter—Ministers, Members of Parliament and friends and relations. Notably among them was G. G. Ponnambalam who had made a valiant effort to make him change his mind, of course, without success. Failing in the attempt, Ponnambalam and several others including E. A. Nugawela and Bulankulame Disawa called on J. R. and asked him to snatch the opportunity and claim his rights to the succession to Dudley. 'No' said the imperturbable J. R. 'I have other things to do.'

Those other things were more important in that situation. For example, the Party had to be kept intact. Had he too entered the fray for the premiership factionalism would have fragmented the Party. That was the last thing J. R. desired.

After Sir John was sworn in as Prime Minister, many of the 'old gang' got moving once again. Now, they were tripping each other in their eagerness to shake hands with the new Prime Minister and talk of old times and assure him of their goodwill and drop a hint that they were available if wanted. The one man who remained at home was J. R. The one man who said 'I'll think it over' when Sir John telephoned him and invited him to join his Cabinet was J. R.

The next day Sir John himself came to J.R.'s residence and they discussed, over lunch, the composition of the Cabinet, and by the time Sir John left the two men had become still closer friends, each realizing the other's need.

In the new Government J. R. became the Minister of Food and Agriculture and Leader of the House. In Sir John's absence he was also called upon to act as Prime Minister.

A change of portfolio did not effect a change of heart. The reason for the change has never been divulged by either Sir John or J. R. That it was J. R., in his capacity as Finance Minister, who brought public displeasure in the previous Government by his tactless budgetary proposal is nothing more than a political canard. That J. R. at his discussion with Sir John over lunch chose for himself the new portfolio is a more plausible theory.

As Minister of Food and Agriculture the first thing that J. R. did was to instruct his officials to leave the desks and go into the field and win the confidence of the farmer. His efforts to reorganise the Co-operative Movement in the country and give it new responsibilities became the turning point in that movement—from consumer oriented sales units to centres for development aid.

That was as a Minister. As a member of the Cabinet J. R. gave his unqualified support to Sir John in all his official dealings, and set an example in thoroughness in the subject under his care. In Sir John's own estimation, 'J. R. never shirked responsibility, never sought credit for his contributions. In short, he took full responsibility for Cabinet decisions. He stood by his leader in good weather and bad, a quality not easily found in the competitive arena of politics'.

But that was J. R. Ready to serve where his service was valued, he shunned personal glory even when leadership should really have been his, not by choice but by right. However, as the world now knew and as the very prestigious TIMES of London observed on 13 October, 'In seeking a successor to the vacant place Lord Soulbury (Governor General) (had) passed by the other brilliant young man of the Cabinet, Mr. J. R.

Jayewardene, and decided to place his trust in Sir John Kotelawala.'

Sir John, who in his own inimitable style had wise-cracked before Pressmen that he had tried to be the Executioner and ended up as a Humanitarian, had finally got going in a rather tempestuous way of ruling the Cabinet in addition to the country, and the men he had chosen to work with were Dudley's own men barring two whom he had chopped off on the way. Sir Lalitha Rajapaksa and G. G. Ponnambalam, the two victims, had to give way to the two Senators E. B. Wickremanayake and Sir Kanthiah Vaithianathan respectively.

The Finance portfolio that J. R. had relinquished went first to Sir Oliver Goonetilleke and later to M. D. H. Jayewardene.

It was during Sir John's tenure of office that Queen Elizabeth II paid a visit to Ceylon—the first visit of a reigning monarch of England to this country.

The original invitation to the Queen to visit Ceylon during her tour of the Commonwealth was made during Dudley's time. However, due to various circumstances—not excluding the lawlessness that prevailed in the country in mid-August 1953—acceptance of the invitation remained in abeyance. When Sir John took over the Premiership and peace and order returned to the country, an assurance came from Buckingham Palace that the Queen would positively arrive in April next year, notwithstanding a mischievous petition prepared by some misguided politicians who wanted her to change her mind.

On 10 April 1954, the Queen and her Royal Consort, the Duke of Edinburg, arrived in Ceylon, much to the disappointment of the pessimists and some well-known quack astrologers who had predicted that she would not come.

It was a right royal welcome that awaited her. The vast concourse of people from all parts of the country who spilled into the city in a continuous stream, hours before the time of her arrival, lined the eight-mile long processional route which was gaily decorated with streamers, illuminations and bunting and 21 massive pandals. Every Ceylonese had wished to see the Queen, except, of course, the eccentrics who too ultimately

succumbed to their natural curiosity. On the part of the majority—the saner people—the wish to see their Queen was also natural, for she was the Queen of their own choice and had come on their own invitation, not as a symbol of imperialism but as the Head of a Commonwealth of free and independent nations. Besides, she was the last of their queens and, in both temporal and spiritual measures ,far ahead of the first, Anula, who ascended the Throne of Lanka in 48 B.C.

On the 12th the Queen delivered her Speech from the Throne, declaring open the Third Session of the Second Parliament at Independence Memorial Hall, Independence Square.

The ceremony was marked by the colour, pageantry and spectacle that the organisers had tastefully arranged for. The Hall itself was decked with the Kandyan art of 'Rallipalan' which drew Her Majesty's personal interest. Resplendant in her coronation robes she appeared a fairy queen in a fairyland of panoramic colours ranging from the white of the Ministers to the scarlet and ermine of the judges, from the purple of the bishops to the saffron of the monks and through every shimmering shade of the spectrum.

Of the thousands upon thousands who had gathered at the Independence Square that day the proudest must surely have been Mrs. J. R. Jayewardene whose husband's speech drew rounds and rounds of applause.

The Ceylon Daily News of 13 April, referring to that speech, stated that it even outshone the speech J. R. delivered at the San Francisco Peace Conference where he earned the plaudits of the World's Press.

The courtesy of the East over-ruled Western protocol when the Queen opened Ceylon's Parliament and a new parliamentary precedent was born. For the Queen remained in the 'House' to hear the formal Addresses in Reply.

The Ceylon Daily News further recorded that the Addresses took nearly half an hour, intoned in a priest-like chant by Sir Oliver Goonetilleke, the Leader of the Senate, and Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, the Leader of the House of Representatives.

But J. R. was the orator of the two and, speaking without notes, looking directly at the Queen, he repeated his Address in the Sinhalese language.

'Your Majesty', he began, 'On behalf of the House of Representatives, I have the honour to present an Address in Reply to the Gracious Speech with which you have been pleased to open the Third Session of our Second Parliament. It was decided to hold today's ceremony in the Independence Hall for several reasons. In the neighbourhood of this Hall the first Parliament of free Lanka was inaugurated. Here, a grateful public paid their last respects to the Right Honourable D. S. Senanayake. Here too will rise the national memorial, commemorating both his memory as the chief architect of our freedom, and the possession of that freedom itself.

'Let us for a moment recall to our minds the beginning of our recorded history "in the dark, backward abysm of time." Centuries have gone by since that day, nations and empires have arisen and fallen, while kings and queens ruled over our land in an uninterrupted sequence, until the last of our ancient dynasty was compelled by the people to surrender its sovereignty to Your Majesty's ancestor. As his Heir and as their Queen, the people of Lanka have given Your Majesty a royal heritage which lives even today, unbroken through 2,500 years.

'Your Majesty is also the Head of that portion of your territories, known as the Commonwealth of Nations. Hundreds of millions look upon you as the living symbol of its great ideals. Our neighbours, India and Pakistan, as well as the other members, agree that East and West meet in their allegiance to these ideals. May I for a moment reiterate some of these which form the foundation of the Commonwealth concept.

'The freedom of the units that compose the Commonwealth, whether they be big or small, is one of these. Among the free nations of the world, Lanka is one. Political freedom, however, is but "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal" if it were not wedded to a government of the people. We believe in the right of the people to choose those who should govern them.

Democratic institutions and the freedoms inherent in democracy thrive in every town and village throughout the Commonwealth.

'We cherish the right of the individual to personal liberty, a liberty which cannot be taken away without a legal trial. A citizen of the Commonwealth walks through its wide domains without fear of tyranny or oppression, for his life, liberty and property are protected by Your Majesty's writ which operates only with the sanction of independent courts of law.

'A free democracy functions for the benefit of the people, whose economic and social betterment is the prime concern of our governments. Nay, more: many of them have, through the aid provided under the Colombo Plan, sought by this noble gesture to stretch out a hand of friendship and help to those whose need is greater than theirs.

'In the relationship that prevails between states, we exercise the tolerance and friendship preached equally by the great religions, which the citizens of the Commonwealth are free to practise as they choose. It has been my privilege recently to represent my country at many international conferences, and I can truly say that the members of the Commonwealth seek to settle their disputes by agreement rather than by force, in the knowledge that obstruction and pettiness would force this mutual and free association into dissolution.

'These are some of the ideals that inspire our common efforts to achieve a more prosperous and happier life for all classes of the people we represent. I see in the Commonwealth the quintessence of the ideal of the Parliament of Man and the Federation of the World.

'This is Your Majesty's first journey to Asia, and you have honoured us by visiting our country first. His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburg, however, revisits a land whose people remember with gratitude that he shared with them the fever and the fret of a Great War.

'The people of Asia are on the march. We have contributed to their past achievements, and I trust we can continue to inspire their future hopes. In the days when our race was young, scholars and pilgrims from India and several centuries

later from China, came to our shores to learn from our monks and their disciples the sedulous pursuit of eternal verities. In more recent times, when the early glitter of Western democracy fell upon Asia, the system of trial by jury, election through universal adult franchise and government by an elected Prime Minister and his Cabinet were first introduced in our land. Now it is our unique privilege to have the Head of the Commonwealth open or sovereign Legislature, the oldest sovereign and elected Parliament in Asia. We, together with our neighbours in Asia, both within and without the Commonwealth, are in the process of seeking to naturalise the British system of parliamentary democracy with our immemorial and indigenous civilizations. The lamps have been re-lit all over Asia; they will not go out again if our efforts succeed.

'The words I speak will go into oblivion, but in our Island's story today's event will remain a moment of history. Our great chronicle, the *Mahavamsa,* will record that the people of Lanka, through their elected representatives, rendered thanks to Your Majesty who embodies, in your person and in your actions, the ideals of kingship, and who performs your regal duty, in the words of the *Mahavamsa*—"one with the people" ,

On 17 July, Sir Oliver Goonetilleke was elevated to the post of Governor General. It is reported that during the Queen's visit in April, Sir John had recommended him as the most acceptable successor to Lord Soulbury.

Sir John's government also witnessed the laying of the foundation for the organisation now known as the Non-Aligned Movement. The first discussion which was more or less the prelude to the 29–nation Bandung Conference of 1955 was held the previous year, in Colombo, when five countries including India and Ceylon originally took part.

Many persons who in later times wandered across the political stage of this country, garbed in various ideological colours, have pretended to the sole authorship of the principle of non-alignment. To say the least, this is most. unkind especially to J. R. who from the very first opportunity he received as a representative of free Lanka made it amply

clear that Ceylon did not expect to barter away her freedom either to America or to any other nation. Even D. S. Senanayake had said so in a broadcast over the B.B.C., as far back as 1951, when he said that Ceylon stood for non-alignment.

J. R.'s persistent efforts to keep Ceylon out of the political and economic clutches of the Big Powers have been a golden thread running through and linking every phase of his political career. From the late thirties, when he refused to pitch camp with the Marxist groups headed by N. M. Perera and Colvin R. de Silva, right up to this day when, as the retiring Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement he emphasised the need to make non-alignment a living force, J. R. has resolutely opposed even the very concept of a "balance of power."

Nothing hurt him more than to be told that he served the American cause.

None but J. R. would have had the audacity to tell the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development at their Fifth Session, in Paris, on 14 September, 1950, that he himself, had felt the criticism levelled at these Institutions justified, for they were serving Anglo-American interests in the main by giving 90 per cent of their million dollar loan to European and American countries. It is true that J. R. had expressed his gladness on seeing that policy revised, but he made it a point to remark: 'In the days before the creation of these Institutions, the domination of large areas of the world by a few states made it impossible for institutions with these principles to flourish. Let it not be said that since imperialism has disappeared from these areas these institutions seek to perform the same functions that imperialism did in a previous age.'

Alignment has its uses, when equals are aligned. For, then, they complement each other. But alignment of a weak nation with a strong power is nothing less than subjection and, as J. R. sees it, its consequential exploitation is as disastrous as war.

Speaking at a civic reception accorded to him in the Nepalese capital of Kathmandu on 5 October 1978, J. R. recalled the

Buddhist teaching that men should not harm even the meanest living thing, and said:

> 'Let this message go to the world once again. I would like to mention to the leaders of the powerful nations who live in air-conditioned rooms and in tents in camps, while their people go to war and are slaughtered, that they should themselves go out to the battlefield and fight. If they do so, there will be no war.'

Ceylon, during the early years of its growth as a newly independent nation, had to grow out of an idealistic policy into a more realistic stand. This was why, while establishing diplomatic relations with the socialist countries and even selling rubber to the People's Republic of China when no other nation in the world was doing so, it entered into a defensive alliance with the United Kingdom. This was necessary for the defence of this country at a time when it had no army, navy, or air force of its own. Strategically situated in the Indian Ocean Ceylon was tempting meat for any political hawk that wished to establish its dominance in the area. The selection of the United Kingdom as its ally was entirely due to historical reasons and, besides, the Queen of England was Ceylon's Queen at that time.

With the creation of the Commonwealth of Nations, Ceylon found herself a free member of an organisation of free states and, accordingly, an equal partner in a large federation which included India and Pakistan. One of the unwritten though accepted principles of the Commonwealth is the freedom of every member to select its own political alliances. And, Ceylon, for example, has strengthened its relations with non-Commonwealth countries including China and Russia, and in J. R. 's own words: 'We are not concerned with the internal governments of communist countries. We will recognise them and be friendly with them and trade with them though we do not agree with their internal policies and even disapprove of their foreign policies.'

Addressing the International Law Association (Ceylon Branch) on 15 December 1954, J. R. categorically affirmed:

'We are not concerned about favouring this bloc or that bloc. We are concerned about maintaining peace in this world. Any little action that we can take, however small that may be, we shall take as far as Ceylon is concerned. Ceylon feels that peace cannot be established in this world by hatred or revenge or by suspicion or by keeping nations under subjection. That would only develop into greater wars and greater misery. We support these views because they mean peace for Ceylon, peace for Asia and for the world. On these foundations has been built the superstructure of our foreign policy, and that superstructure contains the following further principles:—

(a) Friendship with foreign countries, particularly those that believe in peace.
(b) Ceylon throws in her weight on the side of those who wish to preserve peace.
(c) We are opposed to those countries that wish to enslave the world and seek to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries.

'Ceylon has not considered the question of joining any power blocs because peace in the world cannot be established by abusing each other or by building up hatred or revenge against our opponents. These are the main principles of our foreign policy. They appear now quite clearly and are known to the nations of the world. They have been proclaimed at international conferences and emphasised and underlined by our Prime Minister on his recent world tour. Ceylon seeks to preserve her freedom, to strengthen democracy, to pursue peace, to refrain from aligning herself with power blocs and to contribute to the peace, progress and welfare of humanity'.

The Movement that Ceylon helped to rig up and which six years later at Bandung launched out in full sail has gone a long long way towards new horizons of peace and solidarity among Third World nations.

