

THE FOREIGN POLICY OF SRI LANKA 1948-1956*

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I

The foreign policy of post-independence Sri Lanka was determined to a considerable extent by the 1947 - 1948 independence settlement.¹ The distinguishing feature of the country's independence movement was, as is well known, that it constituted an exclusively upper class enterprise, supported by upper-middle class professionals and such vested interests as the newspaper establishment in Colombo, the Catholic Church and the rural gentry – the social strata whose fortunes invariably depended on the colonial administration in the country. As such the entire reality of the independence settlement was that it was a manifestation of a conspicuous degree of community of interests between these social strata and the British colonial authorities.

The leadership of the nationalist movement was extremely conservative and was lacking in any broader concept of nationalism. Their central preoccupation was to persuade the British to transfer power through a constitutional device by demonstration of friendliness and loyalty to the British. Mr. D. S. Senayake, the simple but dominant leader of the nationalist movement, put the point neatly in a report to his ministerial colleagues on the 1945 negotiations with the Colonial Office:

We had not sought to force British opinion to agree with us. We argued and demonstrated by co-operation that Ceylon might be the first of the tropical Dominions, the first of the oriental peoples to be admitted to complete equality, the first to benefit of that policy of raising dependent peoples which the British parties have announced in their election programmes. There has been no rebellion in Ceylon, no non-co-operation movement and no fifth column; we had been among the people who had given full collaboration while the British were hard pressed.²

The leadership of the nationalist movement accordingly did not envisage any structural change in the country's historical colonial relationship with Britain. The grant of Dominion Status on the lines suggested by him, Mr. Senanayake stated :

... would cement the bond between our peoples (the British and the Sri Lankan). It would add to the power of the British Commonwealth of Nations. It would place another Dominion in the most important strategic position halfway between England and Australia. It would complete the triangle in the Indian Ocean.³

Independence of India and the revolution in the world balance of forces resulting from the Second World War brought Sri Lanka into the orbit of independence by the mid-forties. The Colonial Office, however, was not at all ready at this point to visualise independence for the country by a single step as it eventually did. For as Sir Charles Jeffries, the then Deputy Permanent Under-Secretary to the Colonial Office, pointed out, Sri Lanka was "a

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different cup of tea".⁴ The British preoccupation was of course the continuing interest in the island's strategic importance in the Imperial-Commonwealth defence network in the Indian Ocean area. Sir Charles Jeffries informs us :

..... (From) the point of view of the British Government the question was not quite as simple as all that. There were the defence interests of the British Government and her allies. Ceylon was a vital point. If independence were granted there would be no going back.⁵

The uncertain implications of India's independence for the defence and security problems in the Indian ocean area had enhanced the importance of Sri Lanka in the British defence policy by the mid-forties.⁶

This continuing tendency on the part of the Colonial Office to regard Sri Lanka as an important link in the imperial defence network in the Indian Ocean area constituted the crux of the problem of Sri Lanka's independence during this time. The 1943 Declaration stated that the post-war examination of Sri Lanka's constitution would be directed towards the grant of 'full responsible government' under the Crown; but it laid down detailed conditions in respect of defence and external affairs. Similarly the Soulbury Commission accepted that the "goal of the people of Ceylon is Dominion Status"; but governed by defence considerations the Commission concluded that it was "clearly not possible to reach that goal in a single step"⁷

In the meantime, before the publication of Soulbury Commission report, Mr. Creech-Jones, the then Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs, invited Mr. Senanayake for consultations. On this occasion, the Sri Lankan leader, counselled by Sri Oliver Goonetilleke and Sir Ivor Jennings, submitted to the Colonial Office that the limitations imposed by the 1943 Declaration had been "inspired by mistrust".⁸ Therefore, "ignorning" that document, Mr. Senanayake "made a strong case for Dominion Status but met the fears which had inspired the limitations of (the 1943) Declaration by offer of an agreement about defence and external affairs".⁹ Mr. Senanayake himself reported this crucial offer, intended to be the prerequisite of the grant of independence, in the following words :

We should be ready and anxious to give all assistance and all the facilities that His Majesty's Government.. might require, provided that we were given control of our own country I said I was ready to pledge my colleagues to any reasonable agreement about defence as an integral part of any agreement for the Dominion Status I went to the length of preparing the draft of such an agreement to govern relations between Ceylon and the United Kingdom, particularly in matters of defence and external affairs¹⁰.....

As Sir Charles Jeffries put it, all this was "embarrassing" to the British authorities.¹¹ Yet they were not at all disposed towards visualising the grant of independence by a single step as there was no pressing need to do so. However, when Sir Oliver Goonetilleke entered the 'decisive' phase of negotiations with the Colonial Office, after the problem of independence of India and Burma was settled, the interplay of two sets of circumstances made it possible

for the British authorities to declare Sri Lanka's independence within the British Commonwealth. There was, in the first place, the willing offer of agreements covering defence and external affairs by the Sri Lankan leadership and their manifest willingness to collaborate with the British. During the final phase of negotiations the basic objective of Sir Oliver had been to reassure Sri Lanka's co-operation with the British and to alleviate doubts and misgivings on their part about independent Sri Lanka's international role. After these negotiations, Sir Oliver, pointing to Sri Charles Jeffries, stated in London :

We asked you to look to us as a little bit of England and look to us with confidence because the collaboration between Britain and Ceylon will be so strong and because you are dealing with men whose word is their bond.¹²

As Mr. Senanayake himself had envisaged during his consultations with the Colonial Office :

... If His Majesty's government still felt that we could not be trusted the simple solution was to give self-government but provide for the taking over the administration of the island in the event of default on our part. It was not the legal powers that would be needed but full collaboration of free peoples.¹³

In the second place, there were industrial actions of the working class led by the Left which were by 1947 escalating into a general strike threatening to undermine the political base of the conservative leadership. In May Mr. Senanayake, alarmed by this possibility, instructed Sir Oliver to impress upon the Colonial Office by every means in his power "the absolute necessity of their making an immediate and spontaneous announcement that Dominion Status should be conferred on Ceylon at the earliest date that was constitutionally practicable".¹⁴ Mr. Creech-Jones as well as Governor Henry Moore themselves were concerned about the volatile political situation in the country and now they clearly saw that "the effects of further delay could only be disastrous".¹⁵ The Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs accordingly declared on June 18 in the House of Commons that "immediate steps will be taken to amend the (Soulbury) Constitution so as to confer upon Ceylon fully responsible status within the British Commonwealth of Nations", subject to "a number of agreements".¹⁶ This declaration was made "on the understanding that there would be agreements relating to defence, external affairs and public affairs".¹⁷ These agreements were signed in November and in February the following year Sri Lanka's independence was formally declared.

