



*"...we must  
have...  
a Navy"*

*The Navy in Sri Lanka  
1937-1972*

*From Crown Colony to Sovereign Republic:  
A personal memoir*

*Somasiri Devendra  
Instructor Lieutenant Commander (Retd)*

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Instructor Lieutenant Commander (Rtd)

A Sri Lanka Navy Publication

2015

\* On 3rd. December 1950 Sir Ukwatte Jayasundera, Leader of the Senate, tabling the Navy Act before the House uttered the memorable words:

“Now that we have an Army..... we must also have a Navy”.

**This memoir is dedicated with respect and in gratitude to**

**THE NAVY**

**and to all the men and women who served -  
Past, Present and yet to come**

*".....we must have...  
a Navy" \**

The Navy in Sri Lanka  
1937-1972

## Preface

Sri Lanka Navy has come a long way, and we celebrate our 65th anniversary this year. Yes, the Navy evolved over 65 long years through difficult times as well through stories of success and we do continue to progress towards the future with greater commitment in many fronts. To carefully map our future course, we need to understand the present and importantly do a careful study of our past, or our history.

Pearl Buck, an American writer and novelist once said *‘If you want to understand today, you have to search yesterday’*. This saying amply highlights why we cannot forget our history and move ahead. So our history, the Navy’s history, becomes so important for all of us. We have a duty of knowing our historical roots, how we evolved over time, customs, and traditions among many others.

In an era where many tend to forget history, I must indeed praise the effort put in by Instructor Lieutenant Commander Somasiri Devendra (Retd) in compiling some of the very important events prior to 1950 and stretching it all the way to the 70s. This book does not represent the history of the Navy or for that matter the most accurate record of events that have taken place in the 50s and 70s, but, is a sensational collection of personal memoirs and reasonably accurate historical accounts of the author. I believe that we should take this as our founding pillar of compiling the much needed naval history book.

I urge all the officers, especially the junior officers, to have a personal copy of this book and start reading it so that we all will be able to know our history well so that we could move to the future standing on a strong foundation.

I salute Instructor Lieutenant Commander Somasisri Devendra (Retd) for his untiring effort in doing the research work and compiling this book titled **“....we must have a Navy”** in a very short time period.

**RC WIJEGUNARATNE, WV, RWP & Bar, RSP, VSV, USP, ndc, psn**

Vice Admiral

COMMANDER OF THE NAVY

# FOREWORD

## *“Fair weather and foul”: the story of this book*

This book is about is how I came to see the Navy, through a determination to seek and find. It is no real History, as I do not have the qualifications, ability or resources to write a definitive history. I have embarked on this book exactly because no proper historian is available to write it: hence, I am only putting together what I observed, experienced and learnt. This book is, therefore, a modest effort to lay the foundation for a historian of the future. While asking the reader to excuse me for all the errors or blanks in the narrative, I feel that the writing of it is a story in itself which needs to be told.

Why did I undertake this work? Apart from the reasons given below, I (and many others new to the post-1950 Navy) felt deprived of any knowledge of the pre-1950 Navy – the “OKAPI Navy” – and so began my researches into *that* Navy. At the end of that study, I described my reaction to what I had discovered as follows:

*“The discovery-of the original CRNVR files was exhilarating. Leafing through those crumbling papers, I found myself engulfed by amass of detail of day-to-day happenings. The CRNVR ceased to be a collection of somebody else’s stories: it became a real-life Navy with all the’ problems, gripes, frustration, achievements, complaints, criticisms, and appeals familiar to me in my own Navy. The more I delved into the dry facts and the dusty files, the more human the CRNVR became to me. The total picture gradually revealed itself; made me behumble, with an ungrudging admiration for the men of the CRNVR; pride in that we were their lineal descendents; and a deep sense of frustration that we had been deprived of all systematic knowledge of this period of the Navy’s History.”<sup>1</sup>*

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1 Devendra, S, “A History of the Navy in Sri Lanka: 1. The Ceylon

I have no doubt the naval personnel of today know even less about the pre-1983 Navy than we did of the pre-1950 Navy and, hence, this book.

I was commissioned in February 1960 in the rank of Instructor Lieutenant; a “Schooley”, as the Navy elegantly called us. Medical Officers, Economists and Teachers, with a Bachelor’s degree behind their names – were commissioned in the comparatively senior rank of Surgeon Lieut., Instructor Lieut. or Lieutenant(s) whenever the Navy needed them. In my seventeen years of service I had one promotion in rank, to that of Instructor Lieutenant Commander, in which I retired. I did hold senior staff appointments at Naval Headquarters, but I relished most my last posting, that of Commandant, Naval and Maritime Academy, Trincomalee. I retired, as planned, in 1976, in a voyage of search for bluer skies and greener pastures.

I received no formal naval training, either at home or abroad but, being of an academic turn of mind, I questioned every specifically (and to me, peculiar) naval activity and terminology. This did not make me exactly popular, but I was not entirely ignorant either, although I asked the questions. My maternal grandfather had served on Port Commission tugs fitted out as minesweepers (“Samson” and “Goliath”) in World War I, and a cousin was already a serving officer in the Navy. My academic discipline in the English Language and English History were a good background to the many archaisms I delightfully recognized in naval terminology. However, in spite of all this, my work was duly appreciated and, in time, I was appointed to responsible positions, and even recalled to service twice – twelve and nineteen years, respectively – after retirement. And even once more, for a specific task which appeared beyond the reach of serving officers, twenty-four years after requirement. I learnt early on that, if I sought answers, I would have to find them myself. This I did, and having found them, I set myself three goals.

Resolution # 1 was that I would do my best to remove the Cross of St. George from our Ensign, because there was no valid reason for it being there. In due time, senior officers arrived at the same position and the removal was effected in 1972.

Resolution # 2 was that our Navy Band should play March music based on existing (even though not exactly contemporary) popular melodies, such as those of John de Silva. I was able to win over the then Bandmaster, Cdr. Danwatte, who actually incorporated John de Silva melodies in the Band's repertoire.

Resolution # 3, the last and most difficult, was to write a history of the Navy in Ceylon: something I had to do myself. I had no entrée to the Naval Record Room but, coincidentally, Rear Adm. Royce de Mel, the first Ceylonese Captain of the Navy<sup>1</sup>, (then in retirement) wrote to his successor in service, Rear Adm. Basil Goonesekera, that certain people were apt to talk "loosely" about the origins of the Navy; and volunteered to help put the record right – if only a packet of writing paper was made available to him! Rear Adm. Goonesekera not only accepted the offer but appointed Lt. Cdr. J. Jayasooriya and me to write a History of the Navy in consultation with Rear Adm. De Mel. This gave me a chance to pull out the crumbling CRNVR files from the Record Room, to access Adm. de Mel's copious notes and to interview long-retired CRNVR officers as were yet around in the early 1970s.

By the time I retired in 1976, the work was completed up to 1950, I had handed over the MSS to a nominated officer, and I lost touch with it absorbed, as I was, in my new career. In 1980, the late Capt(s) V.T.D. Amaratunga began re-casting the original MSS

<sup>1</sup> The current term "Navy Commander" is often used in this narrative, but the terms in actual use were "Commanding Officer" (CNVF/CRNVR) and "Captain of the Navy" (RCyN and early SLN)

to conform to the conventions of “Naval Writing”. He submitted his first draft to the Chief of Staff Commodore A.H.A. de Silva, in March of that year under a covering minute, reporting that he had commenced dictation, that the first draft was “mainly borrowed from the work done by Lt.Cdrs. Devendra and Jayasooriya”, and adding, “If the style is OK, then I can go ahead”. The Chief of Staff confirmed that the “Style seems OK”<sup>1</sup>. The work was, I believe, completed, and some chapters written covering the post-1950 period: yet it remained in limbo, unpublished. After his appointment as Navy Commander, Adm. de Silva tried, in 1984, to resuscitate the project, seeking the assistance of Mr. T.D.S.A. Dis-sanayake<sup>2</sup> (of the Foreign Service) to write a history of the Navy. He also asked me to assist him<sup>3</sup>. Unfortunately, Mr. Dissanayake could not find the time; Adm. de Silva and Capt. Amaratunga retired in due time, and the MSS was lost, again.

When I was recalled to service in 1988 (to resuscitate the Directorates of Administration and Welfare and to re-write a new set of Sri Lanka Navy Orders), I began a search for the missing MSS and successfully tracked it down. The stack of files and papers was considerably larger, since it contained the work done by Capt. Amaratunga. This time, though, even after demobilization in 1989, I took the precaution of keeping the MSS, the papers and photographs I had collected with me: the Navy never missed them! In 1992, the serving Navy Commander Rear Adm. Clancy Fernando requested me to prepare the book for publication by the Navy. I brought the original MSS up to date, casting it in the form of a book for the general reader and one evening in 1992, just before I left for a conference in Australia, I met him at Headquarters and handed over to him the MSS, all the most precious documents I had extracted from the old files, and rare photographs given to me by old CRNVR personnel. He was very pleased and asked me to help him with his next project by visiting and photographing naval

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1 From documents in my possession.

2 Ref. File SLN 135/5 dated 31 July 1984

3 *Ibid*

museums in Australia. It was a long and amicable talk between friends, till

*“...we tired the sun with talking  
and sent him down the sky”.*

In Sydney I spent a full day at Spectacle Island, which housed the Naval Heritage Collection, making many notes and taking many photographs, and made a date for a drink on the morrow with the Curator, Lt. Cdr. Alan Henricus RAN, (a former Royal Ceylon Navy officer), then serving his last appointment in the Royal Australian Navy prior to retirement.

Came the morrow and, with it, the news that Adm. Clancy Fernando had been assassinated by the LTTE. In my sadness it seemed to me the History – like many another ideal - would not see the light of day.

But I was wrong. On my return, his successor Rear Adm. Samarasekera wanted me to complete the work. But where were the papers I had handed over? Lost. Again. Every single document –and this time, lost for good. They have never been found. But I had learnt from earlier experience to keep copies: so it was my personal duplicate copy that went to the publisher and **“A History of the Navy in Sri Lanka. 1. The Ceylon Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (CRNVR) 1937-1950”** finally saw the light of day in 1995. It was envisaged that Vol. 2, on the Royal Ceylon Navy and Volume 3, on the Sri Lanka Navy would be written in due course.

*[NOTE: All working papers yet in my possession have since been deposited in the Library of the Naval & Maritime Academy, Trincomalee, for the use of future researchers]*

The work did not end there. In the Millenium Year 2000 the Defence Ministry decreed that a volume be published to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Navy Act. Once again I was asked to do it, and I suggested that we begin not from 1950 but 1937, making it a history of the Navy from 1937-2000. He agreed and I set about

writing it – the details are given elsewhere. It was obvious that it could not be a scholarly work, but only one man's version. I had researched the CRNVR period and I had lived through the RCyN period, either as a naval officer or as an educated and politically well-informed adult. For the post-1976 period, however, I had to depend on information gleaned largely from others. When the work was, at last, finished, we hit a major snag. The serving officers who were, quite correctly, asked to read the MSS and assess whether it was suitable to be an official publication, were queasy of many unpleasant facts and unaware of others. Given the prevailing climate of political discourse they, unsurprisingly, wanted changes made – mainly those of a cosmetic nature – and I was unwilling to lend my name to such a version. I withdrew my draft and, as a compromise, suggested that – given the very little time available – the Navy could publish a coffee-table book, instead, with lots of pictures and little text. This was accepted and the glossy **“The Sri Lanka Navy. A Pictorial History”** was published. Although many 16-18 hour days were spent on this, I made only one request: that my name should not appear as either author or editor.

In the MSS I had withdrawn (titled **“The Navy and the Nation”**) I had included a few chapters on the CRNVR, other chapters on the post-1983 Navy and several Appendices describing the Navy in 1998. These formed about half the text. The present volume includes the whole of the first volume (rather than a few chapters) as the volume is out of print and does not deal either with the post-1976 Navy as I am not qualified to write about that period. However, a few chapters have been added to provide a political, sociological and military context to a narrative that had earlier been too narrow in scope.

Eight years of work with the Centre for the Study of Human Rights (CSHR) of the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo, teaching Human Rights to military and police personnel, made me realize that the lack of an understanding of what Sri Lanka and its Armed Forces had been before 1983, was a major barrier to

understanding the changes that had occurred in the Armed Forces and the country since then. Without interpolating the socio-political parameter to the narrative, neither military personnel nor civilian readers could follow the logic of what, and how, a near breakdown of law and order occurred in 1983; and I incorporated this in the Handbook for Military Instructors compiled by me as Editor-in-chief<sup>1</sup>. All three Parts of this book now incorporate the socio-political context.

The material relating to the Royal Ceylon Navy follows closely to chapters in the MSS I had earlier submitted, and later withdrawn, but amended with the addition of a socio-political commentary, forms Part 2 of the present volume.

In Part 3, I deal with the Sri Lanka Navy fairly briefly, as I had only four years of service in it. It is a disjointed narrative, not comprehensively dealt with, and my focus is entirely on my personal experience of those four years.

The present book, therefore, is a personal memoir. It is a reasonably accurate historical account of the Navy I worked in, lived in and researched, and it is a book that had to be written because naval officers and sailors know as little of the Royal Ceylon Navy (in particular) as my generation did of the CNVF and CRNVR. It will, I hope, lead to those who served in the post-1983 period putting their experiences in writing.

Having now completed the last of my early resolutions, my work, I think, is done. Judgement and improvements I leave to others.

S.D.

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<sup>1</sup> The entirety of my argument is found in the 2-volume work, “*Arundaya* – the Dawn” a manual, in Sinhala language, for Human Rights Instructors in the Armed Services, published by the CSHR, University of Colombo

# **CONSOLIDATED CONTENTS**

## **PRELUDE: THE NAVY IN HISTORY**

Sinhalese Naval Power. C.W.Nicholas

## **PART 1**

### **THE CEYLON ROYAL NAVAL VOLUNTEER RESERVE 1937-1950**

*The historical narrative*

*Supplementary Chapters*

## **PART 2**

### **THE ROYAL CEYLON NAVY 1950-1972**

*The historical narratary*

*Supplementary Chapters*

## **PART 3**

### **THE SRI LANKA NAVY 1972 -1975**

**Conclusion.**

**Acknowledgements**

**PRELUDE:**  
**THE NAVY IN HISTORY**

## Sinhalese Naval Power

C. W. NICHOLAS

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*C.W. Nicholas, MC, CCS, retired as the first Warden of the Dept. of Wild Life. A formidable historian and researcher, he was co-author, with Prof. Senarath Paranavithana, of "A Concise History of Ceylon". Enlisting, during World War I, in the King's Royal Rifles at the expense of an academic career, he was invalided out and awarded the Military Cross for bravery. Returning to Ceylon at the age of 22 he was selected for the Ceylon Civil Service. The present paper, and his "The North-west passage between Ceylon and India" mark him as the first historian to research naval matters in a historical perspective.*

*[This paper was first printed from "The University of Ceylon Review", 16(3-4), July-October 1958, pp 78-92 and later reprinted in "Sri Lanka and the Silk Road of the Sea", 1990, from where the present text has been obtained.]*

During a period whose beginning is uncertain but whose termination may be placed, approximately, towards the end of the 4th century B.C., Ceylon was colonised by Indo-Aryan mariners and emigrants who sailed from the deltas of the Indus and the Ganges, the earliest arrivals being those who came from north-western India. Before they established settlements in Ceylon, these mariners, whose business was trade, had doubtless made several coastal voyages to this Island and carried back its products, or the profits from those products, to their homelands. In B.C. 325, Oneicritus, the chief pilot of Alexander the Great, was told by the seafaring people of the Indus delta, who had long been acquainted with Ceylon, about the situation, the surroundings and the products of the Island. It is probable that the Indo-Aryans first learned of Ceylon from South Indian sailors, with whom they must necessarily have made earlier contacts and who, it is reasonable to suppose, could not have been ignorant of the existence of their large, island neighbour. In abandoning their homelands and journeying to settle in far-distant Ceylon, the southernmost limit of their then known world, the first Indo-Aryan emigrants took a step which was perhaps not irrevocable because the ships they travelled in could have taken them

back if the enterprise failed. Prominent, probably first, among the reasons which urged them to choose Ceylon for their new settlement would have been a reliance, if not a sense of assurance, that they would not encounter resistance which they could not overcome from the peoples, whoever they were, who then inhabited Ceylon, as well as from others, like themselves, who were trading with the Island. A second vital consideration would have been the greater material gains that would accrue to them from the known riches of the new territory in pearls, precious stones and chanks: possibly, they were also aware of additional sources of wealth in ivory, elephants, tortoise shell and spices. A third important factor on which they would have relied would have been an abundance of water and cultivable land on which they could raise crops for their sustenance.

The Vijaya legend of the Ceylon Chronicles (itself a combination of various other legends) describes a voyage at the mercy of winds and currents ending in a fortuitous landfall on an auspicious day at the hitherto unknown and rich island of Ceylon. One of these legendary versions related by Fa-Hsien<sup>1</sup> implies a progressive colonisation and is the least unreal of these stories, all of which are fabulous and were embellished with miraculous and supernatural elements when they came to be written many centuries later. What we may safely assume is that this was no haphazard adventure but that the first settlement of Indo-Aryans, who were an agricultural community, was an organised expedition to a known land, that regular communication was maintained thereafter with the homeland, and that the success of the pioneer settlement encouraged further waves of emigrants to follow. The distance by sea was about 1,500 miles and none but intrepid seamen in sea-worthy ships could have accomplished this succession of outward and return voyages.

The background of the Indo-Aryan settlers in Ceylon was, therefore, one of expertness in sea faring, namely, in the building of sea-going vessels, the efficient management and navigation of them on the ocean, the ability to make voyage of many days dura

tion, and a knowledge of winds and currents: concomitantly, they would have been equally expert in the lesser skills of building and operating smaller craft for the Ceylon pearl and chank fisheries and of boats for the catching of fish for food. (A fish was the distinctive emblem of the independent dynasty of Gamanis who ruled over south-eastern Ceylon but lost their authority early in the 2nd century B.C.).<sup>2</sup> Sea faring, in every aspect of its activities, was the forte of these earliest colonists of Ceylon and should have been the inherited skill of their descendants, the Sinhalese. In the reign of Devanampiya Tissa (B.C. 246-206) the Sinhalese were still making long voyages because the king's envoys sailed to the Ganges and back with gifts for the Mauryan emperor, Asoka, and they repeated the double journey in the following year. The existence of active communication between Ceylon and the Mauryan empire (Asoka mentions Ceylon in his edicts) can scarcely be doubted. The return from voyages abroad, in one day, of seven ships to a port in Rohana laden with valuable cargoes, is recorded in a semi-legendary story of the early 2nd century B.C.<sup>3</sup>

Thereafter, Sinhalese sea power appears to have suffered eclipse. In the 3rd century B.C. and earlier there was active maritime trade between the Arabs and the Indians. Then, in the 2nd century B.C., the Greeks began to cut out the Arab intermediaries and to make coastwise expeditions themselves to India. The direct dealing stimulated trade between the West and India. The South Indian ports, too, began to be visited with increasing frequency by Western ships. A trade boom had begun. Great opportunities for acquiring wealth by the sale of the products of South India and Ceylon to these Western merchants presented themselves, and doubtless excited the cupidity of the rulers and governing classes of these regions. Early in the 1st century B.C., the great discovery was made of the use of the monsoons to sail direct across the Indian Ocean, and Greek and Roman Ships came with regularity and in much greater numbers to South Indian harbours. The products of Ceylon were obtained by the Romans in South Indian ports to which they were conveyed in South Indian ships. During the peri

od of about two and a half centuries preceding the second decade of the 2nd century A.C. (when Roman ships began to make regular visits to Ceylon and deal direct with the Sinhalese), the Sinhalese had only an indirect share in the flourishing trade with the West and were dependent on South Indian shipping and intermediaries for the transport and marketing of their valuable merchandise.<sup>4</sup>

This loss, in the second half of the 2nd century B.C., of their sea power which the Sinhalese had previously possessed in a high degree becomes, therefore, a very significant event in the early history of Ceylon. The only apparent reason for it is that the vast, new opportunities for highly profitable trade created by the advent of Western ships and merchants into South Indian waters led to a conflict between the Tamils and the Sinhalese for the control of Ceylon's lucrative export trade in those seas. The Tamils were numerically stronger than the Sinhalese but were probably less skilled in seafaring, although it is very likely that they had greatly increased their efficiency since the days when they had stood aside and allowed the Indo-Aryans to occupy Ceylon and acquire its riches. In the struggle for command of the sea which followed, the Sinhalese were vanquished. The invasions and conquests of Ceylon which took place early in the 2nd century B.C., first by the Damilas, Sena and Gutthaka, who are described as the sons of a ship's captain who brought horses to Ceylon, and soon afterwards by the Damila, Elara, appear to have bene the most crucial phases of this struggle. All three are described as benevolent rulers, in marked contrast to later Tamil conquerors, and this benign foreign rule is consistent with a policy of achieving commercial control and at the same time giving every encouragement to the subject people to increase their production of and profits from the articles of commerce. The final phase in the subjection of Sinhalese sea power, it may be conjectured, was the Pandyan conquest in the reign of Vattagamani Abhaya early in the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. To this time may be assigned the inscriptions at the capital, Anuradhapura, of a guild or corporation of Tamil householders whose leader was a ship's captain.<sup>5</sup>

The collapse of Sinhalese sea power and the capture of Ceylon's external trade by Tamil intermediaries were largely discounted about the year 125 when Roman ships began to sail into Ceylon harbours and to deal directly with the Sinhalese. Chinese ships were also trading direct with the Sinhalese at this time and Ceylon became eventually the entrepot of trade in the Indian Ocean. A resuscitation of Sinhalese sea power was no longer essential solely in her trade interests, because the Romans and the Chinese would have seen to it that their direct dealings with Ceylon were not interfered with by the Tamil navies: and the Sinhalese had no aggressive intentions nor any desire to extend their territory overseas. Moreover, the ancient sea faring skill of the Sinhalese had been lost for over 200 years and now survived as a memory, while the Tamils were actively engaged during that period in seaborne activities and had attained a high level of efficiency which, they never lost thereafter.<sup>6</sup>

The *Culavamsa* states that Moggallana 1 (491-509) "by instituting guards for the sea-coast, freed the Island from danger."<sup>7</sup> It may be that in this statement is to be perceived the beginning of the revival of Sinhalese sea power, for it did revive and became powerful once again in the reign of Parakkamabahu 1 in the second half of the 12th century. In the 3rd, 5th and 7th centuries, particularly in the 7th century, Sinhalese princes with pretensions or claims to the throne crossed to South India and returned with Tamil mercenaries to wage war against the ruling monarch. Very probably these Tamil troops were transported in Tamil ships. The Chronicles say nothing of sea fights on these occasions nor of any attempted invasions being repulsed on the sea: the decisive contests were always on land. The silence of the Chronicles is not, however, sufficient ground for a conclusion that there were no naval encounters: it may well be that attempted invasions which were beaten off at sea were not recorded. Manavamma (684-718), who put an end to civil war, secured the throne with the aid of a Pallava invasion force, given him by the Pallava king, which was conveyed across the seas in Pallava ships. Many of these Pallavas settled in Ceylon and examples still

survive of their characteristic art and architecture. It is probable that the resumption of sea faring by the Sinhalese was given a powerful impetus at this time under Pallava guidance.

After the Pandyan conquest of 429 to 455, Ceylon was not invaded by the Tamils until the reign of Sena 1 (833-853), a period of nearly four centuries. The earlier conquest exposed the vulnerability of Ceylon from her lack of naval forces, and we have seen that remedial measures were initiated by Moggallana 1 at the end of the 5th century. The naval build-up was apparently inadequate to resist the Pandyan invasion in the reign of Sena 1, and this weakness appears to have been realised because it is stated that this king's successor, Sena 11 (853-885), "set up guards against every danger" and "made the Island hard to subdue by the foe."<sup>8</sup> The "foe" in this context means the Tamil enemy in South India, and the measures of security taken to render the Island "hard to subdue" must have included defence on the sea as well as on the invasion coast. The strengthening of sea power undertaken after the second Pandyan invasion was completed rapidly and efficiently because Sena 11 was able to invade South India in 862.

In 862 and again in 915 Sinhalese expeditionary forces crossed the seas to the Pandyan kingdom. The first of these landings in Pandyan was an invasion whose purpose was to dethrone the Pandyan king and replace him on the throne by a Pandyan prince who had sought the aid of the Sinhalese monarch, while on the second occasion the Sinhalese army fought as an ally of the Pandyan army against the Colas. It could be assumed that on both occasions the Pandyan would have given all the naval assistance they could to ensure the safe trans-portion of the Sinhalese forces to Pandyan soil. There is ground for assuming, also, that Sinhalese sea power had now reached a stage when their navy was capable of playing an effective part in invasion operations. In the reign of Mahinda IV (956-972), attempts to conquer Ceylon were made by the Rastrakuta king, Kṛṣṇa 111, and the Cola monarch, Sundara Cola: both these rulers appear to have invaded the northern part

of Ceylon and to have been foiled in their plans for the conquest of the Island by the Sinhalese king.<sup>9</sup> We do not know the extent of the contribution of the Sinhalese navy to this successful resistance.

The growth of Sinhalese sea power would undoubtedly have suffered a set-back during the Cola occupation from 993 to 1070. It would appear, however, that a certain number of Sinhalese ships made good their escape from the northern ports to ports in Rohana, because three of the princes who ruled Rohana from 1029 to 1050 came from overseas and maintained overseas contacts, while Vijayabahu, who became ruler of the principality in 1055, was able to engage in maritime commerce with Burma.<sup>10</sup> The strategy of blockade could not have been unknown, and the distances to be covered by the Cola navy from their Ceylon bases to blockade the ports of Rohana were comparatively short: nevertheless, the Colas were not successful in preventing Vijayabahu's foreign trade. In Vijayabahu's final, successful campaign to expel the Colas, the principal objective of the western column of his two-pronged attack was the great seaport of Mahatittha (modern Mantai) and it is likely that with the capture of this harbour several Cola ships fell into his hands, together, probably, with the Sinhalese vessels which the Colas were then using. The main purpose in capturing Mahatittha before the attack on Polonnaruwa was delivered was to prevent the Colas from escaping by sea to their homeland and to ensure that they could not be supplied or reinforced: a secondary purpose may have been to capture their shipping. Ceylon emerged from the Cola conquest with a depleted and not a shattered navy. After Vijayabahu's victory, he re-established overseas relations with Kalinga and Burma, and also made preparations at two seaports to embark an expeditionary force upon an invasion of the Cola kingdom. He could not, therefore, have lacked naval resources.<sup>11</sup>

Save for an abortive attempt at conquest by an invader (Viradeva of Palandipa) whose identity is obscure,<sup>12</sup> Ceylon was free of external attack for a century following the expulsion of the Co-

las. For some years there was a disastrous civil war which impoverished the country, but with the accession of Parakkamabahu as ruler of Dakkhinadesa, an era of great prosperity was inaugurated. He increased the money resources of his principality by exporting precious stones.<sup>13</sup> The ports available to him at that time would have been the havens and anchorages between the mouth of the Kala Oya and Kalutara. (Colombo was already a seaport in the 10th century. Valigama in Matara district was also a flourishing port and there were many merchants there to whom their life and their money were dear, “but Parakkamabahu exercised no authority over it.”<sup>14</sup>

The first record in the Chronicles of a sea fight occurs in the course of the narrative relating to the war between Parakkamabahu of Dakkhinadesa and Gajabahu of Rajarattha. It has to be borne in mind, however, that much of the *Culavamsa* account of Parakkamabahu is pure panegyric: there is a great deal of adulation and exaggeration, and successful skirmishes are made to appear as major victories. In the two naval engagements described, “many hundreds of ships” are said to have participated and “many thousands of men” to have fallen: this description is not to be taken literally. The fights were, in fact, a contest for the mastery of the Pearl Banks off the north-western coast. In the first conflict the Malayarayara, a commander of Parakkamabahu, advanced from Valikakhetta (identified by Codrington with modern Vellavela, near Battulu Oya) and captured Gajabahu’s fortress at Mallavalana, a place in the vicinity of Puttalam or Kalpitiya. He then embarked his troops on ships and sailed to Muttakara (the Pearl Banks) where Gajabahu’s naval forces, who were in possession, offered resistance. The Chronicle says that he twice engaged Gajabahu’s ships and put them to flight, but it is clear from the sequel that he failed to wrest the control of the Pearl Banks because shortly afterwards Parakkamabahu had to despatch another general to accomplish this task. This general, the Nagaragiri Mahinda, followed the same plan. He captured Mallavalana (which had been retaken by Gajabahu’s forces), put to sea with his troops, fought a victorious naval action against Gajabahu’s

ships and secured the control of the Pearl Banks: to consolidate and hold his gains, he built a fortress at the place named Pilavasu and garrisoned it.<sup>15</sup> Thus Parakkamabahu deprived his opponent of one the main sources of money revenue from external trade, and doubtless exploited that success by exporting pearls in addition to precious stones.

Parakkamabahu united the whole of Ceylon into one kingdom in 1153. He certainly raised the military might of Ceylon to a level which it had never attained before, and his naval power was considerable, enabling him to carry out invasions of Burma and South India. The attack on Burma should more accurately be described as a massive punitive raid rather than an attempt at conquest, but it was a naval enterprise of some magnitude. The provocation for the conflict between the two countries, between which there had long subsisted ties of friendship and cordial trade relations, is stated in detail in the *Culavamsa*.<sup>16</sup> In brief, the Burmese king, Alaungsithu, grown haughty and intolerant in old age, impeded and put a stop to the trade of Sinhalese merchants, especially the trade in elephants. He raised the prices of elephants to prohibitive levels, refused to make the customary exchanges, and then seized and imprisoned a group of Sinhalese merchants and confiscated their wares and their ships. Two Sinhalese envoys were sent back to Ceylon in a leaking vessel. On a later occasion he accepted payment from Sinhalese merchants for elephants and then refused to deliver them. The final act of aggression was the seizure of a Sinhalese princess on her way to Kamboja (Western Siam). The Sinhalese king resolved to make war and put in hand preparations for an invasion of Burma. The building of a fleet of vessels of various kinds was begun and "now all the country round about the coast was one great workshop occupied with the building of the ships." The work of shipbuilding was completed in five months and the fleet assembled at the port of Pallavanka (identified by Codrington as Palvakkī, about 24 miles northward of Trincomalee). The overall Commander of the entire naval and military force was the Damiladhikarin Adicca, a dignitary whose peace-time duties were connected with the State

Treasury, and next in command under him was the Nagaragiri Kitti (called Kit Nuvaragal in the Devanagala inscription). The fleet, it is stated, was provisioned with supplies to last one year. “Now when this assemblage of ships all at the same time sailed forth in the midst of the ocean it looked like a swimming island.” Rough seas and adverse winds were encountered on the voyage and the ships become separated (a not uncommon event in the marine history of sailing ships). Some sank and others drifted to foreign shores. One ship made land at Kakadipa (“Crow’s Island”), probably one of the Andaman Islands, and the troops on board captured several of the inhabitants and brought them to Ceylon as prisoners. Five ships under the command of the Nagaragiri Kitti entered port of Kusumiyā (Bassein), where the troops landed, defeated the Burmese forces who opposed them and laid waste the surrounding countryside. The Damiladhikarin Adicca landed at Papphalama and advanced and captured the town of Ukkama: it is claimed that his troops slew king Alaungsithu but this claim is not supported by the Burmese accounts of the death of their king. The Burmese now sent envoys to Ceylon to make a treaty with the Sinhalese king: whether these envoys preceded or accompanied or followed the Sinhalese ships on their return journey is not disclosed. The *Culavamsa* account of the capture of Kusumiyā by the Nagaragiri Kitti and the restoration of peace by a treaty negotiated by Burmese envoys is confirmed by the Devanagala inscription<sup>17</sup> of Parakkamabahu I, dated in the year 1165, recording a grant of land to Kit Nuvaragal for his services in the Burma campaign.

If the *Culavamsa* narrative is construed literally, it would appear that only six troop-carrying Sinhalese ships reached Burms, the rest of the fleet having been scattered by the storms encountered at sea; and the submission of the Burmese, which is said to have followed upon the victories gained by the troops from these six ships, can only be explained either by a lamentable state of unpreparedness for defence in the Burmese kingdom or divided loyalties within it and the adherence of powerful factions, actively or passively, on the side of the Sinhalese. On the other hand, it is not

improbable that the *Culavamsa* story of the subjugation of a foreign kingdom by six of Parkkamabahu's ships is just another laudatory exaggeration of the marvellous power of its hero's arms.

Parkkamabahu's next military expedition across the seas was the invasion of Pandya. The Cola power was now declining, but it was not weak. In a succession dispute which arose in Pandya, the ruler, Parakkama, was besieged in his capital, Madhura, by the claimant, prince Kulasekhara. Parakkama appealed to the Sinhalese for armed assistance, while Kulasekhara appealed to the Colas. Parakkamabahu of Ceylon responded to the Pandyan king's call and began to assemble at the seaport, Mahatittha, ships and troops under the command of the Senapati Lankapura: but before the expedition was ready to sail, news was received that Kulasekhara had captured Madhura and slain Parakkama Pandya and his wife and children. The Sinhalese king repeated his orders to the senapati Lankapura to proceed with the invasion, depose Kulasekhara and consecrate as king a scion of the house of the dead Pandyan king. The fleet with the troops on board thereupon set sail, pre-selected landing place being the roadstead of Taladilla on the Pandyan coast. Since the ships could not stand in close to the shore at Taladilla, a large number of small boats was taken, probably in tow as well as slung over the sides, to transport the troops from the ships to shore. The crossing of the sea from Mahatittha to Taladilla took about 24 hours, a day and a night, and the landing was made successfully, as planned, in the face of Pandyan opposition: Taladilla was captured and established as a beachhead. The further course of the fighting, which was on land, is not relevant to this account of naval operations, but it may be mentioned that further, important use was made of the Sinhalese navy to bring to Ceylon numerous Tamil prisoners of War captured by the Senapati Lankapura as well as to reinforce the general with a large contingent of fresh troops at a crucial stage in his campaign. The *Culavamsa* ends its account of the Pandyan invasion abruptly but on a note of victory.<sup>18</sup> From the Cola inscriptions we know that the actual termination of this particular campaign was the defeat of the Sinhalese invading force-

es and the capture and decapitation of Senapati Lankapura and the other Sinhalese generals after the capture of Madhura by them and a probably imprudent attempt to invade the Cola kingdom which brought massive retaliation from the Colas. But this was not the end of Parakkamabahu's intervention in the affairs of Pandya. The Pandyan rulers were "time- servers who changed sides according to their estimates of their own immediate interests." But Parakkamabahu's policy was consistent: he aligned himself with any Pandyan prince who was prepared to make war against the Colas and in pursuance of this policy it happened that he subsequently supported princes whom he had previously fought against.

A Cola epigraph of 1178 (approximately) states that news was received in the Cola kingdom that the Sinhalese King Parakkamabahu, was building ships and assembling troops at Uratturai (Kayts), Pulaicceri, Matottam (Mantai), Vallikamam (Valikamam), Mattival (Mat- tuvil) and other places in order to make a fresh invasion of South India: to forestall this, the Cola king organised a counter-expedition, placing at its head prince Srivallabha of Ceylon, a nephew of king Parakkamabahu, who was then a refugee in the Cola country: this expedition landed in Ceylon, captured several places, including Pulaicceri and Matottam, seized many elephants, devastated a considerable area of land, killed or took captive some of the Sinhalese chieftains of the locality, and returned to the Cola kingdom with the captured booty. Parakkamabahu's invasion plans were thereby frustrated. Reading between the lines, we may infer that the placing of a Sinhalese prince at the head of this Cola expedition was, if not an attempt to dethrone Parakkamabahu, an endeavour to secure a foothold in the northern part of Ceylon with a view to extending the scope of the operations later: this plan was frustrated by Parakkamabahu.

Sinhalese troops again crossed to Pandya about 1186 and fought on the side of the Pandyan faction which was at war with the Colas. A Cola inscription claims that the Cola soldiers "cut off

the noses of the Singala troops who rushed into the sea.” Parakkamabahu died in 1186. His repeated interventions in Pandyan affairs would have imposed upon his navy the tasks of transporting the expeditionary forces and the reinforcements sent from time to time, supplying and provisioning these forces, bringing back the wounded and prisoners, maintaining uninterrupted sea communication, and, above all, preventing the Cola navy from interfering with the seaborne operations. There is no reason to doubt that it was capable of performing these tasks, and did perform them, successfully.

Nissanka Malla (1187-1196), in more than one of his victorious inscriptions, claims to have invaded South India, received tribute from Pandya and Cola without fighting and, returned to Ceylon with captives. The presence of an inscription of this king at Ramesvaram is evidence that he did cross to the Indian mainland with an army, but the rest of his claims receive no corroboration from any source. It is probable that he continued the policy of Parakkamabahu I of sending Sinhalese troops to Pandya to aid the Pandians against the Colas.

After the death of Nissanka Malla, the Sinhalese kingdom of Polonnaruwa moved rapidly to its collapse. Civil wars and invasions succeeded each other. There were at least four Cola invasions between 1196 and 1210, and these were followed by a Pandyan conquest from 1211 to 1214. In these encounters the military power of the Sinhalese on land and sea was severely shaken: it was finally smashed in the second and third quarters of the 13th century by the conquests of the Kalinga, Magha, and the Javanese, Candabhanu.<sup>19</sup>

The naval history of ancient Ceylon may, therefore, be briefly summarised as follows:-

*Up to 3rd B.C.* - Expert skill and a great tradition in seafaring; many voyages were made to and from the deltas of the Indus and the Ganges; as sailors the Sinhalese were supreme in the South Indian seas.

*2nd and 1st centuries B.C. and up to about the year 125.* - Rapidly increasing commerce between the West (Greeks and Romans) and South India led to a struggle between the Tamils and the Sinhalese for the mastery of the South Indian seas in order to gain control of Ceylon's rich export trade, and in this struggle Sinhalese sea power was vanquished in the 2nd century B.C.; thereafter, the products of Ceylon were transported to and sold in Tamil ports by Tamil intermediaries to Western merchants; perhaps only Chinese ships had regular dealings in a small way direct with the Sinhalese.

*125 A.C. to the 4th century.* - Roman and Chinese ships were calling regularly and in increasing numbers at the ports of Ceylon and dealing direct with the Sinhalese, eliminating the Tamil intermediaries, and this direct trade expanded to such dimensions that Ceylon became the entrepot of trade in the Indian Ocean; the necessity for a Sinhalese navy for protection of trade or for defence or for territorial expansion (which the Sinhalese never contemplated) did not exist.

*The 5th century.* - The Pandyan conquest emphasised the necessity for a revival of Sinhalese naval power, and the first steps were taken by Moggallana I.

*The 7th and 8th centuries.* - Under Pallava guidance the resuscitation of Sinhalese sea power made further progress.

*The 9th and 10th centuries.* - After the Pandyan invasion in the reign of Sena I, the Sinhalese naval build-up was greatly ex

pedited, and in 862 and 915 the Sinhalese navy was capable of transporting Sinhalese armies of invasion to Pandya and maintaining those armies in the invaded territory.

*The 11th century.* - Sinhalese sea power was not seriously incapacitated during the Cola conquest, and recovered rapidly after the expulsion of the Colas.

*The 12th century.* - Sinhalese naval power reached its peak, enabling Parakkamabahu to carry out an invasion of Burma and to send a succession of expeditionary forces to South India; the Sinhalese navy was able to keep the Cola navy in check.

*The 13th century.* - Destruction of the naval and military power of the Sinhalese.

Neither the name nor the title of a Sinhalese naval commander, corresponding in rank to an Admiral, is mentioned in the Ceylon Chronicles. There was, in fact, no such post, because the ships were not exclusively warships and for the greater part of the time were employed as merchantmen: moreover, many of them were privately owned, though the king had, no doubt, the power to requisition them for war service whenever necessary. In every Sinhalese expedition overseas, the overall commander of the ships and the troops was always the commander of the land forces: but in no instance is the king or a prince mentioned as having left Ceylon in command of an expeditionary force. Sinhalese kings and princes commanded troops in the field within their own kingdom, but not abroad.

Of naval strategy and tactics the Chronicles say practically nothing. No doubt, Indian methods and techniques were borrowed, but there again we know almost nothing of Indian naval warfare.

## POSTSCRIPT

Professor Paranavitana's theory, first propounded at the Dambadeniya Cultural Conference on August 23, 1958, that Magha, and by implication, presumably all the other Kalinga kings of Ceylon, were members of the Kalinga royal house of the Srivijaya kingdom of Malaya and Indonesia, has a vital bearing upon the history of Sinhalese sea power as well as resolves certain historical problems of the 10th to 13th centuries.<sup>20</sup> Mahinda IV (956-972) was the first Sinhalese king to make a marriage alliance with this Kalinga royal house of South-east Asia, and the *Culavamsa* employs significant words in narrating the event:- "Although there was also in Lanka a race of nobles, the ruler of men (Mahinda IV) had a princess of the land of the ruler of Kalinga fetched and made her his first Mahesi. Of her were born two sons and a charming daughter, he made his sons Adipadas and his daughter a Queen: thus the Ruler found the royal house of the Sinhalas."<sup>21</sup> Mahinda V, son of Mahinda IV by the Kalinga Mahesi, describes himself in an inscription as "a pinnacle of the Kalinga royal house."<sup>22</sup> Vijayabahu I, after he restored Sinhalese sovereignty over Ceylon in 1070, married a Kalinga princess as his second Mahesi, and by her he had a son, Vikkamabahu, who also married a Kalinga princess. The grandmother of Parakkamabahu I (1153- 1186) was the Kalinga Mahesi of Vijayabahu I. Parakkamabahu's sister married a Kalinga prince and their son, Vijayabahu II, was nominated as Parakkamabahu's successor. Thereafter, the following kings of Ceylon were of pure Kalinga descent: Nissanka Malla (1187- 1196); Virabahu (1196); Vikkamabahu III, also called Erapatta<sup>23</sup> (1196); Codaganga (1197); Sahassamalla (1200-1202); Queen Kalyanavati, Mahesi of Nissanka Malla (1202-1210); Lokissara or Lokesvara (1210-1211); and finally Magha (1214-1239).

The Srivijaya kingdom of South-east Asia possessed immense sea power: they colonised Madagascar and their only competitors in the Indian seas were the Colas. The conquest of Pandya, Ceylon's closest neighbour on the Indian continent, by the warrior

Cola king, Paran- taka I (907-955), and the rapid expansion of the might of Cola arms, both on Land and sea, would have made it very evident to the Sinhalese that alliances with other kingdoms on the Indian mainland who were enemies of the Colas would be of little avail in averting their own, impending subjugation. The Sinhalese, therefore, looked eastward to Srivijaya, with its great naval resources, for the aid they would need, and the marriage of Mahinda IV to a princess of the Kalinga royal house of that kingdom appears to have been arranged with this political end in view. All the assistance which any kingdom on the Indian mainland could have given the Sinhalese against the Colas would have been purely diversionary assistance which, could not be depended upon to be either well-timed; or sufficiently massive; none of these kingdoms was capable of reinforcing the Sinhalese army with troops transported across the ocean nor of breaking nor even seriously impeding the Cola navy's command of the South Indian seas. The only material aid that could benefit the Sinhalese was naval aid and the only power that could give that aid was the Buddhist kingdom of Srivijaya in South-east Asia ruled by the Kalinga dynasty: without that aid a Cola invasion and blockade of Ceylon would achieve complete success, both in its military and economic aspects.

The wise policy of Mahinda IV bore fruit. We have seen that during the Cola occupation of northern and north-central Ceylon, Vijayabahu of Rohana was able to engage in sea-borne commerce with further India in spite of the Cola blockade, and this external trade, which enabled him to build up his resources for fighting the Colas, was doubtless facilitated, if not protected, by the Srivijaya navy. After his victory, Vijayabahu I had no lack of sea power. The ports on the eastern and southern coasts, particularly Trincomalee, would have increased in importance after the alliance with the Malays: we find Kotthasara (modern Kottiyar, in the Bay of Trincomalee)<sup>24</sup> mentioned twice as the port of escape overseas for defeated Sinhalese princes of Kalinga descent,<sup>25</sup> and Valigama, in Matara district, a flourishing seaport in the 12th century.

The naval might of the Sinhalese in the reign of Parakkam-abahu I has already been described. There is little reason to doubt that here again the Sinhalese owed much to the Malays, and it was probably this obligation that influenced the selection of Parakkam-abahu's nephew, the son of a Kalinga prince, as his successor on the throne of Ceylon.

## NOTES

*Note. - The word "navy" is not used in its modern sense of war-ships exclusively. In ancient times, the merchant ship and the fighting ship were one. In Elizabethan England of the 16th century, the "Navy" meant "all English ships and all English seamen."*

1. Fa Hsien's travels, H.A. Giles, London, 1953.
2. C.J.S. (G), II. 99, 100, 175, 176; Sir Paul Pieris Felicitation Volume, 66, 67
3. M 11.20-39: 18.6-8: 19.1-8: 22.60. Either the Sinhalese had no knowledge of the currents on the western coast of Ceylon or they had lost that knowledge when the story of Viharadevi came to be written. It is said that she was cast adrift on the sea near the mouth of the Kelani River and that the vessel was carried to a landing place in Ruhuna. This is impossible because the current is northward and not southward, and it is this northward current which accounts for the pattern of the lagoons on the west coast.
4. "The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India," by E. H. Warmington, Cambridge, 1928; "Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean," by G.F. Hourani, Princeton, 1951.
5. J. R. A. S. (C.B.), XXXV, 54.
6. The theory of a struggle for sea power between the Sinhalese and the Tamils in the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C. and the victory of the Tamils is the outcome of a stimulating discussion with Mr. B. J. Perera.
7. Cul. 39, 57.

8. Cul. 51, 49-50. .
9. E.Z.V. 107, 108.
10. Cul. 58, 8-10.
11. Cul. 59, 29, 46: 60, 5, 6, 34.
12. Cul. 61, 36-47.
13. Cul. 69, 33.
14. Cul. 75, 45, 46.
15. Cul. 70, 60-65, 89-93.
16. Cul. 76, 1-75.
17. E. Z. III 312-325.
18. Cul. 76, 76-334: 77, 1-103.
19. For the Cola inscriptions, see "The Colas," by K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, 366-372, 378-385, 412, 423, 424; J.R.A.S. (C.B.), XXXI, 384-387. For Nissanka Malla and his successors, see Cul. 80, 1-80; 81, 1-21; 82, 1-27; 83, 1-48; E.Z. II. 190-192; IV 82-88; V. 152-158, 170-173; J.R.A.S. C.B.), New Series, V. 173-182.
20. The writer was aware earlier of Professor Paranavitana's views on this subject, but was precluded from making use of them till they were made public. That is the reason for introducing them now as a postscript.
21. Cul. 54, 9-11.
22. E.Z. IV. 65.
23. E.Z. V. 161.
24. The identification is by Professor Paranavitana.
25. Cul. 61, 43; 70, 305.

## **PART 1**

# **The Ceylon Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (CNVF/CRNVR)**

**1937-1950**

## CONTENTS

### Introduction to the first edition

### Introduction to the revised edition

### *The historical narrative*

Preamble	Ceylon in the 1930s
<b>Chapter</b>	<b>1</b> Genesis – Preparations for war
<b>Chapter</b>	<b>2</b> The Navy during the war years: 1939-1946
	(1) Mobilization, Organization, Duties
	(2) Maritime Operations
	(3) Operations ashore
	(4) Encounters with the Enemy
	(5) Demobilization
<b>Chapter</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Chapter</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Chapter</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter</b>	<b>7</b> Providing for the future: The “Nucleus” (1946-1950)
<b>Chapter</b>	<b>8</b> The Nucleus: Duties and Activities (1946-1950)
<b>Chapter</b>	<b>9</b> Final Analysis.