DEFIANCE IN DEFEAT

SIR JOHN'S GOVERNMENT was naturally not without its share of internal problems. Though a man of courage with the special capacity to attract men of calibre and discipline, he was often wanting in tact which is a necessary consideration in parliamentary politics. An unbridled tongue and a quick temper chased away a fair section of his political supporters, both rural and urban, and the Buddhist monks who wielded considerable influence in the villages were bluntly told to get out of the political loyalty on pain of being branded with a tar brush. He demanded loyalty from public servants, victimizing their trade union leaders meanwhile. Even on the international scene he pushed his way without concern for public opinion or any heed for diplomacy. His sense of power made him even forget the normal ratification he needed from his own party for the public statements he chose to make.

The manner in which he threw his weight about added to the displeasure that his Government had itself earned through a series of unpopular decisions including the decision to amend the Constitution so as to enable certain persons who had been found guilty of corrupt practices at elections to contest again. On top of all this, the public press went to town on the scandalous conduct of the Army at an anti-opium campaign in Tanamalwila in South Ceylon.

The first impact of the general dissatisfaction that grew against the Government was felt when R. G. Senanayake resigned from the Cabinet. R. G., who was later expelled from

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the party itself, finally turned out to be one of its bitterest critics. His subsequent campaign against J. R. seemed to show that his resignation was due to differences with J. R. But J. R. was not the Government. Had J. R. been, at least, the man behind Sir John's Government that Government would have had better counsel and enjoyed better fare at the end of its tenure. To be true, R. G. went to the polls on other issues. He claimed to have resigned from the Cabinet to save the country from Americans and Indians.

The U.N.P. was now being pilloried in the country as an Uncle-Nephew Party which catered to D. S. Senanayake's interests and, thereafter, to his son Dudley's and, then, to R. G.'s and finally to Sir John's. After Sir John took over he left no room for any one to doubt that he alone was the Cabinet and the Government. The Opposition lost no time to take this story to the country. Led by S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike's Sri Lanka Freedom Party it painted the Government red—as being financially bankrupt and unconcerned with the development of the country and hostile to workers' interests and sympathetic to Tamil and Catholic Action and, above everything else, anti-Sinhala and anti-Buddhist. Some of the Marxist parties that had all along stood for parity of status for Sinhala and Tamil now decided to ride the tide and joined in the general cry for "Sinhala Only".

Sir John who had already assured the Tamils that their language would be placed on a par with Sinhala found that his party too had abandoned that stand. Before things turned worse Sir John decided to listen to his advisers and obtain a fresh mandate from the people. The U.N.P. itself formally endorsed Sinhala Only as its policy, and feeling that the language issue would over-cloud all other burning issues of the day thought it time to face the polls.

Parliament was dissolved in mid-February 1956 and the General Election was fixed for April. It was a solid Opposition that the Government had to face. A new front which called itself the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna and comprised a heterogeneous section of political interests represented by

S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike's S. L. F. P., W. Dahanayake's Bhasha Peramuna, Philip Gunawardena's Viplavakari Lanka Sama Samaja Pakshaya and several Independents had risen in opposition. The Front had also arrived at a formal no-contest pact with N. M. Perera's L. S. S. P. and an informal understanding with the Communist Party.

The General Election saw 249 candidates contesting 89 constituencies returning 95 members to the House of Representatives which seated 101 members including six nominated by the Government. The results of that election could not have been a surprise to Sir John who, during the election campaign, had boasted that he would be the Prime Minister even if only ten of his men were returned. The surprise, if at all, was the Opposition's. For the M. E. P. was returned to power with an absolute majority, cutting down the U. N. P. to a mere eight seats.

J. R. himself lost Kelaniya, and that too to his erstwhile Cabinet colleague R. G. Senanayake who won Dambadeniya as well. J. R. who had served Kelaniya for 13 continuous years received 14,187 votes to R. G.'s 36,990.

Today, looking back at these results, one feels that J. R. had really expected it. J. R., if no one else, would have surely seen the disastrous course along which Sir John was dragging the U. N. P. But not even he could have brought sense to that headstrong leadership.

Now, things were different. That leadership had been exposed by the debacle of 1956. Free from parliamentary responsibilities, J. R. now had the time to sit back and chew the cud. His first task was to analyse the results of the election and see whether there was any hope for the U. N. P. That his party colleagues were feeling shy to face the public did not deter him. That many of them were decamping, like rats from a sinking ship, did not scare him. That Sir John himself, though returned as M.P. for Dodangaslanda, was showing little interest in Party work and was spending his time mostly in England did not dampen his spirit. The suggestion of the others to dissolve the party did not satisfy him. The storms of political

adversity raging around him unmoved him. He stood like a rock, wishing his party were a rock like him.

J. R.'s analysis of the election results showed him that the U. N. P., although it had won only eight seats, had polled 731,516 votes to the M. E. P.'s 1,092,211. On the percentage of total votes polled the U. N. P. had received 27.3 to the M. E. P.'s 40.7 leaving 11 to the Independents, 10.2 to the Samasamajists, 4.5 to the Communists and 6.3 to the rest which included the Federal Party, the Tamil Congress and the Labour Party. These that were counted among the "rest" mattered little in a genuine confrontation for power in the larger part of the country south of Elephant Pass. This meant a clear 731,516 votes to the U. N. P. as against the 1,446,402 which the combined opposition of the M. E. P., L. S. S. P. and C. P. had polled. However, although it had polled nearly half the votes, it had won only eight seats to the 68 of the Opposition.

The meaning was clear: by whatever name statistics may be called, half the people of the country had declared their trust in the U. N. P. despite the erratic leadership it had provided to the people during the last few years. To lose courage now was to abandon responsibilities and betray the confidence of the people who had voted for the Party. Therefore, J. R. firmly decided to revamp its shattered forces unheeding the doubt and in decision that some of its members expressed.

It was an uphill task. The first step was to put the Party's publicity media on gear. Its two main papers, the *U. N. P. Journal* and the *Siyarata,* had dropped circulation to about 500 copies each. Its propaganda meetings, since April 1956, drew no more than 40 to 50 people at a time, and half of them came to jeer.

Nevertheless, with unyielding regularity and with the patience that would have broken down any other man, J. R. continued to organise public meetings. The first, at Kelaniya, just two months after his party's defeat, ended up in near confusion when supporters of the new Government threatened to disrupt the proceedings. Elsewhere, too, he had to face ridicule, thuggery and plain hooliganism.

He took over the management of the *U. N. P. Journal, The Nation* and the *Siyarata.* He personally went through the articles before they were sent to the printer, and even wrote the editorials for some time. Within a couple of months the circulation of each paper soared to 20,000 copies, and assuming that at least five persons read each copy the total number of readers stood at an estimated one lakh.

And what of the Government? Flaunting some vague "Middle Path" policy it had begun to roll like a behemoth in heat. It did not know its right from left. On the Sinhala issue it passed legislation making Sinhala the Official Language and then signed pacts with dissident Tamil elements and tore up those pacts when Sinhala radicalists protested. That resulted in island-wide riots bathing the country in blood.

It may be that S. W. R. D. was a leader with good intentions but the Cabinet with which he had to work and the rest of the gang he had picked up to help him comprised men and women of diverse temperament and diverse mind. The enactment of the Paddy Lands Act and the nationalisation of the bus services, the harbour stevedoring services and the British bases in the country, which normally should have received the proud acclaim of at least those within the ranks of the government, only resulted in broken heads among Ministers, chaos in the public transport system and months-long demurrage payments for freighters waiting for berths in the harbour. Worker dissatisfaction grew to an endless spate of strikes both in the public and private sector.

It was true that the M. E. P. Government had come into office on a mighty wave of communal and religious emotion. It was, therefore, also true that it was beholden to the chauvinist elements to keep it in power. But the country, along with the rest of the world, had entered a different phase of social history, and Ceylon too had to decide on its priorities when the rest of the world began moving apace on a path of economic achievement. That path left no place for petty parochial interests that could stall its pace or, at worst, cause a detour that would lead to civil turmoil or economic chaos. Here, the

people who were at the helm of affairs were in blinkers. They saw only the carrots of cheap popularity before them and not the abyss on either side. And, in their effort to appease religious sentiment and Sinhala emotion, with utter disregard to its national implications, they moved closer to the edge month by month.

J. R. knew what was happening. With the country in his heart he cautioned the Government from falling a prey to the forces of reaction. He sincerely wished it well, and on behalf of the people he called upon the U. N. P. to play the watch-dog. But the Government was apparently out to destroy itself. Fearful of the plight the country would fall into, J. R. decided to do something about it. The first thing necessary was to build a powerful democratic Opposition which could forestall any attempt by Marxist parties to take control of the Government. The only democratic opposition possible was through the U. N. P. That the U. N. P. had been decisively defeated at the elections did not mean that the people had disowned it. It merely reflected the democratic right of the people to try a change of government; a right the people might possibly exercise again to reverse the situation; a possibility that was round the corner. Should the U. N. P. wait till the Government falls, or should it hasten that end? Should the U. N. P. organise itself and stand in readiness to take over? The U. N. P. should do both, thought J. R., for no power on earth could stop the fall of the Government and no other party could provide a democratic alternative.

The program that J. R. embarked upon was meant, on the one hand, to expose the Government's failings and, on the other, to show the country that the U. N. P. was yet alive and kicking. His efforts succeeded when at the meeting at the Colombo Municipal grounds, on 8 August 1956, the public who earlier shunned U. N. P. meetings came in their thousands and pledged their support. It was a good start, and at the elections to the Colombo Municipal Council the U. N. P. won 19 of the 29 seats it contested. This was entirely J. R.'s achievement and was even more remarkable considering the fight he

had to give to the Government and Government-backed parties which were also in the fray. The U. N. P.'s success at Colombo was soon repeated at Kandy, Galle, Dehiwela-Mt. Lavinia, Badulla etc. The man who took the bow and the encomiums for these successes was naturally J. R. the indefatigable organiser. But the laurels were not his. They went elsewhere and sometimes to people who were even never on the scene. That is how, after the resuscitation of the party by J. R., Dudley Senanayake was brought back as its leader. On J. R.'s part there was no bitterness or recrimination. In fact he accepted Dudley's leadership with all the sincerity at his command.

The satisfaction of seeing a job well done was sufficient compensation for his trouble. He had gone a long way to put back on its feet an almost dead party. He had taken the call of the party to every town and village and rejoiced to see the public sympathy and support it evinced. He may not have known, but it is nevertheless true, that what the party received was really the good-will and admiration that was given him. One example that can be quoted here is from the personal experience of one of the authors of this volume. The author remembers how he, as the Hony. Secretary of a Thinker's Forum in a suburban area, invited J. R. and the leaders of the other parties to address the Forum on: "How My Party Differs from the Others". Except for J. R. none of the other party leaders accepted the invitation. And, one day in October 1956, in a temple hall at Ganemulla, J. R. told the members of that Forum that his party stood for socialism. One need not say how surprised his audience was, for no one had ever associated the concept of socialism with the U.N.P. But there was J. R., talking of social equality, equal opportunity for all, equal distribution of wealth and recognition of the value of labour. This socialism, he said, is not the brand peddled about by Marxists, but a 2,500 year old system preached by the Buddha.

It is widely admitted that the problems that plagued the M.E.P. Government were unparalleled in both number and

magnitude. The problems became so frequent that S. W. R. D. even thought that he had become immunized from their effects. To him the simplest remedy seemed to be to close his eyes and will the problem out of existence. However, what seemed simplest to him turned out to be worst to others. An year's indifferent rule and an ineffective language policy brought matters to a head in June 1957, when the infamous Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact was signed. Apart from giving certain concessions in regard to the use of the Tamil language, the Pact envisaged the creation of separate Regional Councils for the Northern and Eastern Provinces with full administrative autonomy and power to federate. This was viewed by the rest of the country with alarm, the Tamil leaders who were demanding a federal state were being given it and more. The agitation against the Government's move spread far and wide, and diverse organisations including the then highly articulate Bhikku Front came out in protest demonstrations.

To invoke the gods to save the country from the threat of division and to put some sense into the heads of the rulers, the Prelates of the two major Buddhist Chapters of Malwatta and Asgiriya called for a special religious service. They also sent out an open invitation to all interested individuals and parties to join in the "puja".

Here was an opportunity that J. R. did not wish to miss. On behalf of the U. N. P. he accepted the invitation, and elected to walk like a pilgrim the entire 72 miles from Colombo to Kandy.

J. R. conveyed his intention to the Prelates assuring them of his Party's support and promising them to be in Kandy on the 8th, ready to take part in the religious service. He assured them further that it would be a peaceful march even devoid of political demonstrations.

News of J. R.'s plan spread like wild fire. Party members from all over the country wrote to him requesting permission to join in. Inundated with requests J. R. was forced to limit permission to 500 only. Besides, a larger number would

obviously be unwieldly and, further, would tend to create undue suspicions in the minds of the State authorities.

The Government went into fevered tantrums, and Ministers of State and Government-backed newspapers called for a ban on the march. Some of them quite openly organised counter-demonstrations. Prime Minister Bandaranaike who sarcastically remarked that pilgrims do not need Police protection, nevertheless, agreed to send a Police van as escort. The Lake House papers, then a trumpet for the Government, called the march "a silly thing" which the U. N. P. should call off. Some papers even attributed sinister motives to the U. N. P. saying that the march could flare up communal passions.

J. R. made his position clear. He said that the journey to Kandy is on an invitation received from the Mahanayakes and is not a publicity stunt. The aim of the journey, he explained, is to draw the attention of the Government to the public opinion against its efforts to divide the country. Therefore, those who would oppose the march would be those who are incited by the M. E. P. In short, this was to be a non-violent protest.

As arranged, a large number of persons gathered near the Layard's Broadway Junction by 4 p.m. on 3 October. A decorated vehicle was ready to take the monks who were to lead the procession chanting *pirith*. At 4.30 p.m. the procession began to move, with J. R. and his eleven organisers walking right behind the leading vehicle. Dudley Senanayake and several other U. N. P. leaders who had come to see them off walked with the processionists for some distance.

Supporters of the U. N. P. had decorated the entire route with green flags and banners, but here and there were also seen a profusion of black flags and several effigies and coffins marked U. N. P. On either side of the road were large groups of people, some sympathetic to the U. N. P. and some vociferously hostile. Boos and catcalls seemed to drown the cheers. Before long a hail of stones descended on the procession, and a short while later a handbomb exploded. By the time the procession reached the end of its first lap of the

journey there were sixteen injured—many of them spectators—and a van toppled and burnt.

Having spent a restless night at Kadawata the pilgrims started on their second lap at about 6 a.m. Two hours later, near the 14th mile post, at a place called Imbulgoda, the pilgrims found their way barred by about a hundred persons who were lying down on the road, led by the M.P. for Gampaha. Two cars had also been placed across the road, blocking passage. It was quite evident that these people meant mischief. And the Police were obviously conniving with them as was proved by their inaction the previous day.

The march ended. On Police advice the Prime Minister banned it. The ban would have come to nought had J. R.'s followers forced their way through. But, then, that would have brought greater harm not only to them but also to their cause—the non-violent protest.