Thus the independence settlement, as it is manifestly clear, embodied an outstanding degree of community of interests between the then conservative leadership of Sri Lanka and the British authorities. The point to note is that, as Mr. Senanayake envisaged : "The only satisfactory arrangement—satisfactory to either government—would be one in which the Ceylon government was collaborating with the Imperial Government".¹⁸ This was duly taken note of in London. "Ceylon has consistently co-operated with Britain", Mr. Creech-Jones stated in the House of Commons during the debate on the Second reading of Ceylon Independence Bill,

and has taken a pride in her loyalty, her contribution to war and her ties with the United Kingdom. It was consistent with all her spirit that she seek to take control of her own destiny within the framework of the British Commonwealth.¹⁹

The corollary of this was the visualisation of the continuity of the relationship that existed before between the two countries. The reference to the defence and external affairs agreements which were intended to provide for this continuation was "deliberately vague", because as Sir Charles Jeffries candidly points out, the British Government "did not wish to spoil their gesture by making the grant of independence conditional on Ceylon accepting any specific obligations".²⁰ However, Mr. Creech-Jones himself put the point straight in the House of Commons : "Ceylon's responsible Government promptly negotiated Agreements to provide for continuity of external affairs and defence....".²¹

The defence and external affairs agreements together with the understanding established between the Colonial Office and the Sri Lankan leadership brought the country into a close relationship with Britain. This in turn brought the country to the very heart of global politics in the post-war era. The relationship with Commonwealth, that is to say, the special relationship with Britain constituted the key aspect of the declared foreign policy of the United National Party governments during entire period 1948-1956. However, conflict between the two opposing state systems, the Cold War, began to dominate the foreign policy formulation and the debate in the country right from the beginning. There was no uncertainty or a doubt on the part of the UNP leadership as to what policy the government ought to adopt in respect of this conflict ; it was the firm alignment with the West through the special relationship with Britain. The colonial revolution was unfolding quite dramatically since the end of the World War II. The dynamics of the Afro-Asian regional politics threatened to drag the UNP leadership to the arena of Afro-Asian regional politics; the Anglophile leadership nevertheless guarded themselves against any possible dent in their general alignment with the West. The country's geo-political location forced them to confront the geo-political imperatives in South Asia. This again, however, tended to reinforce their alignment with the West.

In the domain of the country's internal set up the independent settlement did not result in any noteworthy change. The UNP leadership refrained from introducing any meaningful change in the colonial society as if it would offend the former colonial master. The overriding thrust of their internal policy was to preserve and consolidate their power base within the existing socio-economic structure which was organically linked to the Western capitalist order. They were extremely sensitive to any actual or potential threat to the *status quo*, particularly to their political dominance. Therefore, instead of trying build up some semblance of national consensus, they adopted a totally negative attitude towards their political opponents. The traditional left parties were always identified as "trouble makers"; and notwithstanding their ideological differences and keeping in line with the then prevalent Cold War propaganda, they branded them as the agents of the Soviet Union bent upon creating chaos and disorder. All these tended to further solidify UNP's alignment with the West. The 1952 balance of payments crisis ultimately resulted in the Sino- Sri Lanka rubber-rice pact, challenging the whole edifice of the UNP's foreign policy. But the extreme anti-Communism of the UNP prevented any of its political manifestation in the country's foreign policy. The period 1948 - 1956 accordingly

represents an interesting study of collaboration between a Third World privileged social strata and the West.

II

There does not exist any evidence to suggest that the country's leadership had articulated any defence policy on the eve of independence. But after the independence was declared the ruling elite began to rely upon the Defence Agreement as the indispensable requirement of the country's defence and security. They did not envisage a direct or an immediate threat from the Soviet Union or China to Sri Lanka's independence despite their vociferous anti-Communism. But they maintained that the country's defence and security could be threatened by a possible danger emanating from its geo-political vulnerability, from a **potential** threat from India, which dominated its immediate geo-strategic environment. It was not that UNP leadership contemplated an ever-present immediate danger from their giant neighbour to the North; but they held the view that India was the only specific potential source of danger and that the matters could not be left for chance. From this point of view, Mr. Sensenayake and his successors looked upon the defence link with Britain as the surest guarantee of the country's defence and security as against any potential danger from India. Accordingly, the chief functional value of the defence agreement for the UNP leadership was to reassure the country's independence and security as against any possible danger originating from India.

The second functional value of the defence relationship with Britain concerned the preservation of internal order and the UNP's political hegemony in the country. The UNP leadership was well aware of the divisions in the country's ideologically oriented Marxist Left. Nevertheless, they always considered the left parties as a source of trouble and as potentially capable of successfully challenging UNP's rule in the country. In view of the absence of an adequate internal defence establishment, the UNP leadership again relied upon Britain to assure internal order and stability as against any serious attempt on the part of the Left to disturb the **status quo**. "The unwritten premise and the unspoken argument", **The Tribune** (Colombo) editorially commented, "which probably was the most compelly factor for the retention of the British troops and bases in Ceylon by the Senanayake and Kotelawala Governments was that the presence of foreign troops was a source of strength for the Government in power against 'civil strife'"²².

The international and operational significance of the defence relationship between Britain and Sri Lanka, however, was determined by the deliberate alignment of the UNP governments with the West. During the whole of this period Sri Lanka was an inalienable part of the world strategic network of the Western powers. "The ambition and the desire of the Commonwealth", Premier Senanayake told the House of Representatives in July, 1950, "is to maintain peace in the world. We have joined the Commonwealth and with them we will certainly endeavour to maintain peace in the World"²³. This Commonwealth defence relationship combined with the politico-ideological identity of the UNP leadership with the West determined the country's overall strategic relationship with the outside world.

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Nicholas Mansergh has observed :

The 1947 Defence Agreement formally associated Ceylon through the period of the Cold War with the senior Commonwealth partner who was also a principal associate in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.²⁴

Britain, Sri Lanka's dominant defence partner, considered her strategic link with Colombo as a part of the general defence strategy of the West. Thus, it was stated in the U. K. defence statement for 1949,

.....His Majesty's Government have necessarily devoted increased attention to co-operation with other members of the Commonwealth, the United States of America and other like-minded powers, and generally to the development of a appropriate regional security arrangements.....²⁵

The Sri Lankan leadership on their part perceived an inseparable organic unity between the 'defence' of Sri Lanka and the 'defence' of other 'free nations'. Mr. Senanayake himself put it succinctly in November, 1950, five months after the outbreak of the Korean War, which tested all the world strategic relationships;

One of my sacred and onerous responsibilities is that of preparing to defend our freedom against any type of aggression whether it comes from without or within, in order we may progress peacefully, in order that we might live without fear.....and in order that we might link our freedom with the liberty of all freedom loving people throughout the world.²⁶

This conceptual unity was accompanied by Sri Lanka's active association with the Western strategy in relation to both the central strategic balance and the local conflicts in Asia.

After the country's defence policy was formulated and implemented within the overall structure of the global strategy of the West, Premier Senanayake did not want to go beyond that. This was due partly to his low-profile attitude towards external affairs and partly to the absence of any immediate and visible threat to the country's security. Thus when his attention was drawn to the idea of a regional defence arrangement for the Pacific which was mooted in 1950 he rejected it off hand.²⁷ It was only after a defence project for South-East Asia was launched by the United States of America that the UNP leadership reconsidered this attitude.