### *Supplementary Chapters*

### Personal Recollections and Marginal Notes

#### Chapter 1

Insertion of Officers’ names in the Navy List

The Susantha de Fonseka incident-----RAdm.R.A.de Mel

#### Chapter 2 (1)

List of officers who served in the CNF/CRNVR

## **Chapter 2 (2)**

Passage to Burma -----RAdm D.V.Hunter

## **Chapter 4 (4)**

Recollections:

Lt. A.C. Dassanaikē  
Lt.Cdr (E) B.E.L.Dekker  
Lt.Cdr. G.R.M.de Mel  
Lt. K.M.Martinus  
Lt.P.N.L.Mendis  
Cdr. M.Monnington  
Lt.Cdr. C.H.Ohlmus  
Lt.Cdr. B.A.Ohlson  
Lt. F.R.Perera  
Lt. N.J.V.Perera  
Lt. D.G.Simpson  
Lt. N.P.S.Wijewikrama

## **Chapter 5 (5)**

Visit of SACSEA to CRNVR

## **Chapter 7**

The Cruise of the “Halpa”-----Lt. Alanson Caldera

The Victory Parade

Transfer of HMS Flying Fish to CRNVR

Legislation affecting the Navy in Ceylon.

## Introduction to the first edition of Volume 1

Ever since the demobilization of the CRNVR, individuals – whether in their official or personal capacities – have been interested in writing a history of the Navy. In the course of compiling this volume, I became aware of the efforts of Adm. Hunter, Adm. Kadirgamar, Adm de Mel and Cdr. E.P.Wickremasinghe, in addition to the pioneering interest of Capt. W.G.Beauchamp.

The present compilation was, however, undertaken at the insistence of Adm. D.B.Goonesekera in 1974-75. His decision to embark on this venture resulted from a constructive remark, made by Adm. De Mel, of a faulty description of the beginnings of the CNVF/CRNVR made by him (Adm. Goonesekera). This work was undertaken during the period of a few months, while attending to other duties. It was fortunate that, at this time, the original files of the CRNVR were still available in the Record Room of Naval Headquarters. When, much later, I was mobilized in the Reserve in 1988-89, I came to know that these files had been destroyed. Only the few documents rescued by me in 1974-75 remain.

In compiling this volume, I have tried to follow the guidelines set by Capt.Beauchamp, to his officers (in 1946):

“...it is requested that you furnish.....a resume of operations undertaken.....together with eyewitness accounts.....The latter will not be subject to editing....however, excessive ebullitions should, within reason, be restricted.” and Adm. Kadirgamar in a letter to Adm. Hunter in 1971:

“...What you desire is a historical study and one has to be that it does not end up as an aimless one. Systemized methodology at the outset is a must.....The next is the study and availability and access to old records. No writing should be attempted until research is completed.....one must guard against producing an old boys’ section of a school magazine.....”

With the respect due to both these officers, I have tried to include both objective and subjective accounts in this volume. As I had access to only the records at Naval Headquarters, the objective section included in the chapters is necessarily limited in scope. The loss of material in later years made it impossible to revise the draft without venturing into uncharted waters. Although ex-CRN-VR personnel may query the facts and figures quoted by me, it must be placed on record that these have been taken from original sources and are more reliable than mere memory. The subjective section – included in the Appendices – have been left untouched and unedited. I hope the mix proves both informative and human.

I must place on record my thanks to Adm. Goonesekera who commissioned me to undertake this compilation, Admirals A.H.A.de Silva and H.A.Silva who encouraged me to keep in touch with the material even after my retirement, Adm. W.W.E.C.Fernando who urged me finalize it for publication and Adm. Samarasekera who finally did publish it. I must also thank Adm.J.Jayasooriya who helped me in the initial stages and Capt.V.T.D.Amaratunga who not only re-cast the original MSS in keeping with the conventions of Naval writing but also did some further research himself. However, the present volume follows, basically, my original draft of 1974-75.

Most importantly I must thank the retired officers whom I interviewed, most of whom are no longer with us – Lt.Cdr. Sansoni, Cdr. Martinus, Cdr. Wickremasinge, Lt.Cdr. Neville Perera, Adm. Royce de Mel whose handwritten notes to, and discussion with me formed the skeleton of this study; and various other officers and sailors who, knowing of this project, contributed nuggets of information and old photographs for preservation in Naval records. Lastly, I must thank my Secretary, Mr. Malcolm de Hoedt, for finding time to type out my final manuscript.

In conclusion may I make a plea for the establishment of a proper Naval Records Office and Archives so that those who come after us will have resort to primary sources.

1<sup>st</sup>. March, 1995.

## **A Note on the present edition**

The present edition, in so far as Part I is concerned, largely follows the first edition. It has, however, a Preamble to place the formation of the CNVF/CRNVR in the socio-political context adopted throughout this volume. All material originally included as Appendices to individual chapters have been placed as 'Supplementary Chapters' at the end of the 'Historical narrative'. A very few Supplementary Chapters have been added to accommodate important material that was not available to me in 1995.

The publication of the first volume had a positive result. Today, there are a handful of serious researchers into Sri Lankan Military History (including the CNVF/CRNVR and the RCyN) who have done comprehensive data collection and analysis. I refer to Mr. Glen Hodgins (a Canadian) and Mr. Sergei De Silva-Ranasingha, a Sri Lankan by birth with an abiding interest in this country. Since research on any subject transcends national, ethnic or geographical barriers, it is the genuineness of the research that matters and not the domicile of the researcher. I look forward to them (and others) producing works of far greater depth than this. This would be welcome as works of objective and academic research. Further, if the Navy (or the Army or the Air Force, for that matter) does not write its own history, somebody else will; and it is my hope that this modest initiative will motivate the Navy of today to write its own History so that two, three or more points of view will be available to students of naval history all over the world.

In lighter vein, I must mention another result of the publication of the first edition: the material in this volume was plagiarized in a work of fiction. Unfortunately, I happened to be its reviewer, and was much amused. My only comment (in the published review) was that my work "...is genuine research material and (the writer) is welcome to it. Knowledge is free and some of this material has lately been discussed on the Internet, too. But a nod in my direction would have been nice:..."

Plagiarism, at times, can be the sincerest flattery!

10<sup>th</sup>. December, 2015

# THE CEYLON ROYAL NAVAL VOLUNTEER RESERVE

## *The historical narrative*

### Preamble

#### CEYLON IN THE 1930s

A Navy created for Ceylon, and manned by residents of the country, came into being in 1937. It was formed and raised by the British government in keeping with British foreign policy requirements and constraints. The rest of this Part of the present volume traces the history of that Navy. However, in keeping with a decision taken to provide an outline the prevailing socio-political context in which a colonial Naval Force came into being, this Preamble seeks to make the point that the formation of the Navy was not the result of an overwhelming demand by the people of this country. In fact its creation had nothing to do with the wishes or needs of the people, but it was in keeping with a British perception that there would be another war between a rampant Germany (under Hitler) and the British Empire. The planning and creation of the Navy were quite unrelated to internal requirements of this country; the reasons are dealt with in the following chapter. It is therefore necessary that the reader is provided with, at least, a basic understanding of the politico-social context of the country in the 1930s.

Ceylon was, then, yet a Crown Colony, governed by a Governor appointed by Whitehall. It was quite distinct from British India which was ruled through a Viceroy. In military terms this is significant because the Defence Forces of Ceylon were a part of the British Forces and not part of the Indian Army / Royal Indian Navy. Ceylon had been a Crown Colony ruled by a Governor, appointed by the Secretary of State for Colonies, since 1802. Thus, while Indian Army and Royal Indian Navy officers held Viceroy's commissions, the officers of the CDF and CNVF/CRNVR held

King's commissions with the names of the latter appearing in the Navy List of the Royal Navy: a situation that led to some friction in isolated outposts during the war.

For nearly 100 years, from the Colebrook-Cameron Reforms of 1833, the absolute power of the Governor (though not of the British government) had been modulated – in theory, if not in fact – by the establishment of a Council composed of Official and a few Unofficial Members. The latter were largely urban, anglicized persons from various ethnic groups who, though being educated professional men of ability, had no real power within the Council but served a useful role in voicing opinions and bringing out necessary information into the public domain. Over these near-100 years, the number of Unofficial Members in Council increased in number, though not in power. They were appointed, not elected, and the basis of selection was education, profession, land and wealth. Around the turn of the century “Educated Ceylonese” were elected for the first time by an electorate that comprised of their peers. The Empire intended to pass on more powers to this Legislative Council and indicated that self-government was a distinct possibility at some date to be decided on later. British Governors, however, had grave doubts about the advisability of policy on the basis that there was ethnic, religious and caste-based rivalry even within the educated professional classes. The Sinhala-Muslim riots of 1914, the Court Martial and execution of Henry Pedris, an Officer in the Town Guard, and the use of Indian troops to enforce the Governor's will all engendered the populist view that the British could not be trusted. In the late 1920s, yet another Constitutional Commission was appointed: the Donoughmore Commission, which came out to Ceylon in the wake of the acceptance of universal adult franchise in Britain.

At the time of the Commission met, the Ceylonese had already been divided themselves on the bases of ethnicity (a heritage of 1833, yet alive today), caste (a new problem springing from an old one due to imperial intervention), and class (education, profes-

sion and wealth: a heritage of the "Educated Ceylonese"). The Ceylon National Congress, modeled on the Indian National Congress, represented the latter, and a Tamil Congress and a Sinhala Maha Sabha represented the former. Even Sports Clubs were ethnic, as apparent by their names: the Sinhalese Sports Club, the Tamil Union, the Burgher Recreational Club and the Moors Sports Club, to name but a few. In contrast there were two political movements of a different nature: the Labour Party (LP), which organized the first successful industrial strike at the Wellawatte Spinning Mills in 1925; and a plethora of Marxist Parties, such as the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) - a Trotskyite group which was to carry on an influential anti-war campaign in the 1930s and 1940s, leading to the imprisonment (and subsequent escape) of its leaders; the Ceylon Communist Party (CP) - which abandoned its anti-war stance when Soviet Russia joined the Allies; and the Ceylon Branch of the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India (BLPI) which later merged with the LSSP. The far Left and Nationalist parties were the beneficiaries of the rampant anti-British feelings

The Donoughmore Commission included a Scottish peer, Sir Hugh Drummond-Shiels, who was keen to grant universal adult franchise to the Ceylonese, should they only ask for it. But none of the major parties did. Ultimately, it was the lone voice of the small Labour Party that was seized upon as the proverbial straw by the Commission. Consequently, in 1931, Ceylon had a State Council with a majority of representatives ("Members of the State Council", or M.S.C.) elected by universal adult franchise, a Board of Ministers with a Leader of the House, an elected Speaker and Deputy Speaker. Yet the Council lacked real power, particularly over Finance, Administration and Foreign Affairs, which remained in the hands of the Governor's Chief Secretary, Financial Secretary and Legal Secretary.

In real terms, Ceylon remained a Crown Colony, even though a major step towards representative government had been taken. Unfortunately, racial politics reared its head again. In the second

State Council political machinations resulted in a “Pan Sinhalese” Ministry with no Tamil ministers. It was inevitable that the cry for “50-50”, or parity of status between Sinhalese and Tamils (and some other minorities) should arise. In the wings was the LSSP-led Marxist group which the government identified as its most immediate and potent enemy. There was also a “Moderate Group”, led by D.S.Senanayake, which embarked on a series of negotiations aimed at the grant of “Self Rule” for the island. Caught in the cross-fire between these groupings and aware of an impending war, Britain put off any further move towards “Self Rule” to the end of the war, while not shutting the gate on the demand.

The bulk of the people showed no inclination for war. The prevailing mood was anti-Imperialist. “Poppy Day” was deemed an imperialistic ritual and even the Remembrance Day Committee under the auspices of the Governor himself, split itself on the issue that, while monies collected were repatriated to Britain, Ceylonese veterans treated as second-class citizens. The break-away group started a rival campaign, the “Suriya Mal” campaign and its initial success made the Committee hastily paper over their differences. However, the movement had gathered momentum and Campaign fell into the hands of the LSSP, with the support of all leading politicians of all ethnicities and classes.

In fact, there was a strong feeling against the British for being our colonial masters: the Germans may have been a possible threat, but the immediate ‘national’ enemy was British Imperialism.

It was in this socio-political context that a Navy came into being. The history of what happened within the Navy has, by and large, nothing to do with what was happening outside it. The Navy was engulfed in a war, and nothing else mattered. Yet the history of the Navy has to be seen in the broader context of what was happening outside it and the few words above will, it is hoped, give a glimpse of those happenings and an inkling on how they were to develop.

## Chapter 1

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### GENESIS

Sea faring plays its part in Sri Lanka's history and, in fact, the earliest settlers in this Island are known to have journeyed here by sea. There are many historical references to maritime activities among the people-fishing, trade, war. Yet the genesis of our Navy cannot be traced to any of these but, in fact, to the activities of the British, our colonial overlords, in the present century.

During the First World War, although the bulk of the fighting had taken place in Europe, the Indian Ocean area had not been immune from German influence and, more specifically, from German Naval influence. The raider "Emden" had penetrated the Indian Ocean and preyed on Allied Shipping, appearing off the remoter coasts of this Island in search of fresh provisions. A merchantman had been<sup>4</sup>sunk just outside the Colombo harbour. It seems to have, therefore, been decided soon after the war ended, that any future plans for the protection of the Island's coast should include the formation of a Volunteer Naval Unit.

The Commanding Officer, Ceylon Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve (CRNVR) forwarding a brief history of his unit to the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asian Command (SEAC) on the occasion of the latter's visit to CRNVR Head-quarters on 29th March, 1946, described the origin of this decision as follows:

"Two years after the conclusion of the Great War 1914/18 the question of th formation of a Ceylon Volunteer Unit, with a view to training of personnel in minesweeping duties and general seamanship, was discussed. No substantial conclusions were arrived at and it was not until 1930 that the matter was brought up again"

*(Note: Letter No. X. 256 of 22.3.45. However, in another letter X. 256/A of 29.1.47 Staff Officer, Intelligence, Navy Office, Colombo gives the date of this discussion as 1924.)*

By this time, developments in Europe left no room for complacency in England and the possibility of war in the near future was, seriously considered. In this sombre atmosphere the Imperial Defence Conference met in London in 1932. After deliberation it lay down as a guiding principle that each part of the Empire would be responsible'; for its own defence. The principle was to apply to all Dominions, Colonies or Protectorates, whether represented at the Conference or not; each one was to assume its own responsibility as soon as it was able to do so. Each colony, it was felt, had a contribution to make towards the implementation of an integrated Imperial Defence Policy.

As the thirties progressed, the fears of impending war increased and, in this country, "a group of interested parties" canvassed the idea of a Volunteer Naval Force. The efforts finally bore fruit with the Governor giving his sanction to the Naval Volunteer Force Ordinance No. 1 of 1937, "an Ordinance to provide for the establishment of a Volunteer Naval Defence Force". The formation of the force could thus commence. It was decided that the formation would take place in three steps, viz:

1. The appointment of a handful of experienced personnel to administer the force.
2. Selection and training of the first officer intake.
3. Enlistment and training of sailors.

Step 1 was accomplished with the commissioning of two Executive and two Paymaster Lieutenants on 1 st January 1938, namely:

Lieutenant F.B. Rigby-Smith- of the Ceylon Wharfage Co., a veteran Merchant mariner with a Master's ticket.

Lieutenant P.J.B. Oakley - Marine superintendent, P & O Lines, a Master Mariner.

Paymaster Lieut. E.F.N. Gratiaen  
Paymaster Lieut. D.S. de Fonseka

Exactly one month later, on 1st February, W.G. Beauchamp, a Director of J.M. Robertson & Co. Ltd., was commissioned in the rank of Commander and placed in command. Beauchamp wielded much influence amongst European circles in Colombo and this, no doubt, influenced his selection. (Note: Cdr., later Capt. Beauchamp's influence in his community was matched by his bulk. A special chair and desk had to be made for him and are yet in use at Kochchikade). Added to this, however, were the facts that one of his brothers, Harold, was a Commander in the Royal Indian Navy and another, Lawrence, was a Lieutenant Commander RN on the staff of the Captain - in - charge, Ceylon, who was the senior British Naval Officer in Colombo. These selections, no doubt, reflected the thinking of the members of the Royal Ceylon Yacht Club and of the Captain-in-charge, Ceylon, Capt. F.L. Berthon, RN., who were the prime movers behind the formation of the force.

After the administrative nucleus had been formed, the selection of the first officer intake commenced. Selections were made in March and it was found that only four had the necessary knowledge and experience to be commissioned with immediate effect. They were:

Commissioned on

Sub Lieut (X) M.Monnington	4.3.38
Sub Lieut (X) A.H.H. Boyn	4.3.38
Sub Lieut (X) D.G.Simpson	4.3.38
Sub Lieut (X) B.A. Ohlson	15.3.38

Eight others - two Europeans and six Ceylonese - were selected as "prospective Officers" and designated "Probationary Sub Lieutenants". They were:

H. N. Thompson (X)	Pilot Service Commission	11.3.38
J.A. Donald (X)	Pilot Service	11.3.38
H.C. Sansoni (X)	Proctor	11.3.38
A.V. Fruightneit (X)	Electrical Dept.	1.3.38
Arthur Van Langenburg (X)	Port Commission	22.4.38
Maurice de Saram (X)		
Percival de Silva (X)	Legal Draughtsman's Dept.	
N.D.V. Ferdinands (E)	Port Commission	11.3.38

Instructions commenced only on 1st September. A course training totalling 97 classes was planned, the subjects being “General Seamanship, Manning of Boats under Oars & Sail, Naval Traditions & Customs, First Steps in Minesweeping, Duties, Signals & Drill” However, the pace was found too fast and only 75 lessons could be completed.

Practical classes were conducted under the eye of the Master Attendant at Galle Buck, the first Headquarters. This was housed in the old Ceylon Garrison Artillery building that adjoined the present Colombo Sick Quarters. They were also sometimes conducted at the Master Attendant's Boathouse. A Yeoman from Royal Naval Head Quarters assisted with practical instructions.

Sea training was conducted on board the harbour tugs, Samson, Goliath and Hercules, HMS Barnet, (a trawler attached to the Boom Defence Dept.), the fisheries vessel Nautilus and ships of the East Indies stations. Mine-sweeping practicals were conducted using Mk. V. Oropesa gear. In September that year a training cruise on board HMS Norfolk was arranged: prospective officer Percy de Silva arrived too late to join ship and thereafter dropped out. Another prospective officer, Mauries de Saram, also left the service as he could not overcome sea-sickness. (This cruise, incidentally, was interrupted by the Munich crisis).

There was also a joint exercise with the Army at Trincomalee when the CNVF manned launches; and a cruise to the Pearl Banks in a fisheries vessel.

At the end of the training, those found suitable were commissioned under the hand of the Governor, Sir Andrew Caldecott, at a ceremony held in December 1938. The CNVF thus had an officer complement of sixteen in addition to the Commander.

The enlistment and training of sailors and other ranks also commenced. The first intake was to comprise educated youths from family backgrounds that, it was believed, would ensure integrity. It was intended that they should be employed in confidential work involving signals & coding and in handling gunnery equipment. They were not intended to perform general seamens' duties. This intake, to be termed "Signalman/Gunners" was enlisted on 21st October, 1938, for a period of three years. Twenty eight signed on but, at the end of training only 24 remained. The 28 who signed on were, (in alphabetical order) the following:

Abeykoon, C. S.	Martinus, K. M.
Abeysinghe, W	Mendis, P. N. L.
Ambrose, J. C. P. B.	Murray, I. P.
Colombage, S. P. H. N.	Peter, P. H.
de Silva, I. J. R.	Perera, J. E.
de Silva, S. O.	Pinto, N. J. R.
de Soysa, W. R.	Potperior, A.
Deutrom, E. W. H.	Samaratunga, S. E.
Ernst, R. E.	Samarakoon, D. F.
Hunter, D. V.	Samarasinghe, N. B. A.
Jansz, M. H. N.	Sinnaraja, V
Lewis, J.	Thiedeman, I. N. S.
Livera, V. S.	Vanderwert, H. R.
Kelaart, E. F.	Wijewickrema, N. P. S.

As Signalman/Gunners were not enlisted for general seamanship, Seaman and Stoker duties were to be performed by personnel recruited from the Port Commission. The second intake of sailors, enlisted on 1st November 1993, therefore, comprised Port

Commission Lascars. They were, termed “Seaman (Lascars)” and two Petty Officers, three Leading Seamen and fifteen able Seamen were enlisted and assigned official Nos. 101 - 120. The next intake was one of Stokers; two Petty Officers, five Leading Stoker Mechanics and twenty one Stokers were enlisted on 1st January 1939, and assigned Official Nos. 201 - 228 A second intake of Signalman/Gunners, numbering 40 was enlisted in April 1939. It is a matter of regret that the names of these personnel cannot be resurrected with any degree of accuracy from extant records.

The Seaman (Lascars) and the Stokers were experienced in their respective trades and required no professional training, unlike Signalman/Gunners who reported for training to Galle Buck Friday afternoons and Saturdays. The origin of the Volunteer week end camps can safely be traced back to this practice

On 30th January, 1939, the CNVF had its first ceremonial parade with the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies Station, Vice Admiral J. F. Somerville taking the salute. The parade was held in front of the office of the Captain-in-charge, Ceylon, at Flagstaff Street, which is the present Naval Headquarters. All branches took part and Vice Admiral Somerville addressed each group separately. Addressing the Officers he said:

“What counts, is not merely a little effort, but the example you set to other people in being prepared to assist the Empire in war. The best way of preventing war is to be absolutely prepared and I am very glad to know that here in Colombo there are people trained to be ready and prepared for war service.”

He next addressed the Seamen:

“Your job will be to look after the minesweepers. You have to get a grasp of all its technical details and know how to run these sweepers. Don’t forget that it is difficult to sweep in the North East and south West monsoons and with strong seas it will not always be easy.”

To the Stokers he said:

"I know what an important part you play. There is no question about it that you must steadily apply yourself to your job. I hope you will have proper minesweepers here and you men will then be able to apply yourselves to this work."

Meanwhile, a new Headquarters was being built on the east side of the Port Commission Railway lines, in Kochchikade. Built at a cost of Rs. 28,000/= it provided office accommodation for the Commanding Officer, Staff Officers and Paymaster, messes and an armoury. Outdoor facilities included a small parade ground and a 12-pounder gun bearing the date 1896 on a brass plate. A distinctive illuminated sign "Ceylon For Good Tea" hovered above the Headquarters: it was dismantled at the outbreak of the war and not re-erected thereafter. The Headquarters was declared open by the Governor on 14th June, 1939.

At this point of time, the CN.VF cost the Government very little. Of the sum of Rs. 28,667/= voted under Head 9 in 1937 - 38, only Rs. 1,812/= had been spent up to the end of the third quarter. The next year, with increased recruitment anticipated, Rs. 77,409/= was voted.

## Chapter 2

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### THE NAVY DURING THE WAR YEARS

1939-1946

#### (1) - MOBILIZATION, ORGANIZATION, DUTIES

At 2100, on 31st August, 1939, general instructions were issued to all members of the CNVF to report at Headquarters for fully mobilised service. Following the instructions a Gazette Extraordinary dated 2nd October 1939, placed the Force on a war footing. Exactly six years later, on 2nd October, 1945, the Allies celebrated "V-J" day signalling the end of World War II. During this six-year period the CNVF expanded numerically and operationally. Halfway through this period - on 1st October 1943 - the Admiralty assumed financial and operational control of the Force re-naming it the "Ceylon Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve" or CRNVR. The CRNVR was handed back to the government of Ceylon on 1st April, 1946. On that same day the Navy's wartime leader, Capt. W. G. Beauchamp, CBE, VRD, handed over command to Lt. Cdr. G. R. M. de Mel. Although the Ceylon Government re-assumed operational control and financial responsibility, the older name was not resumed and the name CRNVR continued to be used. The present chapter and the four following deal with the Navy during this period: 2.10.39 - 1.4.46

The CNVF had been conceived as a mainly seagoing force. Training had been carried out with the idea of manning ships and, in particular, ships with Minesweeping and Anti - Submarine (M/S-A/ S) capability. The Force was now trained and ready to undertake the task envisaged for it but it had yet not been organised on a mobilised basis. So far, although the Force had a Headquarters, it continued as a collection of Volunteer "week-end sailors". To set this right, the Board of Ministers of the State Council sat

on 25th October 1939 to work out rates of pay and allowances for members of the CDF (Ceylon Defence Force) and the CNVF. This enabled their members to cease their dependence on their substantive jobs and to devote all their time and energy to the war effort. Shortly afterwards, on 23rd December 1946, Lt. Cdr. Bingham, RN, was re-called to active service as Officer Instructor. CPO George Chambers who had been contracted with a civilian, had his contract renewed in 1943 and served in Ceylon till 13.3.46. Although after 1943 the Admiralty paid his wages his standing was that of a civilian, and not that of a mobilised serviceman. Yet he was allowed to wear uniform, use the local rate of Warrant Officer and engage in all operational duties.

## Flotilla

The decks having now been cleared for action, the Force assumed its due responsibilities. A flotilla was formed for the protection of Colombo Harbour. Memories were as yet vivid of the times when the German raider “Emden” had roamed unchecked in the Indian during the World War I, appearing off the remoter coasts of Ceylon for fresh provisions and of how a merchantman had been sunk just outside the harbour. Colombo was a vital link in East-West shipping and keeping the harbour open to allied ships was a prime task. The first flotilla consisted of one harbour tug and a trawler which were commissioned HM Tug Goliath and HMS Barnet and fitted with Oropesa Minesweeping gear. HMS Widness, a fleet Minesweeper also formed part of the flotilla. Subsequently, Barnet was returned to the Boom Defence Depot and the Samson joined the Flotilla. CNVF personnel manned the tugs and also carried out “Marking Party” duties on board RN ships and fleet auxiliaries when HMS Widness and RFA’s Apple Leaf and Pear Leaf towed targets for gunnery exercises. An order was placed for two MS-A/S trawlers with the Irawaddy Flotilla Company, Rangoon, Burma, but the order was not fulfilled due to the fall of Burma to the Japanese. (The only memento of this incident is a silver beer mug

in the VNF Wardroom). In early 1940, however, the CNVF purchased its first ship, HMS Overdale Wyke, which was taken over at Port Said by CNVF Officers and sailors and sailed to Colombo under the command of Lt. Cdr. Oakley. Other ships followed from time to time. Details of operations undertaken and ships manned are given in later chapters. At this point it is sufficient to note that maritime operations included harbour duties in Colombo and Trincomalee, escort duties between Ceylon and India, patrols, escorts to and from and guard ship duties at Addu Atoll and Diego Garcia.

## **Shore Duties**

Shore duties also commenced almost immediately following mobilisation. The first posts to be manned were the signal station at Naval Office, Colombo, and the port War Signal Station (PWSS) at the Chapel Hill, Trincomalee. This latter post continued as a firm CNVF commitment throughout the war. The original party which went to commission it, had to hack their way through thickets to reach it but the solidly constructed buildings which had been erected during the first World War were found to be in very good condition. As the war progressed, shore duties proliferated and soon the CNVF, which had been envisaged mainly as sea going force, was utilising about half its man-power for performing shore-based duties. Apart from the signals duties already mentioned (described in greater detail in later chapters), the CNVF also undertook guard and security duties at various installations; manning the confidential coding section at Naval Office, Colombo, manning the controlled minefield station, doing Mine-Watching at Colombo and Trincomalee, providing gunners for the Boom Defence vessels in Trincomalee and providing cook/stewards for SAC SEA (Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia) Command Headquarters, Peradeniya.

## Headquarters

To keep up with the increasing commitments, a proper headquarters organisation was needed. The headquarters at Kochchikade was expanded with the addition of a new building (present VNF Wardroom building) which was opened by the Governor, Sir Andrew Caldecott, on 11th July 1941, in the presence of about 200 guests including Mr. D.S. Senanayake, Minister of Agriculture and Lands and Leader of the House, Mr. George E. De Silva, Minister of Health, Vice-Adm. Ralph Leatham, C-in-C- East Indies Station and Vice-Adm. Geoffrey Arburthnot, his relief (an extraordinary officer who used to wear a black tie with the regulation open-necked White Tropical Uniform). In the course of his speech the Governor indicated the possibility of the CNVF being placed at the disposal of the RN. He said:

*“if ever, as has been done in other parts of the commonwealth, the men and ships of our local Navy should be placed at His Majesty’s disposal by the Ceylon Government for the duration of the War, you, officers and men, have by proven service and efficiency in certain that such an offer would be gratefully accepted”.*

Other than at the establishment at Kochchikade, there were officers and sailors now stationed in Trincomalee and Kandy and also at sea. It is not possible, at the present point of time, to reconstruct the Headquarters organisation at any time during this period. However, from available records it would appear that, at fullest expansion, the Headquarters organisation consisted of the following officers.

*"We must have a Navy"*

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Title</b>
C O	Commanding Officer, CRNVR
SO(O)	Staff Officer to CO (in charge of operations)
C S	Captain's Secretary
Sy O	Supply Officer
A Sy O	Assistant Supply Officer
B E O	Base Engineer Officer
R A V T O	Resettlement and Vocational Training Officer
S O	Staff Officer
P M O	Principal Medical Officer
Comm. O	Communication Officer(?)
B E O	Base Engineer Officer, CRNVR
S E O	Senior Engineer Officer

It is not known whether this list is complete or whether all posts were filled concurrently.

In addition to the above were the Commanding Officers of the ships, of the shore establishment in Colombo and the O I C of the Trinco detachment.

Till 1st October 1943, the Government of Ceylon continued to vote funds-for the Navy. Voted funds for those years were:

Head 9	1937 - 38	.....	28,667.00
	1938-39	.....	77,409.00
Head 8	1939-40	.....	49,338.00
	1940-41	.....	34,420.00
	1941-42	.....	32,217.00
	1942-43		

(These figures do not include supplementary vote and savings, if any).

The Government again assumed financial responsibility only with the Budget for 1946 - 47.

## Relationship with the Royal Navy

At this time Ceylon, being a Crown Colony, was administered by a Governor appointed by Whitehall. There was a Board of Ministers answerable to the State Council, who administered most internal matters but certain subjects (including Defence), termed “reserved subjects”, were completely under the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom Government and administered on its behalf by the Governor through Chief Secretary, Financial Secretary and Legal Secretary. Trincomalee was the base of the RN East Indies Fleet. The Naval administration of the Trincomalee Naval area was under the NOIC (T) - Naval Officer-in Charge, Trincomalee - and that of the Colombo Naval area under the Captain-in-Charge, Ceylon. After the fall of Singapore, Defence was taken away from the Governor and placed under the C-in-C Ceylon. The channel of communications between the Navy and the Chief Secretary (representing the Government) was the Captain-in-Charge, Ceylon.

The Admiralty took over the CNVF when the Governor, with the consent of the Board of Ministers, offered it for general service with the RN under Section 6 of the Ceylon Naval Volunteer Reserve (General Service) Ordinance No. 44 of 1938. (This ordinance, created under the Colonial Defence Act. of 1931, provided, *inter alia*, for the discipline of the Force and maintenance of vessels, and was constructed as one with the Naval Volunteer Ordinance, No. 1 of 1937). He offered the RN financial control of the CNVF in return for a fixed annual contribution of Rs. 3,000,000/- from HM Government, 10% of which was to be used on the Navy.

When the CNVF came under the Admiralty and became the CRNVR the base at Kochchikade was commissioned HMS Gamunu (the mis-spelling continued for the duration of the war and even after) of and all CRNVRestablishments and ships were considered tenders to Gamunu. (There was also an HMS LANKA which was, however, the main RN Barracks in Colombo). All financial commitments, including pay, were discharged by the Ad-

miralty. (The average monthly pay roll of the CRNVR was Rs. 235,000/= in 1944). The following excerpts from various orders promulgated at this time indicate the separate identity of the CRNVR even after the Admiralty assumed control of it.

“..... Although the CRNVR has been accepted as a unit for General Service it is not the intention that individuals should show generally serve apart from CRNVR ships or units .....”

(Flag officer Ceylon No. C 2024/12/5 - 16th March, 1944.)

“..... Although this change implies no immediate change in the duties undertaken by the force it does mean that units and personnel of the Force will be liable for Naval duty any where, as may be ordered by the Admiralty.....

“..... There is no intention that the identity of the Force will be lost on turning over for general service. The CRNVR base Headquarters will be commissioned as HMS Gamunu and ships and shore detachments of the Force will be tenders of HMS Gamunu. The unity of the Force will thus be preserved.....”

(Commanding Officer, CNVF. General Order No. 24th September, 1943).<sup>R</sup>

## **Cadre & Branches**

From the earliest days the Force had an approved cadre. As new duties were assigned to the Force a number of men equivalent to that required for the new task were added to the approved cadre. From records of correspondence it appears that a very strict check was kept on cadre and regular reports of personnel strength had to be rendered. Unlike in peacetime, no cadre was sanctioned in accordance with the approved role of the force but only in accordance with the actual tasks undertaken from time to time. In arriving at figures of personnel required for each new task no percentage seems to have been added for leave/watches/sickness. From records available it appears that in 1942 there were 34 officers and 730 men. At the end of 1943 there were 48 officers (out of an ap-

proved cadre of 52) and 913 men (out of an approved cadre of 1,062).

The following figures in respect of the period January-November 1944 gives a vivid picture of the type and extent of the expansion that occurred during the height of the war:

9th Jan. '44	Cadre raised by .....66 stewards to to 1,096 sailors
9th Feb. '44	Cadre raised by .....6 SBA's to 1,102 sailors
31st Mar. '44	Cadre raised by ..... 7 .....to 1,109 sailors
13th Jun. '44	Cadre raised by .....24 Coders to 1,133 sailors
30th Sept. '44	Cadre raised by .....148 .....to 1,281 sailors
9th Nov. '44	Cadre raised by .....10 .....to 1,291 sailors

However, the sanctioned cadre was seldom filled, for various reasons. Particularly during the middle and later stages of the war, there was an acute shortage of suitable volunteers as most suitable persons were either mobilised or engaged in essential services.

During the same period as above increases of the officer cadre also took places as follows:

Date	Total
31st March 1944 .....	52
14th April 1944 .....	53
28th June 1944 .....	50
9th November 1944 .....	62

This must have been very near the apogee of expansion. A “Colombo General” signal (DTG 151130/Jan. 46), announcing general demobilisation, stated that the “peak strength” of sailors was 1,314. Elsewhere it is indicated that peak strength of officers was 62 and of sailors 1,357. However, it is not possible to be absolutely certain of the largest numbers borne in the CRNVR as there are many conflicting figures in documents.

Although the first few intakes of volunteers into the CNVF were all Signalman/Gunners, the Force soon acquired additional branches in the lower deck (most of the original signalman/gunners were subsequently commissioned). Seaman Lascars were mobilised from the Port Commission. They were all salt-water seamen mostly from the North, and very professional. Most of them reverted to the Port Commission, at the end of the war, but a few stuck on and joined the permanent Navy later. Stokers were also enlisted; again mostly from the Port Commission, and others from the Merchant Service. By the end of this period, when demobilisation was being effected, the following different types of sailors are referred to, though it is by no means certain whether each constituted a separate branch. Each branch seems also to have been differentiated, in official numbers, by an alphabetical letter.

Type of Sailors	Alphabetical	Prefix
Seaman (Gunner & Special duties)		A
Seaman (Lascar)		A
Seaman (Harbour Service)		A
Signalman and Telegraphist		A
Coder		A
Stoker		K
Cook/Steward		M
Pay/Writer Supply Assistant		M
SBA		M
Electrical		J

The "Pay and Stores" personnel belonged to the branch known as the "Accountant Branch": Officers of that branch known as "Paymaster Lieutenant" etc. With effect from 1st November 1944, however, the CRNVR came into line with the new RN Terminology in this matter and called the Branch the "Supply and Secretariat" Branch: Officers being called "Supply Officers" and

designated” Lieut (S)”. (Apart from this list there seems to have been many kinds of specialists: Lt. Cdr. N.D.V.Ferdinands refers to several trades in the Navy then-Shipwrights, Carpenters, Joiners, Shoemakers, Tailors and Upholsterers, Automobile Mechanics, Refrigerator Mechanics, Electrical Wiremen, Marine and Mechanical Storemen).

It would appear that, generally, personnel were not often changed from one type of duty to another. Those who were good seamen continued to man the ships. Those who were employed on Communication duties continued on that line. Drafts, as now understood, do not seem to have taken place, on a regular basis.

### Officer Complement

The officer corps comprised both Europeans and Ceylonese. The Europeans were mostly those on the staff of mercantile firms in Ceylon. A document dated 21st April 1944, gives the following as the European officers in the Force:

<b>RANK</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>(SUBSTANTIVE EMPLOYER)</b>
Capt.	W.G. Beauchamp	(J.M. Robertson & Co.)
Lt. Cdr.	P. J. B. Oakley	(Mackinnon Mackenzie & Co.)
Lt. Cdr.		(Transferred to RNR on 6.10.41.)
	M. Monnington	(Colombo Commercial Co.)
Lt. Cdr.	B. A. Ohlson	(Mackinnon Mackenzie & Co.)
Lt. Cdr.	D. G. Simpson	(Brown & Co.)
Lt. Cdr.	A. H. H. Boyns	(Mackwoods Ltd)
Lt. (E)	G. M. Mackay	(Vavas seur & Co.)
Lieut.	P. M. Duggan	(Julius & Creasy)
Lieut.	H. L. Haigh	(Shell Co. of Ceylon)

*"We must have a Navy"*

Pay master Sub	Lt.F. M. Mcbain	(Sun Life Assurance Co.)
Sub. Lieut.	M. N. Weyman	(Gordon Frazer & Co.) (Transferred to RNVR On 15.12.40)
Lieut. Cdr. F. B. Rigby-smith		Not Mobilised due to being engaged in essential duties the Ceylon Wharfage Co.
Lieut. (E)	A. Smith	-do-

In addition to the above there was also sub-Lieut. (E) J. Kirkpatrick who died in 1943.(An employee of Davidson & Co. Ltd., Colombo who had joined the CNVF on 1.1. 42 aged 27 years 03 months, he died of pneumonia following a fracture of the 5th cervical vertebra after of diving from the lower diving board at the Galle Face Hotel pool. One week earlier. his only brother Sub Lt. E. P. Ross Kirkpatrick, DSC, RN had been reported missing, presumed lost, in the Mediterranean. Sub Lt. (E) Kirkpatrick was buried at Liveramentu cemetery, Colombo. However, he was not the first CRNVR officer to die. The first, Sub A. B. Weerasinghe, died on 18.05.42 due cardiac failure following pneumonia as a result of exposure while on duty on Sambhur, when she ran into the reef off Hendala. He left a widow and a 4 year old daughter.)

There is also a later reference to Lt. D.S. Bowden (of Vavasour & Co.) and Lt. Cdrs. H. N. Thomson and J. A. Donald of the Pilot Service. The European pilots in the Port commission were commissioned in the rank of Lt. Cdr. but not mobilised. However, they were commissioned in order that they may board all neutral and potential enemy ships seeking to enter Colombo harbour. They manned this Examination service assisted by a junior executive officer from Naval Headquarters and three ratings who formed the boarding party and carried out the search.

There were different branches among the officers, too: references are made to the Executive, Engineer, Medical and Supply branches. All wore the 'Wavy' stripes of the RNVR with the

squarish loop (with colours distinguishing non-executive officers: Engineers - Maroon; Doctors - Red and Paymasters - White).

“Special duties” officers wore a green stripe (but what duties these officers carried out is not known). Officers were placed in different branches according to their professional knowledge in civil life, so their basic training was largely indoctrination and seamanship/naval knowledge. Executive Officers who did watch-keeping at sea were awarded watch keeping certificates-originally on a local format and later in accordance with RN practice.

## Training

Training, both basic and advanced, continued to be carried out. Training of recruits then became the duty of the Barracks Officer, HMS Gamunu. W/O Chambers carried on with training till the end of hostilities. His contribution to the CNVF/CRNVR appears to have been considerable. He made a very definite contribution to the CNVF both by his training programmes and his introduction of RN traditions and customs. Training in the specialist branches was conducted by such qualified officers as Lt. Cdr. N. D. V. Ferdinands who was commissioned to train the nucleus of the stoker branch. Capt. Beauchamp was no great seaman and Executive Officer training was largely conducted by Oakley and Rigby-Smith who were very experienced hands. Officers and sailors were sent to India for specialist training from time to time especially in communications, gunnery and anti-submarine warfare. The performance of the Ceylonese trainees at HMIS Machlimar, the RIN A/S School was very good.

## **Uniforms**

There was a difference between the uniforms worn by the Signalman/Gunners (who wore white tropicals) and the Seaman (Lascars) and stokers who were enlisted from the Port commission-at least in the early years. These latter sailors wore blue singlets and short slacks, as working dress. It is not known whether this distinction in uniform was eventually done away with or retained and, if the latter, till when.

## Chapter 3

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### THE NAVY DURING THE WAR YEARS

1939 -1946

#### (2) MARITIME OPERATIONS

The CNVF/CRNVR had originally been conceived as a mainly sea-going force to be deployed in territorial waters only. However, as bigger ships joined the fleet and the personnel became more proficient, it became necessary for these ships and men to undertake more onerous duties to relieve the strain on the other allied fleets stationed in the area. This resulted in the CRNVR ships and men being deployed beyond Ceylon's territorial waters. This chapter seeks to, first, describe the ships of the fleet, in as much detail as possible and next to describe the various duties that were entrusted to the Navy from time to time. However, from the sources available, a complete picture cannot be assembled, but a reasonably accurate one emerges.

#### The Ships

The ships which comprised the fleet are listed below, grouped in accordance to their class/duties.

- (i) HM Tugs Samson, Goliath
- (ii) HMS Overdale Wyke
- (iii) HMS Okapi, Semla, Sambhur
- (iv) HMS Hoxa, Balta
- (v) HM Trawler Barnet, Tug C-405
- (vi) Motor Fishing Vessel (MFV) 17
- (vii) Dorothy Gordon
- (viii) MFV 186,187

It is regretted that much information regarding these vessels is unavailable but what is available is set out below for the record. As the rest of this chapter and the two immediately following show, this little fleet and the crews performed a task worthy of credit.

## LIST OF SHIPS MANNED AND DETAILS

### (I) H M Tugs SAMSON, GOLIATH

Port Commission tugs commissioned for war purposes and entirely manned by CNVF personnel. They had been used for similar duties during the First World War too. Used for harbour tug and patrol duties, search, salvage and rescue work. Returned to Port Commission before CNVF changed its status.

<b>SAMSON</b>	<b>GOLIATH</b>
Displacement	:
Length	:
Beam	:
Draught	:
Guns	: Lewis Guns only
A/S equipment	
M/S equipment	: Mk. V. Oropesa
Main Engines	
Complement :	Officers - (X) - C. O. + 1 (E) - 1 Sailors - Communicators 04 - Seaman (L) 14 - Stokers 16 - Cooks <u>03</u> <u>37</u>
Date Commissioned	: December 1940 2 March 1939 (?)
De-commissioned	: December 1943 June 1941 June
Disposal	: Handed back to the Port Commission: June 1941 22 April 1943

## **(II) H M S OVERDALE WYKE (FY 61)**

First, and the only ship to be purchased for the Navy by the Government of Ceylon. Converted trawler purchased from the Admiralty. Fitted out for MS duties in the U K and sailed to Port Said by an RN runner crew. Ceylonese crew consisting of (among others) Oakley (C.O.), Boyns, Ohlson, A. Smith, P/O Stanislaus, P/O (Tel) Rankine, P/O (SM) Bastiampillai, P/O (CK) Marshall and Stwd Eric Perera left Ceylon by ship on 20.2.40, reaching Port Said 3.3.40. Took over ship on 15.3.40 and sailed for Ceylon, reaching Colombo 14.4.40. Used for minesweeping, escort and patrol duties.

Construction	: Built at Selby by Cochrane & Sons Ltd. and completed in 1924.
Displacement	: Tonnage - 338; under load conditions -764
Length	: Overall - 146' 11". Between perpendiculars- 136' 11"
Beam	: 23' 6"
Draught	: Dome on - 17; Dome off - 15'
Guns	: 1 x 12 - pounder 12 cwt. with 1" aiming rifle. 1 x Oerlikon (Single mounting) 2 x 20 mm. Lewis Guns (twin mounting).
A/S equipment	: 16 depth charges with two throwers and rails. Marconi Echometer Type 123 A
M/S equipment	: Single Oropesa, Mk. II
Main engines	: Steam reciprocating, Vertical, Triple expansion, Coal burning. One screw.
Endurance	: 10 days' steaming. Max speed 8.6 knots.
Complement	: Officers - (X) - C O +2

## (E) -1

Sailors - Signalmen	-03
Telegraphists	-03
S D's	-04
Gunners	-03
Seamen (L)	-13
Cooks/Stewards	-03
Stokers	<u>-11</u>
	<u>40</u>

Date - Commissioned	: 10 Dec. 1939 or 15 March 1940
De-commissioned	: 15 Dec. 1944
Disposal	: Handed over to Port Commission care and maintenance pending final disposal by Govt - 16 Mar. 46

Note: Her 12-pounder gun was removed and installed at Koch-chikade

**(III) H M S Okapi (FY 59), Semla (FY 60), Sambhur**

Converted Norwegian Antarctic whalers purchased in 1941. OKAPI was whaler No. AN5 and was sailed to Colombo from Durban by a Norwegian crew on 8.1.41. Distinguished by large, flared bows and low (1'6") freeboard. Very seaworthy. Fitted out as A/S vessel at Bombay Dockyard. SAMBHUR, after freeing herself after running aground off Chapel Rock, Trincomalee, finally sank off either Hendala or Mutwal Bay, under the command of Lieutenant Sansoni. Only her Oerlikon was salvaged

*(see NOTE 2 below)*

	OKAPI	SEMLA	SAMBHUR
Displacement :			
Length :			
Beam :			
Draught :			
Guns :	1 x 12 pounder 1 or 2 x Oerlikon 2 x Lewis guns	1x 6 pounder 1 or 2 x Oerlikon 2 x Lewis guns	1 x Oerlikon
A/S equipment:	Asdic Type 123A Depth charges	Asdic Type 123A Depth charges	
M/s equipment:	Oropesa sweeps	Oropesa sweeps	
Main Engines :	Oil burning		
Complement	Officer - (X) - C O + 2 (E) - 1		
	Sailors - Signalmen		-03
	Telegraphists		-03
	S.D's		-04
	Gunners		-03
	Seamen (L)		-08
	Stokers		-08
	Cooks/Stewards		-03
			<u>32</u>
Date Commissioned :	May 1941	October 1943	June 1941
Decommissioned :	Sept. 1945	7.4.1945	
Placed on care & Maintenance :	19.10.45	19.10.1945	7.4.1945
Disposal :	ReRecommisione and sailed for South African Naval Force 15.8.1946. Durban by a 5.5.1942	Reommissioned Sold to a private firm, Lost by grounding	

*NOTE 1 : During her four-year commission, it is estimated OKA-PI sailed 11 1,000 miles.*

*NOTE 2: SAMBHUR proceeded out of Colombo Harbour and northwards towards Uswetakeiyyawa at the request of the extended Defences Officer, Commander the Viscount Mandeville, who was also on board. The ship had no First Lieutenant or Sub Lieutenant. The C O, failing to regard the navigational instructions in the legend to the relevant chart, struck the reef. It is reported that the ship which was on "slow ahead" telegraphed "full astern" and the engine room responded with "full ahead". The Engineer Officer, Lieutenant (E) Clarence Weerasingha went overboard while transferring to go ashore developed (pneumonia) as a result and died in consequence at the General Hospital Colombo. (Rear Adm. de Mel).*

#### **(IV) H M S HOXA, BALTA**

"Isles" class trawlers. At the time of purchase they were the best equipped vessels in the CRNVR fleet. Used for local patrols, M/S duties and escort duties. They were the last ships manned by the CRNVR during-the war.

#### **HOXA                      BALTA**

Displacement :

Length :

Draught :

Guns :

A/S equipment: Asdic Type 123A

M/S equipment:

Main engines :

Complement : Officers - (X) -4  
(E) - 1

Sailors –

Commissioned: October 1943                      January 1944  
Placed on C & M : 31.3.11%      31.3.1946  
Decommissioned:  
Disposal : handed over to R N Maintenance crew, 16.4.1946.

**(V) H M TUGS BARNET, C.405**

Admiralty tugs taken over for war service. BARNET taken over in Colombo at outbreak of war and returned soon after. Subsequently transferred to Aden for the rest of the duration. C. 405 taken over in Trincomalee, and used for harbour and escort duties and also for Lighthouse relief and Examination service duties.