When J. R.'s request for permission for at least six of them to continue their walk was turned down by the Police, J. R. accepted the verdict of authority and advised the pilgrims to turn back. Four buses were got down for the return journey. The crowd grew to threatening proportions and J. R. walked to their midst, alone, and asked them to beat him up if that were their aim. His daring silenced them. J. R. took the fourth bus, the last to board it, and left the place at 1.15 p.m. along with the other leaders among whom were M. D. Banda, R. Premadasa and D. C. W. Kannangara.

As J. R. explained in a statement issued by him on his return to Colombo, the entire episode of the 'March to Kandy' was a defeat to the Government. The pilgrims had moved with supreme determination from the very start and all efforts of the Government's thugs to make them abandon their journey had failed, at Grandpass, Peliyagoda, Kiribathgoda and Kadawata, and finally the brazen intimidation at Imbulgoda, openly connived at by Government M.P.s and Police, would have been just one more obstacle which the pilgrims would have easily overcome. For the ordinary people—the common villagers—

were in complete sympathy with J. R.'s cause, a fact which drove the Government into near panic.

Though the Government had prohibited the march it could not stop the religious service that was due to take place at the Dalada Maligawa on the 8th. Even so, the Government prohibited the use of the *Pattirippuwa,* the octagonal building, claiming it to be Government property—a contention that was challenged by the Prelates who stated that the premises belonged to the Sangha and quoted, even, John Doyley's diary of 19 March 1815 as proof. However, as nothing could prevail upon the Government to change its mind, the organisers of the *puja* decided to hold the service in the Maligawa grounds.

The members of the U. N. P. were there in full force, led by J. R., and thousands of devotees who streamed in from all parts of the country flooded the entire area. Many of them had come to express their bitter resentment of the Government's attitude towards the U. N. P.—the fascist attitude that hired hooligans to aim stones at the devotees and at the Maligawa itself during the religious service.

Whether the Gods responded to the invocation is something that we cannot say. But it is true that public opinion forced the Government to abrogate its pact with the leader of the Federal Party.

Maddened by its growing unpopularity the M. E. P. Government tended towards political adventurism wherein the so-called Middle Path policy resolved into a total lack-of-policy. Nose-led by political and communal extremists it brought chaos to the economy and death, bloodshed and mayhem to the suffering public.

'The evil that the M. E. P. candidates did during the elections is living after their victory. The drought in the Dry Zone, the floods in the West Zone, the recrudescence of malaria, the indiscipline that is seeping through every strata of society and increasing murder and grave crime are but some of them. What the people expected from a change of government was some

benefit they did not have before. Instead, they find that their saviour is devouring them'.

That is how J. R. himself assessed the situation in November 1956. His party was being singled out for ridicule and repression. But nothing could now cow down the spirit of the resurgent U. N. P. For behind it and before it strode the resolute figure of the charismatic J. R.

The reign of the M.E.P. was cut short with the assasination of the Prime Minister S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike in September 1959. W. Dahanayake who took over as Prime Minister found it impossible to hold together the disparate groups that comprised the M. E. P. His tenure lasted a bare three months before Parliament was dissolved and a General Election set for 19 March 1960.

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UNDER A NEW delimitation of electorates the elections of March 1960 had to return a total of 151 Members to the House of Representatives. The Kelaniya electorate to which J. R. received nomination once again was now smaller than the constituency he had earlier represented and subsequently lost in 1956. J. R. was keen on contesting Kelaniya for two reasons: firstly, he did not wish to forsake his close friends in the electorate and the fourteen thousand odd voters who had supported him in 1956. Secondly, he wanted to prove that the people of Kelaniya who had been misled by the S. L. F. P. had now realized their mistake. He certainly proved it when the election results returned him as the Member for Kelaniya polling a majority of 1,509 votes over his nearest rival, the S. L. F. P.'s R. S. Perera.

The U. N. P. captured 50 seats at the elections and being the largest party in Parliament formed the Government. For the third time Dudley Senanayake became Prime Minister. To save the country from unnecessary expense and in view of its unstable position in a House where the combined Opposition was larger, he limited his Cabinet to eight Ministers

giving J. R. the portfolios of Finance, Local Government and Housing. In addition, J. R. was also appointed Leader of the House. In accepting the Governor General's call to form a Government the U. N. P. probably, thought, and, in fact, J. R. advised, that the other parties would allow a government to carry on with at least the day to day administration for some time without burdening the country with the heavy expenses of another General Election. However, the Opposition proved to be unyielding, and at the very outset it elected its own candidate T. B. Subasinghe as Speaker, defeating the Government's nominee, Sir Albert F. Peries. To prevent a similar fate when the debate on the Address of Thanks was taken up J. R. pleaded with the Opposition to allow the Government to continue for some time and said:

'I, therefore, make this appeal to you: the country does not want a General Election; the country is tired of General Elections. The time may come very soon when you can help the country to choose a proper Government. But till then why not give a chance to the men who are sitting on these Front Benches, to a man who is experienced as a Prime Minister, whose integrity is not challenged, a man about whom there has not been a whisper of bribery and corruption? Give them a chance to run this Government for a time until you feel the country is again ripe for an election.'

His plea fell on deaf ears, and on 22 April the Government was outvoted by the Opposition. Bowing to the wish of the majority and in accordance with the U.N.P.'s declared respect for parliamentary democracy, Dudley Senanayake had Parliament dissolved the very next day and fresh elections fixed for July.

Three months were insufficient time for the U. N. P. to organise its election campaign. It had to go it alone while the S. L. F. P. now led by Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike had the L. S. S. P. and the C. P. back it up through a mutual no-contest agreement. Besides, the sudden and tragic death of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike engendered a wave of public sympathy towards

his widow which the S. L. F. P. lost no time or strategy to exploit to its advantage.

J. R. who wished to contest Kelaniya once again was persuaded by his party to contest the two-member constituency of Colombo South. The sitting member, Edmund Samarawickreme of the U. N. P., personally stood down in J. R.'s favour. The elections returned 30 U. N. P. members, including J. R. who became the First Member for Colombo South polling 25,814 votes, a majority of 1,900 over the L. S. S. P.'s Bernard Soysa who became Second Member for that constituency.

The U.N.P. was now back in the Opposition. Dudley Senanayake became the Leader of the Opposition and J. R. its Chief Whip. Sirima Bandaranaike who did not face the polls took over the destinies of the country as a Senator-Prime Minister.

The second defeat of the U. N. P. gave new courage to J. R. who went about organising the party with greater zeal. He gave a new dimension to the party by providing a special interest in workers' movements. The National Trade Union—Jathika Sevaka Sangam—Movement that had been launched a few years back was given an active role in the party organisation. And, for the first time in the history of the U. N. P. the party observed May Day with a bang in 1961. May Day had all along been the preserve of the leftists. J. R.'s advent into that preserve proved his long advocated support for the rights of the working class and disproved the much maligned image of the party as being essentially an employers' club.

Apart from party activities, J. R. did not fail in his role as an Opposition front bencher. He was quick to defend the public cause whenever governmental threats assailed it. Towards the end of 1961 he represented Ceylon at the annual sessions of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in London, and in May 1963 took part in the discussions with the Indian Premier, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, on the Indo-Ceylon Problem.

The path was now clear for the S. L. F. P. Government of Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike to have its own way. Happily ens-

conced in the Senate, she managed the affairs of State through her relation and the first of her four Ministers of Finance, Felix Dias Bandaranaike, who was known more for his wit than his wisdom. C. P. de Silva who had sacrificed his position in the party in favour of Mrs. Bandaranaike was only nominally the Leader of the House. To the Members of the House of Representatives she was a "stranger", and the parliamentary propriety and political morality of her remote-controlled administration was never left unquestioned. Nevertheless, the S. L. F. P.'s comfortable majority in Parliament helped it to carry on regardless. It had 75 solid votes of its own, and with the added support of the Appointed Members and several turn-coat Independents its position seemed unassailable.

Mrs. Bandaranaike's Government was little different from that of her husband's. Professing the same nebulous Middle Path policy it careered down the Gadarene Slope of political adventurism. No one knew what the true motive forces were that sped it on its way, except for wild but pardonable guesses which rested on the theory that those at its helm represented a feudal class and, therefore, had to use the Government for the restoration of their fast eroding power and prestige. The erosion of the feudal powers had been nothing more than a historic process, but with the introduction of the free education scheme the new generation of educated young workers had begun to move in increasing volume to the cities where capital-intensive projects held better prospects of more honourable employment. The exodus left the land-based rural economy in near chaos which in turn loomed as a possible threat to the power and influence that the feudal class wielded in the rural electorates. Here was another manifestation of the conflict between feudalism and capitalism.

Before the end of 1960, the S. L. F. P. Government laid its hands on the Insurance Companies. And, later, on the pretext of agreeing with the observations made in the Buddhist Commission and Sasana Commission Reports, it took steps to take over the denominational schools.

Speaking on the take over of the Assisted Schools and Training Colleges, J. R. told Parliament that the U. N. P. stood for the prime need of a religious background in a child's education and that a U. N. P. Government would not only aid but even manage a system of denominational schools. Besides, education should not be the monopoly of the State, and any such attempt, he explained, would not only be futile but also harmful to the interests of the religious minorities, including the Buddist minority represented by the Maha Bodhi Society and the Buddhist Theosophical Society whose educational institutions have been built up over the centuries. He told the Government to act like a statesman and not like a bully.

But the Government was neither in a mind nor a mood to listen to sane counsel. It paid scant regard to public opinion, less to the rights of the individual and still less to international good-will. Its one aim, apparently, was revenge on all sections that had opposed the S. L. F. P. at the elections. This mood soured the beatific face it tried to present when even progressive legislation was enacted. The Ceylon Petroleum Corporation Bill, for example, was to set up a state-controlled agency for the business of distributing and selling petroleum and petroleum products, but its undeclared intention was to victimize the oil companies which the Government party felt had financed the U. N. P.

J. R., always alert to the insinuations of corruption against his party, took umbrage at this stance. And, on 21 April 1961, he vehemently denied any financial relationship with these companies. The mere fact that these companies were based in the United States and the United Kingdom with which the U. N. P. has close ties of friendship does not mean that the U. N. P. receives money from these companies; it only means that the U. N. P. too stands for the democratic way of life that these countries cherish. 'But we do not support them in anything wrong that they do,' added J. R. 'We have fought against them in the United Nations; we have fought against them in this House and condemned them if they were wrong. But I ask you, why do you not do the same thing regarding the

Soviet Union? Therefore, when you come to this House and say the United National Party is a party which has taken money from the oil companies, that they are the stooges of America, I say that is an unfair, unjust and incorrect statement to make.'

As regards the importation and distribution of essential consumer commodities, including oil and motor spirits, J. R. put the record straight by saying that the U. N. P. was not opposed to it, that he had himself moved for it way back in 1945 in the State Council. In fact, J. R. called upon the Government to make it a fuller job by taking over the importation of oil as well. 'We do not put up our shutters and close our doors to the feelings and ideas of the people as they exist in our contemporary world. We throw them open, and if the people of Ceylon are moving towards socialism, this party, the party to which I belong, will be with them in that march.'

But it was not where the people were moving that Mrs. Bandaranaike's S. L. F. P. Government moved. It just rushed into situations which gave it more than mere jolts. It had to face an attempted coup d'etat, and the laws it made to meet the situation blew up in its face. And, as if to hide its face, it severed the country's ties with the Privy Council and had the Governor General, a former U. N. P. Minister, recalled by the Queen.

However, the Government had now begun to feel the restlessness growing in the country. There was only one way open to save itself, and that was to hold a rein on the organised working class which alone had the immediate capacity to pose any real threat. And, in a master-minded tactical move, it coalesced with the Lanka Sama Samaja Party which commanded 12 votes in Parliament and a host of major trade unions.

The alliance with the Marxists, in June 1964, made many S. L. F. P. leaders uneasy. Here was a party that the Premier's late husband had set up as an alternative to the U. N. P. Now, however, with N. M. Perera, Cholmondeley Goonewardene and Anil Moonesinghe in the Cabinet and Vivienne Goone-

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wardene a Junior Minister the Samasamajist tail had begun to wag the S. L. F. P. dog.

When Parliament began its Fifth Session on 2 July 1964, its voting strength was further augmented by the C. P. member Stanley Tillekeratne joining the S. L. F. P.

Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely, said Lord Acton. The S. L. F. P. – L. S. S. P. Coalition Government, drunk of the heady wine of power, had now begun to feel that they were well set in office even to continue beyond its term. They believed that whatever they did was acknowledged by the people, and that parties like the U. N. P. were plainly rabble-rousers without any genuine roots among the masses. It was a feeling of euphoria given expression to by many government men who openly flaunted their power and advocated the establishment of a dictatorship. These utterances caused fear among the people who were already suffering the slings and arrows of administrative mismanagement and bureaucratic bungling under a government that was blindly blundering along. In fact the validity of its rule had itself become an issue, for there had been no popular mandate allowing the S. L. F. P. to coalesce with the Marxists.

The U. N. P. was the first to protest against the government's sly attempts to extend its term of life. At its Executive Committee meeting held on 5 July, the U. N. P. unanimously resolved to resort to revolutionary measures and mobilise its forces to safeguard the rights of the people if the government were to adopt any suspicious tactics. The U. N. P. had always stood for a constitutional regime and under no circumstances would the party deviate from that policy It would oppose any illegal rule. It would accept even a Samasamajist Government provided that Government was elected constitutionally, but not any illegal government.

Explaining the stand taken by his party, J. R. stated that they would, with immediate effect, adopt the role of a revolutionary party, and go all out to form mass opposition to any undemocratic moves by the government. It would amount to a

gross betrayal on the part of the party, he said, if it were not to mobilise the people in such an event.

The counter move declared by the U. N. P. hastened a denial by the Government of any dark designs. But the left-handed denial constituted no clear assurance that the government would end its headstrong attitudes.

J. R. took the matter up in Parliament too, and on 9 July reiterated the necessity to understand the real nature of the Coalition and the terms and conditions under which the L. S. S. P. had thought it fit to join the government.

'I must refer,' he said, 'to one particular member who is now the Finance Minister. I must refer to him for two reasons: one, for he occupies the seat I occupied for six years. I do not envy the task he has. Whatever our differences in politics, he is now the Minister of Finance and his acts affect all of us.'

J. R. admitted that he had known N. M. Perera since 1926, as a colleague at the Ceylon University College. Though they had come from different schools he had taken a liking to N. M. Subsequently they had parted company.

'I think,' he said, 'I took the right road, because I find the Honourable Member agreeing with many things I have done in my life. I think he is also going on the right road.'

He then referred to the things on which the Minister of Finance had agreed with him. One was the political independence of Ceylon. The Minister had said that it was a fake independence. Now, he and everybody else had accepted that the Constitution the U. N. P. had obtained in 1948 was a free Constitution and as a result they had been able to ask the British to leave the bases. The new Minister now praised the Commonwealth and valued the ties with the Commonwealth and hoped to enhance them. There was a time when he wanted Ceylon to leave the Commonwealth.

J. R. further said that the Minister of Finance had also accepted the citizenship laws promulgated by the U. N. P. and now intends to solve the citizenship problems on the basis of those laws. He had also accepted the U. N. P.'s proposals for solving the language problem.