The SEATO defence project sponsored by America did not present the Kotelawala government any easy choice. Its vociferous anti-communism and the extremely favourable disposition towards the dominant Western power necessitated a positive orientation towards the proposed defence organisation. However, the logic of the country's special relationship with Britain, its general association with the Colombo Powers and the sectarian in-fighting which then obtained within the UNP militated against such a policy. From the beginning, Britain diverged from America as to how to fight Communism in Asia. On this occasion

the Foreign Secretary, Sir Anthony Eden disapproved purely militaristic American strategy as it was embodied in the proposed defence organisation. He accordingly transmitted the British line of thinking on the matter to the five Colombo powers, including Sri Lanka, and invoked their support, particularly that of India, counterposed to America in respect of shaping the South-East Asian defence project. The resulting configuration of forces caught the Kotelawala government in a dilemma. Its overall anti-Communist policy necessitated it to go along with America. But now the logic of the British connection forced it to act in concert with the other Colombo Powers, particularly India, on which the British thinking on the proposed defence plan and the policies of other members of the Colombo Powers depended to a considerable extent. Reflecting this dilemma, the government said, in a statement issued on August 13, 1954, that the country was "prepared to maintain an open mind on the subject" and expressed the view that "SEATO may not be the most appropriate machinery" to maintain peace in Asia.²⁸

Subsequently Sir John Kotelawala repeatedly asserted that Sri Lanka would keep an open mind in respect of the membership in SEATO. But soon he realised that this was not politically feasible. A section of the UNP led by the Senanayakes and supported by **The Times of Ceylon** launched a campaign against Sir John's inclination towards SEATO from the mid-1954 onwards. It became part of an internal power struggle within the UNP. In view of this opposition which challenged his base in the party Sir John reaffirmed the continued commitment to the policy laid down by D. S. Senanayake. In August, 1955, in answer to the anxiety expressed by Mr. Dudley Senanayake about the country's possible membership in the America-sponsored defence alliance, he grudgingly said : "The position with regard to the Defence Agreement, with regard to our contracts with foreign countries, is just the same as it during the time of the first Prime Minister and of the second Prime Minister. There has been no change whatsoever." And he added "There need be no fear of our joining SEATO or NATO".²⁹

III

This continuing strategic alignment of Sri Lanka with the West was complemented and reinforced by an equally important alignment between the two sides in the sphere of the country's diplomatic relations. During the entire period from 1948 to 1956 Sri Lanka remained a dependable ally of the Western powers. The UNP leadership tended to believe that the active assertion of the country's independence was synonymous with the active collaboration with the West. Their vociferous anti-communism in certain instances came very closer to John Forster Dulles himself, an extent unwarranted by the traditional wisdom of Britain.

There is no evidence to support Professor Howard Wriggin's view that "not until the development of the hydrogen bomb.....and the sharpening of political and military conflict in Indo-China in 1954 did the Cold War come to play a significant role in the foreign policy debates" in Sri Lanka and that it was "to remain far away" from the country.³⁰ As early as November - December, 1947 the ruling elite had identified the Soviet Union as their chief international adversary.³¹ And before long they identified international Communism' as the greatest danger confronting Asia, falling in line with the Western propaganda during

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this time. If the defence agreement laid down the foundation for Sri Lanka's strategic alignment with the West during the period 1948 – 1956, it was its attitude towards this issue that defined diplomatic alignment during the same period. By 1948 there was no question whether Sri Lanka had been affected by the Cold War or not; she was right at its centre as an active participant on the Western side. On his return from the 1948 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, Premier Senanayake declared in Colombo :

There is what they called the 'Cold War' between the East and the West of Europe which is causing not only a setback in world recovery but is preventing the progress and development of Asian countries and Ceylon which have recently emerged or are emerging from foreign domination. We are thus intimately interested not only in preventing chaos developing around in South-East Asia, but in what goes on in Europe and we shall be prepared to assist in the resolution of the present deadlock. I made it clear to everybody (present at the Commonwealth Premiers' Meeting) that Ceylon will do everything in her power in the defence of democracy, freedom and justice.³²

Despite this deep involvement in the Cold War the ruling elite was also concerned about the attempt made by the European powers to cling to their crumbling empires in Asia in the immediate aftermath of the country's independence. As a result, Mr. D. S. Senanayake himself issued a directive in December 1948 banning the country's harbour and airfield facilities to the Dutch planes and ships carrying troops and military weapons to fight the Indonesian nationalists. This was the only specific action that the UNP governments took in support of the independence struggles in Afro-Asia. After the Chinese revolution and beginning with the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers' Conference held in Colombo in January, 1950, the concern about Afro-Asian liberation struggles receded to the background – making the Indonesian policy as if it was an aberration; and fighting 'international Communism' became the focus of the country's international policy.

Throughout the period from 1948 to 1956 the connection with Britain constituted the ultimate reference point of the foreign policy of the UNP governments. Yet the left opposition as well as the ruling elite were quick to perceive the decline of Britain from a position of a great imperial power to that of a second ranking power. Parallel to this, the United States, the dominant power in the Western alliance as well as the edifice of the world capitalist order, emerged in its own right as a factor of central significance in the UNP's world outlook. The leadership looked upon America as "the guiding factor that will shape the destiny of Asia" as against "the tide of Communism".³³ They identified a close political solidarity between the two countries and believed that the destiny of Sri Lanka was bound with the West.

On the question of fighting Communism in Asia, however, until Sir John became the Prime Minister in October, 1953, Sri Lanka fell in line with the British strategy as against America's basically militaristic courses of action. At the 1950 Commonwealth Foreign Ministers' Conference which was summoned to work out an anti-Communist programme for Asia in accordance with the British line of thinking, Mr. D. S. Senanayake stated :

The fundamental problem of Asia is economic, not political and it is essential to the future of the world that the problem of poverty and want in Asia should be clearly seen and boldly tackled. Communism would have no appeal to the masses of Asia once they are assured of steady improvement in their conditions of life.³⁴

The UNP leadership proudly presented the Colombo Plan as their contribution to the cause of the "free World", and Sir Oliver Gonetilleke commented that it had "proclaimed an era of new hope to all in South-East Asia".³⁵

The Korean War, the most intense encounter between the Communist and non-Communist forces, was the best test case of Sri Lanka's alignment with the West during the period concerned. The country's attitude towards the Korean crisis changed in emphasis depending on the differential phases of its unfolding. From the outbreak of the War (June 1950) until the U.S. led forces crossed the 38th Parallel (October 7, 1950) there was no ambiguity in the government's attitude. The leadership maintained that the war was a result of a "well laid" Soviet plan.³⁶ Premier Senanayake "did not see any reason why (the airfield and harbour) facilities which were available to the Americans in the past should not be available" in the context of the Korean War.³⁷

From early October until General MacArthur was relieved of his command on April 10, 1951 the spectre of an imminently possible global war haunted the entire world challenging all the established strategic relationships. Sri Lanka which had been formally and otherwise connected to the Western alliance was not free from the impact of this. It was indeed this situation that determined her attitude towards the crisis until the United States agreed, in effect, to negotiate with the other side in June, 1951. In January, 1951, Mr. D. S. Senanayake, along with the other Commonwealth Prime Ministers signed a declaration which contained among other things the following:

.....the problem of peace is that of removing the causes of war; of easing tension and promoting understanding; of assisting less-developed nations which need our aid; of being at all times willing to discuss our differences without foolishly assuming that all attempts to secure peace are a form of 'appeasement'. We will cultivate friendship we now have and hope that with wise approaches differences may become less and ultimately disappear.