	<b>C. 405</b>	<b>BARNET</b>
Commissioned	: September 1943	
Disposal	: Handed back to the Admiralty	
Complement	: Officers - (X) - C 0 + 1	
	Sailors - Communicators	-02
	Seamen (L)	-07
	Stokers	-07
	Cooks	- <u>01</u>
		<u>17</u>

**(VI) M F V 17**

Used as Examination service vessel till service was discontinued, and also on miscellaneous harbour duties:

Complement	O I C	-01
	Seamen (L)	-06
	Stokers	-05
	Telegraphists	-01
	Gunners	- <u>01</u>
		<u>14</u>

Commissioned	December 1942
De-Commissioned	14 May 1945
Disposal	

## **(VII) DOROTHY GORDON**

Used for harbour duties in very early days under the command of a CNVF Officer. Coxswains were European planters who would travel down from the hills on a roster drawn up by themselves.

## **(VIII) M F V 186,187**

Sailed from Colombo via Vizagapatnam for Akyab. Sailed from Colombo 6th February 1945, and crews returned to Ceylon in May 1945. Ships left behind. They were small craft, 60' long with a beam of 10' and carried a crew of 2 officers, 4 seamen and 2 stokers each. No armament. Used in Burma front to carry ammunition, stores and prisoners between Akyab and the forward areas up-river (See Appendix).

## **OPERATIONS**

### **Harbour Duties and Local Patrol**

These were the earliest duties carried out. The harbour tugs Samson, Goliath and Hercules had served as training ships in the pre war days and continued to serve CRNVR as commissioned ships after 1938. There were also the Admiralty tugs Barnet and C 405. These vessels were fitted with minesweeping gear and operated both within and without the harbour. In the first instance they operated as harbour tugs. In 1942 a unique convoy came to Trincomalee: Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, Mauretania and Aquitania, now troopships, escorted by a cruiser and some destroyers taking back the Australian contingent from the Middle East. The

Queen Elizabeth, Mauretania and Aquitania also put in to Trincomalee on another occasion. Okapi and Sambhur did Anti-submarine patrols at the harbour entrance on these occasions. For other duties in the harbour there was also a large number of powered craft manned and cox'd by Seaman (Lascars) but these were not commissioned ships. Nevertheless they came under CRNVR and, in Colombo were moored near Kochchikade pier (Note: An interesting incident concerning these smaller craft was the discovery, on 15th November 1945, of a dead body floating near the moored craft. It was found to be that of O/D(L)S. Alfred who had drowned. Foul play was suspected and the OOD's and other investigations threw suspicion on Alfred's coxswain but murder could not be proved for lack of definite information.) The bigger ships had to perform duties as tugs and also as Anti-submarine guards inside the port and approaches to the harbour. They were later fitted with Asdics for this purpose. Assistance had also to be given to boom defence ships and installations. The RN maintained 2 Boom Defence Gate Vessels (Sand Gate and South Gate) at the entrance to Trincomalee harbour between Sober Island and Ostenburg Point. There was also guard ship duty: ships detailed to stay alongside any suspicious neutral vessels in harbour to see that they did not engage in any irregular activities. The tugs also towed targets for gunnery exercise by the Army, Royal Navy and for the Royal Navy monitors Erebus and Tarantula which were moored in Trincomalee and fired their 16" guns over Ostenburg ridge. Since, in the early days, there was no reliable water supply in Trincomalee, ships in harbour were watered by a water barge which brought water all the way from Colombo. The CRNVR had the duty of providing escorts to this water barge. Further afield the CRNVR provided ships crews for lighthouse relief duties. The lighthouses so relieved included that at Minicoy, in the Lacadives. All A/S patrols ceased on V J day.

## **Duties at Addu Atoll**

A considerable part of the East Indies Fleet was stationed at Attu Attol in the Maldives, and referred to as “Port T” for security reasons, Overdale Wyke, Okapi, Balta and Hoxa, used on escort duties, took turns to act as guardship at Addu Attol for 2 - 3 months at a time. Duties included mounting anti-submarine guard at the harbour entrance. Apart from this the ships would be used for miscellaneous purposes such as, for example, visits to the island of Fua Malaku for fresh fruit and vegetable, delivery of stores to the island of Suvadiva and to provide cover to a flying boat (all done by Okapi). One trip was made by Okapi from Addu Attol to Diego Garcia to tow back a Japanese type fishing vessel when the station there was being closed down.

### **Escort and Search-and-Rescue duties**

After the Japanese raid in Ceylon in 1942, the Eastern Fleet moved to Kilindi in East Africa, and the C-in- C E. F. (Eastern Front) established his Headquarters - called Navy Office 11- in Baur’s Flats. The first to hold the post was Adm. James Somerville. With the CNVF becoming the CRNVR, Hoxa and Balta which had hitherto been manned by Royal Navy and Royal Canadian Navy personnel, were handed over to the CRNVR. All CRNVR ships formed part of the Ceylon Escort Group, later to be known as the “Arabia – Bengala- Ceylon - Dutch - East Indies Group” (ABCD Group). A large number of British and Allied ships were using the Indian Ocean, involved in the logistics of the Eastern front. As the R N became hard-pressed for ships and men, those of CRNVR came to be used for escort duties in the immediate environs of Ceylon. Hoxa, Overdale Wyke and Okapi were the vessels most frequently used for these purposes as they had the best sea-keeping qualities. From Colombo and Trincomalee escorts were provided to Cochin, Madras, Addu Attol, Male and Diego Garcia. The seas between Ceylon and the Maldives were frequented by Japanese submarines and many Allied ships were lost in this area S A R (Search and Rescue) duties were also undertaken. For example on

7th July 1944, Okapi (Lt. Cdr. Ohlmus) proceeded on such a mission in concert with a Catalina squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force and rescued 26 survivors from a torpedoed vessel. It is on record that a total of 248 persons were rescued from torpedoed vessels by CRNVR vessels, as follows:

HMS	OKAPI.....	70
	SEMLA .....	13
	OVERDALE WYKE .....	14
	HOXA .....	104
	BALTA .....	<u>47</u>
		<b><u>248</u></b>

Towage of torpedoed ships was also undertaken. Tugs in Trincomalee often proceeded to the aid of ships that had struck the reef or run aground off the Batticaloa coast. All lighthouses had been doused and many ships did not have radar, which accounted for these occurrences. Some of the merchantmen so helped were the City of Marseilles, Helen Moller and Gladys Moller.

## **Duties in the Burma Front**

This was an isolated incident when two motor fishing vessels (MFV) were required for logistics purposes in and around Akyab, in Burma. The two ships were manned by volunteers and sailed through Pamban Passage to Madras, and from thence to Akyab via Vizagapatnam. The point was 7 miles from the fighting on the Arakan Front. The ships were used to transport stores and provisions along the Kaladan River to Kyaukpyu, Ramree and Cheduba Island. The ships were at Ramree when the allied invasion of Rangoon was launched. After this their mission came to an end the crews returned to Ceylon. Personnel involved in this operation were:

**MFVVVV 185**

Lt. D.V. Hunter  
S/Lt. Ivan de Livera  
LS. S. A. Fernando  
LS. A. A. Fernando  
A/B. Ponnuchamy  
LSM. Atapattu  
S/M. N.Abeydeera  
S/M. Tony Fernando

**MFV 186**

Lt. Rajah Proctor  
S/Lt. George Ekanayake  
LS. F. Sabamalai  
LS. G. A. Fernando  
A/B. S. V. Mariam  
AB. Weerasingham  
M/S. Priyasena  
S/A. Saranelis

Yeo. E. P. Wickremasinghe

## Chapter 4

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### THE NAVY DURING THE WAR YEARS

1939-46

#### (3) OPERATIONS ASHORE

Envisaged and trained as a basically maritime force, circumstances, the enormous complexity of the defence machine and the drain on the R N and other Imperial forces made the CRNVR undertake many shore operations. As the more highly trained and experienced personnel were required for duties elsewhere, more and more of the routine duties were entrusted to the CRNVR which could undertake local recruitment, training and disciplinary control among Ceylonese.

The major tasks ashore delegated to the Force are described in this chapter.

#### **Communications**

This remained a major commitment of the CRNVR right throughout the war. That this role was earmarked for the Force from the start can be deduced from the recruitment of Signaller/Gunners, as early as 1938. The Port War Signal Station (PWSS) at Chapel Hill, Trincomalee, was handed over to the CRNVR right at the beginning of hostilities. Lt. Cdr. Sansoni remembers that the building, an exceptionally strongly built one, was in existence at the time the CRNVR personnel took it over but it was surrounded by jungle and they had to hack their way to it. It commands a panoramic view of all the approaches to Trincomalee harbour and all shipping was challenged from here. Clearance had to be obtained from PWSS before ships could enter harbour. In the very early days, the speed of the CRNVR signallers was very limited and as-

sistance was rendered by British Army personnel from the Signal Corps; but this was only a temporary measure. Apart from challenging ships in the vicinity, the PWSS also collected LOGREQS of ships entering harbour and passed them down to Dockyard via Dockyard Signal Station (DSS) which was also partially staffed by CRNVR personnel. Regularly, submarines would go out on forays and the last signal they received would generally be “Good Hunting” from the PWSS. The entire PWSS was covered in jungle green netting. In the lower floors was an Army Artillery detachment which maintained a radar watch. Behind was a small mess for the duty watch; all around was the forest, (in which there was at least one bear!). In the early days of the war the CRNVR personnel were also helped out by a batch of RN reservists, old Jutland men, when traffic was heavy. Apart from the traffic cleared during the raid on Trincomalee, the most famous signal cleared by the PWSS was when a Japanese scout plane was sighted. The RAF pilot who intercepted it signalled to NOIC(T) “Got the bastard” and NOIC(T) promptly signalled back “Congratulations on your getting the illegitimate gentleman”. Apart from manning the PWSS, NHQ Signal Station and DSS, CRNVR personnel also worked at Elephant Ridge (minor watching post run by the PN) and the de-gaussing Range (from August 1945). The main barracks was in Admiralty House (Navy house) which was the CRNVR camp, under the command of Lt. Cdr. P. M. Duggan RNR. After he left the service to return to his legal practice, the RN felt that a European should be OIC and appointed an ex-Ceylonese planter Lt. P. M. Blair, RNR. The Trincomalee detachment was withdrawn on 4.3.46 (strength - 1945-10+385).

## Coding

Sometime towards the middle of the war, there was the need to form a new branch of coders. This would have been in 1943-44. Coders were required to supplement the staff at the cypher branch of Navy office, Colombo. 74 coders in all were enlisted and they

worked at this Office for the duration of the war. The personnel were selected on the basis of English language ability and integrity and were subject to security checks. This task was carried on till 17.9.45.

## **Medical**

A Surg. Lt. was commissioned as early as November 1939 (Surg. Lt. S. R. Gunawardena) and at the height of the war, the Medical branch manned a Sick Bay and a 50-Bed ward in Trincomalee for the CRNVR, as well as for RN "Asiatic" Cooks and Stewards. In Colombo, Sick Bay staff was made available to two 75-bed "Asiatic" wards of the St. Peters' RNAH and the HM Dockyard Surgery, Colombo.

## **Harbour Service**

This was carried on by a special branch of sailors known as, "Seaman (H/S)". Their duty was to man the Boom Defence nets and a controlled field which protected the harbour entrance in Colombo. Ships were able to come into harbour not only after clearance, but after the anti-submarines nets had been raised and the mine field reactivated. The indicator Loops were controlled from a room in Navy Office 1, the Headquarters of the Flag Officer, Ceylon. The sailors recruited for this purpose, too, continued to man the same posts throughout the war. All A/S defences in Colombo ceased in August 1945.

## **Security**

From time to time, various positions of importance in Colombo were handed over to the CRNVR for security purposes. The Force had to provide sentries for these places (100-155 in 1944-45)

As the Force consisted of personnel recruited from time to time for specific purposes there was often insufficient personnel to undertake the new demands made on them and the Force had to refuse those requests. Where they were undertaken a fresh intake of recruits invariably followed, and a slight increase in approved cadre resulted.

Personnel in Colombo seem to have been quartered in different places at different times. Apart from the Kochchikade Barracks, Lt. Cdr. Neville Perera refers to a “St. Joseph’s Barracks” (later Fisheries Dept., Galle Face). A document dated 7th August 1943 refers to a Colombo Barrack named “Overdale Wyke H” which housed men working at the following places:

Naval Office  
 C-in-C’s residence  
 Industrial School  
 N A D (Naval Armament Dept?)  
 NCS (?)  
 H & S (Hongkong &-Shanghai Bank)  
 Baghdad Yard  
 H Q Pickets  
 H Q Guards  
 Regulating Office  
 Mess Men  
 Orderlies, C O’s, A O’s & Q R’s  
 Signal Watch  
 Degaussing Range

## **Stewarding**

There was a regular Cook/Steward branch in the Navy but due to certain incidents, a special set of cooks/stewards were enlisted and stationed in Kandy in what was known as “Camp A. 12”. This was no other than Admiral Mountbatten’s SEAC HQ which

was staffed by RN Asiatic Cooks/Stewards regulated-by a CRN-VR staff under Lt. Cdr. Neville Perera who was the only Ceylonese Officer in the mess. He was assisted by P/O S.O. de Silva who was later commissioned and set in charge of all RN Asiatic Cooks/Stewards in Trincomalee. In 1945 these men numbered 504 cooks and stewards. The regulating element of CRNVR personnel numbered 1 officer and 10 sailors in 1945.

The circumstances that led to undertaking this task was related by Lt. Cdr. Neville Perera.

*"When Adm. Mountbatten set up SEAC Headquarters in Kandy, he took in about 500 Cooks, Stewards and Cabin boys – civilians - from the E.S.L.C. As they were an indisciplined lot it was proposed to enlist them in the Navy. Their leader, Heendeniya, then called a strike as he felt this was detrimental to his own influence. So the CRNVR was called in to settle the matter. I was then at St. Joseph's Barracks - later Fisheries Department, Galle Face - and went with Gratiaen up to Peradeniya to meet the HQ Commandant, Adm. Jerram, a supply type. P/O S.O. de Silva also went up with us. It was decided that Gratiaen should talk to the then on the advantages of joining the navy, but the men were all drunk and abusive and the talk made no impact on them. Gratiaen went back to Colombo leaving me to handle the situation. That night I spent with my uncle, the Magistrate in Kandy, who suggested we enlist the aid of the Civil Defence Commissioner, Kandy, the Rev. Lakdasa de Mel. Both Adm. Jerram and Rev. de Mel were willing, so the Rev. walked up to the crowd which was drunk and armed with knives. He refused the Admiral's offer of a marine guard. He spoke to the men, asked them where they came from, said that he had just returned from Baddegama himself, patted them on their backs and persuaded about half of them to enlist. This was done that night itself by P/O S.O. de Silva and myself. The rest of the crowd was extradited from Kandy and others recruited to replace them. I remained as their OIC, being the only Ceylonese in Mountbatten's mess.*

*Whenever Lord Louis was in Kandy he would have 6-8 officers to*

*lunch with him. On one occasion I was invited. Capt (s) Brockman briefed him about each single guest, and he would speak to each one. It was a very plain lunch - sardines on toast, mincemeat, fruit.*

*He also had cocktails to visiting VIP's and I remember meeting Chiang-Kai-sheck.*

*He had a huge chart on which was marked the position of every RN ship in the world".*

## **Boatyard**

CRNVR Auxiliary Boatyard was in Colombo to supplement the `Admiralty boatyard. It serviced MFV's in the area and in transit. Buoys were placed for 12 MFV's but usually there were between 25 & 33 at any one time. In 1944-45 the Boatyard serviced, repaired or stored 70 MFV's of the 45 ft. classes aggregating nearly 5000 BHP for passage or transit to Forward Areas in the Burma Front.

## **Training**

At the tail end of the war, the CRNVR took on the training of A/S rates on the Mobile Anti-Submarine Training, Unit 21(MAS-TU) in July 1945. In charge of training was P/O Serpanchy.

## **Miscellaneous**

Such duties cropped up from time to time. In the Annual Report for 1944-45 references are found to the provision of signalmen to the Degaussing Range Signal Station, watchkeepers for 1000-ton cold stores plant and two power stations (1.50 Kw at Galle Buck Colombo and 150 Kw at St. Peter's R N A H Colombo) and staff for the A/S Flotilla Base workshops, all in Colombo. Reference are also found to the following; maintenance of variegated stores, H F/D F and radar calibration. However no details are available.

## Chapter 5

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### THE NAVY DURING THE WAR YEARS

1939-46

#### (4) ENCOUNTERS WITH THE ENEMY

The CRNVR was certainly deeply involved in keeping the enemy from the shores of Ceylon, particularly after the Japanese occupied the Andaman Islands, and in keeping to a minimum the disruption of the total war effort. But, apart from the isolated experiences of the air raids on Colombo and Trincomalee, the enemy remained a "faceless" one. Contact with the enemy was very seldom and, even then, impersonal. In the absence of official records it is not possible to list each occasion on which contact was made. However, from here and there, descriptions of incidents have been gathered and these are recorded here in brief. These notes are presented with any errors included, as there is no way of checking on the accuracy of the details. The name of the person who has narrated the incident is included for further verification if desired.

H M S Semla out on patrol sighted a large Japanese plane crashing into the sea. It was later identified as a 4-engined Kawanishi Bomber shot down by a Beaufighter stationed in Ceylon. The pilot was found dead in the water. Many documents including blue prints of construction and patrol programme were recovered. Attempts to relieve the pilot of a full set of gold teeth were stopped by the C O, Lt. Ohlmus. (From an incident related by F A C Roelofsz, C Ohlmus and K M Martinus)

H M S Overdale Wyke (Lt. Cdr A H H Boyns) on an escort mission with a 2 - ship convoy to Addu Atoll picked up a firm contact on her Asdic. Convoy scattered and a persistent depth charge attack was carried out but the contact was lost (Cdr. E. P Wick-

remasinghe)

H M S Overdale Wyke was submarine guard ship at Addu Attol, at the harbour entrance. A contact was reported and immediately a torpedo was sighted passing the ship a cable length away. It found its target, a merchantman, at the far end of the harbour. The Overdale Wyke and two destroyers, H M S Quick Match and H M S Quiberon gave chase, but the submarine made good its escape. (Cdr. Wickremasinghe)

In 1945 after the surrender of Italy, all Italian ships were ordered to surrender to the nearest Allied port or ship. “Overdale Wyke” (Lt. Cdr. Boyns) while on patrol was warned of the possible surrender of a vessel. Soon after, a large unidentified ship was sighted and the crew took up action stations. The stranger flashed “Italian Ship ‘Eritrea’ surrendering to you” and flew a white flag. The “OW” ordered her to stop her engines and muster the crew on deck. A boarding party boarded the light cruiser and accepted her surrender (Cdr. Wickremasinghe).

“Eritrea” was later used by RN in Colombo and Addu Attol. The “OW” on an escort mission to Diego Garcia developed engine trouble S W of Colombo and drifted for 4 days. Food and water ran out, and there was no defence against any submarines. On the morning of 5th day, a warship was sighted heading directly on the “OW”. Anxious moments later she was identified as the “Eritrea” which had picked up her signal and was coming to her rescue. (Cdr. Wickremasinghe).

When MFV 185 & 186 were in Akyab there used to be regular raids on the harbour which would be repulsed by the warships at anchor with our ships joining in with their Lanchester carbines. On one occasion a cargo vessel carrying ammunition sustained a direct hit and she disappeared from sight in one explosion. The MFV’s also came under fire on their mission (Rear Admiral D. V. Hunter and Cdr. Wickremasinghe).

The day before the Japanese raided Trincomalee the PWSS received a signal from Colombo that an enemy force of 6 vessels comprising carriers and cruisers was sighted by a Catalina off Jaffna. All ships in harbour were ordered to scatter and the carrier "Hermes" to fly off her "Swordfish" and "Fulmars" to intercept. She was, also to leave harbour escorted by the frigate "Vampire". 17 merchantmen and 1 hospital ship left harbour. Only the monitor "Erebus" remained. The siren blew at 0715. From PWSS planes were sighted coming in from, China bay, Foul Point and Fort Frederick. About 72 planes attacked, from about 20,000 ft. There was not much of a defence put up. The attack was targetted on the Dockyard. Most of the ships outside harbour were sunk. One Japanese plane hit an oil tank at China Bay and set it on fire, burning for 6-7 days. The telephone link with DSS broke down and PWSS had to flash signals to "Erebus" who relayed them to DSS. Some memorable messages came through from 222 Air Group (China Bay) to NOIC(T): "Hermes sighted by enemy aircraft 20 miles off Batticoloa. Request fighter assistance if available" The "Hermes" was sunk shortly afterwards. Balta to NOIC(T): "Gunnery Officer and one rating critically ill. Request approval to close boom and land". The delay in getting the message across was about 40 minutes. Both died. There were no casualties at Admiralty house camp and all took shelter behind a wall. The hill behind the Dockyard collapsed and killed and injured many civilian workers. The sentry outside the Admiralty house gate was de-capitated by an anti-personnel bomb. Some of the bombs used were ex-British bombs captured by the Japanese at Singapore. At the PWSS they had just exchanged "Good Mornings" with the Army Signal Corps signal station at Fort Frederick when the raid began. Soon after that, that station sustained a direct hit. There were no survivors. The "Sagaing" also sustained a direct hit and kept burning for several days (Lt. Cdr. Neville Perera).

"Sambhur" (Lt. H. C. Sansoni) was in Colombo when the harbour was raided. An RN ship (destroyer?) HMS Tenedos sustained a direct hit. There was one flash and when the smoke cleared

she was sunk. The bodies were buried in Colombo (Lt. Cdr. Sansoni).

During the raid on Colombo “Okapi” left harbour to escape being bombed. She was spotted by Japanese planes and strafed. She was hit but there were no casualties; she fired back with her 12 pounder, manned by Kenneth Martinus (Cdr. K. M Martinus).

After the raid on Trincomalee there was a mass exodus. People from the town and civilians working in the Dockyard deserted. So did three CRNVR personnel (names unknown). Among the civilian administrators who ran away were the Government Agent Brevet Colonel D. J. Lanktree, the District Judge (who later set up his courts at Tampalakaman) and the senior Pilot, Commander Palliser, RNR. This last was escorted back from his home in Ohiya and discharged on medical grounds (Rear Adm. de Mel).

During the raid on Colombo the Hector which was carrying ammunitions received a direct hit and was in flames fore and aft. Valuable work was done in saving her cargo by CRNVR personnel (official record).

On one occasion “Hoxa” was escorting the survey vessel HMS Challenger from Colombo to Madras when the Blue Funnel ship SS Perseus was sunk by torpedoes. “Hoxa” proceeded to the scene, rescued the ship’s company from the life boats. Subsequently, gun boats of the R I N took as many as possible and proceeded to Madras whilst “Hoxa” took the rest to the same port. (Adm. de Mel).

Apart from the above there are memoirs left by various officers from the compilation of a “Future History of the Navy” when Capt. Beauchamp set about collecting relevant facts on the eve of his departure from the service. These are given as Supplementary Chapters below.

## Chapter 6

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### THE NAVY DURING THE WAR YEARS

1939-46

#### (5) DEMOBILISATION

During the 12 months commencing December, 1944, the CRNVR reached its apogee of expansion while, at the same time, taking the first steps towards eventual disbandment. This period saw the war slowly but surely coming to an end and, with it, the beginning of the end of the war time CRNVR, an instrument created purely for the war effort. Several significant steps were taken during this period and the most important are described in this chapter.

#### Duties

All duties described so far continued to be carried out and, for this purpose, complement (actual) was raised from 53 + 1109 to 52 + 1263 between September '44 and September '45. Hoxa, Balta, Okapi, Semla and MFV 17 continued to perform A/S Patrols, Escort duties, Lighthouse Services, Examination Services and Target Training. The operation at Akyab was undertaken also at this time. In Colombo, Trincomalee and Kandy, the usual duties continued unabated. Very soon, however, the duties began to reduce. M/S duties were the first to cease and, in August '45, all A/S defences in Colombo ceased. The coders at NHQ Colombo were the next to be relieved of their duties, on 17.9.45. Soon after, in January 1946, the Regulating Staff for RN Asiatic cooks/stewards at SACSEA HQ, Kandy, was withdrawn. Finally on 4.3.46 the Trincomalee detachment followed suit. By 4th March 1946 all shore duties performed for the Admiralty ceased.

## **Ships**

With the cessation of M/S and A/S duties, the ships were gradually phased out. They were first placed on a “care and maintenance” basis and later decommissioned and disposed of. The Port Commission tugs, Samson, Goliath and Barnet had been handed back before the Admiralty assumed control of the CRNVR. Now Okapi was decommissioned in September ’45 and handed back to the Admiralty in November when she was re-commissioned and sailed to Durban with a South African Naval Force crew. Semla was decommissioned in April 45 and handed back to the Admiralty. In April MFV 17 was decommissioned and handed back in May 1945. Overdale Wyke, the only ship purchased for the CRNVR by the Govt. of Ceylon, was decommissioned as early as 15.12.44 but no decision regarding disposal was taken till March 1946 when she was handed over to the Port Commission for care and maintenance till a further decision was taken regarding her future. Since C.405 been de-commissioned as far back as 1943, this left the CRNVR with no operational ship.

## **Personnel**

With the cessation of shore duties and the laying-up of the ships, a large number of personnel became redundant and demobilisation was begun. This was a problem which was faced by other forces in Ceylon as well and also by Allied forces elsewhere. Commanding Officer, CRNVR in his Annual report for 1945-46, stated:

*“Instructions for release were issued by the Flag Officer, Ceylon who had drawn up rules in consultation with the other services who had mobilised Ceylonese personnel. Releases were co-ordinated according to age and service groups so that all Ceylonese personnel recruited by the three services were released under similar conditions and were allowed the same release benefits. The first release took place on 15th October 1945 when 38 CRNVR*

*men were released. Batches of them varying according to their age and service groups were released every week and by 31st March 1946, the effective strength was 11 officers and 82 ratings.*

*"In order to assist men in finding suitable employment on release, full use was made of the vocational training courses organised by the Joint Service Resettlement Committee. 44 Ratings attended a course of training in Animal husbandry at Ambepussa and Horana, 26 ratings attended Trade courses at the Ceylon Technical College and 2 ratings did a Handicraft course at the RN Handicraft Section". (CO CRNVR's Annual report for 1945-46).*

The Programme described above was carried out by a Joint Service Re-settlement Committee Comprising Lt. Col. J. A. T. Perera, Lt. Cdr. G. R. M. de Mel and Major E. A. Nugawela. In the Navy Lt. Cdr. de Mel was designated Release and Vocational Training Officer (RAVTO)

Releases were in "A" and "B" classes. "B" class releases were outside the normal releases, when employment was assured. "A" class releases were for general reasons on the basis of "first in, first out". The first "B" class releases were to the Fisheries Dept. and Lieutenants P. N. L Mendis, Matthysz and White and some sailors joined the Fisheries Trawler "Raglan Castle"

## **Looking back and Planning for the Future**

With mobilisation due to end Capt. Beauchamp busied himself with various associated problems. Having apparently a keen sense of the historical role of the CRNVR, he made an attempt to record the doings of that Force. In December 1945 he addressed all senior officers of the CRNVR in this vein:-

*"It is proposed to compile an informal record of the Ceylon RNVR from mobilisation to final demobilisation ..... It is requested that you furnish as soon as possible a resume of operation undertaken*

*during such period, together with eye witness accounts of particular incidents of interest.*

*“In order to obtain informal versions the latter will not be subject to editing and will be included in a CRNVR Scrap Book.*

*“The interest of ratings should be encouraged in this matter so that the “history” may be truly represented. Since the result will be demi-official, however, excessive ebullitions should be, within reason restricted,*

The responses so far traced to this invitation are given in the Supplementary Chapters, below.

In addition to embarking on this exercise he employed the Captain’s Secretary. Lt. Cdr. Wijewickrema, in compiling a scrap book of newspaper references to the Navy. This he finally handed over to his successor Lt. Cdr. de Mel, with the words that it would come in useful some time in the future when a history of the navy would be written.

The past thus having been dealt with, he turned his attention to the future. He had seen the usefulness of a Naval Force to Ceylon and the capability of the personnel mobilised. Dominion Status for Ceylon was round the corner bringing with it the likelihood of a permanent Navy. He addressed all the powers that were on the need to keep under mobilisation a nucleus of a Navy to provide continuity. The details of this campaign are narrated in the following chapter. It is only sufficient to note here that his suggestion was accepted that there should be this “nucleus” of about 100 men and officers. Having thus made an attempt to record the work of the CRNVR during the war, and having ensured that Force would, through the “nucleus”, form the basis of the future Navy, Capt. W. G. Beauchamp, CBE, VRD, CRNVR relinquished command on 31st March 1946, the day before the Admiralty handed over the

## Chapter 7

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### PROVIDING FOR THE FUTURE: THE "NUCLEUS" (1946-50)

With both the Germans and the Japanese-and those who had supported them-satisfactorily disposed of, the Allies turned to the task of dismantling the defences they had so carefully constructed. Accordingly, in September '45, the Admiralty addressed C-in-C East Indies Station, Flag Officer Ceylon and Flag Officer East Africa as follows:

*"Admiralty have at present under consideration with Colonial Office long term policy for future colonial naval forces. These proposals envisage the retention of small permanent forces in peacetime. It is likely however to be some time before a firm decision can be reached on policy. In the meanwhile request you consider and report your proposals for reductions in both Ceylon and Kenya RNVRs. You should bear in mind the desirability of retaining sufficient personnel to form the nucleus of any permanent force that may be later approved and of keeping a healthy RNVR in existence. You should also report the duties which you suggest should be performed by and personnel which you propose to retain (2810 54 Sept '45)."*

Having thus alerted the local authorities to apply their minds to the problem, the Admiralty next prepared a memorandum, titled "Naval Forces of the Colonial Empire and Mandated Territories and Protectorates", which was submitted to the Colonial Office. Copies were also sent to C-in-Cs, Flag Officer etc. directing them to confer with Governors and make recommendations. The Colonial Office now asked the Governors to do the same. In Ceylon this led to much thinking and planning at CRNVR headquarters: the imminence of Dominion Status adding a new dimension to the problem. It was expected that, with the grant of Dominion Status,

the responsibility for planning and financing defence would shift from British to Ceylonese hands.

The Admiralty memo raised several interesting points. Basically, the Admiralty was interested in the creation of peacetime naval forces which would be recruited, trained and financed by the Colonial Governments, but which would form the basis of extended organisations, including reserves, in time of war, when they would be placed at the disposal of the Admiralty. The Admiralty also realised that it had failed to make full use of the colonial naval forces during while the Army had found ways and means of utilising military forces in all theatres of war. It was envisaged peacetime duties of the colonial naval forces would be:

- (a) Coast guard and customs controls
- (b) Fisheries protection
- (c) Port and harbour Services
- (d) Inland water transport
- (e) Surveying
- (f) Air-sea Rescue
- (g) Transport of troops to neighbouring islands
- (h) Keeping the White Ensign flying

Flag Officer Ceylon consulted C. O., CRNVR on a suitable reply to the memo and his reply addressed to the Chief Secretary was based on Capt. Beauchamp's report which itself had been composed after consultation with all senior officers. The next step was a discussion between the various naval and civil authorities involved. This meeting, which was a crucial one, in that it planned the future of the navy to a considerable degree, was held on 21 st January '46 and the minutes indicate that the following were present:

Sri Robert Drayton	-	Chief Secretary
Mr. J. H. B. Nihill	-	Legal Secretary
Sir Charles Collins	-	Financial Secretary
Mr. D. S. Senanayake	-	Leader of the Board of

RAdm. J. M. Mansfield, CBE	- Flag Officer Ceylon
Capt. W. G. Beauchamp	- C.O.CRNVR
Lt. Cdr. G. R. M. de Mel	- C. O. Designate, CRNVR (Representing)
Mr. J. A. Mulhall	- Secretary to H E the Gover nor (Representing)
Mr. C. E. Jones	- Controller of Establishments C-in -C
Mr. N. J. L. Jansz	- Asst. to the Chief Secretary East India

Capt. Beauchamp, who had devoted most thought to the problem resolved it into three stages:

- (1) The (then) present stage of mobilisation and gradual demobilisation;
- (2) The intermediate stage, when the Ceylon Government had taken back the force but before its future was finally settled; and
- (3) The final stage, when the future of the force was finally settled.

For implementing the all-important second stage he estimated that a force of 100 officers and men would be necessary.

The meeting accepted Flag Officer Ceylon's report to the Chief Secretary suitable to be forwarded to the Colonial office. Its main points were as follows:

- (1) To get full support for this scheme from the Ceylon Government. Defence should be made a responsibility of the Government of Ceylon. This would be possible if Dominion status were granted.

- (2) The naval force of the future should consist of a standing force of 300 and reserves totalling 700: the reserves to be divided into those who required regular training and those who did not (fishermen, merchant seamen, etc.)
- (3) The force should operate fleet minesweepers.
- (4) Duties should consist of Minesweeping and Anti-Submarine work, fisheries protection and inspection, lighthouse relief and servicing etc.
- (5) The Admiralty's contribution should be:
  - (i) Presentation of necessary vessels
  - (ii) Annual issue of expendable training stores and ammunition.
  - (iii) Issue of fuel for sea training.
  - (iv) Pay of seconded R N personnel.

Consequent to this meeting the Chief Secretary in a communication dated 7th February instructed C.O., CRNVR to begin recruiting the “nucleus”. Many problems were encountered now. The major one concerned the relationship between the CRNVR and the CNVF. Although some officers and men had enlisted directly in the CRNVR it was argued that every member of the CRNVR was, *ipso facto*, a member of the CNVF. However, once the Admiralty handed the force back to the Ceylon Government, it would operate under the Volunteer Naval Force Ordinance of 1937 under which there was no regulation by which some members of the force could be placed on compulsory unpaid leave while others were mobilised on full pay. Demobilisation was being carried on then under the Emergency Powers Act, 1939-45, which were due to expire on 24th February 1945- a date far in advance of when the “nucleus” was due to be recruited. To get over this difficulty, the Board of Ministers and the State Council had to approve an amendment to

the Volunteer Naval Force Ordinance of 1937 and, with it being gazetted on 8th March, the way was open to begin recruitment.

(The uncertainty with regard to the procedure for demobilisation is reflected in CO., CRNVR's letter X. 527IK, dated 17th November 1945, to Lt. Cdr. (S) Gratiaen, in reply to his request for permission to resign his commission with effect from 1.12.45. He says, *inter alia*, that "the procedure in connection with discharge has not yet been determined but it appears that all those will be automatically discharged who have not volunteered and been accepted for a post-war Naval Force")

Although a cadre of 100 officers and men had been authorised, no break-down according to rank/rate/branch had been completed by the due date. It was assumed that, of the 100, 89 would be sailors and 6 would be officers. This would be sufficient basis for the moment. March/April 1946 was a busy time for the CNVF/CRNVR. Capt. Beauchamp was due to handover the reins. All books were to be closed on 31st March and new ones opened next day. HMS Gamunu was to be de-commissioned and re-commissioned on the same day. Lists of stores, buildings, etc. had to be drawn up for handing over. Demobilisation was continuing. In this situation, recruiting was made the duty of Lt. Kadirgamar, who was also due to leave for London with the Victory Parade contingent later in April. It was decided that, all those who had served during the war should be consulted and 73 would be selected. Some time after the selections had been made and confirmed it was discovered that many hundred sailors had not been consulted. It was too late to rectify the error, but it led to much dissatisfaction and the "nucleus" thus got-off to a shaky start. Among the persons initially selected were a number who opted to come in at a lower rank/rate. Flag Officer, Ceylon, instructed that they should come back in the rate of A/B and be re-advanced daily. Three officers (D.C. Ingleton, D.I. de Livera and E. White) opted to re-enlist as sailors and one (K.M. Martinus) to change branch from Executive to Supply. Lt. (S) Cumaraswamy, recalled in a personal conversa-

tion, the circumstances that led to this change of branch:

“The Senior Supply Officer, Lt. Cdr. (S) Gratiaen had, as referred to above, resigned his commission and the next Lt (S) S. Cumaraswamy, had applied for his discharge shortly after. It was to fill this vacuum that a serving executive officer was appointed to the Supply and Secretariat Branch.”

*(NOTE: Cumaraswamy was the Chairman of Whittals’ at the time of this conversation.)*

Save for this appointment, all others were Executive Officers. No Engineer was borne due to the lack of a ship and numbers did not call for a Medical Officer either.

The name of the force was the next question. Since it would operate under Ordinance No. 1 of 1937, it was felt that the old name of CNVF should be the correct one. However, after much thought, the name CRNVR was retained for the following reasons:

“(1) All officers and men of the force have been entered on the express terms of accepting general service in the RN in emergency and the force would therefore appear to be entitled to the designation ‘CRNVR’ under section 5 of Ordinance No. 44 of 1938, and

(2) New legislation will be required before the proposed permanent naval force with a reserve of volunteers is established and it is considered desirable that no change should now be made in the title of the force during such interim period. “

(Officer administering the Government to the Secretary of State for the Colonies on 23rd July 1946)

The CRNVR therefore continued under that name till the end of 1950.

Although the force became the responsibility of the Ceylon Government, on 1st April 1946 this development had not been envisaged when the Budget for 1945-46 was drawn-up, and consequently it had not been catered for financially. The Admiralty therefore undertook to advance monies to run the force till a sup-

plementary estimate was passed, when the monies would be reimbursed. Finally, a sum of Rs. 143,363 was passed for the six-month period left of the financial year. It was made-up as follows:

Personnel emoluments	Rs. 131,364
Travelling	Rs. 1,000
Stationery, Furniture, Office Equipment	Rs. 600
Maintenance of Barracks	Rs. 10,000
Incidental Expenses	<u>Rs. 500</u>
	<b><u>Rs. 143,363</u></b>

With the major problems disposed of, the force began to function. The decision to divide the approved strength into 9 officers and 91 sailors was arrived at sometime in the course of the year; it always remained a possible rather than an actual figure. The first nine officers, however, were:-

Lt. Cdr. (soon Cdr.) G.R. M. de Mel  
Lt. Cdr. C. H. Ohlmus  
Lt. R. Kadirgammar  
Lt. R. Proctor  
Lt. W. Molegode  
Lt. I. P. Murray  
Lt. (S) K. M. Martinus  
Sub. Lt. A. Caldera  
Sub. Lt. A. Ratwatte.

The Branch-wise distribution of the cadre of 91 sailors was as follows:

(Actual numbers as at 1.10.46 are indicated within the brackets).

Branch	P/O	US	AB	O/D	Total
Seaman & Regulating	4 (4)	6(4)	33(30)	-(9)	43(47)
Engine Room	2 (2)	2 (-)	6(6)	- (-)	10(8)
Signals	-(-)	2 (1)	2(2)	- (-)	4(3)
Telegraphy	-(-)	1 (1)	1 (1)	- (-)	2(2)
A/S & Radar	- (-)	1 (1)	5(-)	- (-)	6(1)
Sick Berth	1 (-)	1 (1)	2(-)	-(3)	4(4)
Supply - Writer	-(-)	2(2)	3(3)	-(-)	5(5)
Supply - S/A's	-(-)	1 (1)	4(4)	- (-)	5(5)
Cooks	-(-)	1 (1)	9(9)	-(-)	10(10)
Stewards	-(-)	2(2)	- (-)	- (-)	20(2)
	7 (6)	19 (14)	65 (55)	-(12)	91 (87)

An appropriate note to this chapter was struck in January 1946, with the formation of the CRNVR Ex-Servicemen's Association, affiliated to the Ceylon Ex-Servicemens' Association for the "resettlement and general welfare of all de-mobilised CRNVR personnel"

### **Nucleus of the Permanent Navy**

(From a list Compiled in 1965)

#### **OFFICERS:**

Lt. Cdr.	G. R. M. de Mel
Lt. Cdr.	C. H. Ohlmus
Lt.	R. Kadirgamar
Lt.(s)	K. M. Martinus
Lt.	W. Molegoda
Lt.	I. P. Murray
Lt.	R. Proctor
S/Lt.	A. J. Ratwatte
S/Lt.	A. Caldera

## **SAILORS:**

A/B	Asirwatham, A.
L/S	Andree, R. F. M.
A/B	Baptist, E. C.
A/B	Bramdeen, A. A
A/B	Christofelsz, E.R.
P.O.	Livera, D. I. de
A/B	Deckker, Q. C. J.
A/B	Doray, A. K.
A/B	De Mel, B. A. N.
A/B	De Silva, L. P.
A/B	Deckker, B. G. S.
A/B	Donald, H. P.
L/S	Fuard, M. M.
A/B	Fernando, P. B. H.
A/B	Fernando, S. M.
P.O.	Fernando, A. J.
A/B	Francis, S. P.
A/B	Fernando, V. A. C.
A/B	Fernando, J. A.
A/B	Fernando, P. B.
A/B	Fernando, K. K.
A/B	Gunawardena, B. R.
P.O.	Ingleton, D. C.
A/B	Illangakoon, S.
A/B	Karunaratne, D. A.
A/B	Madawella, C. G.
A/B	Mannon, T. K. B.
A/B	Peiris L. G. C.
A/B	Peterson, D.
A/B	Parsons, E. C.
A/B	Poopalasingham,
A/B	Robertson, W. H.
A/B	Rodrigo, A. W.
A/B	Ranasooriya, A. C.

A/B	Rahim, T. K.
A/B	Reuben, K.
A/B	Rajakaruna, M. D.
A/B	Ratnasamy, S. J.
P.O.	Stonehewer, J. R.
L/S	Serpanchy, F. A.
A/B	Sandanayake, A. C.
A/B	Silva, C. C. D.
L/S	Wise, A. A.
A/B	Wouters, J. M.
A/B	Wijesekera., D. K.
A/B	Wijesekera, N.
A/B	Wijesooriya, A. B.
A/B	Poorajah, B. G.
O/D	Baldsing, S.

#### **STOKERS:**

P.O.	Poulier, A. H.
P.O.	Jansen, S. W. W.
S/M	Fernando, H. V.
S/M	Perera, T. A. B.
S/M.	Piyasena, H. D.
S/M	Ratnayake, R. M. P. A.
S/M	Solomon, W.D.
S/M	Weerakoon, Y. M.

#### **COMMS:**

L/Sig	Wickremasinghe, E. P.
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Sig	Bennett, R. S.
Sig	Galapathy, H. A.
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S/A	Ebert, V. B.
S/A	Gomesz, W. L.
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Wtr	Martil, J. M.
L/SA.	Navaratnam, E. D.
L/Wtr	Pieris, F. A. M.
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## **COOKS AND STEWARDS**

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Ck	Joachim, G.
Stwd	Jinoris, H. D.
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Ck	Perera, H.. S
Ck	Subasinghe, M. M.
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S. B. P. O.	Fernando, J. A. L.
S. B. A.	Ariyasena, K. A.
S. B. A.	Perera, A. G.
S. B. A.	Subasinghe, W. E.

## Chapter 8

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### THE NUCLEUS: DUTIES AND ACTIVITIES (1946-50)

#### Finances and Cadre

As has been noted in the preceding chapter, although an approved cadre of 9 officers and 91 men was laid down in 1946, this remained a notional figure. The actual complements of both officers and sailors remained short of approved cadre and there was a fairly regular inflow and outflow of personnel. Financially, too, expenditure was not as great as estimated. For example, the estimated expenditure for the financial year 1947-48 was Rs. 753,448 but the actual expenditure proved to be Rs. 365,687. The actual expenditure per year, however, continued to rise annually.

Since it had been suggested that ships be made available by the Admiralty for training, the Admiralty requested detailed information of the proposed commitment. The details drawn-up by the CRNVR indicated that the cost should be divided between the Ceylon and British Govts. as follows:

Date	Personnel		Year	Expenditure	
	Officers	Sailors		Estimated (Rs.)	Actual (Rs)
01.4.46	9	82	1945-46	43,254	
31.3.47	9	87	1946-47	286,514	300,654
01.4.47	9	87	1947-48	753,448	365,687
31.3.48	8	89	1948-49	524,420	....
01.3.48	8	89	1949-50	.....	...
31.3.49	..	...	.....	.....	

Ceylon -	Personnel Emoluments	Rs. 920,500
	Maintenance Costs	Rs. 100,000
	Repairs and Refits	<u>Rs. 160,000</u>
		<b><u>Rs. 1,180,000</u></b>
Britain -	Cost of vessels	Rs. 4,000.000
	Salaries of seconded personnel	Unknown
	Maintenance of vessels	Rs. 20,000
	Steaming Costs	<u>Rs. 160,000</u>
		<b><u>Rs. 4,180,000</u></b>
+ Salaries of seconded personnel.		

This scheme, however, does not seem to have materialised as planned although one ship was subsequently made available for training.

## Duties

During this period the CRNVR began to undertake the numerous peacetime duties that characterised the Navy in Ceylon in post-colonial times. In fact, the start of many commitments which were now traditional can be traced to this period. It was in May 47 that the Chief Secretary, the I.G.P. and the Brigadier commanding the Ceylon Garrison met in conference over an impending crisis (General strike) and sought ways and means of strengthening the arm of the Police with the use of the armed forces. It was decided that the CDF and CRNVF officers should be empowered to act under the Criminal Procedure Code. This was the start of the use of the peacetime navy as an aid to civil power. A few months earlier, C O CRNVR had had the occasion to address all Divisional Officers on the need to impress upon all sailors the need to maintain strict neutrality in political matters. Ceylon was moving towards general elections to be held under the Soulbury Constitution and politics was the preoccupation of everyone in the country.

Miscellaneous duties continued to fall on the CRNVR. On 10th May'46 the force undertook providing security to the Ceylon Government Stores Disposal Depot at Ratmalana. This duty continued till 16th February'47. In October'46 manning the Port of Colombo Signal Station was undertaken and, in 48-49, the provision of ceremonial guards at Queen's House. During the General strike of 1947, the Force went to the aid of the Colombo Port Commission by manning tugs and lighters and unloading cargo. Other duties undertaken during this strike, and which have since become regular commitments, were manning the power stations (Stanley Power Station and Pettah Power Station) and the Municipal Pumping Station. In August of the year there were unprecedented floods all over Ceylon and the CRNVR deployed and manned three boats at Urugodawatte junction, Nagalagam Street and Victoria Bridge, rescuing a total of 205 persons. On a later occasion a boat was manned at Anuradhapura.

One very Special duty undertaken during this time was the sailing of the Fisheries Department Purse-sein trawler m.v. Halpha from Sydney to Colombo. The ship's company comprising Lt. Cdr. Ohlmus (in command), Lt. Proctor, Lt. Caldera, P/O A. J. Fernando, P/O (SM) A. H. Poulier, L/S A A. Wise, L/Tel H.P. Paulusz, A/B V. A. C. Fernando, S/M R. M. P. A. Ratnayake and Ck.Jinoris left for Sydney by Air Ceylon Dakota on 31st May 48, the flight nearly ending in disaster due to faulty navigation and consequent lack of fuel. Taking over the 75ft., 55-ton wooden vessel the CRNVR crew sailed her over 8000 miles in a little over two months to complete the longest passage undertaken by a CRNVR crew. Details of the passage are given in a Supplementary Chapter. The Halpha reached Colombo in October '48 and less than four months later on - 4th April 1949 - Lt. Cdr. Ohlmus died of an illness aggravated by the rigours of the passage.

## Ceremonial Duties

After the war although the CRNVR came under the control of Ceylon Government, the RN yet maintained a presence in Ceylon, in Colombo, under the Resident Naval Officer, Colombo. The Ministry of Defence now required the C.O. CRNVR to inquire what duties the R N O had and whether these could be taken over by the C.O. CRNVR. Inquiries revealed that his duties, in the main, were:

- (a) Resident R N Authority and Base Stores Officer Colombo
- (b) Naval Representative on Official Occasions.
- (c) Liaison with Foreign Naval Units visiting Colombo.

It was decided that, in keeping with Ceylon's new status as an independent nation, the last-named duty should be handled in future by C. O. CRNVR, who asked for, and got, a suitable launch for carrying out this duty.