When the U. N. P. Government gave Rs. 5,000,000 for the Buddha Jayanti celebrations the Minister had stated that the government should not show any particular favour to Buddhism, but now he had accepted the U. N. P. view on that matter too. When J. R. produced his six-year Plan, the members of the present coalition had had stated that it was a six-year plan for a five-year parliament, but now they were putting up a three-year plan for a one-year parliament.

'This is the first time in the history of the world where a Trotskyite party is in a government. I think the whole country and the whole world are watching to see how they, specially the three Samasamaja Ministers in the front row, will perform.'

Speaking of the fate of Coalitions, J. R. said, 'You know there are certain spiders which destroy the others. That spider is called the black widow. It is like that.' There have been coalitions in England too, he explained, where one party has ended up in being swallowed by the other. In Ceylon, there was the U. N. P. Coalition with the Tamil Congress which ended with the disappearance of the Tamil Congress. There was the S. L. F. P. – V. L. S. S. P. coalition which had resulted in the disappearance of the V. L. S. S. P. at the elections. That was because the people did not like coalitions.

One could understand a coalition against a common enemy from outside. But this coalition was born for two reasons: the S. L. F. P. 's fear that it would be defeated in the House and in the country and the L. S. S. P. 's despair that it would never form a government of its own. This fear and despair could doom the right of the people to select the government they prefer at a free election. That was why, said J. R., that the U. N. P. had to talk so much about the franchise.

He referred to the fact that both the S. L. F. P. and the L. S. S. P. had talked about postponing the elections due in 1965. He stated that a responsible member of the government had asked the country to be handed over to Colonel Udugama, which in other words was a call for a dictatorship. The fact that the member concerned, a Minister, denied that statement did not deter J. R. from quoting what

other members had said, and what an influential monk had suggested to the government in an open letter advocating the establishment of a dictatorship, and what a former Finance Minister had stated at Nuwara Eliya suggesting the continuation of the coalition government beyond 1965.

If such an eventuality were to take place the U. N. P. would see to it that that illegal and unconstitutional government would be overthrown. For the heart of the problem, said J. R., was not whether the L. S. S. P. joined the government or not, or whether there were members of the Cabinet who objected to the L. S. S. P. 's presence and asked for safeguards or not, but whether this country was going to continue as a democratic country, whether it was going to develop economically through democratic processes, whether the people will have the right to vote and elect their own representatives, whether they would continue to enjoy the freedom of expression, the freedom of speech, the freedom of assembly, the freedom of religion and the freedom of the Press.

If J. R.'s words of caution failed to surface the latent suspicions that the more conscientious sections of the S. L. F. P. were nursing it succeeded, at least, in making the people of the country vigilant. The alleged coup itself which was then the subject of a legal hearing outruled the impossibility of totalitarian shortcuts to power. In fact, state encroachments upon the democratic freedoms of the individual had already become a way of life in Ceylon. Attempts had even been made to destroy the independence of the judiciary by removing from the Judicial Service Commission the power of appointing judges and magistrates and exercising disciplinary control over them, and by amending the election law such that election judges will become political appointees. These attempts were foiled by public vigilance, by mounting protests indicating that the dangers were foreseen and would be resisted.

There were also other insidious assaults on the freedom of the individual through, for example, bureaucratic curbs on travel imposed without sanction by the legislature. Other dangers hung like swords of Damocles; the attempts to limit

freedom of speech, to condemn men unheard, to imprison persons without trial, to relieve prosecutors of the burden of showing proof, to deprive subjects of property without adequate compensation etc. And, finally, the Press which is no more and no less the vehicle of public opinion now found itself included in the danger list.

A free Press with an independent Judiciary and the Rule of Law constituted the most vital safeguards of a democratic society and of the fundamental rights of the citizen. For a free Press reflected a vigilant public opinion – vigilant to the threats on these cherished rights. And, when the Ceylon Press Bill was placed on the Order Paper of the Senate with the avowed intention of curbing free expression of public opinion and meaningful criticism, the people voiced their protest in no uncertain terms. Originated in and passed by the Senate on 1 October 1964, the Bill was tabled in the House of Representatives five days later.

J. R. the supreme strategist now came into his mettle, and armed with the Standing Orders he neatly aborted the Government's offensive. J. R. 's strategy called for two members of the Opposition to move the Second Reading of the Bill, and Lakshman Rajapaksa of Tissamaharama and Naina Marikkar of Puttalam completely out-smarted the Government by moving the Second Reading in their name and fixing a date for the debate one whole year away.

The resulting uproar in the House can only be imagined. The pundits of parliamentary practice and procedure on the government benches howled in protest and tried to convince the Speaker of their special right to decide on the progress of a government bill. But J. R 's knowledge of the law and of the Standing Orders that guided the proceedings of Parliament and the forensic skill with which he analysed the situation were not to be matched. The Government had been caught napping. There was nothing that the Speaker could do but rule in favour of the Opposition.

The Press Bill – the 13th draft – intended to create a Press Council which consisted of five members who were to be

appointed by the State. They were to be granted powers of taxation with no parliamentary control and powers to take over newspaper shares and sell them to selected buyers. The Council was also expected to be concerned with alleged attempts by newspapers to create disaffection among the people towards the government and to alleged subversion against the government – neither concept being specifically defined.

The Opposition's move to obstruct the passage of the Press legislation enraged the Government so much that it went. to the extent of challenging the Speaker's ruling. This too J. R. opposed by saying that if the Speaker allowed his rulings to be challenged they would not be able to proceed with the work of Parliament.

The Press Bill was a blueprint for dictatorship, every line in it aiming at state control of the Press of the land. The freedom of the people was now really at stake. Political parties except for the two in the Coalition cried halt to the Government's attempt to muzzle the Press. Almost all religious and social organisations in the country joined in the protest. Not one believed in the preamble to the Bill which proposed to 'ensure independence of the Press.' None could have been expected to believe it, for members of the Cabinet were already revealing their crude intention which, in their own words, was to teach a lesson to the newspapers for daring to criticise.

The Government which ultimately had to eat humble pie thought next of revenge. There was the Lake House group of newspapers which had all along refused to toe the official line. So, with the express intention of taking over the Lake House Group, the Government got its Ceylon Newspaper Corporation Bill suddenly introduced in the House. On 5 November 1964, after a forty-five minute debate, it had the Second Reading on that Bill passed by a majority of 9 votes.

The 'Daily Mail', London, in an editorial entitled 'Ceylon in Chains' commented:

'The long fight for Press freedom in Ceylon has been lost. It is now certain that the largest newspaper group will be State-controlled . . . . . .

'To justify this monstrous move, Mrs. Bandaranaike, the Prime Minister, complained recently that her government had been subjected to "unfair attacks based on false premises".

'It is the excuse of every dictator.'

What was now left to the Opposition was to use not only its voting might but even its knowledge of parliamentary procedures to, at least, stump the Government at its own wicket when it begins batting during the Committee stage. This required a clear expression of public protest. Accordingly J. R. organised a mass rally at the Colombo Town Hall premises on 11 November, 1964. The meeting attended by all sections of the responsible Opposition was preceded by a demonstration which wended its way from the Sugathadasa Stadium to the Town Hall venue led by Dudley Senanayake and other Party leaders. This example led to dozens of other protest rallies all over the country.

Mounting public resentment and the inherent legal flaws of the Bill itself made the Government change its tactics once again. It knew, that if the Bill were challenged in court the reflection it would cast on the Government's *bona fides* would not be entirely satisfactory. And, with the trump of re-introducing a revised Bill up its sleeve, the Government prorogued Parliament on the night of the 12th. The Government's Press grab legislation had been ill-starred all along. The malefic stars were undoubtedly the Marxists who had master-minded the whole operation. The Marxists in the Government should have learnt their lesson when J. R. outwitted them by 'pinching' their first Bill and putting it in cold storage. Resign! was the general cry that came from every quarter. But power is not easily shed, specially by people who have nothing else to cover their nudity.

On 20th November, after the Throne Speech declaring open the Sixth Session of Parliament, the Government gave notice that a new Press Bill would be presented on the 26th. The Government—thanks to its Marxist comrades—was now at its lowest ebb in performance, but it was in no way intending to give up its aim of grabbing Lake House which was now

certain to be its biggest headache at election time. So, on the 26th, the Second Reading of the Ceylon Press Bill and the Newspaper Corporation of Ceylon Bill was fixed for 9 December.

Public protests soared to new heights. The Times of Ceylon, in its succinct and prophetic leader of 1 December, stated: 'They (the S. L. F. P.—L. S. S. P. Coalition) cannot hope to match by counter-demonstration the gigantic upsurge that is taking place in the country; nor can they hope to stem it with the crude stone-throwing, insult-shouting, rumour-mongering techniques of which the Samasamajists are such past masters. Nor should they ever try to do anything so criminally foolish, because the people are in no mood to be trifled with. But, fortunately for the beleagured forces of the S. L. F. P., the battle of the take-over shifts this week to familiar ground again. In Parliament . . . . the Government has at least the moral advantage of being in the saddle, if not the dubious consolation of its numerical superiority. It is there that the senior partner of the Coalition, the S. L. F. P., will have its last chance to retrieve the reputation it compromised (in the eyes of the electors) by its readiness to follow the shameful lead of the Samasamajist mentors.

'The issues they will have to vote on during this session will have a decisive bearing on their prospects at the coming general election. These explosive issues are no longer the playthings of Samasamajist schemers and Cabinet conspirators. They have now been taken to the country, and will soon be carried from village to village and even from door to door. Once this campaign really gets under weigh (sic) those who still have truck with L. S. S. P. iconoclasts and revilers of religion—be it the Prime Minister herself—will receive short-shrift. The chips are certainly down—for the S. L. F. P.

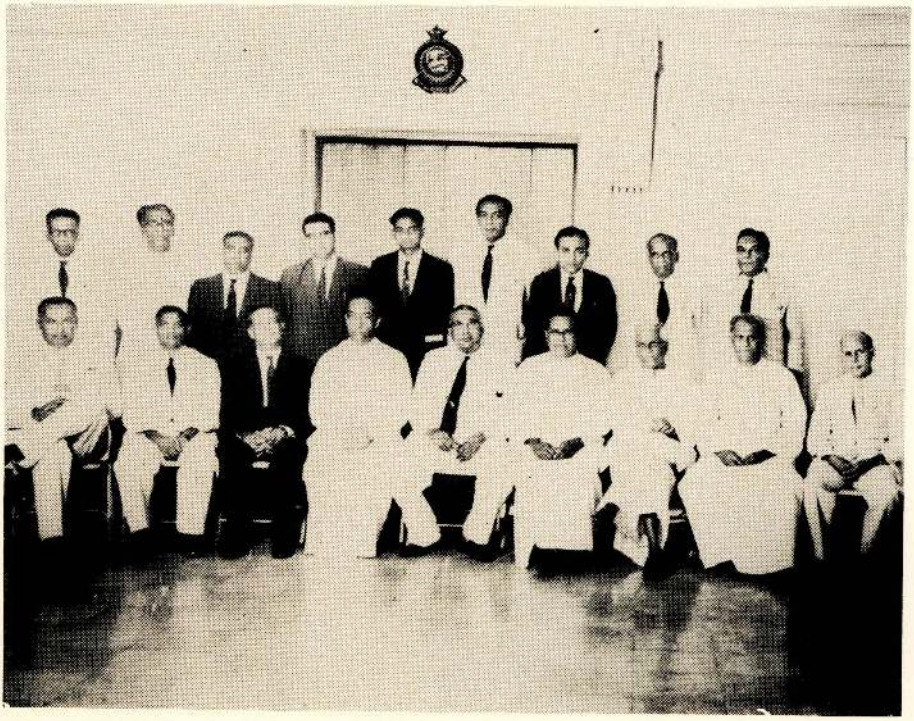
With a thousand burning problems facing the country the Government apparently was interested only in one thing—the taking over of one section of the Press and muzzling the rest. The farcical Sixth Session of Parliament was opened with a Throne Speech which promised to 'take the country

further along democratic and socialist lines'. What that meant, besides the Press grab, nobody knew, for not even one member of the Government rose to explain when the debate on the Throne Speech began. The debate turned out to be a more or less one-way affair, the Opposition hitting out all round the wicket. The short innings ended on 3 December 1964 amidst a series of surprises—surprises to the Government. C. P. de Silva, Leader of the House and Minister of Lands, Irrigation and Power, crossed the floor and took a seat in the Opposition spear-heading the attack on his erstwhile Government.

With C. P. de Silva, thirteen other government members and one Appointed Member who defied the Government Whip voted with the Opposition and the result was 74 to 73, the Government losing by one vote.

There was consternation writ large on the faces of the Government front-benchers. Who engineered this? was the question they naturally asked and, equally naturally, their furtive glances fell on J. R. who appeared to be chuckling to himself. That J. R.'s speech the previous day helped turn the tide is only partly true—true in that that it brought sense at least to the men in that Government to whom democracy meant something valuable. And, if J. R.'s words could not have fired their sense of independence, nothing else could ever have. His closing remarks couched in pithy Sinhala constituted a challenge to all sensible men:

'You and I wearing cloth and banian and speaking Sinhala have been able to come to this House because the people voted for us. Protect that right of the people—the right to vote. If, with the help of the Government's majority in Parliament, you abolish the freedom of the Press the people's voting rights will also disappear. For, if the Samasamaja party which has joined the Government recently is to remain in it longer, I believe the Press which is no longer free will be used to undermine the people's right to use the vote. I don't say the S. L. F. P. thinks that way too. But it is this bit of dung that has made the milk of the S. L. F. P. sour. Whatever their mistakes, neither



The Cabinet of Ministers (1965–1970)

Mr. Bandaranaike nor Mrs. Bandaranaike ever thought of destroying democracy—that is, until these ideas spoilt them.

'This is a historic moment. If you act without any consideration for what would happen in the future it would spell the doom of the Parliamentary system which has been in this country all these years. Under the democratic parliamentary system we have seen so many occasions when the party in power had ended up in the Opposition benches. If you act in this way, all that would be over. Therefore, I would ask you to act responsibly and with foresight. I pray that you be granted the brains and the wisdom to act in a way that would not endanger the democratic right of the people to use their franchise.'

The feverish moves and counter-moves adopted by both Government and Opposition were also partly responsible for the final outcome. Where the Government slipped was in ignoring the murmurs of dissatisfaction among some of its own members and in deciding to use the Whip to command allegiance. To J. R., these same members provided a possible base on which he could mount his defence, and he surmised that he could well use them to augment the strength of the Opposition to spring a surprise victory on the Government.

Now, knowing his course, J. R. put his organisational skills into effect. The first thing he did was to arrange for a common amendment to the Address of Thanks. The Government itself had brought about a rare unity among the Opposition parties, a fact that had now come quite handy to J. R. And, so, on J. R.'s advice, an amendment was tendered to be moved by W. Dahanayake of the Lanka Democratic Party and seconded by Robert Gunawardena of the M. E. P.

J. R.'s next move was to persuade C. P. de Silva to turn his back on a party that had spurned his advice against the alliance with the Marxists. Now, in retrospect, this persuation does not appear to have been unusually difficult. What was now left to be done was to canvass the support of the entire Opposition. There were two U. N. P. members, E. L. Senanayake and Paris Perera, who were abroad. Both of them were cabled to return

promptly to be present at voting time. Paris Perera who was in America attending an Inter-Parliamentary Conference along with Bernard Soysa of the L. S. S. P. was specially instructed to keep his departure a secret from his colleague.