.....In all our discussions we have made it clear to each other, as we now do to the world, that as Commonwealth Prime Ministers we would welcome any feasible arrangement for fresh exchange of views with Stalin or with Mao Tse Tung. We should, in the name of humanity make a supreme effort to see clearly into each others hearts and minds.

We do not seek to interfere in the affairs of the Soviet Union or China or any other country; we are simply determined to retain the mastery of our own affairs without fear of aggression.³⁸

On the same occasion, in a B. B. C. Broadcast Talk, Prime Minister Senanayake made an important statement: "We believe", he said "in a way of life which may be permitted to call the middle way and in which the rule of moral law founded on a faith in the 'oneness' of human life would hold sway, where 'power politics' or 'power economics' would not find a place in the conduct of international affairs....."³⁹ The Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Declaration, which was based on the universal fears generated by a seemingly possible escalation of the Korean conflict into a general war, and this manifestly ambiguous and peace-meal statement signified two points in the formation of Sri Lanka's external relations. First, the rejection of the extreme manifestations in the United States' anti-communist policy in Asia as represented by General MacArthur. Second, the first operational accommodation in Sri Lanka's foreign policy of the key precept governing strategic relations among nations in this nuclear era, namely, the necessity for the prevention of the nuclear war. What the 'Middle Way Talk' signified then was an advocacy of the middle course between 'appeasement' of the Communist powers and the need for negotiations between the two parties to the Korean War. In any event, this 'Middle Way Talk', which was occasioned by the drama in the Korean Peninsula, did not in any respect mean a middle way or non-alignment in respect of the Cold War Conflict. In point of fact, the tendency which emerged from Colombo since then was one of further solidifying the alignment with the West in a context of deepening cold war conflict. However, during the last phase of the Korean War, that is the period June 1951-July, 1953, in which there was a war of nerves between the two antagonistic sides, there occurred a clash of interests between the United States and Sri Lanka leading to the most paradoxical development in the country's foreign policy. Before going to discuss this development, a brief reference to its policy in respect of the Japan peace settlement in order.

Though for various reasons the Truman administration had felt the necessity for concluding a settlement with Japan, the basic factor that determined the kind of peace treaty that was signed in September, 1951 in San Francisco was the objective of bringing Japan to the United States' "side of the Cold War".⁴⁰ The Sri Lankan government found itself in complete agreement with the treaty particularly because there was full agreement between Britain and America on this issue. In presenting the Draft Treaty to the House of Representatives in August, 1951 Mr. Senanayake said that the "most of the views expressed by us have been incorporated" in it.⁴¹ None of the controversial issues involved in the peace settlement such as the necessity for the Soviet and Chinese participation, the question of payment of reparations, rearmament of Japan and the retention of the U.S. armed forces in that country perturbed the Sri Lankan leadership.

The United States and the Sino-Sri Lankan Rubber-Rice Pact

The picture of the country's political economy, as it was perceived by the government leadership by the mid-1952, had three essential characteristics. First, the quantity of rice that the government had been able to secure has fallen far below the need of the country, despite a "desperate attempt" made by the Food Ministry to procure the requirements from South-East Asia - the country's traditional source of use of supplies; consequently, by mid-1952, the country had faced a "food crisis".⁴² Second, by 1952, the price of rice, the largest import item of the country, not only had sky-rocketed but also had been transformed from

a sterling commodity to a dollar commodity. To pay for quantities of rice that had been already allocated by Burma, Thailand and South Viet Nam and to buy the necessary balance in the world market, the government required a dollar reserve. However, due to a drastic reduction of income from rubber exports to the U. S., the country's traditional rubber market, the dollar reserve had virtually been depleted. Third, given the gravity of the country's balance of payment crisis during 1951-53, the government found impossible to bear a further increase in the expenditure for rice imports without seriously impairing the financial and/or political stability in the country. To continue with the importation of rice at a higher price and distributing it at the existing low, subsidised price had disastrous implications for financial stability, conversely any reduction of rice ration or an increase in the price at which the rice was supplied to the consumers had serious adverse implications for political stability. The UNP government endeavoured to grapple with the crisis with a view to preserving both financial and political stability.

Given (a) the dollar-rubber linkage and (b) the scarcity of rice in South-East Asia, by June 1952, the Sri Lankan government was left with two alternatives. Firstly, to turn towards the United States, which the UNP leadership had all along considered as the main source of assistance when necessary. Secondly, to turn towards China which, after the U. N. embargo of May 1951 came into effect, repeatedly offered rice in exchange of Sri Lankan rubber. Given the availability of the former alternative there was no question of even considering the latter. In July Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake sent a mission under Sir Oliver Goone-illeke to Washington. This mission represented the government's final attempt to come to a reasonable agreement with the U. S. On the question of rubber sales to United States. The fact that the mission was sent amidst a serious food and financial crisis enhanced its significance for Sri Lankan leadership. Accordingly, the mission was given as its task "the procuring of rice supplies, the negotiation of a rubber agreement and securing of a measure of economic and financial aid from the U. S. to enable Ceylon to carry on with her plan for economic development as well as to compensate for the possibility of accepting agreement to sell rubber to the U. S. at Singapore prices which are generally known to be lower than the prices prevailing in the Colombo market any time".⁴³

However, as the Sri Lankan government made it clear, the mission "failed to achieve anything"; concerning the question of rice supplies, "the U. S. Government agreed to assist in buying requirements in the open market of the U. S. A., although the U. S. Government had repeatedly declined to agree to the same principle for purchasing Ceylon rubber". On the question of rubber, "while not being willing to tie up the question of aid to Ceylon with the conclusion of a rubber agreement, the U. S. no doubt made it clear that the satisfactory settlement of these matters would be expected to lead to a stoppage of rubber exports to China"⁴⁴ After the failure of negotiations the mission bought about 30,000 tons rice in the American open market "at a reasonable price",⁴⁵ but further purchases had to be abandoned because as the Minister of Trade later pointed out, "prices began to skyrocket the moment Ceylon started making its purchases".⁴⁶

The failure of Sir Oliver's mission left the road to Peking wide open, and on July 30 Premier Dudley Senanyake announced a mission to China. None of the important sections

of Sri Lankan opinion questioned the wisdom of this action. However, the government was not at all inclined to rush into the kind of long-term rice-rubber agreement it entered into with China; for the very decision to send a governmental mission to China amounted to a complete reappraisal of the whole edifice of foreign policy. Everything, therefore, depended on China's response to the Sri Lankan requirements; and they, as will be seen below 'seized the opportunity, and offered a rice-rubber deal which the Sri Lankan government found difficult to reject because of its obvious economic advantages.