One of the first ceremonial duties undertaken by the "Nucleus" was the sending of a contingent to the Victory Parade in London in '46. The detachment, consisting of 18 sailors and one officer, formed part of the Ceylon contingent under the command of Lt. Col. A. Mutucumaru, C.L.I. Leaving Ceylon in April, the contingent participated in the Parade which was held on 8th June and returned on 27th July. Details of the contingent are given in a Supplementary Chapter.

Guards of honour and other ceremonial turn-outs were a fairly regular phenomenon. Senior R. N officers inspected the Force fairly regularly and rendered very good reports. On 11th February '49, Headquarters was inspected by Mr. D. S. Senanayake, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, who presented Long Service and Good Conduct Medals to 17 persons. The force participated in a street-lining for the first ceremonial opening of Parliament by the Governor General, Sir Henry Monk-Mason Moore, on 25th No-

vember 1947 and paraded a guard for HRH the Duke of Gloucester when he came to participate in Ceylon's Independence Celebrations, on 10th February 1948. Liaison was carried on with visiting Naval ships, the most notable visit being that of the Royal Indian Navy Squadron comprising H M I Ships Delhi (Capt. Brown) flying the flag of Rear Adm. J. T. S. Hall, C. I. E., Cauvery, Kistna and Sutlej, in December 1948. Ships from many other countries called at Colombo including those from such far-away countries as Argentina, Sweden, Brazil and the U. S. A. The CRNVR received and looked after all of them on behalf of the Government of Ceylon.

## **Training**

In the absence of a ship of its own it became necessary that training should be conducted on board R N vessels wherever possible. However, as the force consisted of experienced sailors, the training required was more in the nature of "refresher course". From time to time officers and men embarked on board R N ships and worked side by side with their counterparts. HM Ships Theseus, Loch Quoich, Jamaica, Wren, Norfolk, Wildgoose, Birmingham and Ceylon were some of the vessels on which parties of CRNVR personnel embarked for training. Occasionally these training cruises were fairly long, such as when Lts. Murray and Kadirgamar sailed to the Gulf and back, serving on H M Ships Norfolk, Loch Quoich and Birmingham. More often it was only a passage to/from Trincomalee. In 1947 a party of one, officer and ten men who took passage from Colombo to Trincomalee on the Wren were required to trek back to Colombo, living off the land. They completed the journey in ten days.

## **Infusion of New Blood**

When, towards the end of the period, and after independence, the formation of a permanent Navy awaited only the formality of legislation, steps were taken to introduce into the "Nucleus" young persons with no previous or wartime naval experience.

This was the first step towards the new Navy of the future. With this in view, Officer Cadets and Direct Entry Sub lieutenants were advertised for, interviewed and chosen. The first intake of Sub Lts Comprised P. D. Nathanielsz, M. Chanmugam, M. C. Gauder, W. M. A. Wahid, M. Wanduragala, W. Dharmadasa and J. A. Ratnayake. They joined the service on 1st March 1950 and were sent to Royal Naval College Greenwich, U. K. for training in R N training ships and establishments. The first intake of Officer Cadets comprised A. H. A. de Silva, D. A. G. Fernando, R. Aliraja, K. N. Jilla, J. C. Kelaart and J. A. P. L. Perera, who joined the service on 1st September 1950 and were sent for full cadet-entry training to Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth.

## **Ships and Vessels**

The Overdale Wyke, that only CRNVR ship that had belonged to the Ceylon Government, had been decommissioned as far back as December '44. She was found unsuitable to serve the Navy, in any useful capacity and, in March '46, was handed-over to the Port Commission for care and maintenance pending a final decision on her disposal. Hoxa, Balta and Semla, on care and maintenance with CRNVR crews, were handed-over to the R N in early '46. This left the CRNVR literally "high and dry".

The Government however considered the force fit to carry out various maritime commitments. The CO, in keeping with his ceremonial role, was provided with a diesel powered launch which also served as a liberty boat. It was also used for training in boat-handling. Soon after Independence, smuggling between India and Ceylon became a serious problem which necessitated coastal patrols in the northern area. C O CRNVR was consulted on what type of coastal craft would be suitable indicated craft with the following specifications:

*"We must have a Navy"*

Draught	-	3 1/2 - 4 ft.
Speed	-	24 knots (minimum)
Range	-	about 500 miles
Crew	-	12-15
Armament	-	Twin Oerlikon and 2 sets of twin machine guns

However, no boats were purchased for this purpose before the end of 1950.

Continued efforts were made to get two Fleet minesweepers from the RN. However, the first ship that was seriously considered was HMS Landguard, a "Lulworth" class cutter, (ex-U.S. S. Shoshone) of about 2000 tons displacement. She was offered to the Ceylon Government by the U.S. Government as a gift and surveyed in November '47 by C.O. CRNVR who thought her eminently suitable to be used as a Barracks, Depot and Training ship for about 200. Later it was found necessary to make a token payment as U.S. laws did not permit the gifting of a ship in this condition. An estimate of 10,000 U.S. Dollars weft made and accepted. Money was passed and the cheque written out, but the U.S. withdrew its offer at the last moment and the CRNVR was the loser by both ship and abarracks The U. S. Government had received and accepted a higher offer.

## **VIJAYA Joins the Fleet**

Finally, the long-awaited Fleet minesweeper was ready. HMS Flying Fish, an "Algerine" class Minesweeper, built inCanada, and at that time in "moth-balls" in Singapore, was the vessel chosen to be given on permanent loan to Ceylon. She was manned by an Australian crew under the command of Cdr. Ball, RN. Lt. Cdr. G. Stephenson, RAN was the Navigating Officer. An advance party under the C O designate, Lt. Kadirgammaw flew there to join her and having understudied the officers and crew during "working-up" period, took passage on board to Colombo. In Colombo,

she was de-commissioned and re-commissioned as HMCyS Vijaya. (At this time the present National flag had not yet been designed and the Lion Flag of the Kings of Kandy was used in its stead). Vice Adm. C H. L. Wodehouse, KCB, represented the British Government on this occasion and the vessel was received, on behalf of the Government of Ceylon by the Prime Minister Mr. D. S. Senanayake. Mr. Edwards, the Civil Lord of the Admiralty, in Ceylon on other business was also present. (Earlier in life he had been a Stoker in the Royal Navy). A Supplementary Chapter gives the provisional programme drawn up for taking over the ship.

HMCyS Vijaya was now available to be used to the maximum as a training ship and for operational duties such as anti-illicit migration and smuggling. Since the VIJAYA was essentially meant to be the basis of the fleet after a new regular Navy was formed, many details of this ship will not be dealt in this volume but in the next. However, some of the operations she undertook are given below.

On 3rd February 1950 HMCyS Vijaya sailed from Colombo in company with HMS Kenya (a colony Class cruiser) which was the flag ship of the East Indies fleet. Vijaya acted as escort for the Relics which were being sent to Burma on board HMS Kenya. This passage gave the ship's company valuable experience in operating with another ship and also in an ocean passage. On return from Burma, Vijaya made an informal call at Trincomalee on 17th March. The Commanding Officer, Lt. Cdr. R. Kadirgammur, paid official calls on the Commander in Chief of the East Indies Section, the Captain in charge (Ceylon), the Captain Superintendent Dockyard, Commanding Officer of HMS Mauritius (the flag ship which had replaced Kenya), the Staff Officer Operations, the Fleet Communication Officer and the Asst. Government Agent, Trincomalee. Some of these calls had been returned. Vijaya later sailed for Kachchativu, as was the practice at that time, for a practice bombardment which was carried out on 9th April 1950. The practice bombardment was the firing of the 4" Gun at the Island as

the ship either lay stationary a few miles off the island or as she steamed-up and down at different speeds.

The Navy vindicated its existence and proved its effectiveness at sea in anti-smuggling operations on 190f0atober 1950, by the capture of motor launch "Arthur" with valuable contraband. This particular operation nicknamed "Operation Coconut" was under the command of Lt. Cdr. R. Kadirgammur. As a first step he ordered the ship to be painted sea green as a camouflage. She was sailed to the Northern area without specific sailing orders as such and was sailing for Trincomalee. On arriving in the Northern area, she sailed well out to sea patrol routes and lay at anchor and used radar at night. On the night of 18th October radar detected a fast moving craft moving at high speed dead on towards the ship. The ship was, of course, completely darkened and the unsuspecting craft was taken by surprise when suddenly a powerful search light flashed and an order was given to stop. "Arthur" dociley complied and a well laid and properly executed plan was a complete success.

## **Prelude to the Navy Act.**

In December '47, the Prime Minister wished to collect details of all amendments to Legislative Enactments that would be necessary upon Independence. C. O. CRNVR replied that the only amendments necessary would be the changing of the word "Governor" to read "Governor-General". But he submitted a memorandum indicating the lines on which a new ordinance regarding the establishment of a permanent navy should be enacted. This was in January '48. In May the same year, he forwarded a draft bill on the same subject where the submissions earlier made by him were embodied. One year later, a draft bill based on this was forwarded to him by the permanent Secretary, Ministry of Defence, for his information. It is interesting. that these drafts made provision for a Naval Board to Administer the Navy and for the establishment in - addition to the "permanent naval force" - of "citizen naval forces"

comprising a Naval Reserve Force and a Naval Volunteer Reserve Force. Eventually, however, these drafts did not form the basis of the new Act. Instead, the British Naval Discipline Act served the Legal Draughtsman as a model for the new Act, and this was accepted *in toto*, including sections which had no relevance to Ceylon's Navy. Mistakes and all, the Navy Act, Chapter 254 of the Legislative Enactments of Ceylon was passed by the two Houses of Parliament. Presenting it in the Senate on 3rd December 1950, Sir Ukwatte Jayasundera, Leader of the Senate spoke the memorable line: "Now that we have an Army, we must also have a Navy". (The Army Act had been passed by Parliament earlier). Whether or not this was the guiding principle behind this piece of legislation the Bill, passed by both houses of Parliament received the Governor-General's sanction and became law on 9th December 1950, thus ending the amorphous life of the "nucleus" and creating the first permanent navy in Ceylon in modern times. Section 5(4) of this Act placed all serving members of the CRNVR in the books of the Royal Ceylon Navy and the Act also repealed the Naval Volunteer Act, No. 1 of 1937. With this, the day of the Volunteers ended and that of the Regulars began.

## Chapter 9

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### FINAL ANALYSIS

The preceding chapters cover a period of not more than thirteen years, if we count it from the passage, of the Naval Volunteer Force Ordinance in 1937. In terms of history, it is not a long period. These chapters are, as indicated in the introduction, a blend of objective fact - being my own cullings from records - and the subjective recollections of ORNVR personnel, many of whom are no longer with us. In this final chapter, therefore, an attempt is made to shift my own position from objective to subjective: in other words, to end up with my own assessment of the CRNVR between the years 1937 and 1950.

When, in 1960, I was commissioned in the Royal Ceylon Navy, there were among us, a great many people who could have told us of the CRNVR because they were, in fact, ex CRNVR persons themselves. But, somehow, all we heard were anecdotes of a purely personal nature. Further between 1950 and 1960 there had come into being a new breed of officers and sailors who, though led by CRNVR men, did not identify themselves with the CRNVR. Somehow or other the CRNVR came to be considered a different Navy - the "Okapi Navy"- even though Okapi Navy officers continued to lead the service into the 1970's. The last of them, Adm. Hunter, proudly hung a picture of the "Okapi" in the Captain of the Navy's office, but unfortunately, there was what could rightly be called a "generation gap" between those who identified themselves with the pre- and post-1950 Navies. "Unfortunate" because, this prevented more than one generation of the post-1950 Navy from knowing the true worth, and getting a true picture of the CRNVR during the war years and after. The ultimate irony was that this, the first formal study of the CRNVR based on a mixture of fact and reminiscence, was left to be undertaken by the first non-Oka-

pi Navy Commander, Adm. Goonesekera. It is in this background landscape of “Pride and Prejudice” that this study came to be undertaken.

Perhaps due to a personal bias towards a factual base in research or, maybe, even due to my unconsciously identifying myself with the post -1950 era, I first went in search of facts as embodied in the written word. The discovery-of the original CRNVR files was exhilarating. Leafing through those crumbling papers, I found myself engulfed by amass of detail of day-to-day happenings. The CRNVR ceased, immediately, to be a collection of somebody else’s stories: it became a real life Navy with all the’ problems, gripes, frustration, achievements, complaints, criticisms, appeals, etc, familiar to me in my own Navy. Strangely enough, the more I delved into the dry facts and the dusty files, the more human the CRNVR became to me. The “tall tales” fell into place; the total picture gradually revealed itself and left me with a sense of humility, an ungrudging admiration for the men of the CRNVR, a pride in the realisation that we were their lineal descendents and a sense of deep frustration that we had been deprived of all systematic knowledge of this period of the Navy’s History.

Was the CRNVR, then, a part of the Navy that exists today or was it an entirely separate thing? Most certainly, it was part and parcel of today’s Navy if for no other reason than the fact the Navy Act of 1950 created the Royal Ceylon Navy out of the CRNVR cadre, even though demobilisation had taken place some years previously. According to Section 5(4) “Every member of the Ceylon Naval Volunteer Force raised under the Naval Volunteer Ordinance, No, 1 of 1937, repealed by Act No.34 of 1950, who is not in actual service (within the meaning of that Ordinance) on the day immediately preceding the date on which this Act comes into operation shall be deemed to be a member of the Volunteer Naval Force raised under this Act”. So the core of both these forces was the CRNVR. This fact, alone makes the CNVF/CRNVR the starting point and the thread that bound it, the Royal Ceylon Navy and

the Sri Lanka Navy together. I may be only accentuating this fact when I say that when, in 1973, Adm D. V. Hunter retired as Captain of the Navy, he had served in the CNVF, CRNVR, RCyN and SLN, having been enlisted as a Signalman/ Gunner with the first intake in 1938.

Many more are the ties that bound the CRNVR especially to the RCyN. There was the common link in the "Vijaya"; one is apt to consider that she was the, first RCyN ship yet, in fact, she was the last of the CRNVR ships. She was commissioned "Her Majesty's Ceylon Ship Vijaya" even though the Royal Ceylon Navy had not yet been formed. This link with Royalty was possible because she was loaned to the Ceylon Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. In terms of her period under commission she was however, essentially an RCyN ship. Yet in the late 1960s, when Commodore R. Kadirgammara was promoted Admiral, he flew his Rear Admiral's pennant simultaneously at Naval Headquarters and on the Vijaya, his first command, then de-commissioned and non-operational, but yet afloat, moored at the N. A. D. Pier, Trincomalee for the use of recruits under training.

Even the new blood which was infused in to the cadre in 1950, was so infused several months before passage of the Navy Act. Thus it could even be perilously maintained that the long arm of the CRNVR extended up to 1986 when Adm. A H. A. de Silva retired, since he joined as an officer cadet in September 1950.

Many more links exist. The training of naval personnel in India began in CRNVR times and, in-1950, training of officers and sailors in the UK, particularly at BRNC, Dartmouth.

The identification of the tasks of the peacetime Navy, explained in earlier chapters, was done by Cdr. de Mel, then commanding the CRNVR and these continued to hold basically true till at least the early 1970's. The use of the Navy as an aid to civil power saw its emergence during CRNVR times and this task continues to date.

The strands of the cords that bind the CRNVR to the RCyN and SLN are, therefore, far too many to be unraveled. The year 1950, in particular, is significant as it saw the changes taking place even before the Navy Act was passed. Although some have been dealt with here, the detailed examination of this year belongs to the next stage and will form the start of Vol. 11 of this History: “The Royal Ceylon Navy”

I began this volume with “Genesis” and, logically, the last should be “Judgment Day” but, even at this remove it is yet too early to sit in judgment over the CRNVR. Thus I opted to call this chapter an analysis. I believe I have explained in brief my own feelings towards the CRNVR which arose from the work of compiling this volume. The CRNVR was a force relatively small in numbers, yet it did perform a significant role very competently. One of its noteworthy features was that it was conceived as an essentially sea-going force and that it carried out this duty to the satisfaction of all concerned. Years later we, who were then in the Navy, had to undergo the humility of being assigned a largely shore based role for awhile and the memory of those dog days yet rankles. In those days a proper appreciation of the CRNVR could have provided us cause for pride in our service. Manning a flotilla of small ships, converted to fighting ships from their original roles of trawler, whaler and tug, the CRNVR performed a thankless and uncomfortable task creditably. The ships were often at sea for long periods of time. They were the naval craft of Sri Lanka that were first exposed to attack either in the course of a general raid or a specific strafing run. They it was that first crossed the seas and served beyond our territorial waters in other areas of the Indian Ocean, Burma, Addu Atoll and Diego Garcia. They had to face the threat of torpedoes while affording protection to more valuable ships and carry out anti-submarine attacks. It was more than forty years later that the Navy had again to face offensive action by the enemy. Only at the end of the war was the regretful feeling voiced that the powers that be had not realised the full potential of the CRNVR and had not found a way of using this force in other theatres of

war. The Army Units had been so used and had earned their laurels.

The Royal Navy, it would appear, had "missed the boat" It is, however, doubtful that the CRNVR could have been deployed in other theatres of war. In the case of the Army Units, their presence could have been done without in the island as there was no war threat across a land border; in any case, they were deployed not in South East Asia but in the Middle East and Africa. At sea, however, the enemy was ever present and all sea-going units had a role to play. After the fall of Singapore the Indian Ocean became extremely vulnerable to long distance carrier-based air attacks at which the Japanese had shown their ability. The raids on Colombo and Trincomalee merely proved this. The "small ships" of the CRNVR had an increasingly important role to play in releasing the more effective fighting ships for offensive action elsewhere. The CRNVR could not, therefore, have been spared for duties in other seas. Ashore, the men at the PWSS, the Coders at Navy Office and the Cook/Stewards at SACSEA Headquarters, and other personnel carrying out miscellaneous duties had performed their unsung duties, less flamboyantly, perhaps, but equally competently. In recognition of the CRNVR's role in the war, several Samurai-type swords surrendered by Japanese officers were presented to the CRNVR and were displayed at the Kochchikade wardroom till the 1960's, after which they, have been lost sight of. In the final analysis, therefore, the CRNVR is a proud forerunner of our Navy and one that could be looked up to as a role model even today. I do not think I can pay more handsome a tribute.

## ***Supplementary Chapters***

# **Personal Recollections and Marginal Notes**

## 1. INSERTION OF OFFICERS' NAMES IN THE NAVY LIST

Excerpts from official correspondence.

“ No.294  
Ceylon, 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 1939

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that the Officer Commanding the Ceylon Royal Naval Reserve wishes a list of the officers serving in his unit be instead in the Navy List. I enclose a list of officers now serving in the Ceylon Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve and shall be grateful if you will request the Admiralty to publish the list in due course.

I have the honour to be, Sir  
Your most obedient, humble servant,

(Sgd.) *A. Caldecott*  
G O V E R N O R

The Right Honourable  
Malcolm MacDonald

### List referred to

#### Commanding Officer

Commander Willoughby Greaves Beauchamp, February 1, 1938

#### Officer Instructor

Lieutenant Commander Francis Denis Bingham, Royal Navy (Retired), February 4, 1939

Lieutenant Commander

Philip John Bowen Oakley, Foreign-going Master's Certificate, January 1, 1938

Lieutenants

1. Frederick Barnsley Rigby Smith, Foreign-going Master's Certificate, January 1, 1938.
2. (Probationary) Hugh Nesbitt Thompson, November 1, 1938.
3. Lieutenant(E) (Probationary) Norman Douglas Vandendriesen Ferdinands, B.O.T. Certificate, November 1, 1938.

Paymaster Lieutenant (Probationary)

Edward Frederick Noel Gratiaen, January 1, 1938

Sub Lieutenants (Probationary)

Arthur Henry Holman Boyns, March 4, 1938  
Meredith Monnington, March 4, 1938  
Hildon Claude Sansoni, March 11, 1938  
Arthur VanLangenberg, April 22, 1938  
Douglas Gordon Simpson, March 4, 1938  
James Alexander Donald, March 11, 1938  
Adalbert Vana Frugtniet, March 4, 1938

Paymaster Sub-Lieutenant (Probationary)

Deepal Susantha de Fonseka, March 4, 1938"

*"We must have a Navy"*

"L.P.-No.8 4

Any further communication  
Should be addressed to----

***Admiralty, S.W.1***

The Secretary of the Admiralty  
London, S.W.1  
quoting "C.W. 9776/39

10th. August 1939

Sir,

With reference to your letter of the 22nd. May, 1939, No. 55523/39 I am commanded by My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to inform you that they have approved of the insertion in the Navy List of the names serving in the Ceylon Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

*(Signature indiscipherable)*

Under Secretary of State  
Colonial Office  
London, S.W.1"

## **2. SPECIAL INCIDENT DURING THE WAR**

REMOVAL COMMISSION OF PAYMASTER LIEUTENANT DEEP SUSANTHA DE FONSEKA, M. S. C. BY ADMIRAL SIR GEOFFREY LEYTON, COMMANDER - IN-CHIEF, CEYLON

**By Rear Adm. G. R. M. de Mel**

DEEPAL SUSANTHA DE FONSEKA was among the first batch of Sub-Lieutenants enlisted in the CNVF and, at the time of enlistment, he was a Member of the State Council. He was mobilized September 1939 and attached to Naval Headquarters, Kochchikade, regularly for duties. He was allowed time to attend to his parliamentary duties both in the State Council and his Constituency which was Panadura. At the time of this incident he was the Deputy Speaker of the State Council. Since he was mobilised he was always in uniform and was so dressed even when he attended meetings of the Council.

At that time the British-Government was purchasing all the rubber Ceylon produced at a fixed, price well below the prices that could have been obtained elsewhere, from America, for example, or Russia, and the British Government resold the rubber at an enormous profit. This position was very unfavourable to Ceylon in all respects but there was nothing that Ceylon could have done about it but draw the attention of the British Government to the injustice done to the producer in Ceylon.

Paymaster Lieutenant de Fonseka made a very strong speech condemning the British Government for this inequity perpetuated in Ceylon. He made this speech in uniform in the well of the House. A Secretary to the C-in-C Ceylon, Admiral Sir Geoffrey Leyton, customarily listens to speeches made in the State Council from the Visitors Gallery and on this occasion, as was his usual practice, reported the contents of this speech to the C-in-C. The C-in-C considered this a matter of gross disloyalty to the Govern-

ment from a mobilised service officer and had his Commission removed by the Governor. It was suggested at the time that had de Fonseka made his speech whilst in plain clothes the C-in-C may not have taken such a serious view of it but his doing so in uniform was not compatible with the loyalty expected of a serving officer.

Susantha de Fonseka was “disrobed”. He alleged a breach of Parliamentary privilege and a select committee inquired into C-in-C’s action and reported that it amounted to a breach of privilege, but that the State Council could do nothing about it under the circumstances prevailing at that time.

It is ironical that this same Paymaster Lieutenant was some years later knighted by the British Sovereign for his work for Ceylon as one of the earliest diplomats. He was Ambassador in Burma and helped in the China/Ceylon rice/rubber pact. He was finally Ceylon’s Ambassador in Tokyo and hosted MAHASENA on her visit to Japan.

### **3. ALPHABETICAL LIST OF OFFICERS WHO SERVED IN THE CNVF & CRNVR 1939 – 1946**

(\* Denotes officers commissioned before the Admiralty assumed control - 1st October, 1943)

- Balakrishnan, Alvapillai  
\*Beauchamp, Willoughby Greaves  
Bingham, F. D. (RNR)  
Blair, P. M. (RNVR)  
\*Bowden, Desmond Stuart  
\*Boyns, Arthur Henry Holman  
Caldera, Alan Maartenz  
\*Cooray, Dennis Pieries  
Craggs, G. E.  
\*Cumarasamy, Sanmugam  
\*Dassanaik, Alfred Chandrapala  
De Alwis, Keerthisena  
\*De Fonseka, Deepal Susantha  
\*Dekker, Basil Eardly Leon  
De Livera, D. I.  
\*De Mel, Gerard Royce Maxwell  
De Silva, G. L.  
De Silva, Shelton Oswald  
\*Deutrom, Evan Walter Herriot  
\*Donald, James Alexander  
\*Ferdinands, Norman Douglas Vandendriesen  
Fernando, Lionel St. Vincent  
\*Frugtniet, Adalbert Vance  
\*Gratiaen, Edward Fredrick Noel  
\*Grigson-Rankine, Edward York  
Goonetilleke, William Augustus  
Guinan, John Victor Edward  
\*Gunasekera, D. E. M.  
\*Gunawardena, Simon Reginald

- \*Haigh, Harry Lawrence
- \*Hatch, Henry Reginald
- \*Hunter, Donald Victor
- \*Ingleton, Darley Cunnigham
- \*Jilla, Nariman Nasserwanji Dadabhoy
- \*Kadiragamar, Rajanathan
- \*Kirkpatrick, James
- \*Mackay, George Munro
- \*Matthysz, Eustace
- \*Martinus, Kenneth Maitland
- \*McBain, Frank Matheson
- \*Mendis, Peter Leslie Neville
- \*Molegoda, William
- \*Monnington, Meredith
- \*Murray, Ivor Peter
- \*Ohlmus, Carl Hugh
- \*Ohlson, Basil Amyas
- \*Perera, Fredrick Robert
- \*Perera, Nev lle James Richard
- \*Potger, Barant Ludwig
- \*Proctor, Rajasingham  
Ratwatte, Anton Jayaratne
- \*Rigby-Smith, Frederick Barnsley  
Rustomjee, Neshir Cawasji Jamshedgi  
Samarasinghe, Aubrey Greame
- \*Samaratunga, Stephen Elgernon
- \*Sanmugaratnam, Eliyathamby
- \*Sansoni, Hildon Claude
- \*Silva, Joseph Francis
- \*Simpson, Douglas Gordon
- \*Sinnarajah, Vesuvalingam
- \*Smith, Alexander
- \*Thiedeman, Irwin Noble
- \*Thompson, H. N.
- \*Van Langenburg, Arthur

*"We must have a Navy"*

\*Weerasingha, A. B.

Weerasinghe, Robert Edward Michael

Weyman, M. N.

William, Ernest Amalu

\*Wijewickrema, Neville Peter Samarakone

\*Wimalasena, Heenatigala

White, Edward

## **COLOMBO PILOT SERVICE**

Appelbe, G. E.

Bamforth, R. J.

Coyley, D. E. M.

Flood, P.

Fry, E. H. E.

Irwing, A.

McLeod, A. L.

Petrie, L. W.

Robertson, A. D.

Statham, R. A.

Tucker, E. W.

Tyler, C. A. W.

Wakefield, H. E.

Warner, H. E.

#### 4. PASAGE TO BURMA

Rear Adm. D. V. Hunter

It was early in 1945. The war in Europe was over, but the Japanese continued to hold out in the East. All the efforts of the Allied command were now concentrated on finishing off the latter - no one knew it was going to be so quick when it did come - and nothing was spared in achieving this end. I was on HMS Balta, one of the several vessels specially built on the lines of those fine sea boats, the north sea fishing trawlers, for minesweeping and anti-Submarine patrols and minesweeping in the approaches to Colombo harbour.

A patrol at that time lasted 48 hours and on this occasion we had completed our stint in extremely bad weather and were looking forward to the usual signal "Clam Chowder", a coded signal which meant "Return to harbour". Nothing happened for a while and we were constrained to grin and bear it. We had taken a thorough beating during the night and near-gale force winds and high seas prevailed during our entire patrol. Although we were in the North East monsoon, the period of low-pressure areas and cyclones had not quite gone and we were caught on the outskirts of a serious storm. Then came the signal which had never been made in Colombo during the whole course of the war-"Remain on patrol, entry into harbour under present conditions considered hazardous". It was a great disappointment but had to be accepted. We all knew that the safest place to be in such conditions was well out to sea, and the ships even inside harbour were getting steam up for emergencies and broken moorings were the order of the day. What we hated most of all, of course, was that we had to go back to the 'hard tack' of biscuits and corned beef or mutton. No cooking could be done in such conditions and to this day I have no idea how the cooks were able to produce tea and cocoa, the only hot items on the menu. It must have required acrobatic ability to do so. Restrictions on water were introduced at once as there was no

knowing how long this would last.

Forty eight hours more we had to remain at sea and in the meantime no movements at all in the harbour took place. We could imagine Masters of MFV's in harbour doubling up their moorings or blowing frantically for tugs when these parted and they drifted into danger. Balta was "hove-to" heading slowly into the wind and sea, and behaving generally like a dancing girl. At midnight on the second day there was a distinct lessening of the screeching of wind through the rigging and the sea showed signs of relenting. Dawn brought further relief and I came on deck to a grey and heaving sea with the wind now only a strong breeze. A quick breakfast, when in spite of the improved conditions, I still found myself having to chase my sausages and mash round the wardroom table, conditions where your cup of tea had to be handed to you personally to prevent a crash and I was once more on watch at 8 o' clock, staring beseechingly at the signal station and waiting eagerly for orders to come in-couldn't they see us suffering? At last it came, the signal "Clam Chowder" and we saw the relief vessel leaving harbour. We dashed in and secured in record time.

It was my watch ashore but the war was not quite over for me yet. A signalman appeared at the door of my cabin and handed me a signal just received. I was to see the Chief of Staff at Naval Headquarters immediately. Now what had I done? The first boat ashore landed me at the Naval Headquarters steps and I stumbled on to the pier. I had not quite lost my sea legs after 4 days of that sea. The jetty heaved up and down before me and the buildings in front just wouldn't keep still. I must have acted drunk at 9 a.m. and I had to adopt the "rolling" walk associated with sailors to preserve my equilibrium. As I stood before the Chief of Staff I must have swayed like a tree in the wind for he asked "Are you O.K., Hunter? How was it out there?", "Murder sir" I said. "Oh well", said he, "if you can't take a joke you shouldn't have joined." "Some joke" said I to myself.

"Now to business", said the Chief of Staff. "Got a job for

you. Better pack your bags for a long stay away from home. You and Proctor will sail two MFV's (Motor Fishing Vessels) to Akyab, leaving one week from today. You will be escorted by ML 1285 but she's not here yet. Your MFV is numbered 185 and Proctor has 186. Better go and have a look at them at the Block Jetty and see about gear etc. and get her ready. Let me know what you want. You and Proctor will have another officer each and I'll give, you both a good seaman Petty officer as well. That should do for watch-keeping purposes. Any questions?"

I had no questions - yet, and with Proctor, went and had a look at the craft that were to be our homes for an indefinite period from now on. We were secretly delighted, as this was to be a break from the grim monotony of Anti-submarine patrols and minesweeping off Colombo. We were also going as close to the enemy as ever we would get at this stage and may be we would have something to talk about after years. (Like now!) We had never fired a gun in anger so far and here might be the opportunity.

We were ready to proceed in the stipulated week and had made contact with the Commanding Officer of the ML that would escort us, and planned our movement.

We were to go through Pambam Pass, the passage between India and Ceylon at Adam's Bridge and stop at Madras and Vizagapatnam before crossing the Bay of Bengal to Akyab. We reported to the Chief of Staff who took us into the "Old man", Capt. Beauchamp, the then boss of our outfit. "Well, Proctor and Hunter, here's something exciting for you to do. I suppose you know that at this moment the Jap front line is 5 miles from Akyab. They've just been thrown out, but haven't gone far". We knew that, of course, and also that they were on the run; but that did not prevent my heart from missing a beat at what 5 miles meant. I made a quick calculation - Fort to Bambalapitiya. I swallowed hard and looked sideways at Proctor. The SOB was grinning. He was enjoying the prospect of being shot at! I smiled weakly and tried to look brave.

"Any questions or problems, now before you take off?" said the Big Boss. There was only one thing troubling us and that was that we had no independent communications and if we got separated in the Bay we'd be in real trouble. "Well, don't bloody well get separated then" was the answer to that one when we pointed that out, and there was nothing to say but "Aye, aye, sir"; and then he softened and said "Don't worry, we'll find you if you get lost." "Well, good luck! And take care of yourselves". Were his passing words and we knew he meant it. We were like one big family then and we knew that he was worried that he was sending some of his 'sons' into danger. But he also knew there was a war on !

The passage through Pamban was uneventful but when 100 miles from Madras my ERA reported on the bridge one morning and said we had to stop engines. There was something wrong - a knock - in the engine, he said, and we must stop, open up and inspect. After signalling 1285 what we had to do, all ships stopped and waited for us. In half - an hour the ERA was back and he said one word "Kaput" "No go, Chief?" said I. "No go, sir", said he. Towing was the answer and 1285 took us for a few hours and the HM Indian ship (as they were called then) Cuttack towed us the rest of the way to Madras. We were stuck for a week under repairs and the escort and Proctor's ship had to leave me and proceeded on their own.

Repairs completed, I was sailed to Vizagapatnam where I was to pick up a new escort to cross the bay but after re-fuelling and topping up with water and food the XDO (this was the short title for "Extended Duties Officer" and I don't know why "Extended" but anyway he now appeared to be, fully!) sent for me and said he had no escort and could make the last leg of my passage alone? At that time I had one hell of an opinion of myself as a navigator and my reply was that it would be no problem. I conveniently forgot about the communications. There is a saying that to be a good captain one must also be lucky and I was certainly lucky on that occasion. Calm seas, clear days and nights, and the enemy off the

immediate sea and far away. It was a picnic and we made our land-fall on the dot. Proctor came to me in 186 and showed me where he was parked and I secured alongside him.

When we were on talking terms again after securing, I asked him what the score was. "Just fiddling around" said he "running ammunition and stores to warships and river craft, from the ammunition and stores ships over there". "Where are the Japs?" I asked. "Not far. You'll hear them soon enough tonight when they pass over here to bomb the air-field, but you won't see them." And there was his silly grin again. "What's funny?" said I. "This is the life" said he, "and I am going to volunteer to go up the river. He was a senior and if he went I would have to follow. The bloody idiot had forgotten the old rule: 'Never volunteer: it will come soon enough'. "We can see some action. Nothing's happening here"-and the enemy only five miles away ! "Better report yourself to the NOIC. He must be expecting you", said Proctor. And this didn't take long. It was as Proctor advised, maid-of-all-work in the harbour.

That night we heard heavy guns firing to eastward and knew the fight had commenced. They seemed to prefer to fight in the dark and expected you to sleep by day. As prophesied, the bombers passed over that night for their usual strafing of the air-field and we opened fire with our main armament - 4 in no. 9mm Lanchesters! Couldn't see them, of course, but they must have been close overhead as the roar of their passing was deafening. "Don't shoot, sir" pleaded a seaman at my elbow, "they'll see you and drop something". "Go to hell" I retorted, "How do you think I am going to expend this ammo otherwise? We are not going up the river-unless somebody volunteers" - and I felt the butterflies fluttering madly about in my innards as I thought of what passed between Proctor and me earlier.

Three months were we in Akyab. They didn't send us up the river although Proctor volunteered, as promised. They reckoned, quite rightly, that we'd be sitting ducks and wanted us in one piece

to work in the harbour. We saw prisoners and wounded coming in daily and had to help out from time to time. Air raids at dawn and dusk became routine even though the Japs were soon pushed far into Burma. One of the finest fireworks displays I have seen took place when they hit our ammunition ship in harbour during a dawn raid. One moment she was there and the next she was gone forever. Everything inside her went up and she herself went the other way. The concussion was terrific and our little ships were bobbing about for an hour afterwards. I gulped, when I remembered that I was to have been alongside her in an hour to unload ammo. Shortly after this I hit a marker bouy which was not "watching" properly and nearly sank before I put my ship on 'the beach. A damaged stern gland due to the blow let the water in. This was soon plugged and 186 towed me alongside a salvage vessel and we were pumped dry in ten minutes. However, the accident placed 185 "hors de combat" and we were taken into an inlet of the river near by and beached. War receding, our usefulness had gone and the powers-that-be were not going to worry about repairing my little vessel. We were all taken off one day and returned home soon afterwards in a British warship.

I still don't think it was funny.

## 5. RECOLLECTIONS

**Lt. A. C. Dassanaiké**

January 1942 - September 1942

### **H M S Samson**

During the period under review HMS SAMSON was one of two tugs at Trincomalee under the orders of the King's Harbour master. She was not only the more powerful tug at the time but, with the fleet in Trincomalee, she was by far the most powerful tug with her twin screws producing 1200 HP. It is not intended to describe in detail her normal daily harbour operations in this report. These, however, have been exceedingly varied. HMS Samson has very creditably performed the duties of a normal harbour tug-pushing and pulling ships, a target towing ship, a pilot and examination service vessel. An effort will be made to describe in brief under various headings operations outside normal routine.

### **“Kamuning” - February 1942**

Shortly before 1600 Samson was ordered to take the KHM (the late Commander Harden) out to an incoming AMC. Before boarding the latter off Chapel Rocks the KHM casually ordered C O Samson (Lt. Boyns) to go to the assistance of a ship said to be on fire off Batticaloa. It was later found out that this particular unarmed ship with a cargo of rice from Burma was shelled and set on fire by a Japanese Submarine at about 1000 the same day and abandoned by the crew. Samson sighted burning ship at about 2000 and was alongside her pumping water a couple of hours later. The fire was raging from stem to the quarter with the after accommodation alight in places. She was worse for damage in the two forward holds where the cargo of rice too had caught fire. An effort was made to get the fire under control prior to towing her.

Had an effort been made to tow the ship by the stern earlier, as was suggested, she might have been saved. However, the pumping of water continued with no success till the early hours of the morning when an attempt was made to tow the ship. It was found then that the ship had drifted to within twenty three miles off Trincomalee.

When the ship was hardly half an hour in tow, she listed to port, dipped and finally sank-ensign last-accompanied by the loud clamour of crashing glass and woodwork inside her. Incidentally, the tow wire was cut apart only just in time to save the Samson being dragged under. The whole crew but two of the sunken ship were saved.

## **Air Raid April 9th 1942 – Trincomalee**

Colombo had had the Easter raid when the growing tension in Trincomalee came to a head with a sighting report by Catalinas of the approach of an enemy task force. Orders were issued to clear the harbour of all shipping not required urgently within. Samson was to stand by to assist in this operation which was completed about 0300 in the morning of the ninth when Trincomalee had her first Jap air raid. The raid commenced about 0700 and Samson had been stupidly ordered to remain alongside the Dockyard (one of the Chief targets for the day) to take the A K H M on board to direct rescue and salvage operations when and as necessary. As it turned out Samson was the outside ship of two lying alongside the Dockyard two fathom Jetty and took quite a shaking during the first ten minutes of the raid when her pumps unseated in the engine room and various parts of the ship sustained damage from near misses. After considerable inducement and the fear of losing the ship in awaiting the A K H M, the acting CO of the ship took her away from the Jetty only just in time to save her. About the same time a ship, Sagaing, in stream had received a direct hit and was ablaze and despite the crews efforts the fire could not be got under control. However, Samson's pumps quelled it sufficiently to start

the more important operation of towing her clear of the fairway. Before this could be undertaken the ammunition on the ship had to be made safe. Her ship's company had by now left her but Samson's crew stepped on board to make safe all D/C's and four inch shells. This was rudely interrupted by the second raid warning of the morning when all the explosives were hurriedly tipped over the side. In spite of the warning the operation of towing and beaching the ship in Malay Cove was successfully completed. Subsequent to the raid, Trinco suddenly became changed into a place of inactiveness, but Samson had to be made fit for coming events and was ordered alongside the Monitor Erebus who did herself credit during the raid sustaining considerable damage herself. In spite of this Erebus temporarily repaired Samson not only in respect of defects but also supplies of much required victuals and first aid requirements. Battle scarred, with a gaping hole on her quarter deck penetrating the hull and effecting her steering, the now famous "Marble head" limped to within sight of the Port and had to be helped in by Samson and her fellow, C 405. Incidentally, her crew was not too pleased to hear of the air raid in Trincomalee subsequent to a severe bombing she was subjected to in Singapore. However, she helped to revive the very low spirits of those in Trinco with blaring amplifiers putting over fine music. HMS Rover (submarine) in the midst of a refit in Singapore rushed away when the latter was threatened and had to be taken over and handled gently about the same time.

## **H M S Balta Nov' 44 - March 1945**

HMS Balta under the command of Lt. A. C. Dassanaikie at this time was confined to chiefly A/S patrol duties both at Trinco and Colombo. Ocean escorts were a pleasant diversion especially when dealing with merchant shippers. It fell to her lot to escort a considerable number of submarines returning to bases in Trinco and Colombo after operations. It might be mentioned that those arriving off Colombo submitted to a slow escort very politely, but

those at Trinco would always question Balta's authority to escort. But by far the most interesting escort was that of a British tanker Broomadale which completely misjudged the currents South of Ceylon. It needed several polite expression of disagreement with the courses laid down by the merchantman before the latter changed his mind and took to the safer 'depths: Incidentally it must be mentioned that HMS Semla together with Balta was based at Trinco during the festive season of X' Mas of 1944. The latter put out a concert and dress party unequalled by any of the fleet then in port: special mention must be made in this connection of Lt. P. N. L. Mendis for his wonderful organising capabilities.

## **H M S Hoxa - June 46 - To Date**

A trip to Minicoy, target towing and A S R duties occupied the Hoxa since June to the commencement of the current refit. Early in December 1945 Hoxa was regularly detailed to tow targets three and four times a week for ships toughening up for the Eastern assault. Those were successfully conducted without mishap even when the after minesweeping winch failed to function. Subsequent to V. J. day target towing gave way to monotonous S A R duties which at times continued for four days at a stretch. However, this was partly quelled by a shoot at sea when all R U ammunition was fired off. Hoxa was the sole Ceylon Ship to participate in the V J celebrations. The last operation was as patrol vessel outside the port on the blowing off of the controlled mine field when she collected sufficient fish for two meals aboard

## **Ocean Towage of "Nautilus" - May 1942**

The rock breaker Nautilus (gross tonnage about 300 tons) was required in Colombo and Samson was detailed off to tow her from Trinco prior to refitting at her destination. A five-inch wire, however, was used along with a bridle for towing. A length of cable was let over the stern of the Nautilus to prevent it yawing. As much coal as could possibly be stored on the decks of the Samson

was taken aboard as it was considered that she would make a very slow passage with the tow especially in view of the unfavourable weather. Left Trinco in the forenoon and proceeded without mishap for one day when the weather started getting up. It was quite evident that if the weather got worse progress would be so impeded that it would not even be possible to make for Galle for bunkering. A message to this effect was passed via an aeroplane about this time. Passing Arugam Bay about noon and with the sea showing signs of worsening it was suggested (by S/Lt. A. C. Dissanayake) that the shelter of the Bay be sought till the weather abated. This was not heeded to, and the weather getting worse in the next watch, the tow parted at 1600 with no hope of regaining it. It was then decided to make an effort to communicate with Trinco and in the absence of W/T Samson abandoned the tow and put into Arugam Bay for that purpose. Failure to make contact forced the skipper to get to Trinco, leaving the tow adrift, a source of danger to shipping. Incidentally, it was later learnt that on receipt of Samson's signal a destroyer from Colombo was sent to assist but failed to locate the Nautilus and subsequently a corvette, after three days awaiting the calm, took her in tow and brought her into Trincomalee cutting loose a number of moored mines while doing so.

### **Buoying “British Sergeant” - July-August 1942**

Samson returned to Trincomalee after a refit in Colombo in June and changed command from Lt. Cdr. Boyns to Lt. Cdr. Simpson. Between this time and September, Samson often acted as target vessel for Fleet Air Arm bombing and torpedo attacks. Parties of F A A flying personnel boarded her during these operations. Particular note must be made of one such when, after the practice, an F A A plane cooperated in marking a British Tanker sunk close inshore off Batticaloa (Elephant Point). The planes swept low over the wreck which was completely submerged and marked the stem and stern (visible from the air) with aluminum dust. Samson went in and buoyed and identified these positions.

**Lt. Cdr. (E) B. E. L. Deckker**

March '40 **GOLIATH** - M/S duties - engaged also in target towing. A particular interesting day when towing hawser became entangled with starboard screw in fairway. Spent night in that position with target, being towed on ships by O. W after her routine sweep - happily coincided with proposed slipping date. How merry we were when - due to very rough weather - Goliath had to remain tied up to the buoys.

Remember how a Junior officer was requested by Lieut. Monnington who was making a survey of stores in CNVF by letter to take out certain items from the ship's gangway book. At that time being busily engaged in repairs to the ballast pump sent the book referred to with a note asking him to take out the particulars he wanted-what happened after that is a Secret !!

OKAPI	May '41 - Nov' 41	Very proud to have been
	May '42 - June' 42	appointed to
	Jan'43 - Sept' 43	Okapi - inspected by Admiral
		Leatham on board 22/5/42 -
		Out Patrolling in Gale which
		swept Colombo - very thrilling

With Jap War - extended patrols and, shortly after Jap air raid on Colombo had first 'big' job of providing A/S screen for 3 vessels off Chilaw-very exciting days. After this came extended patrols and Escort jobs. Had privilege of maintaining A/S screen off Trincomalee during 2 visits of the Ocean Queens - Mary & Elizabeth.

**SAMBHUR Nov. 41- May.' 42**

Routine WS duties. Good time when probationary Sub/Lts. were given cocoa on empty stomachs and in one instance when one was made to climb the foremast in a sea of 4- happily with very profitable results. Very happy ship indeed-was aboard of her in the raid on Easter day in Colombo in 1942.

**HOXA Oct.' 43 - Oct.' 44**

Pleased everyone when Hoxa was handed over to CRNVR. We, sea going personnel, thought it meant the beginning of seaward' expansion. Engaged in Anti Submarine (A/S) patrols of Colombo, Trincomalee and Addu Atoll. Has done a number of escorts, among them one to Madras on which occasion 123 survivors were rescued from a torpedoed merchantman and on another, forming part of the escort screening the big Naval floating deck on passage to Trincomalee.

A really tough ship-was nearly holed, twice but came off without as much as a scratch (?)

**SAMSON June '42-Dec. '42**

Tug duties in Trincomalee quite a number of hefty bumps in the course of her duties. During submarine 'flaps' Samson mounted guard at boom with 3 Pdr. - uncovered for action. Interesting salvage jobs, one on SS Mataban torpedoed by Jap submarine and the other aground on the E Coast.

## **Lt. Cdr. G. R. M. de Mel**

### **SAMSON AND C. 405**

Towards the middle of April 1942 I succeeded Lieutenant Potger as First Lieutenant of Samson. Sub Lieutenant Dassanaïke and SubLieut (E) Hatch with Lieutenant Boyns in command completed the officers of the ship.

The Samson and C. 405 were the two tugs in Trincomalee which was a very busy port at the time. It was a port used by the Eastern Fleet and preparations were under way for equipping it to accommodate the entire Eastern Fleet.

The C. 405 was manned by civilians and as such had an eight hourday with an hour for dinner. This resulted in Samson having more than her share of work in an extremely busy port. The Dockyard itself was badly smashed up by the Japanese. Facilities for repairs and maintenance were most inadequate. However, the good ship Samson carried on.

A very bad feature about tug work at Trincomalee was that facilities for mooring did not exist. No mooring boats and no pilot boats. Consequently the tug was everything. Incoming ships were not aware of the bad conditions and could not be of much help to the tug. They would dash in at great speed and give everyone on board the tug a headache when it came to the question of putting the pilot aboard. Having put the pilot on board, the tug had to race into harbour and stand by to berth the vessel. Sometimes a convoy came in, still one tug had to do the job.

In August we took over the C. 405. I had to begin the work of taking over and also take the wee ship on her first job with CRNVR personnel. It was a hair-raising experience because I could not get her to do what I wanted. She did just as she pleased with the help of the wind.

By the end of August, Lieutenant Ohlmus took command of C. 405 and I was first Lieutenant.

Now and then the monotony of Harbour Routine was happily broken by a trip to Back Bay to tow in sailing vessels called MUNGEES. This used to be good fun because we made use of the opportunity to buy some good fish at sea.

Another interesting job that was undertaken was target towing for the Army. By day it was quite a simple operation but by night it was quite tricky because the water round about was full of danger. An added difficulty was that the Army personnel hadn't even a common sense idea of what was going on in the tug. For example they always thought we could apply a brake as in a motor car and come to a dead halt. The Army Officer who accompanied us had to face all the abuse from us and at times it was quite unbearable and provoking.

We had one memorable trip in C.405. That was to Pamban Pass to tow a mooring barge to Trincomalee. The services of an RNR Officer was given to us to help in the towing arrangements.