It was a tense Parliament that waited for the final division. The tension was felt even in the lobbies and the galleries. When the division bells were rung and the Opposition amendment expressing 'no confidence in Your Excellency's Government' was put to the vote, even J. R. had a reason to be somewhat apprehensive. For two Muslim M. P.'s who had agreed to vote with the Opposition had finally backed out.

The tale of the day, as one would say, was an amusing interlude—cruelly amusing in the context of the Government's sorrow. When the Speaker finally called upon the Leader to move the motion regarding the presentation of the Address of Thanks to the Governor General, the irrepressible W. Dahanayake rose and with his usual naiveté, asked that he be allowed to take the *amended* Address to the Governor General.

Even when Maitripala Senanayake was moving the formal motion, Dahanayake was heard shouting: 'No, I want to take it. Divide!'

CLIPPED WINGS

THE COALITION GOVERNMENT did not appear to be keen to resign when Parliament rejected its statement of policy. For two desperate weeks it clung on to office hoping for some fortuitous circumstance that would save it from the final fall. Its efforts to rally popular support for itself produced only a lukewarm response. Several Ministers and their hangers-on put up a feeble show of defiance by besieging the Prime Minister at *Temple Trees* and demanding that she continue in office. The Samasamajists advised her to ignore the outcome of the last voting in Parliament and seek a fresh vote of confidence which the Government was sure to receive on the strength of its numbers. There were also several experts on constitutional law who suggested that this particular issue be used to create a new parliamentary tradition where a majority government need not seriously accept an accidental set-back at a voting.

At first these manoeuvres only amused the Opposition, and it took special precautions to keep the people calm. But when the coalition parties decided to call out their trade unions on a sympathy strike, the Opposition knew that it was time to act. For the dark designs of the Government had become too clear; it was out to hold on to the seats of power and not step down with good grace. There were several steps that the Opposition could take and these included revolutionary tactics. However, J. R. decided on a simpler yet equally effective answer. He made it known to the Government that if its trade unions are

called out on strike the Opposition would call out the rest of the trade unions also, bringing the entire machinery of state to a grinding halt. That would be an eventuality that could make any government decidedly uncomfortable; more so this government. Besides, the Hartal of 1953 was not a forgotten letter yet.

Now, seeing no way out of this impasse, the Government finally had Parliament dissolved on 17 December and the general elections fixed for 22 March, 1965.

There were three whole months to go before election day, but to the U. N. P. they were to be three hectic months of concerted campaigning. There were 115 candidates on the field and every one of them had to be given the fullest backing that the party could muster. There were also the former S. L. F. P. ers who had helped the U. N. P. to defeat the Government, and they too had to be backed up.

On nomination day J. R. found himself returned uncontested to the Colombo South seat, along with Bernard Soysa of the L. S. S. P. This gave J. R. the opportunity to concentrate all his attention on the campaign of his party colleagues.

J. R. personally appeared and spoke at 110 meetings in 85 electorates. He had to be there, for it was he the people gathered and waited to hear. And, in the same token, it was he who had to answer the critics. He did his part with sincerity and with gusto, taking on more and more election meetings with every passing day. In the last week before the elections his rounds took him to Chilaw, Kurunegala, Dodangaslanda, Dambadeniya and Yapahuwa in one single day, followed by Bingiriya, Wariyapola and Kuliyapitiya the next morning and the Kandyan electorates in the evening—an almost whistle-stop series of public meetings which even continued into the whole of the next day covering Rambukkana, Kegalle, Attanagalla, Kelaniya, Ja-Ela and Wattala right down to Colombo Central. And at every stop he spoke, and the people in their thousands waited to hear him speak, whatever the time, day or night. He did not let them down.

And the people did not let him down either. The U. N. P. was returned the largest party winning 66 seats. The S. L. F. P. was awarded 41, and the L. S. S. P. and C. P. were together given 14 seats, 66 seats in a House of 151 was obviously insufficient to run a one-party administration. Besides, the S. L. F. P. and L. S. S. P. who were yet in the saddle as Caretaker Government were trying to move ahead of the U. N. P. through surreptitious overtures to the Federal Party. Their aim was to set up a coalition with F. P. support. When the news reached J. R. he promptly met the F. P. leaders himself and obtained their written consent to support a U. N. P. led government. Several party leaders including Philip Gunawardena, C. P. de Silva, W. Dahanayake, K. M. P. Rajaratna and E. M. V. Naganathan were present at the discussion that night. Before the break of dawn J. R. called on G. G. Ponnambalam and obtained his consent also for the U. N. P. government.

There were 95 members now, representing seven parties willing to join in a national government. Confronted with their signed declaration the Governor General had no alternative but to ask Mrs. Bandaranaike to resign.

On 25 March, Dudley Senanayake took his oaths as Prime Minister. The National Government he set up comprised the U. N. P., the Federal Party, the Tamil Congress, C. P. de Silva's Sri Lanka Freedom Socialist Party, Rajaratna's National Liberation Front, Philip Gunawardena's M. E. P. and S. Thondaman's Ceylon Workers' Congress. It was a truly national government for these parties represented between them a complete cross section of the entire population. This provided the government with the communal, religious and class concord so essential for national development. It is to J. R.'s advice and statesmanship that Dudley Senanayake owed the final composition of his 17 member Cabinet.

As had always been his lot, J. R. found himself placed second in line in the hierarchy of the administration. He was appointed Minister of State and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Defence and External Affairs. Even so, it was not J. R.'s nature to grumble. He acquitted himself with extra

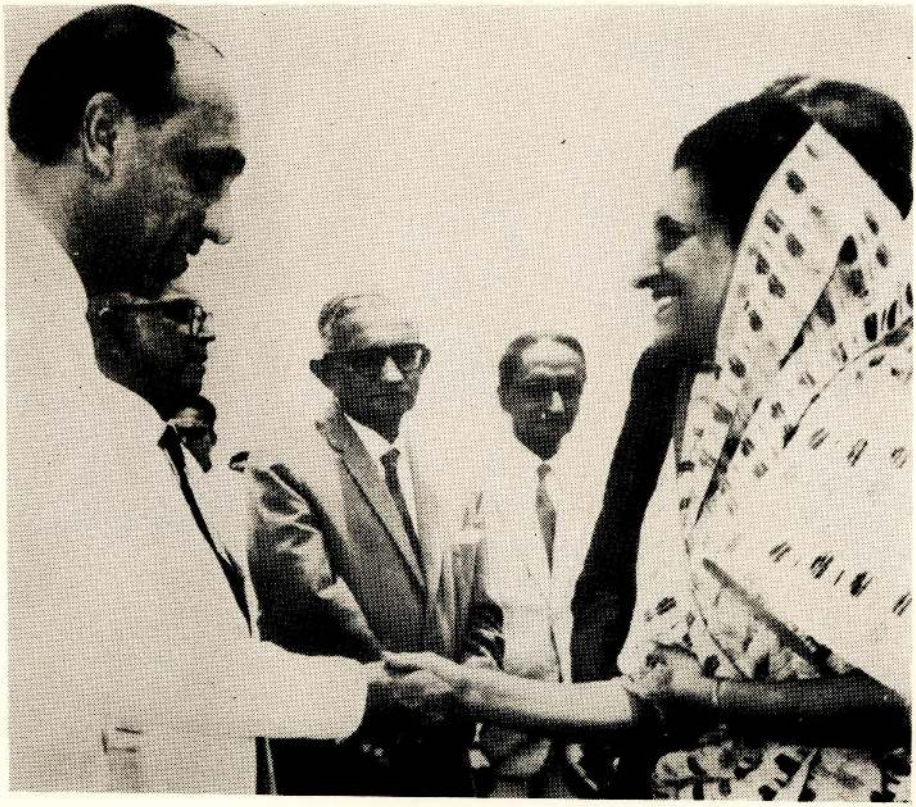
distinction. His farsighted policies on a whole range of national issues not only brought immediate acclaim but even provided a re-assessment of the country's priorities. It was J. R. who gave a meaning and a scope to the tourist industry which at that time was no more than a middling private enterprise.

The two main organisations created by him were the Ceylon Tourist Board and the Ceylon Hotels Corporation. The former provided a genuine base from which all co-ordination work could be done and streamline the publicity media while the latter provided the accommodation facilities that foreign tourists expected. These ventures put Sri Lanka on the world map of tourism and made the industry one of Sri Lanka's biggest earners of foreign exchange. J. R.'s efforts in this field are best reflected today by the ultra-modern buildings that have changed the skyline all the way from Colombo to Bentota. Even a fair number of the old-world rest houses in far-flung areas has acquired a new look.

It was also J. R. who was responsible for salvaging the red-tape-ridden Department of Broadcasting and putting it on a sound independent footing. Today the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation is a national cultural complex, a far cry from the pre-1966 centre for cheap commercial entertainment.

It was during the same year 1966 that J. R. created the Sri Lanka State Trading Corporation which in its several distinct institutions, notably Salu Sala and Consolidated Exports, has become a flourishing organisation in the country's import and export business. Even the common man was given an opportunity of joining this broad-based organisation as a shareholder.

J. R.'s aim in all these and other ventures of this period was to build a self-contained Sri Lanka where no man, whatever his place in life, would find it necessary to seek foreign aid for his or his country's economic advancement. J. R.'s vision encompassed even a Swadeshi Plan which in maturity was to have made the country self-sufficient in rice, fish, meat and textiles. His Plan included a National Agricultural Corps of 15,000 men that was to take the vanguard in a "grow more



With Indira Gandhi

rice" campaign. His effort brought results by way of a record production of rice in 1968, almost 70 per cent of the total requirements, cutting down state imports by almost half.

J. R.'s selfless devotion to the causes undertaken by him and his marked achievements in these matters brought quite a different result too. Some of his colleagues both in the Cabinet and outside began to see him as a man who was aiming to supplant Dudley Senanayake in his Prime Ministerial office. His success in winning over the support and confidence of the Opposition for his Swadeshi Plan, which was meant to be implemented on an electoral basis with decentralized budgetary control, created more room for jealousy.

The fact that Dudley Senanayake was abroad at this time provided a good excuse for the mischief-makers to run riot. They deliberately misinterpreted J. R.'s successful handling of a general strike and an alleged attempt at a coup viciously insinuating that both incidents had been manipulated by J. R.

When Dudley Senanayake returned to the Island the rumour-mongers carried a variety of tales to him, and the Prime Minister, either because of his delicate state of health or because of the personal standing of these tale-carriers, became gullible enough to the extent of placing J. R. under C. I. D. surveillance and stripping him of his authority over the Departments of Information and Broadcasting.

There is no question that J. R. must have felt the affront. But this was not the time to abandon his duties and, besides, Dudley had not personally confronted him with any allegation of treachery. It was not for J. R. to feel spited if Dudley had blundered; it was Dudley's business to know who his friends were. But Dudley's attitude had its own fateful impact on the general trend of the government itself, so much so that the Federal Party too broke away by the end of 1968.

Now, it was a case of each Minister to himself. Dudley's own Ministry became a by-word for bureaucratic apathy, and not all the efforts of the Departments of Information and Broadcasting succeeded in building any atmosphere of public confidence. There was also the Ministry of Education which,

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through its short-sighted and hot-headed policies, was increasingly alienating the goodwill of the student population and creating hot-beds of violence in every school and campus.

But Dudley was complacent. Even with the Federal Party out of it, his government yet had the voting majority to carry on. And, having completed its full term of office—the first government since Independence to do so—it dissolved Parliament on 25 March and faced a general election on 27 May 1970.

Dudley Senanayake had reasons to be hopeful. His was the first government that had brought peace and communal harmony to the country. In the field of agricultural production the figures were already reassuring, and with the diversion of the Mahaweli, which his government had planned for, the new horizons appeared rosy. The people too were expected to be happy especially with the free measure of rice given on the ration despite the phenomenal increase in world prices.

What Dudley Senanayake did not discount for is the unpredictability of the voter, specially in a country where parliamentary democracy has thrived and where regular elections have become a guarantee against totalitarian tendencies. The election of 1970 proved to be no exception to this rule. The results showed in bold relief that it is not the well-meant policies of a government that finally counted but a government's recognition of the temperament of the people.

To the U. N. P. the elections ended in an utter rout securing only 17 seats in a House of 151. The S. L. F. P. which campaigned hand-in-hand with the L. S. S. P. and C. P. romped home with 90 seats for itself and 29 for its fellow-travellers. Here was the people's response to the National Government's well-meant policies. Here was a clear rap on the knuckles of those politicians who in their ivory towers wished to rest content that the world moved with them. Here was a warning that even the people who came to power in 1970 soon ignored and paid the penalty in due time.

The humiliating defeat of the U. N. P. left Dudley Senanayake totally dejected and demoralized. The uninhibited

arrogance of the new United Front Government led by Mrs. Bandaranaike was too much for him, and he yielded the leadership of the Opposition in Parliament to J. R. It was little that J. R. himself could do in the circumstance, for the overwhelming majority of the Government had spilled into either side of the Chamber almost literally, suffocating the Opposition. It was an exertion even to speak and a veritable trial of nerves to rise to oppose. But J. R. with his nerves of steel stood well against the unruly forces of the Government which appeared to have received a standing licence to shout him down.

J. R. conceded from the very beginning that the United Front Government took office with tremendous enthusiasm, an asset that he wanted the Government to enhance. In fact, he offered the Government the support of his own party for the solution of pressing national problems. In a resume of the events that led to the defeat of the U. N. P., J. R. explained to the Party's Working Committee:

'After 23 years of Independence the problems of employment and a high cost of living, an ever-increasing national debt and lack of foreign exchange, are severe barriers to the progress of the majority of our people to prosperity.

'The conflict of political parties has divided towns and villages and created warring groups in them. If this conflict helped to solve our problems it may have been welcome. On the contrary the solutions have been pushed away.

'Youth seemed tired of power politics. They seek a solution to their problems of employment, and even of survival in a fiercely competitive society, if necessary through violence and anti-democratic means. Let us be aware of these modern trends and shape our future attitudes accordingly.

'Are we in this context to perform the role of a traditional opposition familiar in developed democratic nations or is there any other democratic course open to us?

'Are we to criticise the Government proposals and also Government Members, raising issues even of a personal nature, seeking to poison public opinion against the Government individually and collectively, as we did from 1956 to 1965,

with the results that we have seen? Or are we to be a democratic opposition, co-operating with socialist measures of the Government, opposing such measures which violate the democratic freedoms, and not seeking either in Parliament or through the Senate, to block legislation that helps the establishment of a socialist economy. This will put us in step with the march of youth throughout the world, particularly in the developing nations.

'We have a fundamental faith in the individual and not in the machinery of State. A nation must develop through the exercise of freedom, however perilous that may be in the hands of the citizens of a developing nation like ours. Our duty is to help in the establishing of democratic freedoms while economic development through the public and private sectors takes place simultaneously.

'The U. N. P. exists to establish in Sri Lanka a way of life, the democratic socialist way of life. If we cannot achieve it by ourselves, and since we are not the Government today we cannot do so, we should seek to achieve it in co-operation with others. The party must shake itself out of its stolid, wooden, unrealistic way of thinking and existence and not live in the hope that people want us as individuals. They will want us as a group if we are for them. If Government measures are for the good of the people we should support them.