The United States, however, viewed the Sino-Sri Lankan agreement as an attempt to break away from the "co-operative effort" of the West "to deny the aggression-minded nations the materials that should be of special help in their war-making capacity"; and, accordingly, in January, 1953, Mr. Averell Harriman, the Mutual Security Administrator, in his report to the Congress, wrote apparently as a policy-guide to the incoming Eisenhower Administration :

.....The solution of Ceylon's new relationship with China must remain a matter of critical concern to the United States. Controls over shipping and over fuelling vessels calling free ports may provide one salutary course of action.....

The Ceylon situation is important itself. In addition, it illustrates the complexities of a control system which has to be general in order to be effective and the effectiveness of which can be threatened by a failure of a single important supplier to co-operate.⁴⁷

This however did not lead to any considerable controversy between the two countries. The U. S. endeavoured to deal with the situation arising from the China agreement through normal diplomatic channels. The government of Sri Lanka, on its part, deliberately refrained from entering into any controversy mainly because of its continuing disposition towards the West.

In May, 1954, President Eisenhower invited the Sri Lankan Premier to visit America. On July 7 Sir John accepted invitation with a mandate from the government Parliamentary Group to "explore the possibility of obtaining American aid whenever the Government need financial assistance".⁴⁸ On November 5, Sir John announced his visit to America and said that he expected to have "informal discussions on a variety of subjects".⁴⁹ It can be presumed that this variety of subjects included the two inter-related subjects of the China agreement and the U.S. aid.

The visit however did not result in the reinstitution of such aid. Eisenhower Administration did not propose aid to Sri Lanka because, as Charles Wolf has pointed out, of "the same Battle Act consideration which led to the suspension of such aid".⁵⁰ Nevertheless, in February 1956, the White House took "a special decision" to extend 5 million in economic aid to Sri Lanka for the financial year 1956. In taking this decision a presidential waiver of the Battle Act restrictions "was not required".⁵¹ This was due to what the U. S. official called "Ceylon's record of co-operation with the free world".⁵² Sir John's attack on "Soviet Colonialism" at

Bandung was read in the U. S. as a "most effective" and "a brilliant and spirited defence of America and Western policies"; and after the Bandung Conference the Congress as well as the White House began to reconsider the embargo on aid to Sri Lanka, which now appeared as "an injustice" towards "one of America's best friends in Asia" and as an "embarrassment" to the United States.⁵³ Mr. George Allen, the then Assistant Secretary for South Asian Affairs, recommending the grant of aid to Sri Lanka, told a Congressional Subcommittee:

We are not in a position at this moment to programme for Ceylon. I wish very much we were.....

The problem concerns the shipment of rubber by Ceylon to China At the recent conference of Bandung, the Premier of Ceylon made a most effective speech against the colonial aspects of communism. Ceylon is one of the five so-called 'Colombo Powers' which called that Bandung Conference The impression was that they were meeting to show their determination to prevent the return of imperialism by the Western Powers.....

It is therefore all the more significant that Sir John Kotelawala declared at Bandung, in the clearest terms, that the worst colonialism in the world was not the colonialism of democracy but of Communist dictatorship.⁵⁴

IV

The factors which underlined the UNP's alignment with the West *mutatus mutandis* led it to envisage an adversary relationship with the socialist powers. "(If) we try to get close to Russia", Premier D. S. Senanayake stated in June 1951.

We would be embracing the danger, we would be embracing the bear. I think it would be better to depend on the people who have not got a sort of madness to upset this world and also who are not anxious to bring about revolution. We would rather keep away from the other.⁵⁵

On another occasion he said:

Enslavement of the world is what we believe to be (the Soviet) attitude Since it is the freedom of this world that we are concerned with we will never be with Russia until she gives up her policy.⁵⁶

The logical corollary of this policy was the UNP leadership's active association with the western policy of containment of communism.

From the beginning, the government was averse to the establishment of any politically significant link with the socialist powers. The leadership made use of the Soviet attitude towards the question of Sri Lanka's membership in the UN as against the establishment of any contact with that country. In June-July, 1948 a special Security Council Committee

considered Sri Lanka's application for the membership. The majority of the members of this committee "supported" this application; however, the USSR and Ukranian SSR abstained from supporting the application and "reserved the right of their delegations to discuss the matter in the Security Council".⁵⁷

When on August 18 the membership question was taken up in the Security Council, the western powers formally proposed the grant of membership on the basis of the majority support of the special committee. The Soviet Union on her part proposed to "postpone the consideration of Ceylon's admission" "until such time as full information on the status of the Government of Ceylon and on its constitution as well as sufficient proof that Ceylon is a sovereign and independent state has been received from the Government of Ceylon".⁵⁸ The Soviet Representative Jacob Malik explained it :

.....The Security Council and the Committee on the Admission of New States do not dispose of sufficient information on the national status or constitution of Ceylon. Moreover, there is not adequate proof of the fact that Ceylon is really a sovereign and independent state. In the absence of adequate information the USSR delegation finds it difficult to consider this matter. We do not know enough about the national status or the constitution of Ceylon, and there is a total lack of evidence that Ceylon is a sovereign and independent state ; on the contrary, we are informed, in particular, by the Press that Ceylon is not a sovereign state but remains to all intents and purposes a British Colony.⁵⁹

Both the western and Soviet proposals failed to obtain an affirmative vote, being both sides opposed to each other. When the question was again considered by the Security Council in mid-1949, it had become full-fledged Cold War issue. Counterposed to the western "policy of discrimination" in respect of the grant of membership for five Soviet bloc members who had then applied for membership, in September, the Soviet Union introduced a resolution recommending membership for eight pro-western countries, including Sri Lanka, as well as for the five bloc members.⁶⁰ Then the United States insisted that the individual applications for membership should be taken up by "separate consideration and a separate vote taken", keeping in line with the UN procedural rules.⁶¹ The applications were accordingly considered separately and none succeed in obtaining an affirmative vote; the West opposed the members of the Soviet bloc; the Soviet Union opposed the pro-Western countries.

The Sri Lankan government circles were well aware that the failure to obtain the country's membership in the UN was due to the fact that it had become a Cold War issue;⁶² and after 1949 the government itself refrained from making any specific attempt to obtain the membership. Nevertheless the UNP leadership persistently held the initial Soviet objection against the establishment any meaningful relationship with the Soviet Union.

