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LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVES 1948-1975: AN INTERPRETIVE ESSAY

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

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

I

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

II

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

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

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

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

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

III

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

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

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

IV

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

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

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

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

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

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

V

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

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

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

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

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

VI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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