We left Trincomalee by night and arrived at Pamban Pass 36 hours later after a foul journey. The whole ship was wet. Having been in harbour for a long time our stomachs did not take to the sea and the added difficulty of not having a proper place to sleep in made the journey very uncomfortable. We got to Pamban Pass and there we were greeted by RN Officer who exclaimed, "Have you heard the good news? That old beggar Gandhi has been put in jail". We said nothing but our silence was eloquent.

We got the mooring barge which by now had been named GEORGE ready for towing and started our journey back by afternoon. That night we ran into a strong head wind from the south and anchored for the night. In the morning we found that the barge had gone round us twice and wrapped herself round us good and proper and we had anchored near a dangerous shoal. In the operation that

followed to get clear a lifeboat sank and we had to put, man over-board exercise into practice. Fortunately the victim was a good swimmer. We got clear eventually and resumed our journey back. The following day in the afternoon we handed over GEORGE to HMS Samson who was awaiting us at Kankasanturai and carried on to Trincomalee, which we reached the following morning. I left Trincomalee tugs in October and joined the examination vessel Semla in Colombo.

## **HMS SAMBHUR -1941 September - February 1942**

HMS SAMBHUR under the command of Lieutenant Simpson with Sub-Lieutenant Duggan, First Lieutenant arrived at Trincomalee in September 1941 to carry out a patrol in the approaches to Trincomalee Harbour while a convoy consisting of Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth was anchored inside.

On the first night of the patrol owing to an unusual and strong northerly wind set the Sambhur struck Chapel Rock; she pulled herself away but had to return to port on the orders of the Naval Officer-in-Charge Commander Harden, RN.

I relieved Sub-Lieutenant Duggan as No. 1 when the ship was at Trincomalee and did the return journey to Colombo and remained in her as No. 1 till February 1942. The main duty assigned to the ship during this period was mine-sweeping in the Colombo Channel. This was a daily task with one off day in the week. We were occasionally called upon to do a peculiar job called guard ship duty which was to anchor the ship in harbour in close vicinity of any Japanese ship that may have been in harbour. The idea was to prevent any "monkey business" that the Jap may have tried. I personally thought this was unnecessary but the job was religiously carried out.

In December Lieutenant H. C. Sansoni assumed command of the ship and the routine was carried out. There were no extraor-

dinary incidents except of an airman coming down at sea 25 miles from Colombo. Sambhur proceeded to his rescue but when only a third of the distance away was ordered back as the rescue had been effected by the Mercantile marine.

By the end of February I left Sambhur and joined Okapi.

### **Lt. K. M. Martinus**

## **H M S OKAPI**

On 8th January 1941, the Norwegian whale catcher AN5 entered Colombo Harbour. She had been sailed from Durban by a Norwegian crew having relinquished her trade of whale catching and was handed over by the Admiralty to the CNVF for conversion to a ship of war. She was a strange craft with her peculiar spade bow, her two quaint cat davits right for'd, her old fashioned capstan, her massive winch and her powerful shock-absorbers abaft the winch which were designed to take up the stress of towing whales lashed alongside. As for her colour scheme, it seemed to be rust and red - the rust of her plates and the red of her ensign. The skipper was a real "salt" who had sailed her for many years and in many seas. He had grown quite fond of her and she was, he assured us, in spite of her low freeboard, highly seaworthy. The CNVF took over the AN5 and a large stock of tinned "fish balls" laid down in Durban. These "fish balls" were a novelty and all callers on board were invited to partake of them. Nobody was able to discover what AN5 represented and shortly after she was christened HMS OKAPI by the Admiralty.

Her first captain was Lt. Cdr. P. J. B. Oakley (now Cdr. R N R) and her first assignment was the towing of a skid to Trincomalee. The weather was ideal and so was the behaviour of the skid. The coastguards at Batticaloa reported that they had sighted two strange vessels at sea.

The skid was delivered safely by Trinco and Okapi returned to Colombo in the record time of 30 hours.

Okapi proceeded to Bombay for refit shortly afterwards and was at Bombay from 4th February 1941 to 24th April 1941. The dockyard at Bombay made a splendid job of her and OKAPI could not be recognised when she returned to Colombo with her war-paint, depth charges, asdic and 12-pounder gun. It was originally intended to fit her out for minesweeping duties as well but the idea was abandoned and she became the CNVF's first patrol vessel with asdics.

Patrolling off the port of Colombo was a monotonous job which the Okapi carried out efficiently. It was not until December 1941 when Japan came into the war that patrolling became exciting. We had our first taste of Japanese submarine warfare on January 31st, 1942 when the

ss Longwood was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine 20 miles off Colombo. Okapi picked up the S O S and dashed out to the position full speed ahead. The submarine easily got away, however, by the time Okapi reached the position and Okapi escorted the Longwood back to Colombo. The submarine had left a gaping hole in Longwood's bows and she was listing heavily.

In March 1942 the Japanese occupied the Andaman Islands and trouble started brewing. Submarine attacks on merchant shipping were being constantly reported. On 4th April 1942 all hands in Okapi were recalled to the ship at night and she put to sea with the information that a Japanese force was sighted off Colombo. The next morning we expected an attack and we were not disappointed. Japanese planes swooped out of the skies and pelted the Okapi with their machine guns. There were no casualties on board and the crew stood up magnificently to their baptism of fire. Shortly after, the Okapi was sent to patrol off Chilaw where a small merchantman had anchored. Okapi escorted this vessel back to Colombo on April 10th, 1942 and this was really the first escort job a CRNVR

ship did. Escort work increased and soon the Okapi was escorting vessels to Trincomalee, Madras, Cochin and other Indian ports.

### **Lt. P. N. L. Mendis**

#### **Galle face Barracks - May 1943 - September 1943**

There was hardly any operation undertaken by this establishment, which was purely an instructional institution, composed of 150 recruits, the instructional and the regulating staff. The institution was under the command of Lt. Cdr. Rigby Smith CRNVR.

A special feature in the instructional side of it was the regular Saturday route march, with rifles and bayonets.

The FOCRIN and the FOC visited the barracks and inspected a guard of honour on each occasion. The guard of honour was always formed from the recruits themselves. At the end of the course of instructions the establishment had to be released and the establishment had to be shifted to St. Joseph's Barracks. Here too the same routine was carried out. The men were gradually drafted to tenders of the CRNVR and some were sent to specialise in the various barracks. A few were sent to Bombay.

#### **HMS Balta - January '44 - May '45**

During the early months the ship was taking its turn with others of the flotilla in preserving the safety of the channel. Towards the end of February, minesweeping operations were commenced usually carried out in company with another ship, so arranged that the "LL" and "SA" sweepers preceded us. This was done at the time when the harbour had three swept channels. Being the first ship to sweep along the northern channel, rocks and coral were swept up by the kite and this being the case, the depth was reckoned in many ways, coming to an almost definite conclusion that

there were patches of eight fathoms or sometimes even less. The captain being a young and exuberant type, the information worried the pundits who came out with the fleet minesweeping officer to ascertain the truth; in the alternative probably to refer the captain to a psychiatrist. To my captain's delight the next morning the signal was out closing the channel to capital ships etc.

The monotony of this was broken when we were called up one night on a mercy trip to Galle, to aid the survivors of ss Palma. The operation made it more interesting in that a very heavy sea was encountered throughout the passage. Out of the five boats that got away, four were spotted earlier and survivors taken on board. In spite of the captain's assurance that only four got away a further search was made by Balta for the fifth boat which, according to the Chief Mate, got away. It was almost dusk and, on receiving orders to come back, the captain had hardly altered course when a signalman spotted a Very's right aft; the survivors were taken on board almost in darkness. As far as I remember the Balta carried 34 survivors in all.

Soon after this the Balta was called to escort the ss Suiju to Trinco and back. Quite confident with this operation plans were more or less afoot to be the regular consort to Suiju on her future passages. With this idea in view probably we were escorting her again to Trinco when almost close to the shores of Galle the boilers could not take it; thus we were anchored in Galle harbour where people began talking!

Since this boiler complaint nothing of any particular interest was undertaken other than the local patrols. In November Balta took its turn of duty at Trinco, came back to Colombo escorting the Engledale to continue the most familiar operation which was very dear to us, the "Love Patrol!"

**Cdr. M. Monnington**

September 1939. Captain-in-Charge, Ceylon ordered the boom defence trawler Barnet to be turned over to the CNVF for minesweeping duties. September 2nd, HMS Barnet re-commissioned by CNVF.

C.O.	Lt. Cdr. P. J. B. Oakley
First Lieut.	Sub. Lt. M. Monnington
E. O. Lt(E)	A. Smith

Skipper Thomson, whose orders had not reached him, handed over the vessel after reference of A.B.O. Ceylon (Lt. Dommett). September 3rd. Commenced minesweeping.

September 30th (?) As a result of representations by ABO Ceylon it was ordered by Capic that HMS Barnet should revert to Boom Defence: when required for MIS duties a CNVF party was to be put on board. This arrangement was in force for some months until Barnet was sailed to Aden where she remained for the remainder of the war.

During September Barnet continued minesweeping more or less daily. A 75% sweep was ordered which involved four loops. South west monsoon conditions prevailed. During this period Goliath was being fitted out as a minesweeper but this work was completed during the month and two or three "A" sweeps were carried out. On other days Barnet swept with a single Oropesa.

Evolutions performed included disentangling sweep from channel buoys and a 3" practice shoot; gun layer - 1st Lieut.; Trainer - Signalmen Gunner K. M. Martinus; Breechworker-A. M. Ratnasamy.

In the interval between 30th September 1939 and the arrival of HMS Overdale Wyke minesweeping was carried out by Bar-

net (under the above mentioned arrangement until her departure), Goliath, Hercules (commissioned by the CNVF for a short period - probably in connection with the arrival of a convoy), and HMS Widness. Inshore sweeps were carried out by the Port Commission steam launches Ready, Thelma and Alert.

Goliath (C. O. Lt. Cdr. F. D. Bingham, RN Officer Instructor) towed the Battle Practice Target (BPT) for fleet gunnery practices on several occasions. French Cruiser Suffren was one of the ships firing. HMS Widness In April - May 1940 Sub.Lts. Monnington, Simpson and Ohlson were successively loaned to the sloop Widness (C O Lt. Cdr. Chandler, RN); the first named as Navigating Officer for voyages to and from Trincomalee towing lighters and boom Defence vessels, the other two officers for minesweeping and general duties. Widness was later sunk by air attack off Ceylon.

### **Lt.Cdr. C.H. Ohlms**

H M Tug 405 was taken over for manning by the CRNVR in July 1942 in Trincomalee. I was appointed to her command, my first command, and very proud of her I was. She was a nippy little tug with an immense turning circle which never seemed small enough in those early days, and a reversing gear with a tendency to jamming. Her duties were mainly those of towing barges and boom gear between store ships and boom jetty, conveying an immense water-lighter named "Lilian" alongside ships which required her, assisting in berthing operations and towing for various batteries in the area. As most of the heavier types of towing was done with barge or lighter alongside, steering especially when handling "Lilian", involved some complicated evolutions as turning to one quarter was practically impossible as a result of the draft of the tow and a tremendous amount of shunting would take place all over the harbour before the desired results were obtained. Target towing for the army also provided some amusing incidents usually

heralded by a rather seasick army wireless operator tottering up on the bridge with a message from ashore requesting us to stop engines and remain in our present position while the firecommander motored up to the next battery, a matter of fifteen minutes, and although a simple feat no doubt in the eyes of the gunner, a quite impossible one with eight hundred fathoms of towing wire streaming out astern of us.

Our first real deep sea duty came with instructions to proceed to Pamban to tow back the mooring barge HERCULES (400 tons). This operation was successfully carried out in spite of very bad weather conditions on the way back home and one horrible moment when the towing hawser threatened to foul our screw. SAMSON joined us on our return at Point Petro taking over the tow from there. We were amused to learn on our return that a zealous coast guard station had reported us as an enemy aircraft carrier in company with two destroyers, a report probably influenced by HERCULES's flat upper deck.

During my command we were also called upon to render assistance in the salvage of SS Martalan, torpedoed at sea. SAMSON and C. 405 were rushed to the assistance of HMS Astor who had already taken this vessel in tow, helped her over her last 40 miles of tow and took over entirely at the outer harbour mouth. C. 405 sailed to Colombo for docking and refitting in October '42 and sailed back to Trinco in December when I left her.

In March '43 it was decided to convert SEMLA, then employed as an examination vessel, into an A/S vessel. This necessitated the fitting out of larger mess-decks, equipping out with A/S gear, depth charge rails and throwers and the replacing of the 3 - pounder gun, then her main armament, by a six pounder forward and an Oerlikon midships. I was appointed to stand-by and supervise her conversion. The Port Commission was entrusted with the work.

All prevailing accommodation was gutted, the messdecks

for'ard was lowered, and two messdecks fitted with triple tiers of bunks providing accommodation for fifteen and twelve ratings, respectively. Two comfortable cabins were fitted out aft and a really magnificent teak panelled bridge was constructed in place of the canvas structure which had hitherto done duty. The A/S cabin was designed as a solid, weather-tight compartment from hull to fore-deck, a terrific amount of energy and enthusiasm being expended by the engineers in its construction. The six pounder for'ard was mounted over the ratings' heads. No one had so far owned up as the designer of the large and cumbersome steel structure that resulted. The gun, however, certainly possessed an unobstructed arc of fire.

In spite of one or two setbacks the vessel was ready for sea in September '43. It was then discovered that the freeboard obtained was below the minimum allowed. Stability tests followed, brains were wracked, intricate calculations were made, and the ship put to sea. The question of stability has not been satisfactorily solved to this day.

HMS Semla operated as a Colombo A/S vessel from October 1943. Capable of riding terribly in the slightest of seas, her decks were always awash. She was by no means a comfortable ship, but the spirit of the ship's company was the happiest ever obtained.

Besides local patrol, SEMLA took part in two operations of interest, the rescue of survivors of SS PALMA and the salvaging of parts of a large Japanese flying boat.

HMS Semla was diverted when on patrol, to the rescue of torpedoed survivors from the PALMA. Foulest possible weather conditions were obtained. Everything that could go adrift went adrift. On two occasions, when the sea hit her, she lay over so dangerously that the lifeboats were awash. Survivors were picked up south of Dondra Head and an amusing rumour circulating round the ship had it that the survivors, after five minutes' experience of the movement of the SEMLA requested to be put back again into the safety of the boats.

The salvage of the Japanese bomber took place while on A/S patrol outside Colombo shortly after the ship's company stood by to action stations on receipt of a red alert. A large four-engined bomber was seen with smoke pouring from her engines to crash into the sea about four miles to the west of us and burst into flames. SEMLA left patrol, reaching the spot about half an hour later, to find parts of the plane floating in pools of burning petrol. A lifeboat was launched and working down-wind and using chemical fire extinguishers was able to recover several parts including blueprints of construction, a patrol programme and many other documents, eventually handed over to the RAF for information. The bodies of two Japanese airmen were also recovered and brought ashore for burial. One of these bodies was the possessor of an expensive looking set of gold topped teeth which appeared to have an irresistible fascination to a certain member of our crew found, luckily in good time, working his way for'ard in the early hours of the morning, armed with a large and dangerous-looking pair of pliers.

Officers and men of SEMLA were transferred to OKAPI in March '44 for the purpose of sailing her to Addu Attol. HMS left Colombo on 1st April '44 for Addu Attol acting on this voyage as A/S escort to HMS Barrymore. Reports of the presence of not less than 8 enemy submarines in the area to be covered during the voyage had been received and extra vigilance was accordingly maintained. The voyage was uneventful, taking six days in all, as BARRYMORE was capable of only 4 to 5 knots. OKAPI took over A/S patrols from OVERDALE WYKE at Addu. Our stay at Addu Attol proved a very pleasant one. Cordial relations existed between the ship's company and Naval and Army personnel ashore. Many good parties resulted. During our stay we were lucky to come out cricket and athletics champions of the island and runners-up in the tennis tournament.

Besides local patrols, the following operations were carried out:

Several trips to the Island of Fua Malaku for fresh fruits and vegetables, many hard bargains being driven with the local headman.

Two trips to Suadiva Attol - the first on the amazing assignment of providing A/S cover to a "Walrus" flying-boat; the second to deliver stores of flour and rice to the inhabitants who were in desperate need of same and to inquire into a rumour that Japanese submarines were using the Attol as an anchorage.

One trip to Diego Garcia when the station was closing down, to tow back a Japanese-type fishing vessel for use at Addu Attol.

A rescue trip to pick up survivors from SS Helen Moller was successfully accomplished with the assistance of a CATALINA flying-boat.

A trip to render assistance to SS Victor Sylvester, who reported she was being shadowed by an enemy submarine. The trip was undertaken when OKAPI as a result of a break-down of her dynamo generator was unable to send out W/T signals or keep a transmitting watch on her A/S apparatus. A patrol in the area was maintained throughout the night and we were glad to hear in the morning that "Victor Sylvester" had got safely away. OKAPI returned to Colombo in June'44 and was thereafter engaged in local patrols there, till she proceeded to Trinco in January'45 for similar duties. I left OKAPI in March'45 to take command of HMS BALTA.

HMS Balta was operating as A/S patrol vessel, Trinco, at that time, but was taken off these duties at the end of the month as local patrols then ceased. After this day she was employed in M/S exercises and works on loop minefields and took part in VJ cele-

brations while still in Trinco. She returned to Colombo in September '45 where she has since been, employed in ASR duties. These duties have been relieved by a trip to Minicoy with relief light-house keepers and stores and a gunnery and depth charge exercise off Colombo.

Hopper Barge 35 was required for dredging off Rangoon harbour. A CRNVR runner crew was appointed to her in April 1945 for the purpose of sailing her over to Rangoon. The proposed route was via Trincomalee, Madras, Vizag., Calcutta, Chittagong and Akyab. I was seconded to her command. On her first trials she was found to answer helm very badly and failed to make better speed than 4 knots. She was ballasted down with sand in her hoppers and at her next trial appeared to steer better but failed to improve in speed. It was, therefore, decided that she should be sailed to Madras and towed as a hulk from there direct to Rangoon. Good weather was experienced almost throughout this trip and the old hopper, escorted by HMS HOXA rolled finally into Madras harbour on the 5th of June 1945. She was de-stored here -part of her crew transferred to HOXA for the passage to Colombo and the remainder in my charge proceeded overland by train leaving the Hopper to be battened down and towed over to Rangoon by the RIN authorities.

### **Lt.Cdr. B.A. Ohlson**

#### **31st August 1939/September 1939 - PWSS**

It was a very inexperienced but none the less eager party which departed from Maradana for Trincomalee in the evening of 1st September 1939. The party was divided into two sections under Sub. Lieut. Sansoni and Sub. Lieut. Ohlson respectively; the former for administration at Admiralty House, and the latter for Port War Signal Station (PWSS) Trincomalee. The total complement was about 24 men composed of Signalmen and Gunners, many of

whom now bear exalted ranks in the Ceylon Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (CRNVR). Barring the fact that a bag of, no doubt, highly confidential documents was nearly left behind at Headquarters, the trip worked smoothly enough, and at 0830 on the morning of 2nd September 1939 the party viewed for the first time its new domain. Very little preparation had been made for our arrival with the result that food was more than somewhat difficult: Even at this juncture there was evidence that the black market had already started to work.

Orders having been received that morning from NOIC Trincomalee as to the respective duties to be undertaken, the PWSS partly proceeded throughout the day to collect stores to render their future place of residence habitable. Such stores were many and varied and produced considerable speculation amongst the party; but such items as soft soap and soda were quite evidently needed on arrival at PWSS, which had not been occupied except for one brief period for exercises since the last war. It was now a matter to find one's way and get to the location. Inside the building some thoughtless person had coated the walls with a form of lampblack, which adhered easily enough to every part of the body and white uniform, but displayed little tendency or willingness to come off.

It was a common occurrence during the next month for scorpions to drop out of the very new copies of the King's Regulations, which adorned the OIC's desk.

A somewhat energetic form of signalling instruction had already been afforded to ratings in the volunteer programme. This was very strenuously supplemented during the month, and batches were often to be seen in the heat of the day signalling to one another across vast distances of space. "Ohlson's corner" received an early and unexpected baptism by such means.

The arrival of 4 "D" class Destroyers was literally a "Signal event" in the life of the small detachment. We are now in a position to look back with amusement and pity on the unfortunate and no

doubt abusive reception by His Majesty's Signalmen of the Destroyers at the slow taking and sending on that day. It can without any exaggeration be stated, however, that by the end of September the keenness of personnel and efficiency had increased by leaps and bounds.

On the first night of occupation, the entire detachment had to remain at PWSS, and what a night it was. The Signaller on watch roused the Office-in-Charge, without any exaggeration, once every half hour with reports that he had sighted an enemy submarine off Chapel Hill. With incomplete knowledge of the movements of the enemy, it is hard to say whether this was actually a fact, but towards 0300, the possibility of attack had rather diminished in importance due to lack of sleep, and the signalmen were somewhat careful as to what they reported thereafter.

It was a new life to all of us, and the lack of grumbles generally certified its popularity with all.

## **H M S Goliath**

### **October 1939 to February 1940**

Recollection of this period are both sweet and sour; sweet, due to some amusing incidents arising out of our inexperience, and the rousing presence of our Officer instructor, Lieutenant Commander Bingham: sour, due to the necessity of rising at 0400 (or 4 a.m. as we knew it then) and proceeding from the harbour long before the glim light of dawn presented its face. It has always been the pleasure of the Public Relations reporters to blow out their verbal oesophogae with beauteous descriptions of the roseate dawns and the rippling "deep". Personally I never found the dawn at sea particularly welcome or artistic due, no doubt to the fact that having been up for 3 hours and the potential unexpected appearance of enemy submarine from all points of the compass, do not install in the soul much appreciation of the Arts.

Our two Officers who acted in rotation were old sea dogs, and I for one was mortally afraid of them. The sweeping gear very often went wrong and bellows proceeded throughout from the bridge. However, though it was a hard school it was also a very rapid one and the sweeping up of buoys became of lesser and lesser occurrence. Sweeping the channels was also not 100 percent so that return to the harbour was normally accomplished by lunch time.

Weird songs from the throats of S/G Martinus and often from Lieut. E. Smith floated behind us and would have quite realistically been regarded by the enemy as a secret weapon against their acoustic mines.

A visit of Lieut. Cdr., then Pay Lieut., Gratiaen is called to mind during this period. A lot of moral force must have been needed to make him rise at such an early hour and proceed to the harbour for the embarkation. On his entering the boat, the latter gave a violent jerk and our Pay Lieutenant sat himself down in the approximate direction of the stern sheets. It so happened, that a flag was covering the hook by which the boat is hoisted, and a large portion of Pay Lieut. Gratiaen's ample diaphragm impinged itself upon its very sharp point. He was rarely seen at sea again!!!

"A" Sweep and "D" sweep were performed daily with such increasing efficiency that we really began to think that we were winning the war. We were working under adverse conditions, incomplete knowledge and lack of materials, and under the circumstances we can undoubtedly look back to the period with satisfaction.

## TRINCOMALEE

### 16th November 1940 to 19th January 1941

This period was occupied in operating HMS Sea Hawk for internal defence patrol duties in Trincomalee harbour.

The personnel of this craft included volunteer Planters of the Ceylon Motor Boat Club who manned the engines and did other sundry jobs on a week-on week-off basis. Strong representations by these personnel to obtain regular commissions in the Ceylon RNVR were not approved.

The scheme of operations included the patrol of the twice nightly at irregular hours and was intended to intercept saboteurs and potential enemy craft entering the harbour. The noise of the engine was such that advanced warning of approach was distinctly possible up to about 2 miles, so that actually the interception of “bad hats” was distinctly unlikely!

In view of the numerous buoys and boom in the harbour, patrolling in pitch darkness had its tinge of risk, the only navigational aid being a triangle of lights which accidentally formed themselves into a pattern at certain angles. However, patrols were performed throughout without excessive damage, possibly more by luck than by good judgment.

In order to test the defences, it was advised by the Government Agent that he would attempt to attack a section of the harbour during one night. The first patrol fixed for 0100 was successful in spotting the intruder, and red Very’s lights, being the warning lights were fired at maximum elevation. These were not seen by anyone else in the various watch posts throughout the harbour so that the enemy escaped unscathed. The alertness of “Sea Hawk”, however, conveyed a definite moral atmosphere of security to the population!

On one occasion the Commanding Officer visited the Detachment, and arrangements were made for him to accompany the patrol. A certain amount of jollity in the previous proceedings rendered the eye of the machine gunner somewhat inaccurate, so that tracer firing in Dead Man's Cove might well have been at the risk of life and limb of any combatants or prowlers. However, no dead bodies were subsequently produced, so that it is assumed that none of the bullets found their billets.

"Sea hawk" was also available to take pilots to incoming Merchant Ships and also for transporting personnel to the boom depot. The engine of the "Sea Hawk" was at any time liable to give up the ghost so that operations were sometimes curtailed for lengthy periods. In such cases Mr Tom Worthington's launch often came to the rescue and acted as patrol craft.

During this period a chart was made showing all possible landing points open to the enemy, and was subsequently by the Survey Department. No doubt this document reposes in the vaults of the Admiralty in London as an important basis for future combined operations

## **H M S OVERDALE WYKE**

**1.3.40 to 30.4.40 and 26.8.42 to 10.10.43**

The above periods were occupied extensively in Minesweeping duties concerning which, comments had already been-made in other sections. The "Overdale Wyke" at all times proved a highly satisfactory vessel for such operations, in which regard this vessel may be considered superior to any other vessel which the Ceylon RNVR has manned.

**Lt. F. R. Perera****Port War Signal Station - November 1944 to June 1945**

The seven months spent at this station in Trincomalee will always bring pleasant memories. Work for the first few months was fairly strenuous. The signalmen were very efficient and I found their work quite satisfactory and beyond reproach. They found their work quite interesting due to the Fleet being stationed there.

As officer in charge I found no difficulty in managing this station. The efficiency of the ratings and the interesting work helped to pass the time which, if not for the above, would have been very monotonous and trying. My brother Officer Sub Lieut. Thiedeman, a very old hand at this station, being there as a rating and later an Officer was more than a help to me. Later Sub Lieut. Wijewickrema was drafted in his place. It was with some regret that I was drafted back to Colombo due to ill-health.

**Sports & Recreation Officer: November 1945 onwards.**

A post of various interests. During this period the CRNVR Hockey Team crowned itself with glory by winning the Corner Cup - the first Ceylonese team to do so. In cricket we were unfortunate to be defeated in the Quarter finals, yet we are no mean team to be reckoned with.

The weekly-recreational trip is a source of great entertainment to the ratings. A full house is always seen at the bi-weekly film show in Jellicoe Buildings. Games of all sorts are organised and well patronised; especially Tombola, Volley Ball and Cricket

The CRNVR faces the New Year with depleted numbers but one thing is certain - the interest in sports will not diminish Colombo.

Lieutenant. CRNVR

2nd January 1946.

**Lt. N. J. V. Perera**

**PORT WAR SIGNAL STATION - September 1940 to January 1944**

I took over PWSS Trinco as O 1 C in September 1943. Life at the station was a very happy one and was not altogether devoid of excitement. Early in October a Jap. plane came over Trinco about 2200 one night. A Beaufighter from Vavuniya was ordered to intercept her. Suddenly the sky was lit up over Nilaveli the Jap plane had hit the water and burst into flames. Air-Sea rescue boats were sent out but there was no one to rescue-a few bits of wreckage marked the spot where the plane had crashed. A signal was made by COMIC(T) to Vavuniya- "Congrats. on getting the illegitimate gentleman". The Beaufighter pilot, on getting the enemy had been heard on the radio to say "Got the b.....d"! A few days later the sirens wailed again. Another Jap. plane came over and was knocked down over Negombo.

H M Ships in harbour very often carried out exercises with the army both day and night. The night exercises were most interesting. Planes were sent out to locate the "attacking" ship, which on being spotted were illuminated by star shells.

The standard of signalling at the station was very high. Regular signal exercises were carried out with H M ships and Dockyard Signal Station and very often PWSS was complemented by signal officers of H M ships which put into Trinco.

**KANDY - 12th June 1944 to 5th January 1946**

I was ordered to Kandy on 12th June 1944 to take over the administration of 250 cooks -and stewards attached to SACSEA Headquarters. Lt. Cdr. E. F. N Gratian, CPO S.O. De Silva, L/

Sea. Fuard and I were rushed up by car as the cooks and stewards had struck work causing considerable inconvenience to SACSEA headquarters, where we were taken to Rear Adm. Jerram who was Controller at the HQ. He informed us of the situation and asked us to do what we could to persuade the men to return to work. A meeting was arranged at HQ to which the strikers were brought by truck, and were asked to ventilate their grievances. This meeting was not a success and had to be abandoned as it became too unruly. Some of the men were drunk and had knives in their belts! They were given time till next morning to consider the terms offered by the Controller. The officer in charge of the camp who, it was obvious, had started the trouble, and about a dozen ringleaders were paid off the same evening and ejected by the Police from Kandy. A meeting was arranged for next morning in the men's camp. I invited the Rev. Lakdasa de Mel, who was A.R.P. controller in Kandy at the time, to address the men. This he gladly consented to do and it was largely due to his efforts that the majority of the men were persuaded to resume work. Before we proceeded to the camp we were warned that there might be trouble and were offered an armed Marine escort by the Controller, but this we declined! We went to the camp about 100 and the Rev. Lakdasa de Mel addressed the men. After the meeting all except 37 men elected to remain and resume work. These 37 men were paid off immediately and ejected from Kandy. Then came the task of re-organising the camp and enrolling the men in the Navy. We worked from 0800 to 2300 every day for a fortnight doing this. The men were given a little disciplinary training, were kitted up and pay books and S/Cs prepared. The numbers left behind were not sufficient for SACSEA requirements and recruitment had to be started. This went on from time to time as commitments increased and stopped only when hostilities ended. When the camp closed down on 2nd January 1946, there were 506 cooks and stewards and ten CRNVR ratings.

Senior naval and army officers visited the camp from time to time and addressed the men. Offences such as stealing and disobeying orders, which were fairly common in the early days and

*"We must have a Navy"*

which were punished by detention, decreased considerably. The men began to realise what discipline meant and complaints from officers were few and far between.

With the transfer of SACSEA HQ to Singapore there was no work for the cooks and stewards in Kandy. Some of the men were discharged under their Age and Service Groups while out of the balance, half volunteered to join the Army as C A S C personel and the other half were drafted to "Lanka" for disposal.

20th June 1946.

### **Lt. D. G Simpson**

#### **January 1941 - April 1941- H M S Samson**

This period being my first real command consisted of the new Commanding Officer trying to find his feet and master his shiphandling - Allah be praised for twin screws. Almost all the ship's company was by now beginning to "feel their wings" and training went ahead with zest and enthusiasm. Most excitement was caused by the large battle practice target and I can well remember the drops of sweat we cleared the end of the Guide Pier in a strong South West breeze. try the proverbial "coat of paint".

#### **May 1941 - November 1941 - H M S Sambhur**

I always had a strong affection for this very handy little ship largely because I was associated with Lieutenant-Commander Oakley from the day she arrived and because I had a big share in preparing her for Naval service. But she was undoubtedly an unlucky ship and there always seemed to be some extraordinary accident taking place, either it was the main mast collapsing about First Lieutenant Pat Duggan and encircling him in a tangle of rigging or the winch taking an unaccountable turn and nailing Alex

Smith's foot to the deck or zealous gunner Bartholomeusz being catapulted down the Hatch.

The highlight of "Sambhur's" career was, I consider, the day we took the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, Admiral Arbuthnott, with his Chief of Staff to sea for a sweep. It was distinctly rough and like all whalers "Sambhur" would get her main deck awash in heavy dew. The manoeuvres passed off with success and able Seaman Simeon Liyanage - only English speaking Seaman - was fortunately chosen by the Admiral for a detailed explanation on the gear and covered himself with glory. The final disembarking at sea by the Admiral was executed by him with great judgment and nimbleness but alas his Chief of Staff was not so fortunate and required at least a change of bags. This was also the heyday of the 'Pigeon Post' and Admiral Arbuthnott was very delighted with the messages he was able to dispatch and signalled his thanks on our return to harbour.

### **November 1941 - July 1942- H M S Overdale Wyke**

This was always a grand ship with which to be associated and one in which there was plenty of scope for seamanship. Vividly do I remember the excitement of buoy laying and changing and the skill of Devasagayam and other hardy citizens on the gyrating buoys.

### **January 1943 - February 1944 - H M S Okapi**

I have always considered that this was easily the best and the luckiest ship operated by the CRNVR. My very happiest and most useful work, in my opinion, was carried out in this ship. The period covered by the dates January 1943 to February 1 1944 included most of the real thrills as at that time the Japs were getting around, and "Okapi" already had had an honourable action in April 1942 when commanded by Lieutenant Commander Monnington. Ear-

ly 1943 included the opportunities we had of going to the rescue of the torpedoed tankers "Longwood" and "Spondulious", "Okapi" being an oil burner and reasonably speedy always came in for more interesting escort jobs and in this way she saw more service than some of the other ships.,

In October 1943 I was privileged to take one of the best ships' companies ever to set sail and we proceeded to Addu Atoll. With the tremendous assistance of Lieutenant Dassanaik and all the stalwart support of our lads on board we had a most interesting and thrilling four months. Our very first trip to Diego Garcia to relieve that "outpost of the Empire" when she was down to quarter rations was a real thrill. This was closely followed by the trip to hunt for survivors of the .....and the "Scotia". This gave us a chance to meet some fine types of men. In Addu itself the ship distinguished itself in athletics, soccer and hockey and in every way we had a thoroughly good time. The ship's Christmas party will remain with me as memory of terrific joy and merriment with very meagre facilities but made quite superb by the spirit of the men.

### **March 1944 - December 1944 - H M S "Balta"**

It was extremely interesting to take over an endeavour to work up one of this class of ships and they were very worthwhile craft. The best moment we had with her was the recovery of the lost boat-load of survivors from the torpedoed "Palma" after they had been given up by even their Captain. We just managed to sight them by the vigilance of signalman Perera as light failed and I can well remember the leap of delight in my heart at this good fortune.

**N. P. S. Wijewickrema****P W S S - TRINCOMALEE****Feb - Oct 1945**

The normal duties at PWSS Trincomalee reached its peak in 1945. With the stage set for an all out offensive in the East more and more Fleet Units arrived in Trincomalee and kept the Signal Station busy from day to day. The increase in work, however, spurred the men to greater interest and efficiency.

There were 3 officers (reduced to 2 in March) and 17 men attached to the Station in February. The work at the station was not without its humourous side. I well remember a LST making a single letter incorrect reply to our challenge and subsequently amplifying it with a signal that was the ship to ship reply. It was of course readily pointed out to her that PWSS had not been once to sea nor was likely to do so. There was another case of a destroyer who kept on making the wrong Private signal and maintaining to our face that she was right. When she was referred to the relevant Admiralty General Message she confessed her error with shame and regret. We nobly rose to the occasion by not reporting her but reminded her “to err is human, to forgive-divine”

In April the accommodation for the men was increased by the construction of a new dining room. This allowed the men to use one whole building for their recreation. In June the station was very lucky to be given a 15 cwt truck by Commander FLYNN, a sympathetic gesture appreciated by all especially as the station was situated a good way from the town and other camps.

The Signal station has been a favourite attraction for senior officers visiting Trincomalee. It can be said without exaggeration that much about the finest view from Trincomalee is obtained here.

The grounds of the camp, at one time a scrubby jungle were at all times the admiration of visiting officers. With persevering industry, flowers were planted, fences built and vegetables grown.

V.Day and V.J. Day were celebrated on a grand scale, permission having been obtained to burn the fireworks and rockets supplied to the station

To one who first worked at PWSS on 2nd September 1939 as a rating later to end up as Officer-in-Charge of the Station, it gave great regret to apply the closure to PWSS as such on 30th October 1945. The station now continues as Chapel Hill Signal Station under the Supervision of a Yeoman.

**6. VISITS TO CRNVR HQ BY SAC SEA.**

*Memo\_-P.S . A.C V. NO 3.*

*(To be substituted for memorandum dated 1st February, 1944,  
which should be destroyed.)*

**SOUTH EAST ASIA COMMAND**

**PROCEDURE FOR SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER'S  
VISITS TO UNITS**

**PART I**

**ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNITS**

**1. Object.**

*(a)* The object of my visits to units is to meet officers and men, with the least dislocation to operations or training.

I do not wish my visits to be regarded as inspections and for this reason I wish all the arrangements to be devoid of formal military ceremony, though quarter guards may be turned out. I accept that this procedure differs from usual military custom.

*(b)* If it is desired to hold a presentation of medal ribbons, a parade may be formed, provided this is referred to me first.

**2. Procedure.**

I like my visit to be arranged as follows:

## **OFFICERS:**

Personal introduction to each officer of the unit. Only those officers whom I have not met before should be included.

## **SELECTED O.Rs:**

Personal introduction to selected N.C.Os and men representative of all sections and ages of the unit. Men who have particularly distinguished themselves should be included. The whole should not exceed 5% of total numbers with a maximum 20.

## **NOTE:**

The introductions to officers and other ranks should follow each other on my first arrival but they should be located apart. I prefer that officers and men should not be called to attention collectively.

In order to make my brief conversation with individuals as personal as possible they should be fallen in at intervals of about one yard and immediately after I have finished talking to an individual he should break off and rejoin the remainder of his Unit.

## **ADDRESS:**

An address to all ranks. For this I do not wish anything resembling a parade, nor do I wish the group to be called to attention either on my arrival or departure.

I particularly do not wish troops to be fallen in at any time and kept waiting for a long period before my arrival. They should therefore be assembled while I am talking to the officers and N.C.Os. I expect to see them in the uniform in which they are working.

The place chosen for the talk must be quiet: I will not address units in the vicinity of busy air strips or noisy roads, but naturally will accept gunfire. The men I am addressing should have their backs to the sun and I do not want any men behind me whilst I am talking.

For this informal address I require only a rough wooden box or packing case 2 to 3 feet high. On no account do I want anything in the nature of a pulpit.

## **PART II**

### **NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING UNITS**

#### **OFFICERS AND B.O.Rs:**

For officers and British Other Ranks, the same procedure. If these total more than 30, I will give them an address. If desired two or more units may be grouped together for the address.

#### **SELECTED O.Rs:**

For selected N.C.Os and men other than British, the same procedure except that it is to be limited to those who have won decorations, or otherwise distinguished themselves.

#### **INSPECTION AND ADDRESS:**

For the remainder, in place of an address, I will carry out an inspection, followed by a very short address, in URDU in the case of units understanding this language. For this address it will usually be sufficient to close ranks, and I will address the men where they are paraded. If numbers are too large for this they can break ranks and assemble round the box from which I am to address them.

## Part III

### TIMING

For guidance in working out programmes it has been found that the following times should be allowed:

- (a) Introduction to Officers and N. C. O s 3 to a minute.
- (b) Talk to British units 20 minutes.
- (c) Talk to Indian units 2 minutes.
- (d) Inspection of non English speaking units  
(when in three ranks and walking along front rank only) 60 men  
to a minute.

1<sup>st</sup> January, 1945

Louis Mounbatten  
Supreme Allied  
Commander

1<sup>st</sup> January, 1945

## 7. THE CRUISE OF THE “HALPHA”

**(Probably written by Lt.A.Caldera)**

A CRNVR crew of three officers and seven men under the command of Lieutenant Commander Carl Ohlmus was flown out on 30th May 1948 by Ceylon Government Air Ceylon to Sydney to take over and sail back, a 75ft. 55-ton wooden purse seine vessel purchased by the Department of Fisheries.

The vessel was purchased from Messrs. Halvorsen & Sons and twelve days were spent in Sydney, taking over and storing her for the voyage back. Due to limited fuel capacity, it was decided to coast all the way back.

Halpha was delayed a further three days in Sydney due to a cyclone blowing down the East coast of Australia. Finally as the cyclone was blowing over, Halpha sailed to Brisbane on 22nd June, arriving two and a half days later in somewhat heavy weather for a small craft like her.

Leaving Brisbane, she sailed for Townsville and thence to Thursday Island, passing through the inner Great Barrier Reef, one of the beauty spots of Australia which unfortunately could not be explored thoroughly due to lack of time.

From Thursday Island, course was set for Port Darwin, one of the out ports of Australia, an oasis in the barren and forbidding Northern Territory. This was one of the longest laps taking four and a half days to accomplish. Here, as in all other Australian ports, the R A N was of immense assistance to the Halpha which, through flying the Red Duster, was treated with due Naval courtesy as a Naval Craft.

Leaving Port Darwin and Australia, Halpha sailed for Dili in Portugese Timor across the dreaded sea of Arajuru which at the time was as calm as a lake. In Dili too, Australia turned up trumps,

the Australian Consul helping in every way-help which was very much needed due mainly to the language problem.

From Dili to Soerabia along the northern coasts of Flores, Bate and Lombok and here, almost half way across, bad luck dogged Halpha. Her starboard engine breaking down when 450 miles from Soerabia, which was reached three days later on one engine at reduced speed.

Repairs being sanctioned by Colombo, they were undertaken by the Dry Docking Co., Soerabia and estimated at three weeks duration and were to be only to enable the Halpha to run five out of six cylinders, starboard engine. Due to lack of proper equipment unfortunately, these repairs took over seven weeks.

During this period, Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands celebrated her Golden Jubilee and a week later, on her abdication, Princess Juliana ascended the Dutch Throne. An impressive parade of the three services was held, supported by mechanised Forces and the Ceylon RNVR was represented at the saluting base by the First Lieut. of the Halpha, Lt. R. Proctor. Many official functions were held in connection with these celebrations and the Ceylon RNVR officers and men were invited to attend as representatives of a very new navy, as the Dutch Naval officer-in-charge expressed it.

Here too the RNN were very helpful and rendered every assistance they could to the Ceylon men and organised hips were arranged to places of interest in the interior. From Soerabia to Batavia, where too the Dutch Navy, forewarned of Halpha's arrival, were of every assistance. Halpha kept in close W/T communication with the RNN and thence, right up to Singapore where they were made welcome by the RN stationed there.

Batavia to Singapore was one of the calmest hops of the whole trip, being almost wholly through sheltered straits of Banka, Durian, Phillip Channel and Main Strait. Malaya was in a state of

turbulence over her communist troubles, but both Singapore and the next port call, Penang, were comparatively quiet.

The next hop, Penang to Rangoon, was a long one but the best feature was the skill of the Rangoon River pilots as they piloted the Halpha up the forty two miles of river to Rangoon-a river at that time experiencing spring tides of five and six knots. At Rangoon, the Burma Navy could not do enough for the Halpha and helped to make her stay there a very pleasant one. After days in port, Halpha set out for Akyab but three and a half hours after leaving the pilot vessel, a cyclone warning forced her to leave back and the pilot vessel was reached with difficulty due to the heavy seas piling up.

After a week's delay in Rangoon, Halpha set out again for Akyab. This time in seas which were proverbially, calm after the storm. Akyab, reached two and a half days later, was still the same as it was during the latter part of the last war, according to the First Lieut. who served there at that time.

Akyab to Madras, the longest hop, was again made in calm seas and took just under five days. Here the RIN looked after the CRNVR crew and made things very easy with their assistance.

The final trip from Madras to Colombo was accomplished in two and a half days, Halpha arriving at 1200 hours on 25th October after taking the North about route through Pambam Pass.

Thus, in a little over two months' actual sailing time, counting in the routine stops, the CRNVR crew sailed the Halpha from Australia home, a distance of about 8,000 miles. The trip though uncomfortable at times due to the size of the vessel, was the longest the CRNVR has undertaken and proved both educative and interesting and brought a lot of experience to the officers and men manning the Halpha.

## **8. THE VICTORY PARADE - LONDON**

### **8<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 1946**

Ceylon was represented by the following units:

The Ceylon Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, Royal Artillery, Royal Engineers, Royal Army Service Corps, Ceylon Garrison Artillery, Ceylon Engineers, Ceylon Light Infantry, Ceylon Signal Corps, Ceylon Army Service Corps, Ceylon Medical Corps, Ceylon Railway Engineer Corps, Ceylon Corps of Military Police, Ceylon Electrical & Mechanical Corps, Ceylon Pioneers, Auxiliary Territorial Service.

The CRNVR was represented by:

Lieutenant	R.Kadigammar
Petty Officer	I. de Livera
Petty Officer	R.Stonehewer
Leading Seaman	E.A.de S.Punchihewa
Leading Seaman	M.M.Fuard
Leading Seaman	A.A.Wise
Leading Seaman	M.C.McHeyzer
Leading Seaman	R.A.Solomons
Leading Seaman	D.K.Gunasekera
Leading Signalman	E.P.Wickramasingha
Leading Seaman	P.H.A.Perera
Leading Seaman	J.A.Xavier
Leading Coder	Q.Soyso
Leading Stoker	A.F.Alwis
Leading Stoker	C.C.Atapattu
Leading Steward	M.Peter Perera
Able Seaman	S.M.Fernando
Signalman	H.E.Muller
Telegraphist	G.R.Weerasinghe

9. **PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME FOR TRANSFER  
OF H M S "FLYING FISH" TO CEYLON ROYAL  
NAVAL VOLUNTEER RESERVE**

**I. Advance Party of two officers and seven ratings of the Ceylon Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve proceed to Singapore.**

Notes:

- (a) Party to leave Ceylon at earliest possible date.
- (b) One of the officers to be the Commanding Officer designate.
- (c) On arrival officers and men to familiarise themselves with ships of the class, of which a number are lying in reserve at Singapore, and to serve in FLYING FISH, whenever she is not actually employed on the Malay Coast patrol (in which it would be politically undesirable for Ceylon RNVR to participate).

**II. Main Party of two officers and thirty six ratings of the Ceylon Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve proceed to 4, Singapore**

Notes:

- (a) Party to Reach Singapore by the 1<sup>st</sup> August, on which date FLYING FISH completes duty on patrol.
- (b) One of the officers to be the Engineer Officer designate (who should, if possible, be sent in advance of this main party).

### **III. Ship is prepared for passage**

Notes:

- (a) R N Officer will be in Command.
- (b) Ship will be manned by RN Officers and men, backed up by the Ceylon RNVR advance and main parties.
- (c) Complete with all minesweeping and spare gear, together with full outfit of on-board spares, and naval and armament stores.

### **IV. Ship proceeds from Singapore to Trincomalee**

Notes:

- (a) Ship to sail in Mid-August
- (b) Manning will remain as in III (a) and (b) above.

### **V. Turnover Period at Trincomalee**

Notes:

- (a) Ceylon RNVR officers and men to be increased progressively in number until full complement is provided.
- (b) RN Officers and men to be progressively withdrawn as turnover proceeds.
- (c) Official transfer to RNVR which will depend on progress made with turnover, to take place as early as possible, but not in any case later than 15<sup>th</sup> September, when all RN officers and men will have to be withdrawn except as in VI (b) below.

## **VI. Working up period at Trincomalee**

- (a) Duration to be about one month.
- (b) In view of the lack of Engine Room and Electrical Ratings in Ceylon RNVR endeavour is being made to obtain admiralty approval for a party of nineteen RN ratings of these categories to remain until equivalent Ceylonese ratings become available. This party will in any case have to be withdrawn not later than the end of the year.

## **VII. Arrival in Colombo**

Notes:

- (a) Target date will depend on progress made, but is unlikely to be before mid-October.
- (b) Official transfer ceremony to take place as convenient after arrival.

10. **LEGISLATION AFFECTING THE NAVY IN  
CEYLON**

- (1) Colonial Naval Volunteer Ordinance, 1931 (White hall)
- (2) Naval Volunteer Ordinance, No. 1 of 1937
- (3) Emergency Powers Defence Acts, 1939-1950 (White hall?)
- (4) The Ceylon Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (General Service) Ordinance, No. 44 of 1938.
- (5) The Ceylon Naval Volunteer Force (Compulsory Leave) Ordinance, No.11 of 1946
- (6) The Navy Act, No.34 of 1950.