The UNP leadership differentiated their attitude towards China from their position vis-a-vis the the soviet Union. Thus Sir Oliver Goonetilleke stated in June, 1951: "In regard to China our attitude is completely different. We have, as it must be, the great sympathy of a small Eastern nation towards another Asian nation struggling to find a solution to her

difficulties".⁶³ This has the significant result of the absence of any deliberate attempt on the part of the UNP administrations to characterise China as an aggressive power bent upon engendering world peace. This however did not mark any attempt on the part of the UNP leadership to seek any form international solidarity with China: nor did it facilitate the establishment of an inter-state relationship.

On January 6, 1950, the day on which the British recognition of the Peoples' Republic was announced, Sri Lanka's Ministry of Defence and External Affairs stated that "the Government of Ceylon has decided to recognize the new Government of China".⁶⁴ Reporting from Colombo, Victor Levin of **The Sunday Times** (London) correctly observed: "In deciding to to recognize the Communist Government of China, Ceylon has merely fallen in line with Britain".⁶⁵ In any event Mr. D. S. Senanayake made it clear to the Parliament that the recognition did not mean any significant change in the Government's general policy towards the socialist countries.⁶⁶ Explaining why he disregarded the right of China to participate in the peace settlement with Japan, the Premier said, "If it suits us we take them, if it does not suit us we ignore them".⁶⁷ Asked whether he would continue to recognise the People's Republic, he replied: "Yes. At the same time recognition does not mean that we are to recognise them for all time. It depends on the attitude they adopt towards us".⁶⁸ The situation that had emerged on the Sri Lankan side until Premier Dudley Senanayake announced a mission to China in search of rice was one of rejection of any significant inter-state level contact.

On October 10, 1952, soon after the long-term agreement which had been negotiated by a mission led by Mr. R. G. Senanayake, the then Minister of Trade, was published, the Political Correspondent of **The Ceylon Daily News** wrote that "nobody was more surprised" than the mission when it "found that China rice was indeed available". In fact **The Ceylon Daily News** had privilege access to 'inside' information regarding the matters of this nature. But this story is misleading. For Mr. Dudley Senanayake had made quite clear that the deal government intended to effect was conditional upon the nature of the Chinese offer.⁶⁹

In Peking the mission took up three subjects for discussion with the Chinese. Of these the most important was the possibility of exchanging rubber for rice on a long-term basis.⁷⁰ As Mr. R.G. Senanayake reported to the Cabinet on his return to the country, it was made clear to the Chinese that "in view of the special significance of trade in rubber with China, the talks so far as (Ceylon was concerned) were strictly exploratory".⁷¹ Throughout the discussion, the mission had three specific "objectives in view", namely, (a) to ascertain what degree of permanence of continuity could be expected in the trade with China, (b) to ascertain what quantity of rubber China could absorb and (c) to ensure that, in the event of trade continuing, she always paid a premium well above world prices; In case of rice, the mission endeavoured to secure "a long-term arrangement" "at a reasonable price".

Keeping in line with Sri Lanka's wishes, the Chinese agreed to the following "proposals." In the case of rubber,

- "(1) China is prepared to buy the entire Sri Lankan output of sheet rubber - about 50,000 tons;
- (2) She is prepared to continue this for five years;
- (3) She accepts the principle of paying for Sri Lankan rubber at a price in excess of the world price;
- (4) The price for each year or such shorter period as may be desired to be negotiated from time to time;
- (5) The price for the year commencing from the date of any agreement on these proposals is to be 32d per lb f. o. b. (This compared with the then existing Singapore f. o. b. price of 21p per lb.)

In the case of rice,

- (1) China undertakes to supply a minimum of 200,00 tons of rice a year;
- (2) She is prepared to continue supplying this for five years;
- (3) Prices should be negotiated annually; the price for the year commencing from the date of any agreement on this proposal is to be £56 pr metric ton f. o. b., that is, at a price £9 less than the then prevailing world market price".⁷²

When these proposals were submitted to the Cabinet, Mr. R. G. Senanayake pointed out that "the money gains on the combined rice-rubber deal would aggregate a gain to Ceylon of approximately Rs. 92 million". For the Trade Minister "the merits and demerits" of them were quite clear, and therefore, he did not "propose to expand on them".⁷³ **The Ceylon Daily News** in a centre page article said: "The terms of Communist China's offer are very tempting indeed at the first sight. Never before has such an appetising dish been placed before this Government".⁷⁴ Indeed, given the obviously advantageous terms offered by the Chinese, no one in Sri Lanka could easily contemplate the rejection of this offer.

For the Senanayake Cabinet, however, the offer did not present any easy choice; the acceptance of a government-to government level deal with China would be tantamount to a repudiation of its anti-communist foreign policy; and, in fact, as **The Financial Times** (London) observed, the very success of the China mission embarrassed the government.⁷⁵ But, given the obvious economic advantages, and given the popularity commanded by the Chinese offer, it was not politically feasible for the government to reject it. To make the government's predicament more difficult, the Lake House launched a propaganda campaign of a type unprecedented in the country against the Chinese offer. Similarly, an extreme right wing group of

the UNP led by J. R. Jayewardene carried out a campaign against it from within the government, largely due to political considerations.

Despite this opposition, the government decided to accept the Chinese offer. In presenting the final agreement to the parliament, Premier Dudley Senanayake declared :

Honourable Members will be aware of the serious difficulties we have had in the recent years in obtaining our requirements of rice from traditional sources of supply and from that point of view alone, the Agreement is a matter of great satisfaction.

Honourable members will also be aware of the great importance to our economy securing a steady and dependable market for our rubber at a fair price. The agreement achieves this and guarantees a market for the next five years for a substantial part of our production.....⁷⁶

The conclusion of the agreement led to the emergence of the establishment diplomatic relations as a live issue in the relationship between the two countries. The Chinese considered the agreement as an "example of the kind"⁷⁷ of trade relations that they ought to establish with other countries and, immediately after the agreement was signed, they took up the question of establishment of diplomatic relations with the government of Sri Lanka.⁷⁸ The Sri Lankan opposition strongly pressed the government to follow up the trade agreement by establishing political relations with the socialist countries.⁷⁹ Not surprisingly, however, the leadership of the UNP did not want to go beyond the trade relationship.

Had there been any possibility of establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries, it soon disappeared after Sir John became the Prime Minister in October, 1953. In September of the same year the Chinese Premier sought permission from the Sri Lankan authorities to send a "goodwill mission" to "reciprocate" the visit of the Sri Lankan mission to Peking in October, 1952.⁸⁰ "(Under) no circumstances will a goodwill mission from China be allowed to come "Sir John publicly stated, "I have sent a communication to Communist China reminding the Chinese Government that they only have a trade agreement and let our relations with each other remain that way. We have taken nothing from you. We sell you rubber and you sell rice in return. We do not want any other friendship or dealing with Communists".⁸¹

In early 1955 there was a calculated Chinese attempt to win over the friendship of the Sri Lankan government, apparently in disregard of its treaty commitment to the West and its highly publicised anti-communism. On January 10, **The Ceylon Daily News** reported that the Sri Lankan Premier "has been invited to visit China" by his Chinese counterpart. The response of Sir John however did not keep up to the Chinese expectations. On August 2, in the House of Representatives, asked whether the Premier (a) had proposed to visit China and Russia and (b) "prepared to send friendly missions from Ceylon to these countries", Sir John replied:

(a) I am under no obligation to visit China or the Soviet Union.....