'The problems of contemporary Ceylon cannot be solved until the problem of the lack of foreign exchange is solved. Neither this Government nor any other Government in the future can develop the economy properly and help the masses till then. No Government in the past had and few Governments in the future will have the support in Parliament that this Government has. A solution may need governmental measures that could be termed as "not popular." If the Government is taking such steps to solve the foreign exchange problem once and for all, it is our duty to give it our support. For our party policy is to put the country first, Party second and self third.

'Whenever and wherever possible, in Parliament and outside collectively as a party or as individuals, we should co-operate

with the Government, with public bodies and trade unions, on issues that help to advance the cause of the many and not of the few. In our activities we should similarly avoid alienating the friendship and sympathy of members of the Government, of organisations and trade unions that believe in the democratic way of life.'

J. R.'s argument was totally lost on Dudley Senanayake who wanted no truck whatsoever with the Government. That Dudley had suspected this to be another try by J. R. to slip into his shoes may have been a further reason for rejecting the proposal. Whatever it may be, J. R.'s was a bold assessment of the trend in the country, a trend that soon saw its parallel in neighbouring India and in Pakistan and in the incipient Bangladesh.

It was J. R.'s canny capacity to feel the pulse of the people that made him anticipate the explosive situation that was building up among the youth of the country. His aim was to put sense into his Party leadership so that the whole nation would be able to stand up to the problem. In his speech delivered on 10 March 1971 at the New Town Hall, Colombo, one almost felt a premonition of the April holocaust which was to cost the nation over Rs. 400 million in wanton destruction and the lives of thousands of youth.

'The youth are not interested in power politics', he said. 'What they seek is a solution to the country's and their own problems. No Government since Independence has done this duty. It is not surprising, therefore, that the youth are now seeking extra-parliamentary solutions themselves. If I were a youth, I too would say with them, as Cromwell said to the Long Parliament,—

"You have sat too long here for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go!"

'We of the older generation are living in the present and quarrelling about the past. The youth are living in the present and thinking of the future. Here in Ceylon is a serious economic crisis. There is no meaning in trying to pass the blame. When

the house is on fire one would be a fool to stay inside searching for the cause of the fire. The first thing is to put out the fire. Let us accept the situation in Ceylon as it is. If no solution is found today those who will suffer most are the youth.

'When there is an external invasion it is patriotic to unite. Surely an internal crisis as we are facing today present a similar situation. Unity alone can save our country and all of us from impending doom. Should not those in the seats of power think of obtaining the help of all in order to reach the goal of prosperity?'

It was quite plain that J. R.'s wish to help the United Front Government was, by extension, a genuine wish to help the country and especially its youth. But, unfortunately for the country, the Government treated J. R.'s proposal with derision, while the U. N. P. interpreted it as an act of surrender. The Working Committee not only rejected J. R.'s suggestion, but even supplanted it with a seperate resolution calling for unequivocal opposition to the Government. Even the amendment proposed by J. R. that the U. N. P. support the Government in such measures as bridging the gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" was rejected.

There was no doubt that this was a petty way of dealing with a national emergency. In a report in the *Sunday Observer* of 23 January, 1972, J. R. was quoted explaining this attitude as: 'It may be that some of them do not wish their privileged position to be changed and are opposed to the new society which the Government seeks to usher in.' For one thing, whatever the failings of those who comprised that Government, it had to be granted that Sirima Bandaranaike ushered in more socialist reforms during the seven years she was Prime Minister than anyone else or all the others had done before her. One had to concede that her Government's egalitarian concepts which finally brought about a total change in the colonial structure of the national economy were to a large extent formulated and driven through by her Marxist partners in Government. Much had already been done during the first two years of her

administration and more were on the drawing boards. In that context it was obviously statesmanlike to support the implementation of those measures.

But statesmanship is a rare virtue in party politics. The very suggestion that the U. N. P. should support progressive legislation drew the ire of the party leaders who on 12 February, 1972 appointed a disciplinary committee to inquire into J. R.'s conduct. What that "conduct" meant was certainly hazy. If it meant J. R.'s statement to the *Weekend Sun* of 16 January 1972 where he was reported to have stated:

> 'If the Prime Minister invites the U. N. P. to join the Government and her proposal is rejected by the U. N. P. I may have to join the Government together with those U. N. P. members who support my views'

then, the first thing that the Working Committee should have done was to have called for J. R.'s explanation. But that was not to be. Those who were out for J. R.'s blood were least concerned in their procedures being constitutional, democratic or legal. Even A. C. S. Hameed's spirited advocacy failed to stay their mad rush, and later brandishing the Disciplinary Committee's adverse report on J. R. they decided to meet on 17 April to consider J. R.'s expulsion from the party. It was a convenient time for them, J. R. being away in London attending a Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. However, little did they count on what J. R. could do *in absentia.* When the efforts of the sober members of the Working Committee failed to bring any sense into these hotheads and the crisis worsened H. W. Jayewardene assisted by Paul Perera obtained an interim injunction from the Supreme Court, in the morning of the 17th, restraining Dudley Senanayake and the others from taking any steps to expel J. R. That day more than 2,000 supporters of J. R. from Colombo South and Kelaniya stormed Sri Kotha where the Working Committee met and let it know that apart from the Court Order there was also the Party's rank and file who would not brook any injustice to their leader.

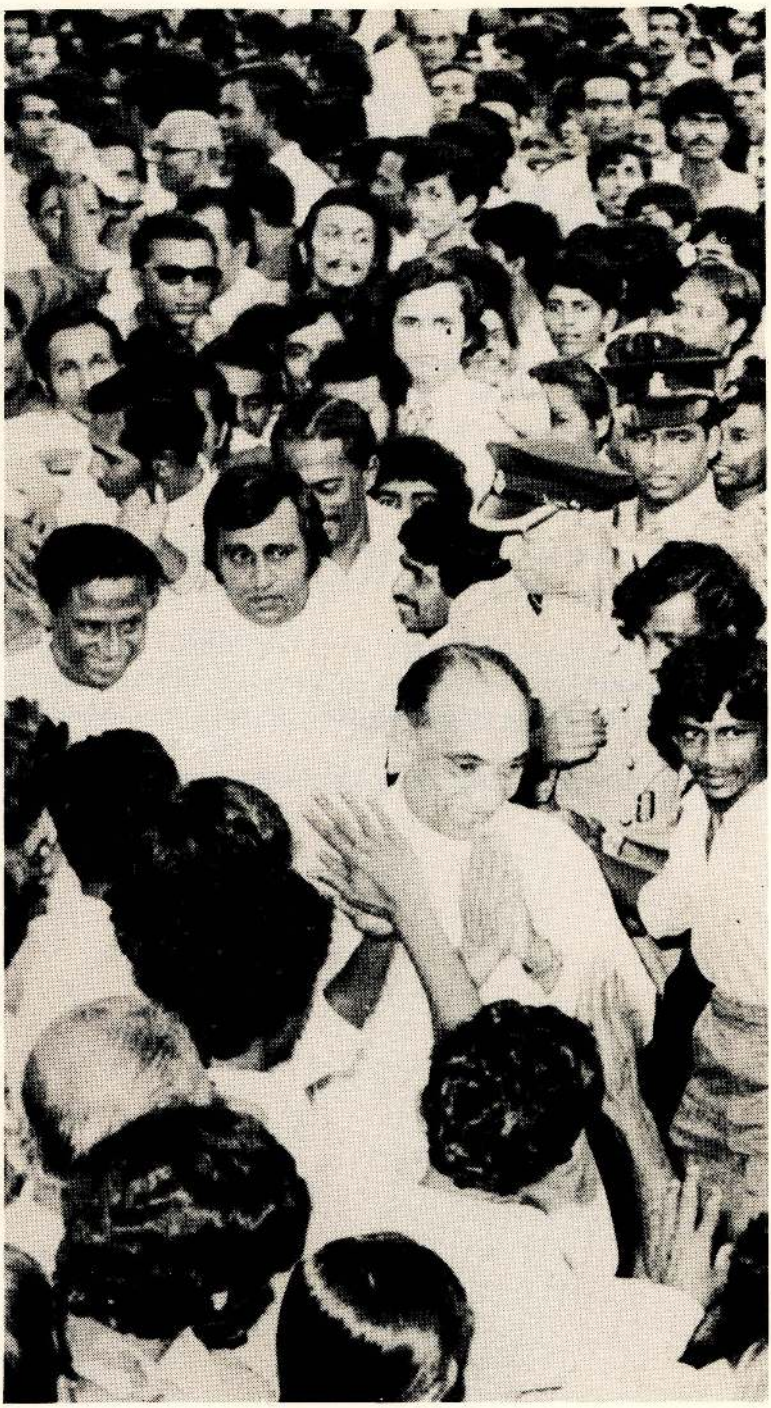
Though Dudley Senanayake bowed to the Order of the Court he devised a different strategy to keep J. R. out of the

Party. This was in the form of a short-dated Annual Sessions where J. R. could be stripped of his Vice-Presidency. On 17 May, when J. R. returned to the Island, he found that the Annual Sessions had been fixed for 2 June. There was only one way to meet the situation, and that was to capture the membership which he knew would support him in the end. That was a course of action that would lead to a split in the party, an eventuality which not even J. R. wished for.

It was the U. N. P. Parliamentary Group which ultimately saved the situation. This Group which had generally not been in overall agreement with the Working Committee arranged for a dialogue between Dudley and J. R. That did not become a difficult dialogue, for these two leaders had actually been life-long friends who had seen victory and defeat together, and before the day was out Dudley admitted that his attempt to expel J. R. was a mistake. A few days later, in a further gracious gesture, Dudley called on J. R. at the latter's residence where both of them recounted with great amusement the many instances in which they were led up the garden path by their "friends" whose machinations well-nigh destroyed not only their mutual friendship but also their Party.

So changed the attitude of the Party towards J. R. J. R.'s thinking was now being appreciated and J. R.'s service was being eagerly sought to update party policy so that it could play a more realistic role in modern politics. Even Dudley agreed with J. R., much to the dismay of many of the party stalwarts, that what the people of modern Lanka looked forward to was not personalities with nebulous auras of sanctity but a party with a down-to-earth democratic socialist policy.

It was this same new thinking that made the U. N. P. take part in the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly which formulated the new Republican Constitution of Sri Lanka and even congratulate the Government on several of its progressive laws. That J. R. had his own reservations on some aspects of these laws is only incidental but they were matters which, he granted, were solvable in the course of time.



Thronged by the masses

On 13 April 1973, Dudley Sananayake passed away. A four-time Prime Minister, an honest and popular leader, a true democrat Dudley was plain Member for Dedigama at the time of his death. J. R. mourned his close friend of half a century and close colleague in politics for over three decades with a moving speech that brought tears to the three million who had gathered to pay their homage to the dead leader. Moved himself to tears, J. R. closed his speech with the words:

'He was my friend. He was only eleven when I first met him. For 50 years I have known him. He was a perfect, gentle knight. No one was more humble. During the last few months, more than ever during our long association, we have travelled together throughout the length and breadth of our beloved country.

'There is no corner of Sri Lanka that did not hear our voices proclaiming and affirming the ideals that I have stated (earlier).

'The hand of death, sudden and cruel, has stilled one voice. May the masses of this country give their support to those who seek to take to its goal the cherished ideals which were so close to Dudley's heart.

'Good night, sweet Prince, may hosts of Devas sing thee to thy sleep.'

A TIME TO RECOUP

THE J. R. JAYEWARDENE–Dudley Senanayake rapproachment had a further salutary effect on the U. N. P. The Party which, after the elections of 1970, had appeared to fade away from the national political scene had now emerged as a new and vibrant entity. The socialist direction it had received under J. R.'s guidance had enhanced its popular appeal, specially among the resurgent youth. Dudley's humility and J. R.'s resourcefulness combined to form a hopeful leadership for the masses. A streamlined publicity drive headed by the two leaders took the message of the new U. N. P. to every corner of the country. That message included a warning of the disastrous consequences that the Government's blind rush towards totalitarianism could entail.

The reaction of the United Front Government to the growing popularity of the U. N. P. manifested in an undisguised offensive which was more than a repeat performance of its acts of repression during the period 1960–64. But,threats and thuggery could not intimidate J. R. or dampen his spirit, and his example spurred his followers onto greater resolve. The immediate upshot of his efforts was the U. N. P.'s resounding success at the by-election of 1972.

After Dudley Senanayake's death J. R. was unanimously elected leader of the U. N. P. on 26 April 1973. This brought him the long sought freedom and authority to put his own radical ideas into practice. Among the first things he did after taking over the party leadership was to change the

Constitution of the U. N. P. providing for equal representation of electorates at Party Conventions. Apart from increasing the number of delegates to the Annual Sessions from 1,000 to 12,000, this provided a grass-roots basis for the party structure allowing branch unions, trade unions, youth leagues and women's organisations a say in party matters including formulation of policy.

This change also opened up the top rungs of the party to new-comers of promise; for example, Gamini Dissanayake who was little known in political circles before 1970 rose to rub shoulders with men of the standing of R. Premadasa, Ananda Tissa de Alwis and Cyril Mathew within a matter of months, and Daham Wimalasena who played a modest role in the trade union movement shot up to be the General Secretary of the Party at age 38.

In regard to the party fund J. R. instituted a completely new system. Before he took over the leadership the party was financed mainly by big land-owners, industrialists and businessmen who almost always called the tune. J. R.'s reform which introduced a membership fee of one rupee brought the party to the masses and a collection of about Rs. 22,000 per month. This sum was a mere fraction of what the U. N. P. could have easily collected on the old basis, but the fact that it was a membership fee encouraged over 500,000 new applicants to seek a stake in the party and feel belonged.

It was also J. R. who gave the trade union wing of the party a practical role in the general organisation by including its representatives in the Working Committee, Executive Committee and Annual Sessions. Apart from the direct advantage this brought to the party by way of worker support, it also helped to explode the persistent myth that the U. N. P. was an employers' club.

J. R.'s composition of the Working Committee was, however a matter that raised many an eyebrow. It consisted of men hand-picked by him. This system appeared, at first sight, as a travesty of the democratic practice of representation by popular choice. But, one has to concede J. R.'s need to be

doubly cautious in the light of the party's newly acquired nondescript membership whose values were yet to be tested. And, besides, there were also the reactionary old-timers who had become an obvious liability to the party. The Working Committee that he finally selected became the strongest backbone that any party could have wished for.

With its ranks closed and its policies clearly defined the U. N. P. was now the very antithesis of the loose-knit S. L. F. P. The contrast extended even to the moral stature of their leaders, for whereas the S. L. F. P. was headed by an arrogant leadership doling out the plums of office to its kith and kin, the U. N. P. was becoming humble to a fault and removing all traces of its old "uncle-nephew" image.

On the other hand, in the S. L. F. P. nepotism began at the very top. The Prime Minister's children and brothers and in-laws were all placed in positions of influence and high responsibility. With the example set at the top, family bandyism spread right down the line, and in every town and village the local representatives of the S. L. F. P. gathered hay while their political sun shone. Every Peace Committee, every Agricultural Productivity Committee, every Cultivation Committee, every Janatha Committee, every Co-operative Store and every other imaginable rural organisation was manned or dictated to by lackeys of the S. L. F. P. and their relatives. Now, with its term of office extended to seven years under the new Republican Constitution the S. L. F. P. was keen on carrying on with the joy ride.