## **PART 2**

# **THE ROYAL CEYLON NAVY**

**1950 - 1972**

# THE ROYAL CEYLON NAVY

## Contents

Introduction:        The story of this book....continued

### *The historical narrative*

Chapter	1	CEYLON: 1950-1956
Chapter	2	A Navy for the future: Defining the Navy's Role
Chapter	3	CEYLON: 1956-1960
Chapter	4	Expansion as a "Blue Water" Navy
Chapter	5	CEYLON: 1960-1965
Chapter	6	The Navy Becalmed
Chapter	7	CEYLON: 1965-1971
Chapter	8	Small Ships and Big Ideas
Chapter	9	The end of innocence: the war on terror

## **Supplementary Chapters**

### **Personal Recollections and Marginal Notes**

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. Officer Cadet Training in the Navy                 | <i>Adm. A.H.A.de Silva</i>         |
| 2. H.M.Cy.S.Vijaya: the first ship                    | <i>Capt. M.M.A.Wahid</i>           |
| 3. The Navy's First Operational Base                  | <i>MCPO E.A.Jansen</i>             |
| 4. "Vijaya" goes to Grimsby                           | <i>Capt.(s) A.G.Devendra</i>       |
| 5. Joint Exercises Trincomalee (JET)                  | <i>Capt. M.M.A Wahid</i>           |
| 6. The "Blue Water" Fleet: the Ships that sailed away |                                    |
| 7. Operation "Goshen"                                 | <i>Cdr(E) E.L.Matthysz</i>         |
| 8, "M.G.S of the Academy:" Teacher to the Navy        | <i>SD</i>                          |
| 9. Looking Back at UNIPOM                             | <i>Lt.Cdr.F.J.Dominic</i>          |
| 10.The Naval contribution to national development     | <i>Lt.Cdr.(E) D.C.D.Lecamvasam</i> |
| 11.A Handful of mustard seeds                         | <i>L/S Thiele (and others)</i>     |
| 12.Insurgency '71: Some Personal Experiences          | <i>MCPO E.A.Jansen</i>             |
| 12.Circumnavigaton Under Sail                         | <i>Lt.Cdr. M.H.Weliwitigoda</i>    |
| 14.Maintenance of Lighthouses                         | <i>Commodore C.I.F.Attanayake</i>  |

## Introduction:

### *"The story of this book"...continued.*

Although presented in several Parts, this account of the birth and growth of the Navy is intended to be a linked narrative and, hence, the link with the preceding Part must be made clear to the reader. This Introduction takes up the tale from where the introduction to the earlier Part ended and – for the convenience of the reader – it is necessary to recapitulate the closing words. Speaking of the MSS I had presented for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, I said:

"In the MSS I had withdrawn (titled "**The Navy and the Nation**") I had included a few chapters on the CRNVR, other chapters on the post-1983 Navy and several Appendices describing the Navy in 1998. These formed about half the text. The present volume includes the whole of the first volume (rather than a few chapters) as the volume is out of print and it does not deal with the post-1976 Navy, either, as I am not qualified to write about that period. However, a few chapters have been added to provide a political, sociological and military context to a narrative that had earlier been too narrow in scope.

Eight years of work with the Centre for the Study of Human Rights (CSHR) of the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo, teaching Human Rights to military and police personnel, made me realize that the lack of an understanding of what Sri Lanka and its Armed Forces had been before 1983, was a major barrier to understanding the changes that had occurred in the Armed Forces and the country since then. Without interpolating the socio-political parameter to the narrative, neither military personnel nor civilian readers could follow the logic of what, and how, a near breakdown of law and order occurred in 1983; and I incorporated this in the Handbook

for Military Instructors complied by me as Editor-in-chief. All three Parts of this book now incorporate the socio-political context.

The material relating to the Royal Ceylon Navy follows closely to chapters in the MSS I had earlier submitted, and later withdrawn, but amended with the addition of a socio-political commentary, and forms Part 2 of the present volume.”

A few more words are necessary to complete the picture. After the MSS was withdrawn it remained among my papers gathering dust. I would occasionally dust it off and wonder what to do with it as it had the makings of a useful continuation of the earlier book. But there was no call for one, nor was I convinced that a private publication would find a market. By this time I had gone beyond naval history, was phasing-out my work in maritime archaeology and drifting towards research into traditional watercraft and my priorities were, thus, far away from the Navy. It was at this juncture that I met and began to interact with Sergei de Silva-Ranasinghe, a Sri Lankan by birth who was domiciled in Australia. He was, then, starting out on a study of Australian wartime activities in the Indian Ocean and was in the country to carry out his field work on Sri Lanka’s military activity in World War 2. He had come across my work on the CRNVR, was convinced that it was the only work of its kind on the Navy and that the original idea of writing Parts 2 (“The Royal Ceylon Navy”) and Part 3 (“The Sri Lanka Navy”) should be taken in hand. In the course of some years we sketched out a plan where I would write the narrative and he would add a more objective analysis for what was to be a co-authored publication. For this purpose the interpolation of chapters describing socio-political developments was deemed essential to place the narrative in context. Tentatively titled “Emerging Navy, Emerging Nation”, a start was made by outlining the intent and purpose but, as with many good intentions, the work did not go beyond that and the new chapters were left unwritten. Thus the MSS which I had withdrawn remained untouched.

I few years later, another researcher into military history, Mr. Jagath Senaratne, showed interest in my work and I had lent him my MSS to read. We had been in desultory contact over the years, and would meet from time to time. His enthusiasm was lively but mine was fading. I had undergone cardiac surgery years earlier and now had to face cataract surgery in both eyes. By the time it was necessary to operate on the second eye my mind was far away from research and I was in no mood to discuss this subject: I told him so, stressing that, as my finances were strained I would consider selling the MSS if it would raise funds for the operation. Jagath asked for time to consider making an offer, which he did in a commendably short time and so the ownership of my MSS "The Navy and the Nation" changed hands. It is important for me, at this stage, that I place on record my sincere thanks to Jagath Senaratne for his willingness to help me in a time of need.

The surgery over, I was facing new eye- and other health-related problems when I was once again brought into close contact with the Navy. The many ways in which the Navy helped me in those days cannot be listed but I must mention one. When my personal website was hacked it was the Navy which detected it first. It was then that I realized that the Navy had been monitoring my earlier website which contained much material on the Navy. The Navy now offered to host all my research and a new chapter in my relationship with the Navy opened. It culminated in a suggestion by the present Navy Commander, VADM Ravindra Wijegunawardena, when I called on him. He thought it important that I continue my first volume to include the Royal Ceylon Navy as most officers in the Navy today were not familiar with it. It sounded exactly like the situation I had seen in the RCyN with regard to the CRNVR. I agreed and set about locating the plans made for a volume to be co-authored with Sergei de Silva-Ranasinghe, but not completed. Since my original MSS "The Navy and the Nation" was no longer mine, the new volume was to be significantly different. Hence I decided that (1) the whole of the first volume (Part 1 of this book) be incorporated; (2) the focus to be on the RCyN; and (3) the Sri

Lanka Navy only be briefly ushered onstage, leaving out all material concerning the Sri Lanka Navy after 1976, the year I retired. In this personal narrative I felt could not go beyond that date.

The most important part of this book is the chapters that concern the RCyN and they draw upon the same material used in writing “The Navy and the Nation”. The year it was written was the last time I accessed the Navy Records Room. The difference between those chapters and the chapters included in this volume is that, in this volume, socio-political commentaries are interpolated between chapters, placing them in temporal context and providing narrative continuity. These chapters demonstrate how the RCyN is the essential link between the CRNVR and the SLN, and how the “three navies” are, in fact, one. These interpolated commentaries also seek to establish the *raison d’être* for many things that happened to the navy during that time.

It was in 1999-2000 that I was last able to access the Navy Record Room. Then, the Navy was deeply involved in a civil war, with many calls upon its time and resources. There was little time and effort to spare for research. In the Record Room I was unhappy to note that, while there was a mass of files, there was no material I could draw upon that reflected the more human side of the Navy. Capt. Beauchamp had had the vision to ask his officers to write in their personal reminiscences and they had complied, and this material had been of immense help to me in fleshing out the dry facts in the official records. Unfortunately I found no such material in the RCyN records. Officers and sailors had not put down personal reminiscences on paper, either in reports or informal writings. The only useful material was what I had collected over the years from the interviews with persons, Ships’ Day souvenirs, journals published by various associations and institutions (as the Buddhist Association and the Naval & Maritime Academy) but, within the limited time available I had to focus on collecting what material I could from the Record Room. This material thus collected was much drier in content –being really a collection and re-arrange-

*"We must have a Navy"*

ment of recorded facts – and far less human than I wished for. This dryness is reflected in the narrative that follows and I must apologise to the reader for this.

Dryness and impersonality apart, I have arranged the material in each chapter in a standard format: Command & Administration; Bases, Ships & Duties at sea; Aid to Civil Power; Ceremonial duties; Visits abroad; and Training & Operations at sea. Other material specific to each chapter is also included. Whatever personal material I had been able to gather have been included as Supplementary Chapters.

It is hoped that the exercise will prove useful.

S.D.

November, 2015

## CHAPTER 1

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### CEYLON: 1950-1956

Ceylon in 1950 was far different from what she had been in 1937 when the Navy came into being. She was no longer a Crown Colony. The efforts of the “moderates” had prevailed and the Board of Ministers of the State Council had, while never deviating from the demand for self-rule, posed no great challenges to the wartime leadership of this country. Under war conditions the Colonial Governor was relegated to second place and the Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Geoffrey Layton, assumed supreme power. In these circumstances the State Council and the Board of Ministers had to resort to constructive co-operation and diplomacy.

*“During World War II Ceylon’s administration was placed under military authority. A Civil Defense Department was formed on December 1, 1941, and it helped to unite the civil and military authorities in the country. Sir Oliver Goonetilleke, the Auditor General, became the Civil Defense Commissioner and Sir Ivor Jennings, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ceylon, was his deputy. As Minister of Agriculture and Lands, D S Senanayake was also involved in this department, in charge of food supplies. The department’s services became so vital to the smooth running of the island that Goonetilleke renamed the organization the “Breakdown Gang”.*

*The three men met almost every evening to discuss various issues, including civil defense. Unlike India, Ceylon lacked a Reform Ministry, however, the workings of the “Breakdown Gang” could be perceived as commensurate to one, with D S Senanayake as minister, Goonetilleke as permanent secretary and Jennings as constitutional advisor. It was during these years that the germ of an idea D S Senanayake formed to attain independence developed into a grandiose strategy, with the assistance of Goonetilleke and Jennings”<sup>1</sup>*

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1 K.T.Rajasingham, “Sri Lanka: the untold story”

This strategy involved the inclusion of non-Sinhalese in the Board of Ministers, making Ceylon indispensable to the embattled British Empire and to avoid the radical politics of the Indian National Congress which was influencing certain elements of the society. The push for Self-Rule was softened by a marked preference for “independence within the British Commonwealth of Nations”. In response Britain asked the Board of Ministers to present proposals: proposals which angered the Gover, Sir Andrew Caldecott, who wanted much less devolution of power. The Home Government agreed to a new Commission under Lord Soulbury and one fall-out of all these moves was the appointment of a new Governor, Henry Monk-Mason Moore, to succeed Andrew Caldecott. The “moderates” played their game in the height of the war and it is through their back-door diplomacy and demonstration of willingness both to co-operate and compromise that the next moves were made. A disinclination of the post-war British Government to hold on to distant colonies during a period of austerity at home and radical nationalism in India no doubt affected decisions. A far greater degree of self-government and control of internal affairs was granted and the General Election of 1947 year took place. Almost all the Sinhalese and Tamil parties agreed to form a government under D.S.Senanayake, leaving the LSSP to lead the Opposition. Within several months, full “Dominion Status” was granted: the Governor (appointed by the British Government) was elevated to the almost ceremonial post of Governor-General (appointed by the Queen on the advice of the Prime Minister) and the Duke of Gloucester arrived for the formal hand-over of power on 4<sup>th</sup>.February, 1948.

The major change that occurred with Dominion status was that, from February 4<sup>th</sup>. Ceylon had full control over Defence and External Affairs. As far as Defence was involved it became necessary to make laws for the raising and maintenance of Armed Forces. In December ‘47, the Prime Minister wished to collect details of all amendments to Legislative Enactments that would be necessary upon Independence. C. O. CRNVR replied that the only amendments necessary would be the changing of the word “Gov-

ernor" to read "Governor-General". In May, 1948 the same year, he forwarded a draft bill on the same subject. Eventually, both were set aside and the British Naval Discipline Act served the Legal Draughtsman as a model for the new Act, and this was accepted *in toto*, including sections which had no relevance to Ceylon's Navy. This Act is quite different from the Army Act of 1949, which also served as the template for the Air Force Act in 1951. The differences are important and merit serious study, not undertaken here.

But even before these Forces had been raised, the demobilized CDF and CRNVR had been called upon in an "Aid to Civil Power" operation. This was in 1947, when the Trade Unions had called a General Strike. This was the first time that the Military was mobilized for IS duties, and the introduction of the future military personnel of Ceylon to post-war active service and this was to have an impact on the Forces in years to come.

Although the Forces had to look after both external threats and internal threats, it would have been impossible for it to meet any external threats for many years to come. The government therefore signed a "Defence Agreement" with Britain for that country to provide us a "safety net" against external threats. The external threat that was feared in these early days of the "Cold War" was, largely, from Communist countries and, to a lesser extent, from India. Although Britain agreed to provide protection against external threats, Ceylon's distance from Britain made it difficult for assistance to be provided at very short notice, particularly as India was identified as one possible threat. Thus it was agreed that Britain was allowed the use of bases in Ceylon.

The identification of India as a potential threat was due to many reasons other than the traditional fear of India. While Ceylon had gained Independence through negotiation, India had won it by a protracted struggle. India was determined to forge its own foreign policy, which included friendly relations with the "Iron Curtain" countries. Diplomatically, India and Britain viewed each other with suspicion. Ceylon's willingness to remain under British

“protection”, therefore, made it suspect in India’s eyes. Further, when Ceylon supported the formation of a “South East Asian Treaty Organization”(SEATO), similarly to the “North Atlantic Treaty Organization”(NATO), which was strongly criticized by India and several Asian countries, Ceylon came to be regarded as an ally of the western powers: a view that led it to be denied membership in the United Nations as being a country not really free. It was only at the end of 1955- seven years after Independence, that Ceylon gained membership in the UNO.

With the Defence Agreements in place Ceylon was depended on British power to overcome external threats. This left internal conflicts and threats as an area for Police action and, when the Police resources were depleted, the Army and Navy could be called in to provide “Aid to Civil power” and thus, for these Forces, their first identified hostile force was the people of the country. This Police-Armed Forces nexus was first tested during the “Hartal” of 1953 when an increase in the price of rice led to widespread opposition from Trade Unions. Both the Police and the Forces were not ready for the scale of the opposition and, apparently, even the trade unionists were not ready to test the yet-untested soldiers.

“During this deployment many innovations were necessary to control violence since the application of Section 95 of the Criminal Procedure Code could not be resorted to because of the widespread nature of operation and the non-availability of Magistrates at required places whenever situations arose.”<sup>2</sup>

Finally law and order was restored, but the new Prime Minister, Dudley Senanayake who had succeeded D.S.Senanayake at his death, resigned. Sir John Kotelawela followed him as Prime Minister.

Under D.S.Senanayake Sri Lanka had followed a foreign policy which was quite at variance with Britain or India. In one in-

stance, when during an Indo-Pakistan war, Pakistani aircraft/ships were permitted to re-fuel at Colombo on their way from East to West Pakistan and *vice versa*, much to Indian chagrin. Later, with the Korean War waging, China was in great need of rubber which no-one was willing to sell it for Cold War reasons. Ceylon agreed to sell it, linking the sale to the supply of rice at an agreed price, thus leading to the "Rubber-Rice Pact" which was to sustain Ceylon for a long time. Later yet, Sir John Kotelawela raised Indian hackles again when he adopted a stance independent of India at the Bandung Conference.

However, popular opinion was gathering against the UNP-led government which had produced three Prime Ministers, of whom one had resigned. There had been intra-party problems and one of the original groupings, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike of the "Sinhala Maha Sabha", had crossed the floor and started the Sri Lanka Freedom Party in the Opposition. In the country there was much unrest centering around the Defence Agreement, the perceived influence of the Roman Catholic Church on the government and the call for the Sinhala language to be the Official Language. The period ended with the UNP-led government losing at the general election and the election of Bandaranaike as the new Prime Minister.

## CHAPTER 2

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### A NAVY FOR THE FUTURE 1951 – 1956 – DEFINING THE NAVY'S ROLE

#### **Evolution of role**

After the war years, the CRNVR had had some years of experience in a peacetime role and the experience gained during those years had now to be formalized and defined. Some of the traditional roles of a non-seagoing peacetime Navy had already been adopted and acted upon by the "Nucleus", such as Aid to Civil Power, Port & Harbour services, Ceremonial duties, Security services, Maintenance of Public Utilities in emergencies, Coast guard & Customs functions and flood Relief. The voyage to Burma, too, was to keeping the White Ensign flying: a specific role for a "navy-in-waiting". Others roles, such as Fisheries Protection, Inland water transport, Hydrographic Survey, Air-sea rescue services and Troop transport, which had been envisaged in the days before demobilization, had not yet been taken in hand. Tasks were assumed as and when circumstances dictated.

A role for the Navy thus grew around the fact that it existed, rather than on paper or pre-planned policy. There was a Navy, and when its expertise was required, it was called upon to perform it. Budget allocations, cadre & complement, purchase of craft and equipment and technical support systems followed. It was all unplanned and simple.

## **Command & Administration**

Before the Navy Act was passed into law, Lt.Cdr. G.R.M. de Mel proceeded to England on a year's training on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1950. Capt. W.E.Banks, CBE, DSC, RN, who had previously been appointed Naval Advisor to the Government of Ceylon on 1<sup>st</sup> February, 1950, took over as C.O.CRNVR in addition and, with the passage of the Act, was appointed the first "Captain of the Navy" and served for one year after which he was succeeded, in turn, by Capt. J.R.S.Brown and Commodore P.M.B.Chavasse. The first Ceylonese officer to be appointed in command was Capt. G.R.M. de Mel. During the period 1950-1956, therefore, the following served as Captains of the Navy:

Capt. W.E.Banks, CBE, DSC, RN	9.12.50 - 26.11.51
Capt. J.R.S.Brown, RN	27.11.51 - 14.6.53
Capt.(later Commodore)P.M.B.Chavasse,DSC,RN	15.6.53-11.7.55
Capt.(later Rear Adm.)G.R.M.de Mel, OBE,RCyN	12.7.55

The newly-formed Regular Navy did not forget its roots and, as a fitting gesture, the man who had fashioned the CRNVR. Capt.W.G.Beauchamp was accorded a ceremonial farewell party on 4<sup>th</sup> May, 1951.

On 7<sup>th</sup> January, 1952, the first Board Meeting of the Navy was held. Present were:

Captain of the Navy	Capt.J.R.S.Brown, RN
Chief of Staff	Cdr. G.R.M.de Mel,RCyN
Staff Officer, Plans	Lt.Cdr.R.Kadirgammara, RCyN
Staff Officer, Training	Cdr.Ball, RN <sup>3</sup> , and
Staff Supplies Officer	Lt.Cdr.K.M.Martinus, RCyN.

The composition of the Board reflects the smallness of the Navy then and the limits of its scope.

3 It is not possible, at this time, to find his initials and whether he was the same officer who commanded the "Flying Fish" on the passage from Singapore to Ceylon for handing her over to Ceylon.

By a Regulation gazetted in accordance with section 159 of the Navy Act, Trincomalee was declared a Naval Port and placed under the control of the Captain of the Navy. It is likely that this move was to facilitate the continuation of the naval Base there, H.M.S. "Highflyer", under RN command under the Defence Agreement signed between the governments of the two countries at the time Independence was granted. Other British bases in Diyatalawa and Welisara, too, continued under British control. This was not a popular arrangement and was to lead to political dissent in the years to come.

The seniority of the Armed Forces *vis-à-vis* each other now came in for scrutiny and determination. Following the tradition in the U.K., the Navy had been deemed the Senior Service, taking precedence over the other services, the Army and Air Force. This probably stemmed from the fact that the CRNVR was an arm of the Senior Service in the pre-Independence period. During this formative period, a case had been made that this tradition need not be followed in Ceylon, particularly because the Army had been formed by law before the Navy. The Army was accorded the position of the "Senior Service" in Ceylon by Gazette Notification.

## **Officer training**

As had been noted in Part 1, the officer cadre of the future had already been selected and sent to the U.K. for training. The first intake of Sub Lts. comprised P. D. Nathanielsz, M. Chanmugam, M. C. Gauder, W. M. A. Wahid, M. Wanduragala, W. Dharmadasa and J. A. Ratnayake. They joined the service on 1st March 1950 and were sent to Royal Naval College Greenwich, U. K. for training in R N training ships and establishments. The first intake of Officer Cadets comprised A. H. A. de Silva, D. A. G. Fernando, R. Aliraja, K. N. Jilla, J. C. Kelaart and J. A. P. L. Perera, who joined the service on 1st September 1950 and were sent for full cadet-entry training to Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth.

In the 1950-56 period more cadets were selected and sent to Dartmouth. They were:

- 2<sup>nd</sup>. Intake: L.V.Balthazaar, B.N.Dharmaratne, J.M. Wright  
 3<sup>rd</sup>. Intake: L.S.Dissanayake, H.N.Gunawardena, A.B.Henricus,  
 M.R.Rajasingham, K.J.R.Serpanchy,  
 A.B.T.Tambinayagam, D.E.Weerasingha,  
 H.E.Wijesingha  
 4<sup>th</sup>. Intake: G.H.M.P.Elikewela, C.M.J.G.Fernando, F.M.Dhar  
 maratne, B.G.Jacob, H.B.Perera, H.A.Silva  
 5<sup>th</sup>. Intake: A.N.de Andrado, H.J.S.Baldsing, W.N.D.Boteju,  
 G.M.F.Marshall  
 6<sup>th</sup>. Intake: F.J.Dominic, J.Jayasooriya, D.C.D.Lecamvasam,  
 K.R.L.Perera, E.R.Phillips, P.M.Thambugala  
 7<sup>th</sup>. Intake: E.P.D.Caspersz, R.C.Fernando, R.S.Jayatileke,  
 B.Y.C.Lecamvasam, G.M.F.Marshall, M.R.Tharma  
 seelan

*Supplementary Chapter 1* gives an account of traing at BRNC Dartmouth by one of the first intake cadets, late Adm. A,H.A.de Silva.

### **Bases, ships & duties at sea**

At the beginning of this period, the Navy's presence on shore was limited to H.M.Cy.S "Gemunu 1", the tender to Naval Headquarters (on Flagstaff Street), situated at Galle Buck, to which location the Barracks from Kochchikade moved in May, 1951. The Engineering workshop, Boom Defence Depot and Boatyard and the VNF facilities at Kochchikade was commissioned "Gemunu 11" with a separate Commanding Officer. A wardroom for Regular officers at No.6, Flagstaff Street, had been taken over in 1950. The Auxillary Barracks were taken over from the Public Works Department on 15.2.52 and the buildings that were to house the Sick Quarters also taken over on 23.8.52. The same year, the Na-

val Sports Pavilion was constructed in the Navy Grounds at Galle Face.

The first requirement of space for expansion outside Colombo was for Training purposes. A training camp was set up in Diyatalawa: 'Thistle' camp which was taken over from the Air Force and four married quarters, also at the same camp, were subsequently taken over from the Army. It was commissioned shortly afterwards, on 28.8.51, as H.M.Cy.S. "Rangalla", and Lt.R.Proctor was appointed in command. There does not seem to have been a policy or plan for naming ships and establishments. Shore establishments, other than "Gemunu", were named after place names and it is believed that "Rangalla" was a mis-spelling or mis-pronunciation of the name of a prominent hill, Rahangala, that overlooked the base. "Rangalla" was a recruit training centre essentially. Recruit intakes were small in number, though frequent: in 1951-52 the numbers under mobilization was 510 and in 1955-56 it was 771. "Rangalla" was later shifted to more commodious quarters.

Very soon anti-smuggling and anti-illicit immigration emerged as prime operational areas of the Navy, as of the Army. "Smuggling", the unauthorised movement of goods across the Palk Strait had been long recognized as an 'illegal' activity by all colonial powers from Portuguese times. It is difficult to imagine it was non-existent during British rule although it may have been kept in check during the war years. With India and Ceylon becoming independent of Britain and Customs barriers being set up on both sides of the Palk Strait, it now became an international problem. "Illicit immigration" was different from smuggling because it involved the movement of persons rather than material goods. Plantation workers of Indian origin who formed the greater part of the workers on Tea Estates now became "nobody's baby" after the two countries ceased to be under British rule were routinely sent back to India as non-citizens and, as routinely, made their way back to the comforts of the comparative comfort of Ceylon Plantations

where they had lived and worked many years. It was a genuinely human problem to persons in both countries. <sup>4</sup>They now became “Is” in military jargon. “Anti illicit immigration” became one of the longest-running operations carried out by the Army and Navy and in later years operations were conducted under a Task Force names “TAFAIL” (Task Force Anti Illicit Immigration) till the formula to solve it was worked out under the “Sirima-Shastri Pact” in the 1970s. The Army was also manning coast watching points and the first operational base of the Navy was a former Army camp, at the mouth of a little river called Kal Aru, eight miles south of the nearest village, Silavatturai. This was manned by a naval detachment and consisted of three cadjan huts: one for officers and an armoury, one for sailors and one for a galley, all built upon a floor of sea sand. In keeping with the practice of naming a shore establishment after a place this little cluster of huts was commissioned on 20.5.53 as “H.M.Cy.S. Kal Aru”. Lt.P.D. Nathanielsz was appointed in command. Sailors were required to carry out patrols along the beach north and south of the camp to keep a watch for craft trying to make for shore with contraband or illegal immigrants. *Supplementary Chapter 2* gives a very human account of life in this camp. This base did not continue long and in a few months, on 8.10.53 “Kal Aru” was decommissioned and the Navy moved to Talaimannar. The new base, on the pier, had marginally better facilities, a railway carriage equipped with telegraphic and radio communication facilities serving as the first Operations Room. This northern base was commissioned, as H.M.Cy.S. “Elara”, probably as there was a “Gemunu” was in the south. Lt.P.D.Nathanielsz again was in command.

Coastal surveillance was yet the main operational function. It was here that the Navy began to patrol the coastline from seawards, using small boats. As the Navy lacked boats of its own for the work, craft were lent by the Colombo Port Commission and

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Lt. (later Cdr.) Rajah Proctor, noted novelist and short story writer, has written a per-spicious novel, “Illicit Immigrant”, exploring this human problem. Lake House Investments Ltd. 1977.

the Fisheries Department - "Lion", "Halmessa", "Thalapatha" and "Adi Sali". Later, the Police launch "Kossa" joined the "fleet" as its "flagship". When the Navy eventually acquired patrol craft of its own these were returned.

The Navy's role in this operational area, after it received its patrol craft was, of course, to be effective at sea. The craft soon began arriving:

- H.M.Cy.Ships "Hansaya" (Lt.M.Chanmugam) and "Lihiniya" (Lt.W.Dharmadasa), hard chine and metal hulled Long Patrol Boats (LPB), commissioned on 4.1.55;
- H.M.Cy.S. "Kotiya" (Lt.Cdr.A.M.Caldera), Seaward Defence Boat (SDB) commissioned on 8.5.55;
- H.M.Cy.S. "Seruwa" (Sub Lt.K.N.Jilla), wooden hulled Short Patrol Boat (SPB) commissioned on 15.7.55.

With the arrival of the patrol craft, a base better-equipped to service seaward operations became necessary and a former RN Flying boat base at Karainagar was taken over as an Advance Naval Base on 16.4.54. On 15.9.55 H.M.Cy.S. "Elara" did a flag shift there, and the Talaimannar base closed down. This first major operational base provided for a Commander, Northern Area (CNA) and Cdr. R.Kadirgamar was appointed to this post on 15.5.55. Three more Short Patrol Boats were taken delivery of and commissioned:

- H.M.Cy.S "Diyakawa" (Commissioned Boatswain F.A.A.Serpancy),
- H.M.Cy.S "Tarawa" (Commissioned Boatswain E.R.Christoffelsz) and
- H.M.Cy.S "Korawakka" (Commissioned Boatswain A.A.H. Van Reyk).

*(NOTE: Officers commissioned from the ranks were titled "Commissioned ...." according to branch and addressed as "Mr." They wore shoulder straps with thin stripes. This practice continued till the mid-1960s when this rank was abolished)*

All the LPBs and SPBs were attached to “Elara” for operational duties. Powers under the Customs Ordinance were devolved on naval officers carrying out anti-smuggling duties and persons taken into custody under these powers were dealt with under that Ordinance.

### **Aid to Civil Power**

Internal security continued to be a major task, with several politically significant events taking place which had the potential of causing civil disturbance. These included the death of the Prime Minister D.S.Senanayake and uncertainty over succession; the “Hartal” period of civil disturbance in 1953; the resignation of Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake and his succession by Sir John Kotelawela; and the weakening of the governing party’s majority by the defection of the Leader of the House, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike and some others. The cry for “Sinhala Only” began to be heard, as also a movement to give the Sinhala-Buddhist majority a greater share of power. The Navy was thus kept on its toes and called out to act in aid to civil power from time to time. The most memorable of the occasions when the Navy was called out was in 1953 when it was called upon to restore law and order in the Pettah.

*“The Royal Ceylon Navy was responsible for the defence of the Pettah and the Port. A section of naval personnel was approached by a jeering mob. Its leader lifted his sarong in the traditional gesture of contempt. He was shot in the area of his exposition!!! The crowd fled. The Emergency Regulations protected the man who fired the shot.”<sup>5</sup>*

Naval legend has it that the Navy struck terror in the Pettah which was considered the most difficult area. This is borne out by the same authority as above:

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5 Colin de Silva, first Asst. Secretary of Defence, quoted in “Sri Lanka Army, Fifty years on, 1949-1999” 1999

*"The situation throughout Colombo was discussed and deemed to be so dangerous that, when the Pettah was mentined, Sir Oliver said with his usual stammer 'C...C..Colin, the Pettah is f...f...finished'"*<sup>6</sup>

Naval legend has it that, after the Emergency was lifted the Navy, flushed with success, staged a march past the Parliament in 'blues' with bayonets fixed and the Police ringed Parliament against the possibility of an attack! This was the "Blue Angels March".

Whether the events of 1953 had a bearing on this is not recorded but in keeping with the Navy's commitment to safeguard all Port services, the Volunteer Naval Force (VNF) commissioned another Division, the Port Division, as H.M.Cy.S. "Tissa". It comprised essential officials of the Port Commission and was commanded by their senior-most member, Capt. M.Chandrasoma, OBE, which continued in existence till 31.8.56, when it was de-commissioned. (The writer, incidentally, recalls attending the funeral of one of these officers where he was accorded full naval honours.)

## **Ceremonial duties**

Several significant ceremonial tasks were undertaken during this period. One of the first was the firing of 21-gun Salute to the Nation on the first Anniversary of Independence, when "Vi-jaya" had to cope, successfully, with the task of firing her single 4" gun without a mishap. This incident was related personally by the late Lt.Cdr. M.H.Weliwitigoda while recording his memoirs to the writer. The Navy did not have saluting guns at that time. This event marks the beginning of the Navy's annual "Salute to the Nation" on Independence Day.

A solemn occasion was the funeral of the first Prime Minis-

ter, D.S.Senanayake, on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 1952, when the Navy ‘manned the rope’ for the “Ransivige” and provided pall-bearers and a contingent.

Princess Elizabeth, as she was then, on a honeymoon cruise, was due to visit Ceylon and to declare open the “Colombo Plan Exhibition”. Saluting gund were acquired to fire a Royal Salute and mounted at the Battenburg Battery. All plans had, however, to be abandoned as the reigning King, George VI died and the Princess had to return home. The newly acquired Saluting Guns were soon put to good use, to fire a salute to the deceased Head of State.

A more festive occasion was that of participation in the Coronation Celebrations of Queen Elizabeth II, which took place when “Vijaya” was in Grimsby for a major refit. She carried the Coronation contingent under Cdr.Murray and Lt.Cdr. Proctor, but was unable to take part in the Fleet Review at Portsmouth because she was in dry dock. Instead, the RN lent a similar class of ship hastily commissioned “Vijaya II” so that the R.Cy.N. also participated in the Review and was deemed inspected by the Queen.

More important was the visit of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to Ceylon in 1954 on board the Royal Yacht “Gothic”. “Vijaya”, which had returned after refit, steamed south of Colombo to rendezvous with her and took over escort duties from the Australian and New Zealand ships three miles out of Colombo. The Royal Ceylon Air Force (RCyAF) provided an air escort. “Vijaya” entered harbour ahead of the “Gothic” but remained in the stream while the Royal Yacht became the first ship to secure at, what was to be named, the Queen Elizabeth Quay. The Navy Paraded a Royal Guard on the pier and awaited the Queen. The Official Programme called for the Royal Standard to be broken and a Royal Salute of 21 guns also to be fired as the Queen stepped ashore. Seeing her emerging, the Captain of the Navy, Commodore Chavasse, gave the pre-arranged signal to break out the Royal Standard. Following this, the guns boomed out a Royal Salute and the Guard Presented Arms. The figure on the gangway stood

at attention acknowledging the Salute but she was, alas! not the Queen, but her Lady-in Waiting, Lady Pamela Mountbatten whom the Captain of the Navy, in his excitement, had not recognized. (This error, it is said, cost Cmdr. Chavasse his future promotions in the RN, being reverted to Captain on return to Britain and retiring in that rank.) The Queen and Prince Phillip visited "Vijaya" and the latter was hosted to a dinner at the Wardroom.

H.R.H. Prince Phillip, the Duke of Edinburgh re-visited Ceylon the next year on board the Royal Yacht "Brittania" which was escorted by "Vijaya". He was entertained by the Officers of the Armed Forces at the Navy Wardroom.

## **Visits abroad**

The first cruise undertaken, after the formation of the R. Cy.N., was by "Vijaya". In May, 1951 she paid a short visit to the Maldives with Sir John Kotelawala, Minister for Transport and Works and his party on board.

"Vijaya" paid another call to participate in the Proclamation of the Maldivian Republic. Wtr. S.L.Fernando, President, Buddhist Association, presented the new President with a Buddhist Flag bearing the legend: "Presented by the Buddhists of the Royal Ceylon Navy to the President on the occasion of the Proclamation of the Maldivian Republic on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1953."

"Vijaya" sailed to England for a D/2 refit in 1953. The refit was carried out at Humber Graving Dock at Grimsby at an approximate cost of Pds.Stg. 1.6 million, or Rs. 25 m at 1953 conversion rates. The voyage, under the command of Lt.Cdr.Proctor, was an eventful one. The Coronation contingent also took passage. "Vijaya" was already in a sorry shape when she left harbour and worse after mis-handling in Bombay by the Harbour Pilot who overrated her capacity to answer the helm, presuming she was powered by steam turbines while she only had steam reciprocating engines.

After emergency patching up, her next stop was at Port Said to pick up the (Egyptian) Pilot for the Suez canal and “Vijaya” was run aground there and damaged a propeller. After temporary repairs, the voyage continued with a noisy and defective properller. Stops at Malta and Gibraltar followed and, in the English Channel, “Vijaya” was fog-bound in a “pea souper” for 24 hours, when electrical failures led to the radar having to be turned by hand by a sailor atop the mast with a stop-watch in hand, wrapped up in blankets as they had no duffel coats (Lt.Cdr.M.H.Weliwitigoda). Contrary to the prophets of doom, she reached her destination safely, to banner rnewspaper headlines: “THE FLEET’S IN!”. (The R.Cy.N., then, gloried in the description of her as “The One-Ship Navy”). *Supplementary Chapter 3* gives a short first-person account of the voyage.

“Vijaya” undertook her second visit to Burma in 1955, carrying a group of persons to participate in the “Chatta Sangayana”. Fifty-two Buddhist Officers and sailors including CPO M.Peter Perera and P.O. (later Lt.(s)) I.C.Theswa, Patron and President, respectively, of the Naval Buddhist Association; twenty-nine Army soldiers led by Major Sepala Attygalle and seven Air Force personnel led by Flt.Lt. Paddy Mendis also took passage. The delegation was led by the Honorary Chaplain to the Forces, the Ven. Indiruwe Pannatissa. A gift of a sapling from the “Sri Maha Bodhiya” was carried as a gift to Burma. In return, the Burma Navy Buddhist Association presented a 5-ft., 1,500 lb. statue of the Buddha and several other smaller statues. One of the smaller statues was later enshrined at the Tissa Viharaya in Trincomalee Dockyard. The large statue was kept for a while at the Mahabodhi Society premises and later, under the patronage of the Lanka Balamandalaya, installed at the Nagadvipa Temple. This was on 6.2.56 and the Commander, Northern Area, Cdr. Kadigammar performed the ceremony. Two years later, the statue was desecrated and dumped into the sea during the Language riots. However, the story was kept away from the Press, to prevent emotional responses and, before the Emergency was lifted, a replacement was brought in

from Burma and installed. The pieces of the broken statue were later recovered from the seabed by sailors and enshrined at "Elara" where it remains for many years. It has, since, been returned to the temple.

### **Training & Operations at sea**

Apart from the cruises mentioned above, "Vijaya" undertook several training and operational tasks, including:

A visit to Port Blair in the Andaman Islands with VNF officers and sailors (1954).

A visit to Male with VNF officers and sailors (1954)

A training cruise to Bombay and Karachchi (1954)

A visit to Madras with VNF officers and sailors (1955)

A visit to Cochin on a Minseweeping exercise (1955)

She also took part in the annual JET Exercises (Joint Exercises, Trincomalee) along with other commonwealth navies every year.

### **Symbols of identity**

In keeping with the Navy's newly elevated status a Crest was considered necessary. The selected design followed the usual form of a ship's crest: a circular shield, surmounted by the Kandyan Crown, with a scroll below which carried the names of the country in three languages. Within the circular shield, ringed by stylized lotus petals (*pala peti*), was the heraldic device of a single "fouled anchor". Unlike the common fouled anchors in RN heraldry, this was "An Admiralty type stockless anchor without the stock". The reason for 'removing' the stock was that, with it in place, the initial impression was that of a Cross: and the powers-that-be wished to avoid that impression.

During the greater part of this period, Ceylon had not finally decided on a design for, nor adopted a National Flag and this had hampered the designing of a White Ensign for the Navy. Once the National flag was adopted, the R.Cy.N. had its own White Ensign. It, too was white, with the red St.George's cross but which carried the National Flag on the upper left quarter. The new Ensign was hoisted for the first time on Navy Day, 1955.

Officers of the RCyN, now a Regular Navy, did not need to wear the "wavy navy" stripes with the squarish loop worn by the Reservists of the CRNVR and now donned the straight stripes and round loop. Even officers of the Volunteer Naval Force wore the same, but with an "R" within the loop. Officers of specialized Branches wore distinguishing colours between the stripes: Supply Officer – White, Medical Officers – Red, Engineer Officers – Maroon. New specializations were assigned the colours in use in the RN.

The period under review ended with a change of government following a General Election, in which a coalition of parties opposed to the party formerly in power won by a large majority. The effect this change was to have on the Navy, whether in the short, medium or long terms, could not have been anticipated.

## CHAPTER 3

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### CEYLON: 1956-1960

#### The Significance of 1956

The year 1956 – an election year – holds a special significance in the country's political history and an equal significance in the development of the Navy. Politically, its significance is that it witnessed the culmination of a movement which had, at its centre, the empowerment of a segment of the population which, though less powerful economically, was numerically very large. In terms of social structure, this segment represented the rural and non-English speaking populace: however, there were many exceptions.

The political party in power was denigrated as “brown sahibs” who wanted to be hold on to power as lineal descendents of the British Raj. Whether such characterization was correct or not depends one's own reading of events. The movement, or the several strands within it, coalesced round the cry for “Sinhala – Buddhism” and, particularly, the cry to make Sinhala the Official Language of the country. The movement was powerful enough to make even the United National Party (UNP), the party in power, accept the cry of “Sinhala Only”. This change of heart was seen as “too little, too late” and in the General Election on 1956, the ruling UNP was reduced to a minority party. Power passed into the hands of a coalition of parties under the name of the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP) under the leadership of Prime Minister S.W.R.D.Bandaranaike.

Major changes of a radical nature were now taken in hand. As far as the Armed Forces were concerned, the abrogation of the Defence Agreements and the take-over of British bases were the most memorable. More significant in the larger scheme of things, however, was the declaration of Sinhala as

the Official Language, literally overnight. The consequences of this cannot be dealt with here other than to note that they were very far-reaching and influence matters in the country even today. The act was hailed as a famous victory by the large Sinhala population and objected to by the Tamil-speaking people. Other English-speaking groups also resented the fact that they were now relegated to the margins and opposition to the government grew. The Nationalization of schools followed and the Roman Catholic community were added to the numbers opposing the government. Open disagreement was expressed by the Federal Party led by Mr. Chelvanayagam and the Federal Party staged a *satyagraha* campaign in protest. Prevailing ill-will between the communities spilled over into violence with riots in Gal Oya leaving over a hundred dead. Violence spread to all parts of the country unchecked for almost a week in May 1958 till Emergency rule was imposed and the Military called out by the end of the month. It was an incident that was to blacken the country's name. Tarzie Vittachi, wrote a book on the period called "Emergency '58" which won him a Ramon Magsaysay award for Literature but caused him to leave the country. Finally, when a compromise formula was worked out by Messrs. Bandaranaike and Chelvanayagam (the so-called "B-C Pact") for the use of Tamil for administration in the North and East, the UNP staged a country-wide march led by J.R. Jayawardene demanding its withdrawal. Public opinion, including from major factions within the MEP government forced the Prime Minister to withdraw the pact. Subsequently, on 3 September 1958 the "Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act" was passed providing for the use of Tamil as a medium of instruction in schools, examinations for admission to the Public Service, and for administrative use in the Northern and Provinces. It substantially fulfilled part of the B-C Pact dealing with the language issue, partly re-establishing the Prime Minister's honour but not endearing him more to the restless elements within his own coalition.

The need for the government to use the Military in an internal security role yet again shows its ambivalence towards the Military – a result of compounded of “Need” and “Fear”. Politicians recognized the need for a Military, but continued to be wary of it: the fear was that the Military could become too powerful. The Army’s 50<sup>th</sup>. Anniversary publication, “Fifty Years On”, quotes Colin de Silva (a wartime Army officer who had been absorbed into the Civil Service and appointed the first Assistant Secretary for Defence) on an incident concerning the first Prime Minister, D.S.Senanayake. *En route* to Britain with the newly appointed Defence Secretary (Kandiah Vaithianathan) and Assistant Secretary (Colin de Silva) as guests of President Nguib of Egypt (who had come to power through a military *coup*), the Prime Minister commented:

*“A group of young officers were behind the coup.....They required a man of General Nguib’s stature to front for them...They will quietly retire him and take over....Actually as a matter of fact, this coup is a lesson we must ourselves learn.....**We must never give too much power to our armed forces or become dependent on them....**” (Emphasis added)*

The government that came to power in 1956 had more reservations about the Military than Senanayake. This government represented social classes that felt threatened by a “westernized”, “Christianized” and English-educated urban middle class which was seen as to holding positions of power in the Armed Forces and Police. There was also the perception that, in the period prior to 1956, these “minority” groups wielded disproportional influence and power as a result of Article 29(1) of the 1947 Constitution. As one of the moves to correct this imbalance the government, hoped to change the image of the Military into something more representative of the social/religious/ethnic structure of the population, as well as to expand it to meet its new role as guardians against external threat. The building up of the strength of the Military had been proceeding at a slow but steady pace since 1949 but the new thinking called for quick expansion. Not only were numbers in-

creased but changes were also made to the officer cadre. Direct-entry officers were inducted, some from the Universities, who were commissioned in higher ranks without military training in British academies that had so far been considered desirable. Subjects like Ceylon History, Geography and Current Affairs were made mandatory for higher rank. (On a personal note, I recall lecturing, as a civilian, on Ceylon History to Army officers sitting an examination for promotion to the rank of major.) These steps represented “new blood” and “new thinking”. Not unnaturally, this led to a “split” between these new officers on the one side and, on the other, both the young officers professionally trained in Britain and the older officers of the World War era. The effect this probably had among Military Officers will be evident in later chapters.

The final act of the drama on the political stage was enacted the following year when a Buddhist monk, Talduwe Somarama, visiting the Prime Minister at his residence, shot him at point-blank range with a pistol concealed in his robes. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike succumbed to his injuries the same day and the Leader of the House, W. Dahanayake, was sworn in as the caretaker Prime Minister. Although Parliament accepted him as Prime Minister there was only a brief honeymoon period. His most notable contribution was of putting a stop to judicial executions being carried out (following the execution of Talduwe Somarama), a decision that is yet adhered to. But he soon fell out with the party, dissolved Parliament, appointed non-Parliamentarians to a caretaker Cabinet and held General Elections in 1960, which he contested under a new party, the “Lanka Prajatantravadi Pakshaya” and lost both the Prime Minister-ship and his own seat in Parliament.

## CHAPTER 4

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### 1956 – 1960 – EXPANSION AS A “BLUE WATER” NAVY

The reasons that led to the Armed Forces focusing exclusively on internal threats have been noted: in particular the Defence Agreement. This focus, added to a lack of any specific external military threat, led to the Military gearing itself for a purely I.S. role. In the post-1956 period the opinion prevailed that the Defence Agreement should be abrogated, the British bases be closed down and the Ceylon Armed Forces should accept their role as guardians of its own shores. The new government embraced this view and the best examples of the execution of this policy, insofar as the Navy is concerned, are the abrogation of the Defence Agreements, the take-over of the Bases and the purchase of sea-going ships for the Navy. But this was to be a short-lived period which did not last beyond 1961. Nevertheless, the RCyN saw its greatest growth-spurt during this period.\_

#### **Significant changes in Foreign Policy**

The defence and foreign policy of the new government had a major impact on the Navy. The main changes flowed from the re-negotiation of the Agreements reached with the British at the time Dominion Status was granted concerning the retention of British bases on Ceylon soil. Under that Agreement, British bases of considerable size were permitted to remain and look after both external threats to Ceylon and purely British regional interests. These Bases were, mainly, the Airport at Katunayake, the Communication facility at Welisara and the Dockyard at Trincomalee although, as has been mentioned in the earlier chapter, the Naval Port of Trincomalee itself had come under the control of the Cap-

tain of the Navy.

One of the many strands of the cry against the earlier government was that this Agreement had been made a pre-condition for the grant of Dominion Status in the Commonwealth and that, therefore, the presence of the British in these bases constituted an ever-present possibility of British intervention in Ceylon politics. To the new government this was a wholly unacceptable state of affairs and the take-over of the bases was considered essential to make the country truly free of British influence. In a geo-political scenario where the world was divided into “Western” and “Eastern” power-blocs, the new government was very committed to a stand of “co-existence” in world politics: a policy, not merely of neutrality, but of “Non-Alignment” to power-blocs and of being equally friendly with all. The presence of the British bases was considered as compromising this stand. The Prime Minister articulated the stand of his government on this matter several times in Parliament and elsewhere:

*“I have dealt with the dangers of ..... the presence of bases in countries, including Ceylon.” (House of Representatives, August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1956)*

*“..... the present government of Ceylon has expressed its intention that the bases in Ceylon of Britain should cease to exist.” (Commonwealth Press Association, London, July 5<sup>th</sup> 1956.)*

*“The last remnants of colonialism in this country have been removed; the bases will no longer exist. On October 15<sup>th</sup>, this year, the base at Trincomalee will be handed over to Ceylon by the British Government. That will be one more step towards full freedom – the removal of rather stubborn remnants of Colonialism. I hope Katunayake will also be taken over.” (House of Representatives, July 24, 1957)*

*“Today our independence is complete ..... two weeks ago, at a simple but historic ceremony, the Trincomalee naval base was handed over to Ceylon. Today we have taken that agreement a step further.” (Speech at Katunayake Airport, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1957)*

## **Significance in relation to the Navy**

The closure of the bases meant that the Navy had to take over more duties and greater responsibility for the patrolling and defence of territorial waters. As a first step, however, it had to cope with the large areas of RN property that was handed over to it. The first camp taken over was "Ella" Camp at Diyatalawa in June, 1957. Up to then, naval training was carried out within a part of the Army Training Camp there but now H.M.Cy.S. "Rangalla" moved into the fully-equipped "Ella" camp. This camp was, about the end of this period, handed over to the Army and the "Uva" camp, very near the town, was taken over by the Navy as "Rangalla".