(b) No; not until it is seen that these countries deserve the friendship of Ceylon

Nevertheless, in his statement to the House of Representatives on the Bandung Conference, Sir John stated:

A very great achievement of the Conference was the mutual understanding of view points reached between Communist China and Non-Communist countries. This is a notable contribution to peace, and I feel that both sides can now get along amicably together without treading on each other's toes.

But he added : "Of course, the sincerity of purpose of both sides has yet to be seen in action".⁸³

V

During the period 1948-1956, Sri Lanka did not have a policy in respect of India and other Afro-Asian countries, independent from her alignment with the West. It was subordinated to and conditional upon the country's then existing organic unity with the western side of the central conflict. During the entire period, Sri Lanka, under the UNP leadership looked upon India from the point of view of a vulnerably located small country who ought to have a friendly but distant relationship. India looked upon her small neighbour from the point of view of a potentially dominant world power who ought to establish an exclusive or a special relationship. The difficulty inherent in these divergent geo-political approaches was merely compounded and complicated by the socio-ethnic question regarding the political status of the persons of Indian origin in Sri Lanka which dominated the day-to-day bilateral relationship between the two countries until 1964.

Pandit Nehru, speaking at a reception held in his honour in Colombo in January 1950 assured the Sri Lankans that India would not "absorb Ceylon" as it was feared by them and went on to say:

There should be closest co-operation between Lanka and India. Our whole history, our common culture make that inevitable. So I feel that neither India nor Ceylon should take any step which goes in the way of impairing these cordial friendly relations.⁸⁴

The close relationship thus envisaged was not found acceptable to the Sri Lankan leadership. Instead they visualised a Commonwealth relationship with their geo-political giant which facilitated a friendly but a distant relationship. Mr. D. S. Senanayake, in an interview with **The Statesman** (Calcutta) declared :

As a matter of fact our position today is different from what was previously. Then India and Ceylon were units of the British empire, but today we are members of the same Commonwealth and two independent members. So the relationship between different members will be discussed as between two independent members.⁸⁵

The Sri Lankan leader studiously refrained from attributing any significance to the Asian Relations Conference of 1947 and the Delhi Conference of 1949. The 1949 Speech from the Throne stated : "Developments in South-East Asia are of particular concern to Ceylon and My Government will continue, in association with other countries, to support for the establishment of freedom and peace in this region".⁸⁶ This declaration merely signified the deepening concern on the part of the leadership about the spread of communism in Asia. And, indeed, beginning with the 1950 Commonwealth Foreign Ministers Conference held in Colombo they envisaged a leading role for the country in the struggle against communism in Asia. India too was concerned about communism in Asia as anybody else; but it had been conditional upon Pandit Nehru's grand balancing strategy in respect of the world bloc conflict. The significance of this divergent diplomatic positions became clear along with Afro-Asia regional diplomacy and acquired an increased degree of importance during 1954 - 1955.

Sir John Kotelawala, in a Statement of Policy made in the House of Representatives in November, 1953, stated:

In South-East Asia we will endeavour to maintain the friendliest relations with our neighbours with whom we have historical, cultural and religious ties. In particular we desire to place our relationships with our neighbours, India and Pakistan, Burma and Indonesia on a firm basis of mutual goodwill.⁸⁷

Similarly, the Sri Lankan Prime Minister repeatedly asserted Afro-Asian solidarity and the need for the assertion of 'Asian opinion'. These statements taken together with Sir John's active active participation in the Afro-Asian diplomacy indicate a significant degree of convergence of Sri Lankan diplomacy with India and other Asian countries. But a closer examination of the role of Sri Lanka in the Afro-Asian regional diplomacy provides a different picture.

The unity in diplomatic action between Sri Lanka and other Asian countries related essentially to such broad and general issues as disarmament and economic and cultural co-operation among the Third World countries. The only specific major issue which interested the Sri Lankan leadership during this period of the resurgence of Afro-Asia was what they called 'international communism'. Sir John himself wrote about his role at the Colombo Powers' Conference of 1954:

Among the many matters the Prime Ministers considered (were Indo-China question, regional economic co-operation etc.) These were all good, but a subject I was very much interested in personally was that of international communism. I am an avowed and inveterate opponent of Communism. Communism that seeks to make it way in from outside unasked is insidious, treacherous and imperialistic. It has to be closely watched and it has to kept out at all costs in the national interests. I was, therefore, particularly anxious to secure a declaration on international Communism.⁸⁸

In the close-door sessions of the conference, the Sri Lankan leader introduced a strongly worded resolution condemning 'international communism'. The Indian Premier, according

to **The New York Times**, "fought tooth and nail" to exclude Communism from criticism in such a formal resolution.⁸⁹

The declaration of the Colombo Powers' Conference⁹⁰ committed the Sri Lankan government to support a political solution to the Indo-China question which had been aggravated by April-May 1954, as a result of an attack by the Vietminh forces on the fortress of Dien Bien Phu. This declaration, which really represented a great gain for Indian diplomacy and was unacceptable to America, hardly kept in line with the policy that the Sri Lankan government following in respect of the Indo-China crisis. On May 5 Sri John admitted in the House of Representatives that the government had allowed the U. S. globe-masters carrying French troops to Indo-China to use the Sri Lankan airfield facilities.⁹¹ On May 6, asked whether the premier would "prohibit any port, airfield or other parts of the territory of Ceylon being used for the passage of troops and ammunition to assist any party to continue the fighting in Viet Nam" in view of his association with the declaration of the Colombo Powers Conference, Sir John replied: "This is a matter in which I must use my discretion, and I shall use it in the way the occasion demands".⁹² When his attention was drawn to the fact that India and Burma had prohibited such facilities to the belligerents in accordance with the Declaration of the Colombo Powers Conference, Sir John replied :

At the present moment it would be unreasonable to deter one outside party from giving aid to the belligerents without any guarantee that the other party will do the same. To do that would be to increase the advantage for one against other. I might add that I do not anticipate the parties behind Viet Minh approaching me for permission to use ports, airfields or other parts of Ceylon for the conveyance of military aid to Indo-China. There is no purpose in asking me to stand neutral for the wrong side.