It is difficult to blame Sirima Bandaranaike for the efforts she had to make to reinforce her authority in the general set-up. One has to remember that her partners—the Samasamajists and the Communists—were no babes in politics. In fact they were already consolidating their hold in several sectors. But her mistake lay in fondly believing that if you capture the rudder the boat is all yours.

It was on this mistaken belief that she decided to make a show of strength at the Dedigama by-election. To capture the seat of the former Prime Minister and former leader of the

U. N. P. was to restore the prestige she had lost at the previous by-elections. Her hopes of winning Dedigama were also built on the numerical fact that Dudley Senanayake had always retained that seat on slim majorities, the last in 1970 being a mere 1067 votes. Now, with the S. L. F. P. controlling the election and the U. N. P. yet going through its metamorphosis and Dudley's personal magnetism no more, a reversal of the U. N. P.'s fortunes appeared to be almost assured.

The Government did not leave the matter in the hands of the Dedigama voters alone. It got its entire state machinery rolling, appointing its own flunkeys to the Police Stations in the area, replacing the volunteers at the Thulhiriya Mill with a guard from the National Service Regiment under the command of a brother-in-law of the Prime Minister and deploying the Field Security Division under the command of another close relative of hers. The personnel of these two units were later found canvassing for the S. L. F. P. Though violence and intimidation were part of their methods no Police Station in the area entertained any complaints. Supporters of the U. N. P. were, however, arrested even without a charge.

For all its attempts the United Front Government had to accept defeat at Dedigama on 9 July 1973 conceding victory to the U. N. P. candidate. Rukman Senanayake, who won the seat with a majority almost four times that of his predecessor.

The gangsterism that was let loose at Dedigama portended a rise of fascist methods. Though this was not the only instance of government–connived violence, here it had taken on a dangerous dimension. It had now become clear to all sane persons that the Government was now out to subvert democracy, and that motive became all the more apparent when, just one month later, it decided to take over the Lake House papers on the pretext of broadbasing a reactionary family combine.

It was true that although Lake House had grown into a national institution it was controlled by the Wijewardenes who were kin to J. R. and kith to the U. N. P. Some of them had even been proved to be racketeers in foreign exchange. Under their directorship the journalists often descended to crude

levels in attacking the leaders of the S. L. F. P. and Marxist parties. Even J. R. was feeling thoroughly disappointed with the manner in which his kinsmen were flouting the norms of journalistic ethics.

But that was the only sin Lake House was guilty of. That through its papers Lake House could make or break a government was nothing but a specious argument, for not all its efforts—often wholly questionable—succeeded in saving the U. N. P. in 1956 or 1960 or 1970. It was an enviable fact that the Lake House papers had the largest circulation in the country and that they constituted nearly two-thirds of all newspapers published here. But the further fact that two-thirds of its shares were owned by the Wijewardene family was merely circumstantial. If that offended public morality or was inimical to the public interest the answer should have been, where the party interested was the Government of the country, to invoke the laws of libel. But, to take over that organisation was plainly tantamount to vengeance or even ill will.

So, when the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd. (Special Provisions) Bill was taken up in Parliament in August 1973, J. R. decided not only to oppose it in Parliament but also to take the issue to the country through a boycott of the nationalized Lake House papers. J. R. could not have been so naive as to believe that his boycott would paralyze the Government-controlled Lake House. His aim was different. He wanted an opening to make the U. N. P. heard in the country, and he achieved that objective through a house to house campaign in which he personally took part in Colombo, Kandy, Kurunegala, Matara and Kalutara.

On the heels of the Press boycott came the by-election for Colombo North necessitated by the death of V. A. Sugathadasa. The U. N. P. candidate, Vincent Perera, trounced the United Front's candidate by 17,138 votes, the biggest majority any U. N. P. Candidate had recorded since 1956.

The resulting ebullience in U. N. P. circles was promptly put to use by J. R. He was the first to make the U. N. P. a party of the masses. The masses represented by the rank and file

had to be kept on their toes, so to say, if the onset of apathy were to be avoided. Apathy has been the bane of all parties. Accordingly, J. R. decided to launch another campaign against the United Front Government which had, by now, supplied sufficient ammunition to the U. N. P.'s guns. For example, there was the postponement of the General Election from 1975 to 1977, the continued extension of the Emergency which was first imposed in February 1971, the suspension of elections to local bodies that had been dissolved at the whim of a Minister and the restrictions placed on the transport of rice.

J. R.'s campaign, modelled on Mahatma Gandhi's Satyagraha Movement, was a series of peaceful protests against the Government. The first of the series took place just one week after the by-election in Colombo North and constituted three marches led seperately by J. R., R. Premadasa and Vincent Perera designed to converge on the National State Assembly premises simultaneously. That effort ended as a moral success, for it forced the United Front Government to barricade the Fort area preventing the approach of the satyagrahis who, in real Gandhian style, sat on the road till night-fall and peacefully dispersed thereafter. The single fact that nearly 100,000 persons participated in the Satyagraha was evidence both of J. R.'s popularity and the Government's unpopularity.

The next in the series was in Nuwara Eliya in November, followed by the more memorable Satyagrahas in Attangalla in December and in Anuradhapura in January, 1974. The Government which originally shrugged away J. R.'s announcement of the campaign as a practical joke changed its attitude after the impact made in Colombo. With its previous experience of breaking public demonstrations through open violence it decided to obstruct the satyagrahis at Nuwara Eliya, but failed in the attempt. That Satyagraha ended as a marked success. Now, more frantic than ever, the Government resorted to sheer brutality when the Satyagrahis next turned towards Attanagalla, the constituency of the Prime Minister Sirima Bandaranaike. Even the approach roads were blocked with felled trees,

rolled boulders and stalled vehicles, and armed bands of thugs roamed the area threatening the Satyagrahis, taunting the passive Police and swearing that they would not allow J. R. to enter Attanagalla.

Unable to proceed any further the Satyagrahis, led by R. Premadasa, sat on the road braving the hail of stones that fell on them. The thugs were, however, totally unaware that at that moment J. R. was performing Satyagraha in the very heart of Attanagalla. Having stepped in unobserved, sometime around midnight, and bided his time till the moment arrived for the Satyagraha. When, finally, he took a tray of flowers and walked into the Attanagalla temple there were hundreds to accompany him and join in the *Puja*.

There was no gainsaying the fact that it was the Government that had planned the violence. Instead of condemning that action the Prime Minister, on 12 December, saluted the people of Attanagalla for obstructing the people who were proceeding to the temple, and praised the Police for its action—or, rather, inaction.

J. R., in his complaint to the President on 3 January 1974, made it clear that she had condoned the thuggery which amounted to a violation of the people's right to Freedom of Assembly and Freedom of Movement, a right enshrined in the Constitution.

It was similar obstruction and violence that J. R. and his Satyagrahis had to face in Anuradhapura too on 8 January 1974. The Government in its panic had even prohibited the campaign by a Gazette Notification made under Emergency Regulations, subjecting violators to severe penalties. But the indomitable spirit of J. R. was not to be cowed. Circumventing the law against unlawful assembly by moving into Anuradhapura in groups of less than five, he participated in the *puja* before the Sri Maha Bodhi.

J. R.'s next endeavour to activate the rank and file of the party by holding public meetings in all 145 electorates on 21 April 1974, the first anniversary of the cremation of Dudley

Senanayake, was aborted by the Government which clamped down a curfew and banned the meetings. The Satyagraha that he subsequently organised at the Town Hall in Colombo to observe Republic Day as a day of mourning ended in broken heads when the Police baton-charged the gathering.

To the Government J. R. had now become an endless irritant while to the larger membership of his party he had grown into a hero. To the recalcitrant coterie in the U. N. P. who refused to appreciate the new credo, J. R. was a failure as a leader. To them J. R. had failed in the Press boycott, satyagrahas and commemorative meetings and plainly proved to be no match to Sirima Bandaranaike in putting up spectacular propaganda meetings. This proved to be nothing more than an excuse, for these were more disgruntled than disillusioned men. J. R. had discredited their outdated policies and repudiated their personalism and, worse, shattered their ego by denying their assumed indispensability to the U. N. P. It was not surprising, therefore, that they had to quit and join the S. L. F. P. which was eagerly waiting to swallow them all including those who had been sacked by the U. N. P.

J. R., with his usual *sang froid,* carried on with his program of strengthening the party. He laid stress on personal contacts and smaller but widely scattered meetings to focus public attention on the hopeless situation in the country. The increasing scarcities of essential consumer goods, the rampant corruption in Government circles, the fading horizons of the educated unemployed, the arrant indiscipline among S. L. F. P. Members of Parliament, the indiscriminate imposition of the Emergency powers—all these and many more gave him enough targets of attack.

The response was electrifying. In October 1974 the U. N. P. captured Kalawewa—the first time it won that seat since 1952. But the pity was that even that did not drive any sense into the remnants of the coterie yet remaining in the party. And, when J. R. resigned his seat on 21 May 1975 protesting against the Government's decision to remain in office till 1977 and declaring that the voters of Colombo South had elected him

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only for a five-year term which was now over, these remnants decided to support a sacked U. N. P. er at the by-election. On 18 July, to their utter discomfiture, J. R. won again, and his majority of 28,305 votes created a new record for the post–1956 period. Soon after J. R.'s return the Working Committee of the U. N. P. expelled 23 of its members including a Joint Secretary of the Party, for breach of discipline.

* * *

BY THE MIDDLE of 1975 the totalitarian intentions of the S. L. F. P. surfaced when the Prime Minister's main confidante who was in charge of about half a dozen key ministries began to throw his weight about. To the utter chagrin of the other two constituents of the United Front Government this Minister went to the extent of interpreting Government policy in terms that negated the socialist content that the L. S. S. P. and the C. P. stood for. The result was a babel of claims and counter-claims in regard to the achievements of the Government and sly references to each other's motives. Things came to a head in September when the L. S. S. P. which had already suffered the indignity of having a curfew specifically imposed on the annual celebrations of its Federation of Labour was taken to task for what Mrs. Bandaranaike termed "vituperative politics" and removed from the Government. The Communists who suffered the alliance a little longer suffered in silence.

Though the defection of the L. S. S. P. left no conspicuous dent on the Government its appearance on the Opposition side became a moral booster to the anti-government forces. J. R. made maximum capital out of this situation. In fact, he had to. For Mrs. Bandaranaike was not idle. The perfect impresario, she went about a well-planned program of building up her international image, whatever its importance was to Ceylon or to her local politics. Already, she had made her mark in foreign affairs by her proposal to the United Nations on the need of declaring the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace. Her publicity men went a step further to spread the story that

she was even being nominated for the Nobel Prize for Peace. In early 1976 she shared with Grace Kelly the F. A. O. Ceres Medal awarded to the most outstanding woman of the year. Thereafter, as a result of her successful bid in 1973, the honour of hosting the fifth Non-Aligned Summit of 86 nations was granted to Colombo bringing Sirima Bandaranaike the honour of presiding over the Movement for the next three years. From her estimation the fabulous cost that the country had to incur for that honour was incomparable to the glory that was her's in being leader of "two-thirds of the world."

That was in the larger field of international affairs. At home her position seemed to be impregnable too. While the L. S. S. P. and C. P. were in the United Front the joint May Day rallies were indeed astounding shows of strength. Without the L. S. S. P. her position in Government was no less strong, not even if the C. P. were out of it. For the S. L. F. P. was yet capable of mustering in the National State Assembly a fair majority by itself and a two-thirds majority through "negotiation".

However, though the Prime Minister was content and happy, not so were her following which comprised individuals who were vexed by a premonitary fear of early political doom. It was, therefore, to their great relief that the postponement of General Elections in India provided them with a necessary precedent to suggest to Mrs. Bandaranaike to do likewise. It may be that she saw no reason to fear the people who at the Mulkirigala by-election had convincingly re-affirmed their faith in her, or, it may be that the voice of the now combined Opposition was too emphatic that she thought any postponement would be too hazardous.

It certainly would have been hazardous, for J. R. showed her how emphatic he was when he told the people at the U. N. P. rally in Kandy that" if the Prime Minister postponed the dissolution of Parliament one day beyond May 22nd, 1977, I will lead a movement to overthrow the Government and hoist the flag of revolution over Sri Lanka." A few days later he declared at Gampola that "I would even sacrifice my life to

overthrow any illegally constituted Government." The same tenor was maintained by the L. S. S. P. leaders and even by the General Secretary of the C. P. which was then a constituent of the United Front.

Here was a general issue on which the Opposition parties could now go to the country together. J. R., making use of the opportunity, organised propaganda meetings in every part of the country including the predominantly Tamil areas of the North and East. The meetings in the Tamil areas proved, on the one hand, that J. R.'s U. N. P. was not meant for the Sinhala areas alone and, on the other, that he never sacrificed his principles for personal gain. J. R. was neither carried away by the respect and affection he was sometimes overwhelmed with nor upset by the violent hostility he was sometimes greeted with.

At his first meeting at Valvettiturai which ended at about 10 p.m. and to which tens of thousands had assembled, he was asked pointedly: Why he marched to Kandy to protest against the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact? Will he implement that Pact if he becomes Prime Minister? And, will he grant to the Tamil people their language rights? J. R.'s replies were also to the point. In a clear and resonant voice he answered that he organised the march to Kandy because the B-C Pact was inimical to the Sinhalese who comprised 70 per cent of the population and that he would not only not implement that Pact but even march again to Kandy if anyone else were to implement it. On the issue of language he stated that he would give recognition to the Tamil language in the Constitution itself. The same questions were repeated to him at the meeting in Jaffna and the same answers were given by him although his audience on that occasion was unmistakably hostile.

That is J. R. Where a weak heart would have succumbed to the fury of the audience and given in to its wishes even for the moment, J. R. withstood the onslaught with his honesty and courage. Nor did J. R. retract from his assurance when he ultimately got the opportunity of implementing his language

Taking Oaths as Prime Minister

policy, and today Tamil has a recognised place in the country, constitutionally guaranteed.

The propaganda meetings of the U. N. P. were made more intensive when the General Elections ultimately became a certainty. The party itself was geared to meet the day to day needs of the campaign. However, two obstacles stood in its way, neither of which was easily avoidable. The first impediment was the U. N. P. *Journal* and, to a lesser degree, its sister paper, the *Siyarata,* which through their defensive role had become more or less ineffective while every other paper published in the country were battering–rams crashing down on the U. N. P. There was no time to start a new paper, and J. R. had to hope for the best from the journalists who ran the two papers. It is to their eternal credit that they soon showed that they too could attack well and truly.

The second obstacle was the old-timers in the Party who refused to realise that their time was up. They were honest men who had spent their time and money for the party and stood by the party in both weal and woe. But the new image that J. R. was trying to create called for new blood and for younger men who were actively engaged in party work especially among the rank and file. It was an image that was in marked contrast to the pre–1956 U. N. P. which comprised aloof, elitist men with broad acres and impressive bank balances. J. R. had already proved his intentions by giving nomination to an ordinary cinema manager for the by-election at Ja-Ela. In fact his search for new faces and new talent had brought him an excellent pick by now, and men of charm and integrity and of skill and accomplishment were already on his list. But J. R., loyal to a friend to a fault, could not ignore his old colleagues altogether. To them he made an exception to his rule, and his gesture was not found wasted.