In Colombo, too, new buildings were erected along what is now named "Chaitya Road". Buildings were constructed here for the Navy and, later, an Auxillary Barracks, too. All the buildings in this complex comprised H.M.Cy.S. "Gemunu" which was a tender to Naval Headquarters. The references to "Gemunu 1" and "Gemunu 11" ceased, although the Boom Defence Depot, the Boatyard and the Workshops at Kochchikade continued to be administered from Naval Headquarters.

On 24.5.58, the VNF Wardroom at H.M.Cy.S "Lanka" at Kochchikade was ceremonially opened.

## **The take-over of the Royal Navy Base at Trincomalee**

Soon after, on 15<sup>th</sup> October the same year, the British flag was hauled down for the last time in the RN base at Trincomalee. This was considered a move of great significance and carried out with maximum media coverage. The Prime Minister and the entire Cabinet of Ministers were present, as were 63 Members of Parliament who came in a gaily decorated special train. But one man's meat is another's poison: the RN Dockyard employees who were being laid off were demonstrating outside the Dockyard gate

and the Prime Minister, who had come by air to China Bay came to take over the Base, most fittingly, by sea for the ceremony. With the closure of the the RN Base a large number of civilian workers had been laid off, most of them were Tamils. A move by government to settle 400 of them in Polonnaruwa added fuel to the smouldering fire of communal disharmony.

Speaking on the naval historical significance of this occasion, the Acting High Commissioner for the U.K., H.E. T.L. Cross-thwait, commented:

*“....that the ceremony takes place during the term of the one hundredth holder of the distinguished post of Commander-in-chief, East Indies and that the flagship of the East Indies Squadron anchored in the Bay was ‘Ceylon’. It is with pride that we see this Base transferred to the Royal Ceylon Navy which can develop to make it, in its turn, a fitting contribution to the security and well-being of your country.”*

The Prime Minister, emphasizing the significance to Ceylon of this occasion, said:

*“The ceremony today marks another milestone in the long but not uninteresting history of Trincomalee to which briefly but happily His Excellency (the acting U.K.High Commissioner) has just made reference. The relationship between the United Kingdom and Ceylon goes back to a period of over 140 years. It is a somewhat chequered history but may I say one that, on the whole, can be considered a happy one.*

*“Nearly ten years ago an important step was taken in the relationship between our two countries when Ceylon demanded and was granted Dominion status, a position of equality in the Commonwealth of Nations and, as His Excellency has mentioned, the Naval Base of Trincomalee which was used during the last war continued to be used thereafter. When my Government assumed office a little over a year ago, in pursuance of our foreign policy, we requested the Government of the United Kingdom to hand over the Naval Base of Trincomalee to us. This step was not taken in a*

*spirit of hostility.*

*"Our foreign policy which is based on friendship, co-operation with all nations and non-alignment with any of the power blocs of the world, necessitated such a step if such a policy was in fact to be effective....."*

*"You have witnessed today a simple but, I venture to think, a very impressive ceremony which will further strengthen the freedom of our country and equally strengthen those bonds of friendship between the United Kingdom and ourselves ....."*

Trincomalee had been occupied by the British since 1796, when it had been captured during the Napoleonic wars, and formally ceded to Britain at the Peace of Amiens, to secure a safe haven for the fleet in the eastern coast of India during the inter-monsoonal cyclonic periods. Its central complex therefore went back to 150 years or more and the buildings were historic ones. The base comprised several facilities, including the Dockyard, ship repair facilities, Base Stores, Armament Depot, a Fire service, Power station, Waterworks and a purification plant, Training facilities, Married quarters and many others. The tender to all this was now commissioned H.M.Cy.S "Tissa" with Lt.M.M.A.Wahid in command and the Dockyard came under Capt.I.P.Murray who was appointed Naval Officer-in-Charge, (Trincomalee), or NOIC(T). The new tasks required more men and the approved complement was accordingly raised and recruitment began. The sudden increase is graphically evident in the figures given below.

<u>Financial year</u>	<u>Officers</u>	<u>Sailors</u>
1951-52	48	510
1955-56	85	771
1956-57	91	871
1956-57	124	1550
1957-58	136	1650

Arguably one of the most difficult tasks was the taking over of all the RN property in the 1000 acre area and the Navy was short of personnel. Commissioned Supply Officer V.T.D.Amaratunga and one Supply Assistant had to cope for most of the time and, although the exercise was scheduled to be completed in two years, it had finally to be done in 9 months.

## **The Fleet**

The ships and craft the Navy possessed were totally insufficient to cope with the new responsibilities cast upon it. Along with the policy decision to take over the bases, there had to be an increase in the number and type of vessels manned by the Navy. This aspect had not been overlooked by the new Prime Minister who realized that the sea was Ceylon's first frontier and that the Navy should have a deep-sea capability. By 1956, the Navy had one minesweeper and a flotilla of small craft for anti-smuggling duties. The government thus took steps to increase the size and capacity of the navy.

In keeping with the sea-going tasks to which the Navy had geared itself during the war, and the period of planning for a post-war Navy, the choice of ships was minesweepers and frigates. The "Vijaya" was a minesweeper and another was acquired from England. Ex-H.M.S. "Pickle", also an "Algerine" class minesweeper, whose bell is still mounted outside Naval Headquarters, was taken over at Devonport, England on 12.9.58 and commissioned H.M. Cy.S. "Parakrama" under the command of Lt.Cdr.A.M.Caldera. She was a much newer ship than the "Vijaya" and was powered by steam turbines, while "Vijaya" had reciprocating engines. She was by far the best ship the Navy had, though not the largest.

Negotiations were also undertaken to buy two "River" class Frigates fitted-out with anti-submarine detection and attack equipment from Israel. The first, ex-"Mivtach" commissioned H.M.

Cy.S. "Mahasena" on 4.9.59 (Cdr.S.T.R.Proctor) was transferred to Ceylon at Djibuti in the Red Sea, while yet steaming, as there was an Arab-Israeli war on and "Mahasena" had to fly under our own colours through a war zone to prevent being attacked. The second, H.M.Cy.S. "Gajabahu", ex-"Misnak", was delivered to Colombo by an Israeli crew and commissioned on 26.4.60 (Capt.I.P.Murray). Prior to the purchase of these ships, an Ocean-going Tug, ex-H.M.S. "Adept" had been taken over from the RN and commissioned H.M.Cy.S. "Aliya" on 18.11.57 (Lt.Cdr.A.M.Caldera).

"Vijaya" continued to sail on cruises to neighbouring countries, which combined operational with training needs, while also serving as goodwill visits. In March, 1957 she sailed on a mainly operational cruise to Madras, shortly followed by another to Cochin. In May she sailed for Singapore, Port Swettenham and Penang. These cruises helped make available trained and experienced crews for the new ships as they were taken over.

This was to be the pattern to be followed to make the R. Cy.N. a force to be reckoned with in our own waters. Political events, however, once again intervened, and this point marked the apogee of the expansionist policy.

### **Political unrest and Assassination**

The MEP coalition did not succeed as a happy one. On the one hand, aggrieved forces that had lately lost power sought every opportunity to regain their influence. On another, elements within the coalition were unhappy at what was perceived as too slow a rate of change and, lastly, the Tamil political parties and their supporters sought to win back some of what were considered their lost privileges. The Prime Minister, a man of a more far-seeing nature than was viewed by many at that time, tried to build a bridge between the two major communities and the "Bandaranaike – Chelvanayagam" (or "B-C") pact, was drawn up by him and S.J.V.Chelvanayagam, the leader of the largest Tamil party.

Although there were the usual dissenting voices within the coalition, it was the ousted UNP, in a move led by J.R.Jayawardene, which gathered sufficient momentum for the Prime Minister to be forced to shelve the proposals. The communal feeling thus roused led to Island-wide communal riots in 1958 which, in turn, led to Ceylon being condemned and considered politically unstable by many countries. In the years that were yet to come, this was considered the beginning of communal tension in Ceylon. Again, this is a matter for opinion.

The Navy was involved in several emergency duties during the so-called “Language Riots” of April-May, 1958, when the Navy was called out and a “State of Emergency” declared. In one particular incident the Navy was more concerned than usual. This was the attack on the Nagavihara temple on Nagadipa. A story had been put about that the Buddhists priests had been involved in the burning of a Poosari in Panadura. The Nagavihara had been attacked and sacked and the statue installed by the Navy had been thrown into the sea. The priests had been stripped and assaulted. The Navy had rescued about 20 monks and given them asylum with VIP treatment at the Navy base for about two months. Before the story leaked out, the Navy undertook the restoration of the vihara and, before the “Emergency” was lifted, Mr.Rajah Hewavitharana of the Mahabodhi Society had obtained a statue, similar to the desecrated one, from Burma, which was flown in and installed in the temple premises. These precautions were taken to prevent retaliation by unlawful elements elsewhere in the country.

Ironically, the “coup de grace” to the Bandaranaike era was delivered, not by a Tamil or opposition politician but by a Buddhist monk belonging to the extremist fringe of the ruling party, who assassinated the Prime Minister in his own house by shooting him with a revolver. While the inquiry got under way, the next most senior member of the coalition, W.Dahanayake formed a caretaker cabinet to maintain continuity.

As far as the Navy was concerned, all these events, as well

as the heavy floods of 1957, led to the need to assist civil authorities to maintain law and order and render assistance to those in need. On 26.12.57, an office for the Special Commissioner for Flood Relief was established at Naval Headquarters.

The Navy's function of maintaining the essential services of the Port of Colombo undisturbed was implemented partly by mobilizing the VNF "Tissa" Division to accommodate these persons.

Apart from providing assistance to the Police, the main naval operations continued to be anti-Illicit Immigration and anti-Smuggling patrolling. The Navy continued to host the JET (Joint Exercises, Trincomalee) on a regular basis. JET 1960 became the largest of the exercises up to that year, with 38 ships from six Commonwealth countries participating. *Supplementary Chapter 4* provides an overview of this exercise.

## **Command, and Administrative structure**

There was no change in command during this period. Capt.G.R.M.De Mel who had been appointed as Captain of the Navy in the rank of Captain in 12.7.57 and promoted to Commodore the next day, was promoted Rear Admiral on 13.7.57.

The command and administrative structure continued without major change. Apart from the Chief Staff Officer and the Secretary, the Captain of the Navy's staff comprised Staff Officers who were the senior-most officers in each of the major branches and functional operations of the Navy:

Staff Engineering Officer	-	SEO
Staff Electrical Engineering Officer,	-	SLO
Staff Supplies Officer	-	SSO
Staff Medical Officer	-	SMO
Staff Communications Officer	-	SCO
Staff Gunnery Officer	-	SGO

Staff Sports Officer

- SSPO

Training continued and numbers increased to keep pace with the expanding requirements at sea and on land. Increasing numbers were sent for specialist training in England and in India, and later Pakistan. Officer cadets and sailors were attached to ships in their fleets for sea-time and experience. Although “Vijaya” and “Rangalla” did their best to give the new entrants pre-formal training, it became imperative that an academic base to the training given, particularly after the Dartmouth Officer Cadet training was increased from two to eight terms. It was decided to start an Instructor Officer Branch and one officer was selected by Capt. Brown, namely, Instructor Lieutenant M.G.S.Perera who was already a Petty Officer in the Engine Room Branch. A “Classroom” was allocated and initial training given in Navigation, Chartwork and Pilotage for Cadets and Instructional Technique (IT) for sailors. Two more Instructor Lieutenants were commissioned when the pre-Dartmouth training was later increased to one year, to bring the cadets up to G.C.E. ‘A’ level standard in academic subjects: Inst.Lt.S.Navaratnarajah (Pure & Applied Mathematics) and, later, Inst.Lt. W.H.Botejue (Physics, Chemistry and Electronics). When, after the change of the Official language to Sinhala it became necessary for the Navy to effect a programme of change-over and Inst.Lt.M.L.Mendis was commissioned for this task. In 1960, the branch expanded with the commissioning of Inst.Lts.H.D.L.M. Palmon, S.Devendra and E.M.A.Perera, and plans were made to set up a pre-Dartmouth training establishment in the newly acquired “Uva” Camp at Diyatalawa.

## CHAPTER 5

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### CEYLON: 1960-1966

This period was to prove a turbulent one, politically. It started with a change of one government, to be soon followed by another and ended with another change. The impact of all these changes on the Navy is described in detail in the following chapter but an overview of the changes themselves must first be provided. This will be attempted here, with some diffidence, and with a declaration that is is brief, not analytical nor judgemental

The period opened with another General Election had been held which, while voting the caretaker Prime Minister out of office, voted into office a “hung” Parliament which lost, in a matter of months, its first test of confidence in the House. This, in turn, led to another General Election where Mrs.Sirimavo R.D.Bandaranaike, the widow of the assassinated former Prime Minister was elected by a large majority to win international acclaim as the first woman Prime Minister in the world. She also won the backing of several other smaller parties which she united under a coalition umbrella. As the newly appointed leader of her party she, who had never held office nor contested a seat, was appointed to a seat in the Senate, the “Upper House” in the prevailing bi-cameral legislature. She was to be a charismatic and decisive leader on both the occasions she led the Government although, as will be seen, she had the tendency to be emotional in taking action. Her inexperience led to certain Ministers and public servants whom she trusted wielding a disproportional influence over policy that, sometimes, painted her in gloomy colours.

She was heir to several issues that had bedevilled the previous government, among them: fear of the Roman Catho-

lic Church and its adherents (commonly called “Catholic Action”), mistrust of the Armed Forces, the need to strengthen the “Sinala only” policy now that it was in place, the need to push the “non-aligned” policy at international level, the need to keep the coalition government intact using the undoubted experience and political wisdom of members from the smaller parties. Her government was called upon to face more than one threat to its authority, the first being the fall-out from the Navy’s “Far Eastern Cruise” (details in next chapter) and the next from an attempted *coup d’etat* which was averted by a ‘change of heart’ by one of the key plotters. Both incidents involved the Armed Forces and “Catholic Action”, and this hardened the government’s mistrust of both.

Since the mid-fifties it was a widely-held belief that, following the nationalization and secularization of schools and the removal of Nursing Sisters from government hospitals, the Roman Catholic Church and community was unhappy at the loss of its influence and that they were seeking means of undermining it. It was also accepted, not without reason, that there was a disproportionate representation of Catholic officers in the Navy and Army. Attempts had been made to reduce their influence by recruiting direct-entry officers, but they were yet small in number and smaller yet in influence. They were viewed by the others as representatives of a “new order”, not quite ‘professional’ and outside the military ethos. The new breed of political leaders, on the other hand, viewed the old entrants as reactionaries. While this mutual suspicion may have been exaggerated and facts not so ‘black-and-white’ political developments in the country these attitudes, along with others stemming from the same mind-set, lit the fuse for a most unfortunate confrontation.

It was against this background that reports reached the government that ships taking part in the Far Eastern Cruise were bringing in arms for the use of “Catholic Actionists”. These reports were taken at face value and hastily acted upon. Investigation

would have revealed that there was a better case against the Navy (than was hinted at) but the first, and ill-planned, Police investigation led to "mud in the face" of the Police. When the facts were finally revealed at a Commission of Inquiry, the government felt aggrieved that it had been twice betrayed by the Navy – first by smuggling and, second, by pulling the wool over the eyes of the Inspector General of Police – and reacted accordingly.

While the Commission of Inquiry was proceeding, some dissatisfied elements attempted to stage a *coup d'état* in 1961. Colin de Silva, who has been quoted before from the Army's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary publication "Fifty Years On", has this to say of the events.

*"...a powerful minister at the time was reported to have made a statement that Ceylon required 'a little bit of totalitarianism'. This statement was widely publicized giving effect to a rumour that he was going to stage a coup d'état with the backing of the armed forces"*

The truth was even stranger. The same source continues:

*"A group of senior Army, Navy and Police Officers in the meantime had planned to stage a coup themselves, ostensibly to preempt any such move by the Minister, if ever there was such a plan. The Air Force which had a British Commander at the time was not involved in any way.....The Government moved swiftly, identified those involved and took immediate measures to arrest....twenty nine persons including fourteen army officers..."*

The attempt was thus nipped in the bud. The persons arrested were tried in a Court specially created for the purpose and many were found guilty. However, due to the Court being found to be improperly constituted, the Privy Council – then the highest Court – upheld the appeal and the suspects were freed. The fall-out from this incident were the embarrassment to the government caused by ill-considered law-making, a general shake-up of the higher ranks

in the Police and the Armed Forces and the hardening of the official stand against the services.

Events in the international arena were to prove more encouraging. The non aligned nations had sprung from the Bandung Conference in 1955 where, it will be recalled, Sir John Kotelawela had toed a line not in keeping with India's. It was based on Nehru's vision of *Panchasila*, namely,

1. Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty
2. Mutual non-aggression
3. Mutual non-interference in domestic affairs
4. Equality and mutual benefit
5. Peaceful co-existence

At that Conference ten "Bandung Principles" had been adopted. A key role was played in this process by the then Heads of State and Government Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Ahmed Sukarno of Indonesia and Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, who later became the founding fathers of the movement and its emblematic leaders. At the second Conference had been held in Belgrade in 1961.

In 1963, Ceylon hosted its first major international conference, a Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Non-Aligned countries. With only two hotels available for delegates (Galle Face and Grand Oriental Hotels) and the Parliamentary premises as the Conference venue the event was successful. Military officers were assigned for liaison duties to heads of delegations.

The operations to halt the inflow of illicit immigrants was re-organized as a Task Force (TaFII), under the Army with other Services involved. The patrol craft of the Navy continued duties at sea and these would sail south to Colombo for periodic servicing *via* the Pamban channel which was in Indian waters. India, however, was not happy with this arrangement and closed the passage

for RCyN vessels which had, therefore to sail around the coast northwards and southwards to Trincomalee. This could be seen as connected to the Kachchativu problem which was surfacing. The Navy was also called upon to man coast-watching points and searchlight points from a new base camp at Pooneryn.

The tendency for government to use the Military to deal with domestic disturbances, when the normal civil systems did not respond to the satisfaction of the government, continued past the 1950s. Commencing in 1958, military Coordinating Officers were appointed to areas that experienced a breakdown of civil authority. The officers, who in such circumstances superseded Government Agents of Provinces, were required to re-enforce the writ of government and provide an "umbrella of protection" under which civil administration could function. Speaking of 1958, Maj. Gen. Mutukumara said:

*"The situation was unquestionably difficult because of the violence the soldiers experienced, involving the use of much more than the 'minimum force' adopted in 'Aid to Civil Power'".*

In 1962, after the attempted *coup d'état*, the Army, Navy and Air Force Acts were amended to include a clause whereby the Prime Minister could, by Order, call "upon any officer of the (Army / Navy / Air Force) to perform civilian administrative duties". This satisfied neither the normal peacekeeping institutions nor the Military. On the one hand the civilian administrators and the Police came to depend unduly on military support. On another, the Military began to experience the use of such power more often than was good for a Military in a Democracy. Nevertheless, the use of the Military to meet civilian conflicts became embedded in practice.

Given the ambivalent attitude of the government to the Armed Forces, in the end, it was not a military "Coups" that led to a change of government near the end of its Parliamentary life, but a Parliamentary one: a plan set in motion by the Opposition to defeat

the government in Parliament. The occasion was an important Bill which was put to the vote at a time the government was not in a position to muster sufficient votes to ensure a win.

The Prime Minister, following time-honoured custom faithfully, resigned.

## CHAPTER 6

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### 1960 – 1965: THE NAVY BECALMED

Every individual, movement or institution experiences its highs and lows in the course of its progress, and the Navy is no exception. The task of the would-be historian, chronicler or recorder, is not to be judge and/or jury; nor to affix blame or find justification. His task is only to record facts. In this chronicle, therefore, this most sensitive period of the Navy's history will be treated in this manner, in fairness to Truth and with favour to none.

In the latter 1950s, the Navy experienced the start of a promise of growth into a Navy of respectable size and capability. Like all the best-laid plans of mice and men, this went astray. The events that occurred during this period made the yet-burgeoning promise a thing of the past, and the Navy experienced a radical change of fortune. While the outcome of all this proved very galling to naval personnel, it is necessary to record that the negative results experienced were as much due to the actions of some members of the Navy as to those of the government in power.

Before the ill-effects on the Navy due to various causes are recorded, it is necessary to describe certain events, both naval and non-naval that, singly and in combination, led to their occurrence.

#### **The Far Eastern Cruise**

The period began with no hint of what was to follow. The second of the frigates purchased from Israel, the "Gajabahu" had been taken delivery of. A new intake of officer cadets and sailors were under training at the new training base in Diyatalawa. On the political front, another General Election had been held which voted the caretaker Prime Minister out of office, voted into office

a “hung” Parliament which lost its first test of confidence in the House. This, in turn, led to another General Election where Mrs. Sirimavo R.D.Bandaranaike, the widow of the assassinated former Prime Minister was elected by a large majority and won the further backing of several other smaller parties which she united under a coalition umbrella. The Navy had provided security to her residence during the election period, as a routine tour of duty, and she chose to have the Navy providing security for her even afterwards.

The idea was mooted that the Navy undertakes a “Show the Flag” exercise through a cruise to the Far East. In the largely unsettled period that had preceded this, foreign cruises had not been undertaken and, with new ships now available, a long cruise was considered a highly desirable exercise. The ships selected were the frigate “Mahasena” and the minesweeper “Parakrama”. Rear Adm.de Mel would also take passage, and fly his flag on the “Mahasena”, maintaining administrative and operational control over the Navy back home through a “rear link” procedure. This was considered an excellent idea and the cruise got underway.

“Mahasena” under the command of Cdr.R.Proctor and “Parakrama” under the command of Lt.Cdr.D.I.de Livera sailed on a good-will visit, touching at Singapore, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Port Swettenham and Penang. Rear Adm. De Mel and his personal staff flew direct to Japan, to take passage back on the “Mahasena”. However, “Parakrama” experienced technical problems at Hong Kong which involved delay. Adverse weather conditions were also reported in the China Sea which would have made it hazardous for a ship of the size of “Parakrama” to sail. It was therefore decided that she remain in Hong Kong and that the “Mahasena” should sail alone to Japan. This leg of the cruise was completed successfully, in spite of heavy seas and high winds. In Tokyo, the Navy was made welcome and treated with great hospitality. The Ambassador at this time was an old Naval Officer himself, Sir Susantha de Fonseka, and the Navy made good ambassadors for the country in Japan.

After the visit, Rear Adm. De Mel took passage on the "Mahasena", flying his flag. At Hong Kong, when they re-joined the "Parakrama", it was found that all was not well. The ship had been commissioned by the Ministry of Defence to bring back a cargo of ammunition but, in a parallel and unofficial exercise, certain officers had conspired to take on board a large cargo of liquor and spirits for certain business interests. The problem was compounded when an anonymous source had informed the government in Colombo that the ships were bringing back arms and ammunition to be given to the agents of "Catholic Action". Since the mid-fifties it was a widely-held belief that Roman Catholic extremists were unhappy with the government in power and that they were seeking means of overthrowing it. The report was thus treated seriously.

Upon arrival in Colombo, the ships ran into a blizzard of accusations and recriminations. The Inspector General of Police (IGP) boarded "Mahasena" upon arrival to check whether she was carrying arms and ammunition over and above her requirements. The Commanding Officer said that he was, in fact, bringing a consignment of ammunition but that it was for the government. After an inspection of the documents, it was found that there was no basis for the charge. For reasons that were later inquired into by a Commission of Inquiry, the IGP had not actually viewed the arms and ammunition in the ships' magazines. Had he done so, he would have known that no illegal arms were present but he may have noted the illegal consignment of liquor was stored there.

Thus the IGP reported to the Ministry that there was no basis for believing that arms and ammunition had been smuggled on board. Naval Headquarters initiated a Signal instructing the ship to sail to Kalpitiya on a routine patrol. It has, since, been suggested that this opportunity had been given for those concerned to dump the offending articles overboard, thus saving the name of the Navy. Whether this would have been a successful ploy is open to question: just as the fact is indisputable that the action of taking

this cargo of contraband on board was wrong it is equally doubtful whether the persons concerned could be trusted to act in the interests of the Navy with great loss to themselves. What did happen on the patrol was that the persons concerned, who had contacts with questionable persons on land in that area, off-loaded the cargo for them. It did not take long for the intelligence to reach Colombo and the Navy now found itself in very ‘deep water’. A large number of officers and sailors were interdicted pending a Commission of Inquiry and the Captain of the Navy, who had flown his flag on the “Mahasena”, was relieved of his duties. After the Commissioner had completed his inquiry and submitted his report (K.D.de Silva: “Navy Commission Report”, Sessional Paper VI of April 1963) nine officers had their commissions withdrawn, eight were compulsorily retired and a number of sailors discharged. Some doubts have since been cast on the impartiality of the Report, these do not detract from the facts that were elicited at the Inquiry.

Rear admiral de Mel, the serving Captain of the Navy was interdicted pending the completion of the Inquiry.

### **The Attempted “Coup de etat”**

While the Commission of Inquiry was yet underway, information was received by the government that an attempt at overthrowing the government by a “*coup d’etat*” was about to be launched. The suspects were high-ranking officers of the Armed Forces and Police, with a few members of the Ceylon Civil Service (CCS). The information, given by a Police Officer and would-be participant who had undergone a belated “change of heart”, was largely accurate and could be corroborated. The government acted without hesitation or delay and, by calling upon the loyal officers of the Forces and Police – who were in the great majority – arrested the leaders of the “Coup” and effectively put an end to it. Once again, many officers were arrested: this time largely from the Army and Police.

Yet, one name that did transpire was that of the Captain of the Navy, who was under interdiction for his role in the Far Eastern Cruise. He, however, was able to evade arrest, surrendering to Court only when the case was called up.

The arrested persons were tried in a special court under an Act of Parliament specially passed, and most were found guilty. An appeal, however, was made to the Privy Council which was, at that time, the supreme judicial body for Dominions in the Commonwealth. When the Appeal was heard, the Privy Council upheld the preliminary objection that was raised by the Appellants, namely, that the appointment of the Special Court was bad in law and, without reviewing the evidence, the Appellants were discharged. This was to have political repercussions in the years to come.

## **Repercussions**

The two incidents described above made the government very suspicious of the Armed Forces. It was also freely speculated that the conspirators had, at least, the tacit support of the Roman Catholic Church, the major opposition party and even the Head of State, the Governor General. While none of this was inquired into and the findings made public, a series of steps were taken affecting them, notably the replacement of the Governor-General

Among the Armed Forces the Navy earned the government's greatest displeasure. This was in spite of the fact that the vast majority of the offenders were from the Army and the Police. It can be reasonable to conclude that the Captain of the Navy's personal involvement with the two incidents described above was the prime reason for singling-out the Navy. A series of steps were accordingly taken that, singly and cumulatively, eroded the position of the Navy in the country and lowered the morale of its members. Among the many steps taken were the following:

- \* Recruitment of sailors, officers or officer cadets to the Navy was stopped indefinitely. All vacancies in approved cadre were to be left unfilled. This left the Navy with the road to extermination by evaporation.
- \* Officer cadets currently undergoing pre-Dartmouth training at “Rangalla” were sent to India instead. Even some Midshipmen under training in the U.K. who had come to Ceylon between terms, were not permitted to return to complete their studies but sent to Pakistan and India instead.
- \* The Navy’s oldest base outside Colombo, H.M.Cy.S. “Rangalla” in Diyatalawa, was handed over to the Army; the Navy being permitted to retain only the small holiday bungalows.
- \* The Navy Sports grounds at Galle Face was handed over to the Army.
- \* All the Navy buildings along the present “Chaitya Road”, including H.M.Cy.S. “Gemunu”, the Auxiliary Barracks and even the smaller buildings were handed over to the Dept. of Immigration and Emigration and the Police.
- \* A decision was taken to dispose of the Navy’s bigger ships and not replace them. The “Mahasena” and “Parakrama”, which had been on the Far Eastern Cruise, were de-commissioned and sold to a Singapore ship-breakers’ yard on 23.9.66. By an ironic twist of Fate, the “Mahasena”’s last Commanding Officer, Lt.Cdr.M.M.A.Wahid, was in Singapore on duty when the tug “Ajax” towed the two ships in. These were the two better ships the Navy had and the objectivity and wisdom of the decision that they be sold, rather than the “Gajabahu” and the “Vijaya” which were retained, is open to question: perhaps these two ships were guilty of the “crime” of going on the “Far Eastern Cruise”.
- \* The Fleet Tug, H.M.Cy.S. “Aliya” was also de-commissioned.
- \* When Cyclone “Emily” hit Trincomalee on Christmas Eve, 1964, the Seaward Defence Boat H.M.Cy.S. “Kotiya”, which was secured to the two-fathom jetty with her engines removed for repairs, sank at her moorings; and the already de-commissioned “Vijaya” broke her moorings and ran

aground. A decision was taken not to replace them.

- \* With Rear Adm.de Mel being relieved of command, Capt. R.Kadirgammara was appointed to act in Command under the rank and appointment of "Temporary Commodore, Acting Captain of the Navy" as which he had to function for four years.

Although all these measures were not taken at once, but at intervals, the cumulative effect they had upon the Navy as whole was demoralizing in the short-term and harmful in the long-term. The Navy was deprived of five of its six craft with ocean-going capability, and two of its most valuable bases. The feeling was voiced that those who remained loyal in the Navy were being punished for the actions of those who had committed wrongs. An exodus, of sorts, of officers and men who felt the Navy were targeted for discriminatory treatment. Some of those who left were the better and most experienced the Navy had, though some were those who could not stand up to the ill-winds of misfortune. Yet, following the leadership of those who had Navy blood in their veins, the majority of the Navy stood firm, with heads unbowed.

In retrospect it is apparent that the punishment did not fit the crime. Justice calls for only the guilty to be punished. It was singularly ill-advised and an unnecessary move to demean and demoralize the Navy as a whole. Yet this was what happened. It was obvious to the discerning, even then, that the massive loss of accumulated experience caused by the policy of evaporation would have a very grave effect on the Navy of a future era, and in a manner that could not be envisaged. This unfortunately came true: the spectre of the long years of non-recruitment returned to haunt the Navy when, upon the assassination of Adm.W.W.E.C.Fernando, he had to be succeeded by an officer who had joined the Navy fifteen years after him. The effect on the sailors was worse. An annual intake meant continuity: a sailor ends his career in 22 years and there is annual annual inflow and outflow that leads to a balance. An intake after seven years (which is what did take place) constituted

a generation gap. This, the Navy had to live with. The ill-effects of the sale and de-commissioning of the ships became evident less than ten years after. With the outbreak of the Insurgency of 1971, when gun-running and foreign assistance to the insurgents were suspected to come by sea, the Navy had no sea-going capacity at all to counteract the danger. Ceylon had to appeal to friendly countries for their Navies to patrol our waters. It took long years of another conflict for the Navy to regain its lost place among the navies of the world. The lessons learnt must not be forgotten.

### **Command and Administration**

Rear Adm.G.R.M.de Mel was relieved of command and Capt. R.Kadirgamar promoted Temporary Commodore and appointed Acting Captain of the Navy on 16.11.60. He was confirmed in both rank and post on 1.7.64. Rear Adm.de Mel retired from the Navy on 15.8.61.

Headquarters administrative structure underwent a change with a system of Directorates being introduced: Director, Naval Staff Duties (DSD), Director, Naval Administration and Personnel (DAPS), Director, Naval Logistics Division (DLD), Director, Naval Engineering (DNE), Director, Finance & Administration, Principal Medical Officer and Judge Advocate.

### **Pay Commission**

The best example of attempts to bring the military system within the civilian system of administration was the Gratiaen Pay Commission recommendations of the early 1960s. Till then, the pay structure of military personnel was quite different to that of the public service. Salaries were rated on a daily basis (i.e. Rs. X per day); sailors were paid fortnightly, though officers were paid monthly. Servicemen were paid allowances such as “Hard-lying”, “Batman’s” etc. and entitled to “Disability pensions” upon

early discharge on medical grounds. These were a legacy of the war years and totally outside standard public service systems. The Pay Commission, headed by Noel Gratiaen (former CRNVR officer and Solicitor-General and later Chief Justice) changed all that. While the reforms benefited servicemen by increasing their earnings and their pensions, it made the Military conform to the standard public service allowances such as "Cost of Living" (CLA) and "Special Living" (SLA) allowances. The underlying idea was that the wartime Military was totally different from the peacetime Military; that the Military in this country was committed to a peacetime role and, therefore, it should be accommodated within normal administrative systems: in other words, to "freeze" the Military in a peacetime role. It, however, provided servicemen with a decent living wage.

## **The Fleet**

The second frigate purchased from Israel was delivered at Colombo and commissioned H.M.Cy.S. "Gajabahu" (Capt.I.P.Murray) on 26.4.60.

H.M.Cy.S. "Mahasena" was de-commissioned on 31.5.62.

H.M.Cy.S. "Parakrama" was de-commissioned on 13.12.63.

H.M.Cy.S. "Aliya" was de-commissioned on 31.3.63.

H.M.Cy.S. "Vijaya" was de-commissioned on 31.3.63.

H.M.Cy.S. "Kotiya" sank at her moorings during the cyclone on 24.12.64.

Towards the end of the period, the need for some additional craft was recognized and orders were placed for two 45' Thornycraft Patrol Craft from Singapore and these were received on 26.9.65.

The Fleet, therefore, comprised the "Gajabahu" and some of the Patrol Craft purchased in the 1950-56 era. Once again a

“One-ship Navy” in numbers and effectiveness, it ranked even below its capacity in 1956.

### **Shore Establishments and Duties**

In spite of the decisions taken that had a negative effect on morale and operational capability, the Navy was called upon to shoulder new tasks and carry on with traditional ones.

In 1962, the Navy was called upon to take over the last British base in Ceylon, a wireless station at Welisara which had been commissioned H.M.S. “Highflyer” after the Base at Trincomalee had changed hands. With the loss of the naval real estate in Colombo Welisara now became H.M.Cy.S. “Gemunu”.

Around the same time the Navy was assigned duties in Laxapana to provide security to the generating stations.

In 1964, the Navy opened a TAFII (Task Force, Anti Illicit Immigration) base at Chempankundu, which was later commissioned as H.M.Cy.S. “Vijaya II”. Its function was to watch the coast line north of Mannar as part of the Task Force which was largely Army controlled. No sea-going duties were undertaken and five Coast Watching Points (CWPs) and two Searchlight Points (SLPs) were manned.

In 1965, the naval area at Kochchikade (other than the VNF Headquarters), including the Boatyard, Workshops, the newly established “Naval Educational Services Centre”, Harbour Examination Service, Experimental Underwater Unit, Scientific Equipment Unit and Base Stores, Colombo, was commissioned H.M.Cy.S. “Rangalla” under the command of Inst.Lt.Cdr.M.G.S.Perera. This base had to service naval craft calling at the Kochchikade pier and to undertake Colombo Harbour Anti-smuggling Operations which involved searching all sailing craft entering and leaving harbour for contraband and illicit immigrants. The earlier base by this name, at Diyatalawa, had been converted to a Technical Training Centre

when recruitment was frozen. It had undertaken the training of Stoker Mechanics and Artificer Apprentices, thus gaining valuable experience in a form of training more complex than recruit training in Ceylon, using Ceylones expertise. It had become the first base to have all officers, including the Commanding Officer (Inst. Lt.Cdr. M.G.S.Perera) from the Instructor Branch. It was de-commissioned on 31.12.63.

The Navy really proved its mettle during and immediately after the Cyclone hit Trincomalee and ploughed a path across the island from east to west. Apart from putting to rights the massive damage it had done to the Dockyard and other naval installations, the Navy was able to give valuable assistance to other organizations and institutions. These included:

*Emergency electrical power to the government Base Hospital;*

*Security patrolling of Trincomalee at the request of the Government Agent;*

*Setting up emergency communications with Mannar and the islands;*

*Providing pilotage to Merchant vessels going the northern waters about which their officers had no knowledge of;*

*Transport of food, medical supplies and fuel to Mannar on "Gajabahu";*

*Salvage of Ilmenite Corporation tugs that had run aground in Trincomalee;*

*Transport of government officials to inaccessible areas; and Most importantly, the salvage of the s.s. "Goshen", the Indo-Ceylon ferry, which had been carried 200 yards inland by the heavy wind and seas. (see Supplementary Chapter: 'Operation "Goshen"')*

Other duties, of a routine nature, performed by the Navy during this period included:

*Providing security to the Sugar factory during a strike;*

*Flood-relief duties;*

*Security for Laxapana, Grandpass and Stanley Power Stations;*

*Anti-fish dynamiting patrols in Trincomalee;*

*Assistance to the Police during the Elections;*

*Taking the trawler “Gandara” to sea for the Fisheries Corporation when the crew went on strike;*

*Maintaining communications with the islands off Jaffna in the aftermath of the cyclone and during Election time and*

*Providing security to Queen’s House.*

In spite of the best efforts of the senior staff, morale did not, however, improve. Even the Captain of the Navy was moved to officially place on record – however circumspectly – the prevailing mood. In his Administration Report for the year 1963-64, his opening paragraph on “Policy” contained only one sentence:

*“The Defence Policy, in so far as the Navy is concerned, has yet to be implemented by the Ministry of Defence.”*

In later paragraphs he commented:

*“Vacancies in Service and Civilian Cadre continue to be frozen ..... The Service and Civilian Strength is far below the sanctioned cadre. The Navy is grossly undermanned.” (emphasis added)*

At this time, the disparity between the Approved and Actual cadre was as follows:

	<u>Approved</u>	<u>Actual</u>
<u>REGULARS</u>		
Officers	154	118
Sailors	1820	1563
Civilians	1309	1036
Seconded	6	1
<u>VOLUNTEERS</u>		
Officers	35	14
Sailors	350	171

In the end, it was not a military “Coupe” that led to a change of government near the end of its Parliamentary life, but a Parliamentary one. The Prime Minister, following time-honoured custom faithfully, resigned.

## CHAPTER 7

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### CEYLON: 1965-1970

As noted in preceding chapters Mrs. Bandaranaike tendered her resignation following the defeat of a crucial Bill in Parliament. General Elections were held and a UNP government led by Dudley Senanayake was elected with a comfortable majority. Like every government since Independence this, too, comprised more than the majority party. However Senanayake has the distinction of being the first Prime Minister to hold office for a full term.

There was opposition to the new government as it had been suspected that the UNP had had a hand in the attempted *coup* of 1961. For reasons that will not be gone into here, unrest once again broke out in Colombo. A protest march in which a Buddhist monk was a participant clashed with the Police which led to Police opening fire and the death of Ven. Dambarave Rathanasara. A pillar subsequently erected opposite Methodist College, the site of the shooting, commemorates his death. The incident again led to the Armed Forces being called upon to provide Aid to Civil Power.

The new government, too, felt that elements within the Army was opposed to it and took what steps it felt was necessary to identify and eliminate these elements. The Army Commander, General Richard Udugama was viewed with suspicion as an appointee of the previous government and was sent on an assignment to the UK. His stay was inexplicably prolonged for about four months, after which he was met at the airport by the IGP and the Air Force Commander, taken to the Air Force Mess where a Defence Ministry official served him a Detention Order. He was then taken to Magazine Prison pending trial, and Brig. Heyn appointed to act in command.

A total of 28 suspects were charged with "conspiracy to

wage against the Queen” and conspiracy to overthrow the Government of Ceylon by criminal force. The trial of the former Army Commander and the other suspects carried on for most of the life of the government till, in 1969 the trial concluded. The judges, giving their reasons in a 73-page judgement held that no evidence had been led to prove the guilt of the accused and found them “Not Guilty”. It was a matter for embarrassment on the part of the government and the Public welcomed the outcome as it was felt that the entire episode was due to the government – which had been suspected of backing the 1961 *coup* – playing a “tit-for-tat” game. It is likely that the anti-government feelings aroused by this incident contributed to the defeat of the government at its end-of-term polls.

It must be noted that, in the events leading to the arrest and imprisonment of the former Army Commander, much use was made of naval personnel and the repercussions of this was felt after the elections, as described in a later chapter. A more lasting result was the hardening of “Sinhala-Buddhist” feeling within the Services and in public opinion, based on the premise that the former Commander and other officers had been arrested for their sympathies with that movement.

In other ways the government tried to uplift the Services within the financial limits available. Perhaps the most important was the decision to upgrade local training to make up for the foreign training that was beyond its finances. This move led to the growth of healthy and competent institutions which helped successive governments to come. In this connection the introduction of a Widows’ & Orphans’ Pension Fund for Servicemen needs mention. Apparently the Prime Minister was unaware that such a scheme did not exist.

In spite of all disturbances the UNP government was able to complete its full term of office, but failed to return to power in the polls that followed.

## CHAPTER 8

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### 1965-70: SMALL SHIPS AND BIG IDEAS

General Elections, particularly when they result in a change in the political party in power, can create the impression that a major change of policy will take place. Change does often take place, though not necessarily to the extent in terms of expectations. The change that took place in the 1965 Election was that the party which had lost power in 1956, now came back as the largest single party and formed the new government with the backing of some other parties.

As far as the Navy was concerned, a change of policy did take place, but not to the extent that the Navy itself wished for. This section, therefore, deals with the changes that took place and the form of the Navy that emerged.

#### Policy

The Captain of the Navy's observation on Defence policy and the Ministry of Defence has already been quoted. The change that took place with the new government, and the Captain of the Navy's hopes and expectations are best illustrated in his comments under the same heading in his Administration Report for the very next year:

*"With the assumption of office of a new government after the general election, the role of the Navy in Anti Illicit Immigration problems was established as a primary one. This decision was immediately implemented by making financial provision for an increased fleet of Fast Patrol Boats. In the Internal Security Plan the Navy was entrusted with the maintenance of the Port, the generation and distribution of power, the operation of Radio Ceylon and the water system of Colombo. All restrictions previously imposed on recruitment were removed."*

This could be construed to mean that the Navy had, to a great extent, been rehabilitated. The way was cleared for recruitment of officers and sailors, for the purchase of craft (although of a limited size) and the Navy's specific functions were spelled out. The hope that the Fleet would be allowed to purchase bigger ships did not materialize.

## **Command and Administration**

There was no change in Command during almost the entirety of this period. Capt.R.Kadigammar who had been ranked of Temporary Commodore in 1960 was confirmed in rank as Commodore and continued in command. On 1.10.67 he was promoted Rear Admiral and on 1.6.70, handed over command to Commodore D.V.Hunter.

While the internal administration was continued under the system of Directorates, a Naval Board of Control was set in place with all Directors and Staff Officers serving on it. A major change was introduced by the bifurcation of internal functions under two Chief Staff Officers who were directly under the Captain of the Navy. These were the Chief Staff Officer (Operations), or CSO(O) and the Chief Staff Officer (Support & Systems), or CSO(S&S). Other Directors and Principal & Staff Officers were appointed named "Principal Advisors": namely, Principal Medical Officer (PMO), Judge Advocate (JA), Director, Finance and Civil Administration (DFCA), Staff Engineer Officer (SEO) and Staff Electrical Officer (SLO).

## **The Fleet**

The only ship the Navy had during this period was the "Gajabahu". The older LPBs and SPBs that had been purchased in the 1950-56 period had been down-graded and de-commissioned, although some were yet in use for harbor and training duties.

In 1965, under a change in policy adopted by the previous government towards the end of its stewardship, two wooden hulled, unarmed 45' patrol craft built by Thornycroft at Singapore had been purchased for trial, prior to more being purchased. These were not commissioned but given pennant numbers, PC 106 and 107. They were found to be suitable for the Anti-Illicit Immigration (Anti-II) role now delegated to the Navy as its primary one, and it was decided that more be purchased suitably modified to naval requirements. Two Patrol Boat squadrons were to be formed. On 18.6.66, three more PCs were taken delivery of and assigned pennant numbers PC 101, 103 and 104 and, on 1.8.67, PC 102, 105, 108 and 109 were taken delivery of. PC 110 was taken over on 12.2.68. This was the First PC squadron.

The Second PC Squadron was formed on 27.1.68, comprising PC 201, 202, 203 and 204 and PC 207, 210 and 211 on 12.2.68.

Apart from the first two PCs, which were delivered in fully-built condition, the others were imported in a "knocked-down" condition and assembled locally. In all, 24 PCs were brought into operation. In addition to the Thornycrofts, two 32' Halmatic and two 28' Tornado PCs were purchased.

"Gajabahu" continued to play her role which, after recruitment of officer cadets and sailors became a reality, soon expanded to include sea-training. A new pier was built at Kochchikade for the use of the Navy to cater to the flotilla of Patrol Craft.

There had been no exercises involving working with a fleet since the operational larger ships had been disposed of and the annual JET Exercises had ceased. It was thus decided to start a similar programme involving the Patrol Craft, to keep the sea-going skills of officers and sailors exercised. An exercise named CEYNAVEX was therefore commenced with "Gajabahu" taking the leading role and the crews of the PC, carrying out exercises and operations suited to the type of craft. CEYNAVEX was conducted in 1967, 1968 and 1969.

With the PCs becoming the workhorses of the Navy, their manning requirements led to changes in training. These craft had very small crews and multi-tasking was very necessary. The newly established Naval & Maritime Academy introduced a training scheme by which Seamen and Stokers were taught each other's skills and dubbed "Seaman Mechanics". On board a PC these sailors were qualified to tend the engines as well as perform seamen's duties. Upon completion of a specified period, they could opt to be either Seamen or Mechanics.

In the realm of Communications, too, there was no need for either Signalling or W/T skills on board PCs. These ratings were, therefore, gradually phased-out and a breed of Communicators more at home with new wireless technology was established.

### **Functions and Operations**

This period saw the Navy defining and fashioning its own role in more far-seeing and imaginative ways. It saw itself as "the reservoir or national maritime skills" and not only advocated but also demonstrated its ability to fill this role to the government. In his Navy Day Message in December, 1968, the Captain of the Navy said:

*"Today we are again proving and demonstrating our great usefulness to our people and to the State. We have established and proved that we are dependable and outstandingly competent."*

*"We shall continue to be the major maritime limb of the Nation. The Academy will be recognized as the only institution for the acquisition of naval and maritime knowledge. The National Shipping Corporation will be established shortly and will draw its strength from the Navy....."*

*"Our duty is to serve and that is what we shall do as we have always done."*

The Navy, therefore, undertook several new tasks during this period.

In the wake of the cyclone of December 1964 which devastated shipping in Trincomalee port, a US Navy diving team had arrived to assist with salvage operations. A core group of officers and sailors with swimming skills were trained by them and later an Experimental Diving Unit had been formed under Lt.T. Somasunderam. The experiment proving successful, the team had been sent abroad for training. Lt.Somasunderam and Surg.Lt.M.Amarasingha were sent to the US and several sailors to India. They proved useful to the Navy, particularly for retrieving contraband jettisoned overboard by smugglers and their services were soon sought after by civilian authorities for a variety of tasks ranging from retrieving bodies drowned in rivers to clearing sluice-gates of irrigation tanks under near-zero visibility. The government also recognized that such services should be charged for, whether the client was a private body or a government one.

It was anticipated that a need for Hydrographic Services would arise in the future and that as in the U.K., India and Pakistan, the Hydrographer for the Navy would be the authority. The Navy therefore began to send officers abroad for graduate and post-graduate courses in Hydrography and Oceanography and sailors on Survey Recorders courses, purchase the basic equipment and set up a Hydrographic Unit. After the Unit was organized a de-commissioned SPB was attached to it as a survey vessel.

The Navy also deemed it necessary to contribute to the government's efforts to work towards self-sufficiency in food, and established the Naval Agricultural and Livestock Project (NALP) at the Headworks area in the naval water supply system in Trincomalee. The Project was manned by VNF officers and sailors and initially cultivated rice and ran a livestock project. Later, the lake itself was stocked with fish and became a thriving dried-fish industry.

The Navy volunteered to assist, by training, personnel of other government institutions which required persons with sea-going skills. H.M.Cy.S.Rangalla ran a pilot project of training Fisheries Dept. deck-hands. This programme was later carried to further lengths after the establishment of the Naval & Maritime Academy in Trincomalee. Here training was continued for Fisheries personnel in both deck and engine-room duties, for Instructors and Apprentice Mates of that Department and for drivers of Police launches. Finally, a certificate course was conducted for trainees of the Shipping Corporation, which certificate was accepted by all shipping companies the world over.