"To make it simple", the Premier stated, "Even if the devil wants my help to fight Communism I am on his side".⁹² The explanation given by Mr. J. R. Jayewardene was very much illustrative of the entire foreign policy pursued by the country during this period. "We are faced with a military situation in Indo-China", he stated on May 5 two days before the fall of Dien Phu,

The fortress of Dien Bien Phu is heavily attackedThe people who are struggling to see that Indo-China is free and has a democratic government would be completely helpless if this fortress and other military posts attached to it fall..... Real military aid could not come to these defenders except by aircraft The Rt. Hon. Prime Minister was therefore faced with that situation Are we going to hand over the entire area of Indo-China, a most important strategic point to us the boundary of the United States of America is not the west coast of America. It is not even the Pacific. One of her boundaries is the east coast of Indo-China, Formosa and Japan. Undoubtedly the fall of Indo-China into the hands of the communists would be a serious drawback to our future progress because the whole rice bowl of Asia would within a short time be under the heel of the greatest military dictatorship the world has seen and we should have to face a situation which I dread to contemplate.⁹³

At the historic Bandung Conference, the Sri Lankan Premier's main task had been to expose "Soviet colonialism"; on April 21, 1955, two days after the deliberations of the conference had begun, he launched his well known attack on the Soviet policy in East Europe. "You may say that colonialism is a term generally understood and capable of one meaning", Sir John declared,

I cannot agree. Colonialism takes many forms. The first and the most obvious form is Western colonialism We all know this form of colonialism There is another form of colonialism, however, about which many of us represented here are perhaps not agree to apply the term colonialism at all. Think for example, of those satellite States under Communist domination in Central and Eastern Europe Are not these colonies as much as any of the colonial territories in Africa and Asia. And if we are united in our opposition to colonialism, should it not be our duty openly to declare our opposition to soviet colonialism as much as to Western colonialism ? ⁹⁴

This intervention effectively destroyed the unstated vital condition upon which the deliberations of the Conference proceeded so far, that is, what Ronald Stead of *The Christian Science Monitor* called the "tacit agreement among major participants on harmony".⁹⁵ "Atmosphere was electric as we walked out of the (Conference) room", Sir John himself reported.⁹⁶ Pandit Nehru subsequently soberly reported to the Lok Sabha :

It appeared to us that irrespective of whatever view we may hold in regard to the conditions prevailing in these countries or their relationships, they could no way be called colonies nor could their alleged problems come under the classification of colonialism It is no injustice to anyone concerned to say that this controversy reflects a projection of the cold war affiliations into the arena of the Asian-African Conference.⁹⁷

VI

Foreign policy of Sri Lanka during the period concerned was one of alignment with Britain, and through Britain, with the West. The independence settlement envisaged this relationship and it was reinforced by the Cold War which unfolded itself since 1947 on a world scale. The alignment between Sri Lanka and the West was organic and functioning smoothly. The anti-colonial revolt and the geo-political balance in Southern Asia brought the country to the centre of Afro-Asian regional politics. This, however, did not lead to any significant change in the country's general alignment in the world. The UNP leadership tended to view that the assertion of the country's independence was synonymous with the active association with the Western powers. The 1952 Rubber-Rice Pact was the most paradoxical development in Sri Lanka's foreign relations. It was certainly not desired by the UNP political leadership. The 1952 external payments crisis coupled with a difficult situation then prevailing in the South East Asian rice market led the government to seek help from the United States. The complete failure of that country to accommodate the interests of its junior partner in Sri Lanka in any meaningful manner left the road to Peking wide-open.

The unqualified disposition of the Chinese to enter into an exchange with Sri Lanka left the UNP leadership with no alternative but to accept the deal. The agreement to exchange rice with rubber was a great gain for the Chinese diplomacy during this period. But it did not result in any noteworthy change in Sri Lanka's foreign policy. And indeed, the tendency which emerged in the country's foreign relations with Sir John Kotalawala assuming the office of prime minister was one of increasing affirmation of solidarity with the West. But its domestic support base was fast eroding.

Foot Notes

1. For a lucid exposition of the independence settlement see, Sir Charles Jeffries, **Ceylon : Path to Independence**, Pall Mall Press, London, 1962 and his **O. E. G. : A Biography of Sri Oliver Earnest Goonetilleke**, Pall Mall Press, London 1969.
2. **The Ceylon Daily News, Ceylon's Path to Freedom**, Colombo, 1945, pp. 11 - 12.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
4. **Ceylon's Path to Independence**, p. 88
5. *Ibid.*, p. 103
6. See Duncan Hall, **Commonwealth : A History of the British Commonwealth of Nations**, Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, London, 1971, p. 976
7. 6677. HMSO para 114
8. **Ceylon's Path to Freedom**, p. 13
9. Sir Ivor Jennings, **The Constitution of Ceylon**, (Sec. ed.), O. U. P., London, 1950, p. 11.
10. **Ceylon's Path to Freedom**, p. 12
11. **Ceylon's Path to Independence**, p. 101
12. **The Ceylon Daily News**, July 4, 1947
13. **Ceylon's Path to Freedom**, p. 15
14. Sir Charles Jeffries, **O. E. G.**, p. 90
15. **Ceylon's Path to Independence**, p. 112 and 117
16. **Parliamentary Debates : House of Commons**, vol. 448, 1946/47, Col. 2015.
17. Sir Charles Jeffries, **O. E. G.**, p. 91
18. **Ceylon's Path to Freedom**, p. 14
19. **Parliamentary Debates : House of Commons**, vol. 449, 1947/48, col. 1479
20. Sir Charles Jeffries, **Ceylon Path to Independence**, p. 118.
21. **Parliamentary Debates : House of Commons**, vol. 449, col. 1479
22. June 2, 1956
23. **Parliamentary Debates : House of Representatives**, vol. 8, 1950/51, col. 486
24. **The Multi-Racial Commonwealth**, O. U. P. for RIIA, 1954, p. 37
25. Command Paper, 7631, **The United Kingdom Statement on Defence Co-operation with the Commonwealth**.
26. **The Ceylon Daily News**, November 6, 1950
27. See **Parliamentary Debates : House of Representatives**, vol. 10 1950/51, cols. 1853-54
28. For the text of the Statement see **The Ceylon Daily News**, August 14, 1954.
29. **Parliamentary Debates : House of Representatives**, vol. 22, 1955/56, cols. 143-44
30. **Ceylon : Dilemma of New Nation**, Princeton University press, 1960, p. 286.
31. See **Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives**, vol. 1, 1947/48, col. 491

32. The Times of Ceylon, November 9, 1948
33. See The Ceylon Daily News of June 22, 1950 and of September 16, 1950
34. The Ceylon Daily News, January 10, 1950
35. The Statesman (Calcutta) May 2, 1951
36. **Parliamentary Debates : Senate** vol. 1950/51. col. 638
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59. **Jacob Malik's Speech on the Proposal**, in ibid., pp. 11 - 15.
60. See The Soviet Representative Tsrupkin's Speech in ibid., 442nd Meeting, pp. 15-22
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62. See, e. g., the editorial of the The Ceylon Daily News, August 28, 1950
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66. See **Parliamentary Debates : House of Representatives**, vol. 8, 1950/1951, col. 48
67. Ibid., vol. 11. 1951/1952, col. 1910
68. Ibid., col. 1910

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74. October 22, 1952
75. November 10, 1952
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78. **Parliamentary Debates : House of Representatives**, vol. 13, op. cit., col. 389
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