Satisfied with the overhauling he had effected in the party and elated by victories in eleven of the thirteen by-elections held during that period and confident that the General Election will now certainly be held on the due date, J. R. turned to the other requirements of his strategy. The image of the U. N. P.

was now satisfactorily enhanced. What was yet left was to shatter the image of the S. L. F. P. That happened without J. R.'s aid.

An unfortunate incident at the Peradeniya University campus came to a crisis with the death of an undergraduate on 12 November 1976 placing the Government in an awkward situation. The death of a fellow student at the hands of the Police and the utter insensitivity of the Ministry of Education in regard to that incident and the Government's own indifference to the students' demand that the authorities who precipitated this situation be brought to book drew out not only the students but even the non-academic staff of all campuses and 861 schools in a sudden wave of anti-government strikes.

Fast on the heels of the students' strike came the rest of the storm. Government Medical Officers began a work-to-rule campaign disorganising the working of every hospital in the country. The workers at the Railway Workshop at Ratmalana came out on strike, soon followed by the engine drivers and locomotive assistants and the members of the various Railway Unions except those affiliated to the S. L. F. P. The unrest, which had nothing to do with the cause of the Peradeniya students, quickly spread to the Port, the Electricity Board, the Water Works Department, the Food Department, the Government Press and eventually to the nationalised bus services.

The strikes disorganised every conceivable public utility service, and the enforcement of the Essential Services Order under Emergency Regulations only insensed the strikers onto greater resolve. Here was proof of the growing ire of the working class against the Government. Here was proof that the Ceylonese working class had now acquired a degree of political consciousness that no longer required it to be nose-led by any political party. For neither the U. N. P., nor the L. S. S. P., nor the C. P., nor even the outlawed J. V. P. had a hand in these eruptions. That these parties gave, or ultimately had to give, their blessings was quite a different matter.

Though the spate of strikes that lasted for over a month subsided in mid-January the damage it did to the Government

Inauguration of President

was irreparable. It was not merely the good-will of the workers and the students that the Government alienated but even the confidence of the ordinary people who had to suffer untold privations during the difficult days. Ere long, disenchantment spread even to the militant sections of the S. L. F. P. and on 8 February four Members of Parliament from the Government ranks crossed over to the Opposition.

In the meantime J. R. had given notice of a no-confidence motion on Sirima Bandaranaike's Government. The motion, due to be taken up on 17 February, brought her memories of December 1964 and a haunting fear of dormant C. P. de Silvas. And therefore, to avoid any such eventuality, she prorogued Parliament till 19 May without even the courtesy of informing the Communist Party of her intention. Her action outraged the C. P. which promptly defected to the Opposition, soon followed by two more important members of the S. L. F. P.

The Government that was elected for five years and remained for seven was fast coming to an end. Six of those seven years had been ruled under Emergency powers. It had been a nightmare to many. J. R. and his party men were not spared either. Many had to languish in jail for days, months and even years, for frivolous reasons mostly J. R. own passport was snatched away by Government order.

Nevertheless, J. R. did not waste his time in outbursts of acrimony. He turned to his Party and to the people for their verdict. He had a Deputy Leader now, in R. Premadasa whom he had appointed over the claims of several other more senior party men. But the right to choose was his, and in his choice he had completely discounted the old theory that the U. N. P. leadership was reserved to the elite. And, when the United Front Government was dissolved on 18 May, the U. N. P. was in many ways streets ahead of any other party in the election marathon.

EPILOGUE

HERE WAS A COUNTRY that had been reduced to near beggary during a seven year spell of misrule. The people had lived in fear, frustration and want.

In the shops the counters were bare. Patients in Government hospitals had to make do with drug scarcities. Infant food had become a luxury. Commodity rations, meant for distribution through Government controlled co-operatives but channelled to the pavement hawkers, were available only at fancy prices.

Plunder by Government had become a virtue and no man's property was safe from acquisition, purportedly for public purposes but often for private enjoyment or plain revenge.

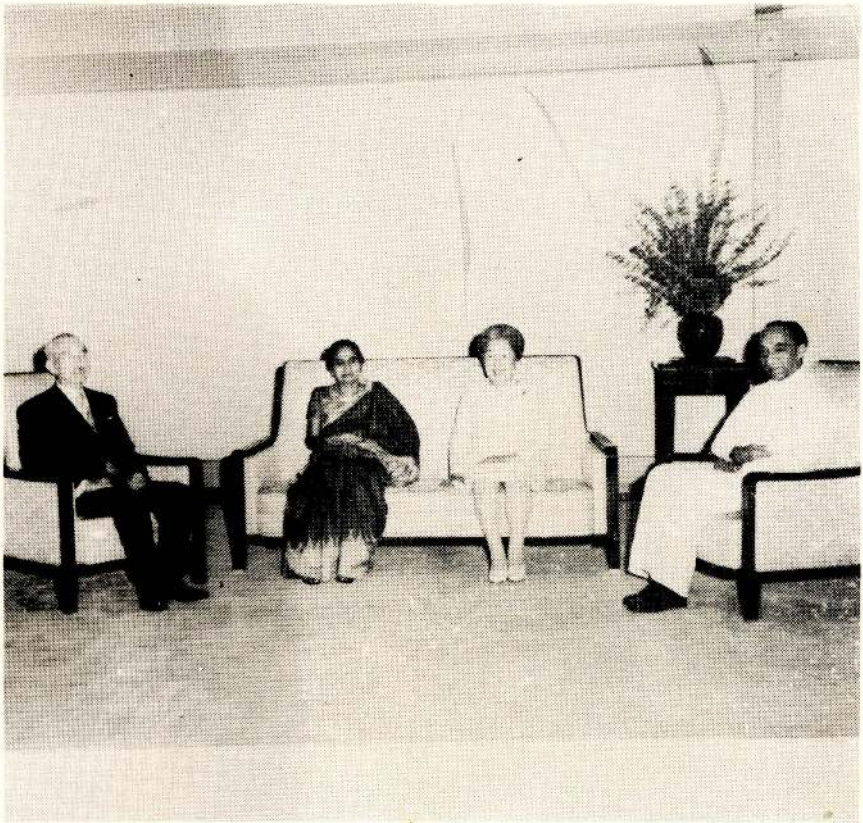
Thuggery was condoned and even connived at so that none dared to oppose the Government.

Youthful attempts at insurrection reflected lost horizons and cost life, limb and liberty.

An experimental education system, sans direction, sans aim, produced unemployables, and frustration and anger ruled life in the campuses.

Cost of living rose to phenomenal heights, not due to external forces but internal bungling, while per capita income remained ridiculously low.

Three political parties having next to nothing in common ganged up to form a Government and governed, proving the impossible. The possibility was contrived through the abolition of the Senate, the imposition of an Emergency, the muzzling of the Press, the prostitution of the radio, the subjugation of



With the Emperor and Empress of Japan

the judiciary and the insidious use of the Gazette Extraordinary.

On 21 July 1977 a harried people, with their heads yet held high, walked determinedly to the polling booths and took their place in orderly and patient queues. The decision they took that day was decisive and the mandate they gave was unprecedented.

On the morning of the 22nd, J. R. found that a silent revolution had taken place. The final tally gave the U. N. P. 140 seats out of a total of 168 creating a world record in parliamentary elections. The Marxists had been put to rout. The S. L. F. P. which had had 90 seats earlier had been forced to eat their pride, and of the eight returned only two were from the previous group. In that respect it was similar to the fate of the U. N. P. in 1956 when only eight members survived the hustings. The similarity went further in that in both instances only two members of the former Cabinet were returned, one of them the Prime Minister.

To J. R. there was a cause for sorrow too, for he was now to miss in Parliament N. M. Perera and Colvin R. de Silva who, though politically his bitterest opponents, were personally his closest friends. They had paid the penalty of truckling to the S. L. F. P.

The results of the General Elections of 1977 were sensational in other respects too. The L. S. S. P. leader who had never tasted defeat at any previous election to the Legislature lost to a political novice. The General Secretary of the Communist Party could not come even fourth in the three-member constituency of Colombo Central which returned R. Premadasa of the U. N. P. as its first Member with a staggering majority of 35,156 votes.

The people had left no ambiguity in their choice. In fact, 87.1 per cent of the adult population of the country had exercised their franchise, further improving upon the world record they themselves had set up earlier in 1970. Why? Sirima Bandaranaike had mismanaged the economy, countenanced corruption and reneged on the pledges she had given in 1970. But, then, her Government had an undoubtedly

impressive record of substantial achievement. Besides, did not the people reject the U. N. P. outright in 1970? Why this sudden change of heart? Could it be that the people thought that an indecisive vote would lead to a coalition—coalitions being anathema to them now? Could it be their fear of the 'little bit of totalitarianism' that an S. L. F. P. Minister advocated? Or, could it be their need of a man who could really pull the country out of its present mess? The answers will remain hypothetical until the people themselves make their reasons clear on the judgment day in 1983.

On 23 July, J. R. took his oaths as Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. It had been a long wait and a hard trek up the path from his schoolboy ambition of becoming an engine driver. He had chosen to wait. He waited in 1952, twice when his friend Dudley took over the Prime Ministership and again when Sir John took over. He waited in March 1960 when Dudley set up his minority Government which ended just one month later. He waited in 1965 when Dudley took office again. On all those occasions and when he was really the architect who had rebuilt the party he had to be satisfied in second place where he waited with infinite patience, without fretting. And, now, as the undisputed leader of his party and the chosen Prime Minister of the people the capacity and the authority to rebuild a ruined Lanka were entirely his.

Addressing the nation on 28 July 1977 he said, 'The U. N. P. is dedicated to the creation of a new society based on the lofty teachings of the Compassionate One. The U. N. P. Government under my leadership will dedicate itself to establish a just and a free society in this land.'

This task necessitated the immediate amendment of the Constitution providing for a stable Executive that is not dependent on the whims of the House or on the pleasure of a Prime Minister. Accordingly, on 22 September 1977, J. R. moved the amending Bill which provided for a President who is both Head of the State and Head of the Executive

With Fidel Castro

and is elected independently by the people at a referendum; the first President under the amended Constitution being the Prime Minister then in office.

Soon after, on 22 October, J. R. moved the repeal of the obnoxious Criminal Justice Commissions Act, and two weeks later had the victims of that law who were yet suffering in jail—nearly 135 of them including the leader of the proscribed J. V. P. – released on pardon.

Then, in accordance with the amended Constitution and the wishes of the people as was expressed in their mandate of 21 July, J. R. was inaugurated first Executive President of Sri Lanka, on 4 February 1978. The previous day, at a solemn ceremony in the National State Assembly, he took his leave of the House. His speech, typical of the man, was not a swaggering declamation of his own importance or a rambling list of the things he had done or wanted to do. Thanking the House for the honour accorded him and for the appreciation of his services, he urged:

> 'May the present Members of this House, as good as any that were elected in the past and those that will follow, remember that though the main purpose of a Legislature is to discuss and enact legislation, it is not laws alone that make a nation good or great but the conduct of its leaders and the example they set.
>
> 'May I be permitted to say to my colleagues on all sides of this House: *Turn the searchlight inwards. Be a lamp unto yourselves. Hold fast to the Truth; no harm can come to you in this life or after it.*'

To ensure exemplary conduct on the part of his Ministers and Members of the Government Party he enforced a code of conduct and, on 31 May 1978, in his Convocation Address at the University of Sri Lanka, he gave a personal assurance saying:

'I am the first elected Executive President, Head of the State, Head of the Government. It is an office of power and thus responsibility. Since many others will succeed me I wish during

my term of office to create precedents that are worthy of following.

Firstly: I will act always through the Cabinet and Parliament, preserving the parliamentary system as it existed, without diminution of their powers.

Secondly: I will not create a group known as the President's men and women who will influence him.

Thirdly: I will implement laws and decisions passed by Parliament impartially, without political, party or family bias.

Fourthly: I will not encourage nor countenance political victimisation.

Fifthly: I will treat every citizen of Sri Lanka alike, and give him or her equal opportunities to progress. Sri Lanka will not be only a socialist democracy, it will be a meritocracy too.

Sixthly: I will offer to the minority, specially to the Tamil speaking people who are citizens, an equal place in every sphere of life. I have no racial or religious bias, for I attempt in my humble way to fashion my life in accordance with the Buddha's teaching.

Seventhly: In my speech and action, I will try to be non-violent for I abhor violence.

Eighthly: I will try to live according to the code of conduct we have adopted for Ministers and Members of Parliament. I will endeavour to encourage the other members of our Party in Parliament too to follow it.

Ninthly: I will preserve democratic freedoms.

Tenthly: In every act of mine I will consider how it benefits the humblest and the poorest and endeavour to help them first.'

In his role as Head of the Government and, therefore, of the Cabinet of Ministers, and also as the leader of the party in power he has continued to be in active participation in public life, even to the extent of pulling out his shirt and shoes and stepping into the muddy paddies.

Armed with a new Constitution promulgated on 7 September 1978, enshrining the main fundamental rights and freedoms found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and guided

by a variety of far-reaching plans for the fulfilment of the agricultural and industrial needs of the country and aided by a string of Commissions and Authorities for the attraction of foreign capital for the implementation of the Government's city, urban, housing and economic development programmes and fully assisted in these purposes by a team of dedicated Ministers and Members led by Prime Minister R. Premadasa in Parliament and twenty-four District Ministers who are to provide a grass-roots basis for the interior development of the country and supported by the working masses, J. R. has confidently embarked on his task of building a just and free and prosperous Lanka.

Through a system of proportional representation in Local Bodies and in Parliament his Government has not only ensured a fair and just distribution of seats but even prevented the evils that a concentration of power in any party or clique might bring in the future.

It is true that, in the final token, all this will rest on the wishes of the people. It is also true that no people will wish a reversion to anarchy. But, as the country has already seen on several occasions, anarchy is no respecter of the people's wishes. Rising from the pettiness of minds it thrives on indifference. The lackadaisical manner in which the Tamil Problem and the problems of youth were handled by previous governments and the resulting bloodbaths are but two examples. Simmering discontent yet characterizes the country's youth, and the fears of the Tamil people are yet not satisfactorily allayed. A will to solve these problems and a statesmanlike approach are not the only requirements for a lasting solution. An appreciation of the grievance is equally important, and that can come only through a correct and intimate understanding of the issues involved.

If J. R. with his unruffled pragmatic mind fails in this most demanding task few, if any, can hope to succeed. It is certainly to J. R.'s credit that the country has already recorded an unusual degree of industrial peace burgeoning the economy and speeding up the pace of national reconstruction. This means that the

people have given him their co-operation which he and the country sorely needs and will need in the future. It will be too rash to think that co-operation is merely a test to see how well it will be utilised. But, then, such tests have been made before, and those who failed and fell have left behind them the thousand legacies now plaguing the country.

In assuming authority over the affairs of State J. R. has automatically taken these problems in hand. One cannot blame the people, therefore, if they look up to him, and him alone, for a just and fair solution.

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