Acting as reservoir of skilled and disciplined personnel, sailors were attached to a variety of institutions other than those mentioned earlier. Among them were the Dept. of Immigration & Emigration, Dept. for the Registration of Persons.

Many other roles were thought of, not only by the Captain of the Navy, but by many far-thinking officers. Some of them were: Merchant Shipping, Pilotage, Docking & Slipping, Salvage diving, Ships Surveying, marking coastal anchorages, undertaking maintenance of Lighthouses, etc. While some of these ideas bore fruit in the years to come, others did not. The Forward Planning that was taking place within the Navy is demonstrated by the nature of non-traditional courses of training on which naval personnel were sent in 1967-68 alone:

- Post-Graduate course in Oceanography (USA)
- Post-Graduate course in Management(USA)
- Graduate course in Basic Hydrography and Oceanography (USA)
- Supply Management courses(USA)
- Transportation Management courses(USA)
- Modified Hydrography Course (India)

The government nationalized the port of Trincomalee on 26.10.67 and the Navy was intimately connected with Port administration thereafter. The Capt. of the Navy was appointed Working

Director of the Port (Cargo) Commission, Trincomalee, and many of the facilities of the Navy were made available to that institution.

## **Routine Operations**

Routine operations continued to be carried out, such as security for the government explosives' magazine at Welisara, Radio Ceylon and its transmitting stations at Ekala, Dept. of Immigration and Emigration, Queen's House, Port of Colombo; Examination Service at the port, assistance to Police, repatriation of Indian nationals, surveillance at the annual Kachchativu festival (Operation "Sneaker", an anti-II exercise) etc.

A particular duty that was cast on the Navy was the escort of the suspects in the ongoing "*Coup*" case. Twenty-eight suspects remanded were transferred to the Magazine Prison, Welikade and Hulftsdorp Detention Barracks under armed Navy escort. Thereafter, similar escorts were provided daily from here to the Chief Magistrate's Court set up in Flagstaff Street, till hearings were concluded. This was not uniformly appreciated, but it had to be done, even if it left an unpleasant flavor.

With regard to Emergency duties that the Navy had to undertake from time to time, a series of code-named operations were formulated which could be put into effect on a single Signal promulgated by Headquarters. They were:

Operation	PRONTO
Operation	HOMELAND
Operation	SHOCK
Operation	SUPERCARGE
Operation	CORNUCOPIA
Operation	SNATCH
Operation	MARCONI
Operation	PLUTO
Operation	CLOUDBURST
Operation	LIGHTNING

When called into effect, operations were conducted under Commanders of Task Forces (CTFs) who delegated their tasks to one or more Commanders of Task Groups (CTGs).

H.M.Cy.S. “Gemunu” at Welisara was made the main Communication channel between the Central Telegraph Office (CTO) and merchant ships. It also had to monitor foreign news bulletines and weather forecasts. In 1970 it was linked with the Commonwealth Communication Organization.

### Recruitment and Training

With all restrictions on recruitment being lifted, the Navy sought to infuse fresh blood, through the influx of officer and sailor intakes.

The first experiment in commissioning a small number of graduates as Direct Entry Sub Lieutenants in the Executive and Supply branches proved a dismal failure. The Navy had been so long out of touch with the changes in the country that it found it difficult to understand the nature of the human material they were dealing with. The same methods of training that had been used prior to 1960 were used and found wanting. The entire first intake thus left the Navy, either by Desertion or by request, disappointed in what they found. The later intakes, however, from the University but not graduates, proved more successful.

With the restrictions imposed for long being lifted, a fair number of senior sailors were able to be commissioned as Service entry officers and that created a domino effect, with more junior sailors having the vacancies available for promotion.

Recruitment of sailors was next taken in hand. A Recruiting team was appointed and they interviewed 3835 applicants at 11 centres island-wide. The first intakes were of miscellaneous branches (Cooks, Stewards and Musicians), 116 of whom were enlisted between June and September, 1965. A much larger intake the next year made it necessary to make special arrangements

for training. H.M.Cy.S. "Tissa" had to vacate the premises it had occupied for nearly ten years and find accommodation elsewhere in the Dockyard, and the premises vacated by it was commissioned H.M.Cy.S. "Parakrama II" on 1.9.66, under the command of Lt.Cdr.A.H.A.de Silva. She served exclusively as a Recruit Training establishment for this particular intake of Recruits and was de-commissioned on 1.6.67. on completion of her task. "Tissa" moved back to her original moorings.

"Parakrama II's" training functions were immediately assumed, and expanded, by a new institution, the Naval & Maritime Academy (NMA), under a Commandant (Inst.Cdr.M.G.S.Perera) on 1.6.67. The NMA was not a commissioned base but was responsible for all naval training: Induction courses for Direct Entry Officers, Officer Cadets and Service Entry Officers, Specialist courses for sailors, and Recruit Training for sailors. The restrictions previously placed on junior sailors who met the required educational standards from applying for the posts of Officer Cadets was lifted. The first Officer Cadet intake since 1960 was undertaken by the NMA in 1969 and two sailors of the 1966 intake were selected as Officer Cadets. Both of them, in the fullness of time, rose to command the Navy.

The Academy was a far cry from the Recruit Training establishments of the past. It was a gradual development from the Technical Training Centre at Diyatalawa, the Educational Services Centre at Kochchikade and the large-scale training programmes of "Parakrama II". It was headed by a Commandant, with a Training Commander under him, and its functions were divided between several Schools and Departments: the Schools of Nautical Science, Mechanical & Marine Engineering, Electric & Electronic Engineering, Communications, Supply, Secretariat & Catering, and Diving; and the Departments of Science & Mathematics, Language & Humanities, and Physical Training. Among the specialized training facilities available were: the de-commissioned ex-H.M.Cy.S. "Vijaya" as a static training ship, Electrics/Electron-

ic laboratories, Workshops, Physics & Chemistry laboratories, a Chart work Practicals Room equipped with navigational equipment, a Machine shop, Fitting & Smithy shops, a Foundry, a Carpentry shop, I.C. model and display room, a Projector room and a Library. With the experience now gained of the academically more advanced recruit and officer material available in the country, an ambitious scheme was drawn up of teaching recruits multiple skills. An intake of “Seaman Mechanics” was undertaken: these were to be taught the skills of both Seamen and Stoker Mechanics, so that they could be more useful on board the Patrol Craft which had small crews. After a period, they could choose to specialize in one of the skills. Although a very useful intake of sailors was trained, however, the experiment was subsequently put on hold as the length of the basic course was too long. In a similar attempt to bring the new Navy into line with equipment actually in use on the PCs, the time-honoured distinction between “Signalmen” and “Telegraphists” was done away with, and both amalgamated into the single branch of “Communicators” who were all trained to operate the new electronic and radio equipment installed on the craft.

By the middle of this period, the recruitment programme had succeeded to a great extent, as the following figures show:

	<u>Approved</u>	<u>Actual</u>
REGULARS		
Officers	161	134
Sailors	1820	1817
VOLUNTEERS		
Officers	21	20
Sailors	186	186

During this period, therefore, a start had been made towards the rehabilitation of the Navy. The government realized that, in the Navy, it had an invaluable national resource, which could be used effectively in more ways than one. While the actual sea-go-

ing capability of the Navy was not significantly up-graded, it was seen that its expertise was useful for other government institutions which had the need for its skills.

The Navy also took the initiative to direct the government's attention towards its full potential in a variety of areas and one of the distinguishing features of this period is that, instead of waiting for the government to make use of it, the Navy took upon itself the task of suggesting new roles for itself in the short and long-term. Presentations, including one to the Prime Minister when he visited the Dockyard, were made. The Academy became a place where ideas were floated and discussion encouraged. One *Supplementary Chapter* indicates how far such thinking could go: it was a paper published in *Vidusindhu*, a journal published by the Academy in 1969. It is an indication of how the Academy became an agent of change .

The entry of new blood, new ideas and more educated personnel, both as officers and sailors, changed the character of the Navy. The "difficult days" which preceded this period can, therefore, even be considered to have been, though unpleasant, a necessary spur to radical change in the Navy – not merely, initially, for the worse but, definitely, for the better in the long run. This 'spur', in combination with the change of course made in the 1965-70 period, helped the Navy to emerge as a more flexible and professional one; one which was able to face the challenge of the next era with great confidence even with its limited means, and prove itself.

## Chapter 9

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### **The End of Innocence: The War on Terror, 1971**

In 1971 and 1972 the Navy and the Nation had to face two major events. Although a General Election had brought back to power Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike with a majority, part of her support came from a radical Marxist movement, the *Janata Vimukti Peramuna* (JVP). Before she could get into her stride and set a new course for her government, she was challenged to deliver on her election promises or to face open rebellion. The rebellion did take place in April 1971 and the Prime Minister had to call upon all her undoubted qualities of leadership to bring it under control within a month, by calling upon the Armed Forces which, while being largely ill-equipped and ill-prepared for an island-wide uprising, yet responded to her call and restored Civil Power. The Prime Minister immediately began the task of converting the Dominion into a Republic where the Head of State was no longer the Queen of England even though she exercised her authority through a Governor-General appointed on the advice of the Prime Minister. The Republic was born the following year, in 1972.

It is, therefore, proposed to deal with the Insurgency of 1971 before the events that began in 1970 are dealt with.

#### **The Insurgency of 1971**

The JVP, the prime mover in the Insurgency, was a group not unknown to the Intelligence services. It advocated the overthrow of all existing political systems by force. It took the position that all established parties were committed to the continuation

of the political “status quo” and to the retention of power in the hands of a ruling class, represented in all Parliament. The JVP was believed to have canvassed for the SLFP and its allies during the General Election, considering them as the lesser evil, but were quick to conclude that their own aims – that of Revolution – would have to be carried out by itself. The JVP stepped up its campaign of recruiting young people of school-going and University age, spreading the gospel that the future belonged to them and that they should take the initiative and make any sacrifice necessary to take over power themselves. Although its philosophy and activities were known to Intelligence agencies, the extent of its influence and action plan were not as well known. The leader, Rohana Wijeweera, was arrested on suspicion and, while he was yet in custody, the first attack on a Police Station at Moneragala, took place on 5.4.97. Almost immediately afterwards, similar attacks were launched on Police Stations in all areas of the island, save Jaffna. A state of emergency was declared as was a Curfew in the districts of Amparai, Moneragala, Kandy, Badulla and Nuwara Eliya. The next day the Curfew was extended over the whole island, and continued in force, with progressive relaxation, for the rest of the year.

Taken completely by surprise, Police Stations were unprepared to deal with the attacks. Yet they fought back and, in some areas, brought JVP activities to a halt. However, a large number of Police Stations were abandoned and the JVP left as the *de facto* power locally. The government and the Armed Services were equally unprepared, as there was no operational plan that could be immediately activated in such an eventuality. Soon, however, the Services and Police were able to counter attack successfully, having quickly learnt the JVP’s strategy and its weaknesses. The insurgents even attempted an attack on the U.S.Embassy, which resulted in the death of a brave Police Officer. The government’s reaction was quick, resolute and determined. The Embassy of a country suspected of supporting the insurgents was closed down and JVP cadres were called upon to lay down their arms and surrender. A large number of Detention camps were established where

surrendered were questioned and sorted out. Within two months the movement had been defeated, save for a small group that took refuge in the forests.

### **Immediate Impact on the Navy**

The Navy was below its approved cadre and complement of 165 officers and 1820 sailors by the end of 1970. An increase in approved numbers to 175 officers and 2100 sailors was expected momentarily and recruitment had begun. The introduction of Defence Ministry Security screening, in addition to routine Police and C.I.D. screening, however, led to a delay in actual enlistment and training. The new screening was not, initially, considered necessary but events speedily proved that it was. When the first attack came, the Navy was yet short by several hundred and it was decided that one hundred be enlisted without prior screening, provided their backgrounds could be vouched for by someone responsible. This intake was recruited under unique conditions: all those summoned had to be "security screened" by a special team seated in the Recruiting Centre. When the telegrams summoning the selectees were sent out, official requests came from certain Military Co-ordinating officers to arrest some of them upon arrival, as they were "wanted"; the telegrams sent to a few were returned by the Post Masters with the notation "Regret addressee dead in fight with Army". Those selected were put into Action Working Dress (AWDs), given half-an-hour of drill, loaded into buses and sent with an escort party to Trincomalee along a major highway that was practically empty: it was felt that it was necessary to show people that there were uniformed persons on the road. (On a personal note, I was the Recruiting Officer who had to handle this intake – the sailors who came to be known as "The 100 Rifles")

On the way, the escort group found that the Police were engaging the terrorists at Habarana: the Recruits were instructed to remain in the bus and the escort joined the Police in the action. These Recruits, on reaching the Academy, were given basic

infantry and weapon training only and sent to operational areas. The same policy was followed in the VNF which was to be used as a filter for would-be regulars: the regulars would be picked from the VNF after a year or so of experience, during which time they would be evaluated in the field. A team from the Recruiting Office interviewed the applicants at the sites where they were serving, in different parts of the country. Several other intakes followed, but these were selected in accordance with Ministry requirements.

At the very beginning, the shortage of personnel led to “Gajabahu”’s crew being taken off for duties ashore. This meant that the Navy had no offensive capability afloat at a time when there was a widespread belief that the insurgents were being supplied with arms and ammunition by sea. The sudden and unannounced arrival of a Chinese ship in harbour, with a large number of army personnel on board, and a Master who was unwilling to divulge details of where she was going and why she was carrying so many soldiers, created a flutter. The ship was asked to remain at anchor till her logistical requirements were met and she resumed her voyage. The incident made it apparent that “Gajabahu” be put to sea again, however slight her contribution might be. The government appealed for help to all friendly countries and help was forthcoming from a great many. Indian and Pakistani Navy ships, with SLN officers on board, undertook to patrol our waters to supplement “Gajabahu”. Other forms of support from many sources came, and the non-aligned stance that the government had adopted many years previously proved itself. Among the many countries that extended support were the U.K., U.S.A. and U.S.S.R.

A much more serious danger to the Armed Services came with the discovery that the JVP had infiltrated all of them. This was discovered after the attacks had begun and the infiltrators had even taken part in operations. Soon, the identity of the leaders were discovered and orders were given by the Ministry of Defence to arrest them. The suspect sailors realized that their days were numbered and one sailor who was armed at the time, opened fire

at the unarmed sailors who came to ask him to report to the Commanding Officer, "Elara" on his return from duty at Chunnakam Power Station. In this incident, two sailors were killed – PO C.A. Gunasekera, A 321 and L/EM N.T.J.Costa, B 2010 – and others seriously injured. The JVP sympathizers made a get-away, carrying all arms, with a civilian driver taken along at gun-point, and tried to leave the Jaffna peninsula. However, they were intercepted at Elephant Pass. In the resulting exchange of fire all of them lost their lives. This led to much investigation and several other sailors were arrested on suspicion and questioned. The scenario was much the same in the Army and Air Force and several were arrested. Later, a large number of those who were considered "hard-core" insurgents were taken on board "Gajabahu" to Fort Hammenheil, Kayts, which was a maximum security detention centre. The first sailor to lose his life in a battle situation with insurgents, however, was E/M D.C.A.Cader, B2400 who succumbed to his injuries in Anuradhapura hospital, after being hit in cross-fire at Nochchiyagama.

In spite of the shortage of personnel, the Navy undertook the security of areas in the island that the Police could not control alone. Naval Co-ordinating Officers were appointed: Cdr.A.H.A.de Silva to Polonnaruwa, Capt.H.Molegoda, VNF, to Ratnapura and Cdr(E) D.A.G.Fernando to Amparai.

Naval detachments were opened at Tangalle, Habarana, Bakamuna, Kalpitiya and Kekirawa. Naval personnel began to take part in offensive actions on land and helped wipe out the JVP hold on Polonnaruwa, Maho and in the south by carefully planned operations. Sailors who proved themselves in these were recognized by a system of battle-field promotions that were introduced for the first time.

## **Consequential Impact**

The country lost its standing as a country free of internal conflict and, because of its strategic location and the perception that the Insurgency was Marxist in character, many Embassies and High Commissions in Colombo added Military Attaches to their staffs. India was the first and others were Pakistan, the U.K., U.S.A., Indonesia, France, and the U.S.S.R. Many of these countries had come to the aid of the country during the Insurgency and either provided equipment, advisors and services or had pledged to do so, and they felt it was in their own interests to monitor the situation regularly. The Insurgency thus catapulted Sri Lanka into a different category of country, in terms of global politics, than before.

## **PART 3**

# **THE SRI LANKA NAVY**

**1972 - 1975**

## **PART 3 – THE SRI LANKA NAVY**

### **Contents**

Chapter 10 - Republicanism and the end of Adolescence

Conclusion

## CHAPTER 10

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### REPUBLICANISM AND THE END OF ADOLESCENCE

#### The Navy in the 1970s

##### Coming of Age

In the year 1971, the Navy “coming of age” in the traditional sense, attained the age of 21 years. It also came of age operationally when it was called upon to counter an attempt to overthrow, by force, the government that had been freely and democratically elected.

In the preceding year, a new government had been elected into office. Led by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) which, in spite of winning by an overwhelming majority, invited its allies, the Lanka Samasamaja Party (LSSP) and the Communist Party (CP) to join hands with it, a “United Front” (UF) government and was sworn into office with Mrs. Sirimavo R.D. Bandaranaike as Prime Minister. One of the new government’s aims was to declare the country an independent Republic and, to give effect to this policy, a Constituent Assembly was formed which had met for the first time on 19<sup>th</sup> July, 1970. However, other political groups functioning outside the electoral system, notably the Janata Vimukti Peramuna (JVP), who had not put their policies to the test before the electorate, launched an attempt to overthrow the democratically-elected government by force of arms and the Nation had to face a “baptism by fire” in 1971. Early, decisive and resolute action by the government led to the defeat and containment of the terrorist group within a relatively short period.

The government was faced with a need to look again at the role and capability of the Armed Services and it boldly chose not

to look to the past but to the future in re-structuring them. The preceding Chapter deals with the threat, how it was countered and how the re-structuring of the Navy was taken in hand. Developments within the Navy itself forms the rest of this Chapter.

## **Command and Administration**

In the preceding year, 1970, a new Captain of the Navy had been appointed, Commodore D.V.Hunter. Cmdre.(later Rear Admiral) Hunter had enlisted in the C.N.V.F. as a “Signalman-Gunner” with the first intake of sailors, in 1938. He thus became the first sailor to rise to Command a Navy and the only Captain of the Navy to have served in the CRNVR, RCyN and the SLN. He was also to be the last of the war-time (“Okapi Navy”) personnel to command the Navy and it was fitting that he had the opportunity of leading the Navy in offensive operations in 1971. Unfortunately, he was also the first Captain of the Navy to “cross the Bar” less than a year after retirement, in Australia. A plaque in his memory was later unveiled at St.Peter’s Garrison Church, Fort, at a service where Mrs. Barbara Hunter, Rear Adm. De Mel and Rear Adm. Kadirgamar were present.

Rear Adm.Hunter handed over command on 1.3.73 to Commodore (now Admiral) D.B.Goonesekera. Cmdr.Goonesekera represented the next naval generation as he had been one of the first Direct Entry Sub Lieutenants to be commissioned after the war and specifically to serve in the Navy of an independent Ceylon.

Rear Adm.Goonesekera handed over command on 31.3.79 to Cmdre.(later Admiral) A.W.H.Perera when he was accorded a Guard of Honour and 13-gun salute. Cmdr.Perera assumed duties the next day.

Rear Adm.A.W.H.Perera, in turn, handed over command on 1.6.83 to Rear Adm.(later Adm.) A.H.A.de Silva. Rear Adm.

De Silva represented yet another generation of the Navy, being one of the first intake of officer cadets to be taken into the Navy and sent to Dartmouth for training.

Administratively, too, the Navy changed course and moved away from the bifurcation of functions between two Chief Staff Officers – CSO (O) and CSO (S&S). Following the structure adopted by the Army and Air Force, the Navy also opted for a Chief of Staff next to the Captain of the Navy, with Directors in charge all specialized branches and operations.

### **Republican Status**

After the Constituent Assembly completed its task, the country assumed the Status of a Republic: the “DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA”. This change of status and nomenclature, and subsequent thinking, brought about many changes in the Navy.

The Navy itself became the SRI LANKA NAVY (SLN). Ships and establishments changed from “Her Majesty’s Ceylon Ships” to SRI LANKA NAVY SHIPS (SLNS). All insignia showing the crown as part of its design were changed by substituting the “Darmachakra” for the crown. On the Cap Badges, alone, the heraldic Lion of the national flag replaced the Crown. I personally recall a visit to the office of the then Minister of Cultural Affairs, Nissanka Wijeratne to discuss the new symbols and to press for the Lion to replace the Crown instead of the planned “Dhammacakka”. The Minister agreed but warned us of how he required the Dhammacakka depicted wherever it would be: he stressed that it should be shown so that the two spokes uppermost should form a “V” as, otherwise, a cross would be shown! It was reminiscent of the logic that ruled that the “Admiralty type stockless anchor without the stock” should appear on the Navy’s crest. The new Crest, itself was based upon the ornamental new Coat of Arms and included many Sinhala decorative motifs. The circular shield within which is a border of

decorative lotus petal around the central figure of the Anchor, superimposed on which is a heraldic Lion. A Dhammacakka appears above the shield and the scroll below carries the words “Sri Lanka” only in Sinhala script.

Several subsequent changes were introduced within the Navy in keeping with the changing mood of the country. Among them was a radical change in uniform with the traditional “white tropical” uniform of sailors (short trousers, vests, blue stockings and duck caps) being replaced by slacks, short-sleeved shirts and peak caps, as adopted in India and Pakistan. The new rate of “Master Chief Petty Officer”, whose uniform included a modified shoulder strap, was introduced to give senior sailors a chance of advancement beyond Chief Petty Officer. These changes were designed to improve morale.

The term “Captain of the Navy”, which was used in the Navy Act, was dropped. Instead the term “Commander of the Navy” was introduced to bring the post terminologically in line with the other two Services.

An important change was the re-designing of the naval White Ensign and flags of rank. The Cross of St. George was removed as it had no traditional significance to the country. Other Commonwealth (save India) had already dispensed with it. The same change, when applied to flags and pennants of rank, required complete re-designing. The red “balls” and St. George’s Cross were eliminated and the heraldic Lion and Anchor rondel in red, appeared on a white field, with red stars placed below to indicate rank, was introduced. The new White Ensign and Admiral’s standard were first broken on “Navy Day” 1976.

## **The Fleet**

The Insurgency demonstrated the weakness of the Navy at sea. The hasty decisions of ten years ago which led to the decimation of the fleet was viewed in perspective. Policy changes resulted in a commendably short time and the Navy was soon in the market for craft with ability to fight at sea. The first acquisitions came in the form of a gift from the Peoples' Republic of China. This took the form of two re-conditioned "Shanghai" class Fast Gun Boats (FGB) which were commissioned as SLNS "Sooraya" and SLNS "Weeraya" on 22.2.72. The craft were much bigger than the Patrol Craft and carried respectable fire power. Being found suitable for the purpose after a testing period, three more new craft of the same type were purchased in the following year and named "Ranakamie", "Dakshaya" and "Balawatha". Later, in 1980, two more, "Rakshaya" and "Jagatha" were purchased and commissioned.

The USSR also gifted a Fast Attack Craft, and a SLN crew was given a year's training and familiarization with similar craft in that country. Patrol Boat 451 ET 205 was commissioned SLNS "Samudra Devi" on 31.12.75 with Cdr.H.A.Silva in command. This was a very sophisticated ship, originally designed for missile warfare but was modified as required, with the addition of a gun in the fo'c'sle as the main armament in place of missiles.

In the following years the first of five general duties Patrol craft ordered from Cheverton Workboats, U.K., were commissioned "Seruwa" and "Korawakka".

The Colombo Dockyard entered the scene as a possible builder of Patrol Craft for the Navy, and the first was launched on 8.6.76. In 1980, an order was placed for five Coastal Patrol Craft and the first was taken delivery of. Orders were placed for four more of a different type and one taken delivery of. In 1983, the first 40-metre Patrol craft built was launched and the first Off-shore Patrol Craft taken delivery of and commissioned on Navy

Day as SLNS “Jayesagara”.

Colombo Dockyard also constructed Vessel Yard No.41 for the use of the Navy.

These acquisitions changed the character of the Fleet considerably. Since the insurgency had been successfully put down, it was considered that “Samudradevi” and the seven Fast Gun Boats provided sufficient attack capability.

The ships and craft were kept in a constant state of readiness. Those requiring major refit or repair were temporarily de-commissioned and later re-commissioned. As early as 1971, communications in Sinhala had been introduced between ships using voice communication systems only.

In 1980, exercises at sea off Jaffna were conducted, with the Commander of the Navy joining the fleet for a part of the exercise.

## **Cruises**

Cruises to neighbouring countries were undertaken to give ships’ crews experience of longer periods and of evolutions at sea.

In December, 1973, “Balawatha” and “Dakshaya” left on a goodwill cruise to the Maldives: the first cruise undertaken since the ill-starred Far Eastern cruise. In February of the following year the Commander of the Navy, paid a ceremonial visit there, flying his flag on the “Gajabahu”. In August the same year, the Prime Minister visited the Maldives and “Gajabahu” was again there in connection with the visit. A direct result of this visit was that two Maldivian cadets were offered training by the Navy, and arrived shortly after.

In 1976, “Gajabahu” sailed to Cochin on an operational visit, and “Sooraya” and “Ranakami” sailed on a similar mission to the Maldives. “Gajabahu” also sailed to Madras on several oc-

casions to transport ammunition and to give sea-time to sailors on non-sea-going branches of the Navy.

In 1978, "Balawatha" and "Weeraya" visited the Maldives.

### **New Bases and new duties**

During the Insurgency, a detachment had been established in Tangalle and this was commissioned as SLNS "Ruhuna", on 17.12.71 with Lt.Cdr.F.N.Q.Wickremaratne in command.

The detachment at Kalpitiya was also commissioned as SLNS "Vijaya" under the command of Lt.Cdr.A.Wijetilleke, on 1.6.73.

A new detachment was opened in Talaimannar under Lt.S.D.Munasinghe and another at Laxapana. The facilities for slipping at Galle, which the Fisheries Dept. had, were made available to the Navy.

The Navy also began assuming new tasks in keeping with its image of itself as the nation's "reservoir of maritime skills". On 6.6.71 the Ceylon Shipping Corporation (CSC) was formed, as anticipated, and the Navy played an important role in its formative years. As the CSC experienced manning difficulties initially, one ship was offered to be manned exclusively by the Navy. From 1975 to 1982, this facility was welcomed by the Navy as it offered officers and sailors the opportunity to experience "blue water" sailing, since their experience aboard naval vessels was limited cruises to the Maldives and South Indian ports, apart from coastal sailing. It also enabled them to gain experience in merchant shipping which helped a great many to qualify themselves and find billets after retirement. The ship taken over was m.v."Lanka Kanthi" which had Capt. A.H.A.de Silva as her first Master. Later, other coastal merchant ships were, such as "Mahaweli" and "Maduru Oya" were also crewed by the Navy.

In March 1976, the Lighthouses so far maintained by the Imperial Lighthouses Commission were handed over for maintenance by the Navy. These were the Barbery, Dondra and Great Basses Lighthouses, and the vessel “Pradeepa” (formerly the “Frank Rees”) which was used to service the Great Basses Lighthouses from Kirinde.

### **Routine Operations**

The Navy being on a heightened condition of alertness all routine operations were carried out with greater attention to detail.

There was, however, another cyclone that affected the east coast in 1978, Batticaloa, Amparai, Polonnaruwa and Mannar districts being the worst affected. Co-ordinating officers from the Services were appointed to be in charge of flood-relief work and Cdr.G.H.M.P.Elikewela was appointed to Polonnaruwa.

### **Ceremonial**

On 9<sup>th</sup> December, 1971, the Navy celebrated the completion of 21 years since the Navy Act was passed. The emphasis was on religious observances and Pirith was chanted at the Colombo Wardroom a Pooja held at the Sivam Temple, Kochchikade, Prayers at the Maradana Mosque and a Christian Service at Christ Church, Fort. Later in the evening, a Ceremonial “Beating of the Retreat” was held at Sugathadasa Stadium, with the Prime Minister taking the salute.

In December 1972, the sailors who had joined the RCyN completed 22 years of service. It was decided that a “Long and Efficient Service Medal” be stuck and this became the first medal to be awarded after the “Armed Services Inaugural Medal” in 1950

The first anniversary of the declaration of the Republic was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 1973. Apart from the detachment taking part in

the Parade, "Gajabahu" and four Fast Gun Boats also performed maneuvers past Galle Face.

During the Prime Minister's visit to Trincomalee, on 31.5.74, she unveiled a plaque commemorating the take-over of the Base from the R.N.

On 9<sup>th</sup> December, 1975, the Navy celebrated its Silver Jubilee. At an impressive ceremony at the Sugathadasa Stadium, H.E. the President William Gopallawa presented his colours to the Navy. He also awarded the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorative Medals to officers and sailors who had completed 25 years of service. For the benefit of the public, a Silver Jubilee Exhibition was held at Boy Scouts' Headquarters over several days. A sit-down dinner where the Prime Minister was the Chief Guest was held at Galle Face Hotel.

At National level, the most significant event was the holding of the Fifth Non-Aligned Nations' Summit Conference at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH) under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister Sirimavo R.D. Bandaranaike. The Navy made available many officers for liaison work and undertook many ceremonial, security, logistic and support services.

The new airline, "Air Lanka" was launched and the Navy Band was selected to go on a promotional tour. They performed with acclaim at London, Paris, Zurich, Bangkok and Singapore under Cdr. Danwatte, the Bandmaster

In January, 1978, H.E. William Gopallawa completed his term as President and hosted the Commander of the Navy and his senior officers to tea at President's House to say "Thank you and Farewell". He was succeeded by H.E. J.R. Jayewardene. By this time the Constitution had been further amended and the new President was Chief Executive and Head of State.

## **War clouds loom**

By 1975, the signs were visible that a major Sinhala-Tamil clash would take place. Although Jaffna had remained an ocean of peace in 1971, the climate had been worsening. Tamil militant groups, some avowedly Marxist, had come into being but were yet jostling for power among themselves. The first major incident was the murder of the SLFP Mayor of Jaffna, Alfred Duraipappa, in 1975. This was, in effect, a watershed which marked the beginning of a new political era. Other communities were also involved: a Sinhala-Muslim clash in Galgamuwa, Maho and Puttalam was contained only by swift naval intervention. In the General Election of 1977, the Tamil parties represented in Parliament were willing to co-operate with the new government led by J.R.Jayewardena (initially as Prime Minister and later as Executive President) in a last-bid effort to solve the problem democratically and by consensus. It effort was destined to fail.

As the '70s came to an end the curtain was being raised to reveal a new scenenario which involved both the Nation and the Armed Forces. These developments, however, do not fall within the scope of this personal memoir and the narrative thus ends here.

## CONCLUSION

With the narrative coming to the end of the period I feel competent to write on, however unsatisfactorily, I must wind up with my own assessment of the Royal Ceylon Navy. The RCyN served as a link between the CRNVR and the Sri Lanka Navy. It is thus organically linked all three navies into one.

During its existence it had to, first, learn to be a Navy without the safety net of the Royal Navy, with all its rules and regulations that did not have to be invented. Now, these had to be invented.

It had, next, to carve out a niche for itself in the national consciousness and to work out a role for itself. Both it and the nation itself were on a voyage of discovery and had to work together though sometimes it appeared that they were marching to different drums. Hampered by many factors, often not planned, the Navy managed to show that it was a competent Force.

Fortune seemed to smile on the RCyN when the Bases were taken over and a larger seagoing role assigned to it but it only flattered and faded. Whose failure was it? Undoubtedly the Navy must shoulder a part of the blame, maybe even a large part. But, as mentioned in the narrative, the question arises whether the punishment meted out fitted the 'crime'. The negative 'vibes' impacted on both the Nation and the Navy: all this was yet in the future, but there are no excuses for not thinking ahead. Those who remained faithful, with heads held high during the dark days are the ones I, personally, hold in high esteem. I was there during those days, and I remember.

The Navy's ability to 'bounce back' after the worst days were over must be admired. The role of the Academy during the last period of the RCyN's existence must never be forgotten forgotten or underestimated. It created an atmosphere of freedom in intellectual discussion and it must be remembered that, when

the Navy again rose, Phoenix-like from the ashes, a blue-print for the future had already emerged in the Academy. I remember those heady days of analysis and discussion only too clearly. It is for that particular reason that I have included, as a Supplementary Chapter, the paper for the Academy Journal *Vidusindhu* by Lt.Cdr.(E) D.C.D.Lecamvasam written in 1969.

The RCyN, in its final days, had to face the Insurgency. It coped, but not in the way it should, ideally, have done. I feel it necessary to quote, yet again, from the Army's History, "Fifty Years On":

*"It is unfortunate that an in depth study of this emergency was not carried out by the Army. The insurrection was generally attributed to misguided and volatile youth taking up arms. An evaluation of the perceptions of officers and the rank and file of their experiences in the field has not been carried out and none of the key players on the military side have yet recorded for posterity the impact of this armed rebellion on the country. The socio-political impact of this insurrection has of course been commented on by several scholars, thinkers and others. In reality the military did not find the JV activists a strong adversary. **It was the lack of intelligence, paucity of troops for wide deployment and lack of equipment which prompted them to seek external assistance.**"(emphasis mine)*

This is a brave attempt to place reality on record. The Navy was even less prepared, though it performed very creditably, and much was done that could have been done better. I can still remember the words of Lt.Cdr.M.H.Weliwitigoda – who led a push into rebel-dominated areas – in his retirement in ill-health speaking with regret of the way he handled certain situations. He was a man of decisive and prompt action and his later thoughts show how much those experiences can back to haunt him – and others.

Nothing can be gained by sterile criticism. The Past is a place from which we can mine information to mould the future. The purpose of this narrative is nothing more than placing

*"We must have a Navy"*

the bare bones of a narrative for those who care to read it. I hope it will help someone.

I enjoyed my days in the RCyN and it has done much to mould me. I realized how much only when I achieved some success in other areas of activity which led others to say "You must have learnt this in the Navy". I can only end with the heartfelt words mouthed by survivors of torpedoed ships when they beheld the White Ensign:

"Thank God for the Navy"

## **Part 2**

### **Supplementary chapters 34**

## Supplementary Chapter 1

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### **H.M.Cy.S. "VIJAYA": THE ROYAL CEYLON NAVY'S FIRST SHIP**

**Capt. M.M.A.Wahid**

*With additional notes by Cdr. M.G.S.Perera*

Almost forty-nine years ago, I enlisted in the Ceylon Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (CRNVR). Its Headquarters was in the Port, situated under the shadow of the Church of St. Anthony, the Patron Saint of Sailors. It was then a Navy manned by veterans, both officers and sailors, who had served in the Second World War (1939-45), patrolling the waters off Ceylon and Burma, under constant threat from Italian submarines or even surface raiders.

These men once manned converted fishing vessels, such as the "Okapi" and "Semla". But now, four years after the end of hostilities, only a few remained in mobilized service and it was now a Navy bereft of ships.

With Ceylon achieving Dominion Status in 1948, it was only fitting that we should build up our defence forces. So, in July, 1949, we were recruited to man the first ship of the post-war Navy.

A fortnight later, we sailed with Lieut. Rajah Proctor for Singapore, to man the new vessel. We joined the troopship "Devonshire", which also carried thousands of British troops bound for Malaya to fight the, mainly Chinese, Communist rebels. In Singapore Dockyard, we joined H.M.S. "Flying Fish", a Canadian-built "Algerine" class ocean minesweeper. The Advance party were already in Singapore, consisting of Lieut. Rajan Kadirgamar (Commanding Officer designate) and Sub Lieut. Eddie White, who would be ship's engineer, and a number of sailors.

The Royal Naval crew, including the Commanding Officer

(Cdr. Ball, RN), remained on board during the voyage to Ceylon, and the ship was jointly manned by the crews of both navies. In Trincomalee, the RN crew left the ship and Lieut. Kadirgamar assumed command. The rest of the Ceylonese crew arrived over-land.

*( Note by Inst.Cdr.M.G.S.Perera: Information was received that H.M.S.Flying Fish had arrived at Trincomalee. So, immediately after kitting-up, and basic parade training, the crew of the new ship was drafted to H.M.S. Highflyer, Trincomalee. On reaching Trincomalee the crew was taken to the new ship by boat. The new crew for the ship consisted of:*

Lieut. R.Kadirgamar - C.O. Designate  
 Lieut. D.V.Hunter  
 Lieut. R.Proctor  
 Lieut. A.Sanmugaratnam  
 Lieut. A.M.Caldera  
 Sub Lieut.(E) E.White

Immediately after, daily branch training was given by RN personnel.

#### Engine Room Crew

CERA H.V.Poulier  
 ERA A.Selvadurai  
 ERA M.A.C.Pieris  
 ERA M.M.A. Wahid

#### Boiler Rooms 1 & 2

CPO(SM) B.Jansen  
 PO(SM) A.  
 PO(SM) M.G.S.Perera  
 PO(SM) M.A.Friskin  
 PO(SM) R.Bartholomuesz  
 L/SM T.A.B.Perera

Within one month the crew was ready to take over.)

H.M.S.Flying Fish sailed on its historic journey to Colombo, manned for the first time by a Ceylon Navy crew and was welcomed by banner headlines by the press. *En route* Lieut. Kadirgamar addressed his ship's company and expressed pride and

confidence in his officers and men.

In Colombo, the vessel was officially transferred to the CRN-VR, in the presence of the Prime Minister D.S.Senanayake. The Royal Navy's White Ensign was ceremonially lowered on board and the national flag of Ceylon (then the Lion Flag without the stripes) was hoisted. H.M.S.Flying Fish was now re-named H.M. Cy.S.Vijaya.

*(Note by Inst.Cdr.M.G.S.Perera: Almost immediately after the ceremonial take-over was complete, the ship left for Galle, where it was open to the public. From Galle, it sailed for Hambantota, where it was again open to the public for a few days.)*

The Vijaya served the Royal Ceylon Navy well after it was formed. During its refit in England in 1953, her crew took part in Queen Elizabeth's Coronation Review of the Fleet at Spitshead.

*(Note: As the ship was in docks, another "Algerine" class M/S was named "Vijaya II" for the occasion and took part in the Review.)*

When the Queen visited Ceylon in 1954, her ship, the "Gothic" was escorted to Colombo by the Vijaya. It may be appropriate to recall an historic moment that occurred then. Vijaya led the Gothic into port and reached the berth on the newly constructed Queen Elizabeth Quay first. But she was directed not to pass any mooring lines to the jetty until the Gothic, which followed her, had first done so. The Gothic, with Her Majesty on board, thus became the first vessel ever to berth on Q.E.Quay and H.M.Cy.S.Vijaya was the second.

A week later, Her Majesty called on board Vijaya (Lt. Cdr.I.P.Murray in command). I was privileged to receive her and the Duke with a Royal Guard, which she inspected.

Vijaya suffered damage in Trincomalee during the cyclone of December 1964. She was ultimately scrapped, after sixteen years service with the Royal Ceylon Navy.

## Supplementary Chapter 2

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### OFFICER CADET TRAINING IN THE NAVY

**Vice Adm. A.H.A.de Silva**

With the intended formation of a Regular Navy, the decision was taken to appoint six naval cadets to follow the Royal Navy system of Officer Education and Training. The appointments took place on 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1950 and the cadets were winging their way to Britain on 13<sup>th</sup> September in a "Skymaster" aircraft of "Air Ceylon". Due to the delays in recruiting, they were not given any sort of indoctrination before their departure. The only introduction to the Navy came when the Officers invited the cadets to a Mess Dinner which was being held to bid farewell to other Officers proceeding for further training.

Arrival at the Britannia Royal Naval College (BRNC), Dartmouth, and induction to the strict training regime did not leave much time for introspection. The winter weather setting in by October was a hazard they had to learn to live with, especially during the "morning routine" by the river, or in a barely-heated pool. Our colleagues were mainly British cadets who had been brought up in a naval environment as most of them were sons or grandsons of naval persons who were traditionally following in their elders' footsteps.

BRNC was a College that had three streams of entry: at age 13, when all of one's secondary education was done at the College; at age 16, after the 'O' Levels in the school system; or at age 18+. The Ceylonese were in the last category. A total of about 80 cadets joined in this category, and were designated "Benbows" as they were accommodated in that Mess-deck. The cadets from the other types of entry were colloquially known as "Darts". The Benbows spent only one term at the College and married up with the Dart

division who had completed 8 terms at the College, and proceeded on the training cruise especially designed for cadet training. Other foreigners on that batch of cadets were Burmese, Pakistanis and New Zealanders. Australians, who had their own Naval College, joined the training Cruiser.

A period of two terms were spent on the training cruiser and each term was spent in a different part of the western hemisphere. The West Indies (Spring), Mediterranean (Summer) and Norwegian (Winter) cruises were in vogue at that time.

The cadets were kept busy, interspersing Academics with Practical Naval subjects, keeping watches on the Bridge, Engine and Boiler rooms while underway and doing harbour duties when in port. Cadets were designated to parts of ship, and boats were manned by them. The tasks were rotated during the cruise so that each person had an opportunity of experiencing various duties and tasks.

On completion of one year of cadetship, a promotion to Midshipman and an appointment to a major war vessel was arranged. One spent 12 months on board such a vessel before appearing for the Seamanship Board examination to qualify for the rank of Acting Sub Lieutenant. On completion of the Board examination one was appointed to a small ship for further familiarization before hoisting one's stripes and proceeding to the Royal Naval College at Greenwich for the Junior Staff College and Academic courses, for a period of two terms.

Upon completion of this period, the Actg. Sub Lieuts. commenced technical courses in the sub-specialisations of Navigation, Gunnery, Torpedo/Anti-Submarine warfare (TAS), Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defence with Fire-fighting, (NBCD), Communications, Divisional work, Air, and Electrical. On completion of these courses one proceeded to sea to earn the Watch-keeping and Ocean Navigation Certification, at the end of which one was considered a fully-trained Naval Officer.

Subsequent batches of cadets had the benefit of local training and indoctrination before proceeding out of the island. This was carried out at the training establishment H.M.Cy.S "Rangalla" at Diyatalawa. Later batches of Midshipmen did their "sea-time" in the Indian Navy's Midshipman Training Ship.

The Royal Navy changed their system of cadet training in 1956, when all the training and education was concentrated at BRNC. Sea training was carried out in the ships of the Dartmouth Training Squadron in short spells and joined the Fleet on completion of training as Actg. Sub Lieuts. The period at Dartmouth thus extended to over two years as Cadet and Midshipmen.

Cadet training with the Royal Navy was halted after the intake of 1959. The intake of 1960 was sent to India, where the system was similar to the old Royal Navy system. The next intake, several years later were trained at the Naval & Maritime Academy, Trincomalee.

**NOTE**

The following intakes of Cadets were trained at Dartmouth prior to 1960. The names of those who rose to command the Navy are shown in **BOLD** type. (Names in alphabetical order)

- 1950 R.Alliraja  
**A.H.A.de Silva**  
 D.A.G.Fernando  
 K.N.Jilla  
 J.C.Kelaart  
 J.A.L.P.Perera
- 1952 L.S.Dissanayake  
 H.N.Gunawardena  
 A.B.Henricus  
 M.R.Rajasingham  
 K.J.R.Serpanchy  
 A.B.T.Tambinayagam  
 D.E.Weerasingha  
 H.E.Wijesingha
- 1953 G.H.M.P.Elikewela  
 C.M.J.G.Fernando  
 F.M.Dharmaratne  
 B.G.Jacob  
 H.B.Perera  
**H.A.Silva**
- 1955 A.N.de Andrado  
 H.J.S.Baldsing  
 W.N.D.Boteju  
 G.M.F.Marshall

- 1956 F.J.Dominic  
J.Jayasooriya  
D.C.D.Lecamvasam  
K.R.L.Perera  
E.R.Phillips  
P.M.Thambugala
- 1956 E.P.D.Caspersz  
A.R.C.Fernando  
R.S.Jayatilleke  
B.Y.C.Lecamvasam  
M.R.Tharmaseelan
- 1957 S.C.Bramananda  
**W.W.E.C.Fernando**  
R.S.Jayanetti  
P.Jayasingha  
D.P.Liyanage  
T.Nadarajanesun  
R.Rasiah  
L.R.Rajasingham  
F.N.Q.Wickremeratne  
N.H.Wijesekera
- 1958 M.A.Andriesz  
B.S.Basnayake  
C.B.H.Gunaratne  
A.I.Jayawardena  
A.S.Jayawardena  
N.G.Nanayakkara  
S.M.Rajasingham  
R.S.Senanayake  
T.Somasunderam  
G.D.A.Wirasekera

1959 D.N.A.Beneragama  
D.C.D.Lecamvasam  
J.Jayasooriya  
K.R.L.Perera  
E.R.Phillips  
P.M.Thambugala

Of the next intake, only three were sent to the U.K. in 1960. The rest were to follow in 1961 after they had completed their ‘A’ Levels for which they were being coursed at “Rangalla” under Instructor Officers. However, before this day dawned, a policy decision was made to send these Cadets to India for training. They – the only Cadets to be trained in India – comprised the following.

1960 A.Wijetilleke  
N.G.A.Fernando  
I.M.Tillekeratne  
M.S.Siriwardena  
M.S.Jebaraja  
F.C.De Croos  
C.D.Jayakody  
A.M.A.P.Abhayawardena  
F.H.J.Perera  
H.L.L.M.Karuanaratne  
M.R.Abdeen  
P.Ambalawarner  
C.S. de Zoya  
R.Samaratunga  
P.J.Samuel ) U.K.  
E.J.P.de Silva )

By the time the next intake was recruited, the Navy had sufficient local expertise to match India in Cadet and Midshipmen training. The next intake was therefore trained at the Naval & Maritime Academy, Trincomalee. The first intake comprised:

1968 H.R.Amaraweera  
M.J.M.Ayub  
T.Z.Bagus  
D.K.Dassanayake  
S.Ganhewa  
C.A.M.Jayamaha (Killed in Action)  
L.P.R.Mendis  
D.S.R.Mills  
S.D.Munasingha  
M.W.Musafer  
**D.W.Sandagiri**  
**H.C.A.C.Tissera**

## Supplementary Chapter 3

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### THE NAVY'S FIRST BASE FOR OPERATION

#### H.M.Cy.S. "Kal Aru"

MCPO E.A.Jansen (Rtd.)

The Royal Ceylon Navy, since 1946, was based in Colombo. All its work, other than training, was carried out from here. Training of Recruits only was done in Diyatalawa.

The Army and Navy were called upon to carry out various duties from time to time. A new duty that had been given was anti-smuggling work. Troops were to be deployed along the northern coast both to north and south of Mannar. The Army set up a central base at Mannar and established some small camps along the coast from which soldiers patrolled the beaches. Probably because their man-power was limited, one of these camps was handed over to the Navy. It, therefore, became the first base outside Colombo, as far as the Navy was concerned.

The camp was situated a little inland from the coast along a little river, which was almost always dry, called "Kal Aru". It was about 40 miles south of Mannar and the nearest town, if you can call it that, was Silavatturai, about 8 miles away along a jungle track.

This base was commissioned H.M.Cy.S. "Kal Aru" with Lt.P.D.Nathanielsz in command. It was not a very "posh" base because there were only three cadjan huts in it. One was the Armoury and for the two officers, one for the sailors and one for the Galley. There was no proper floor because the huts were built on sea sand, and the beds sank into the sand under you, when you sat

or slept in them.

In my time, I remember Cooks John and Peter Singho, SBA Baron (now deceased) Signalmen Jansen (myself) and Hamidon, Tels. Khalid and Jansz, and also Eddie Mead, Hugh Koelmeyer, S.Abeysena, Bryan Thiedeman, Lankatilleke, M.Nicholas, C.S.B.Ratnayake and S/A Navaratnam. There were others also whom I have now forgotten.

Living conditions were quite primitive. We had the sea for bathing and we would dig in the bed of the dried-up river get some water. Sometimes we went to an Abyssinian well about three miles away in the jungle for fresh water bath, but even there the water was still saline. Drinking water was brought in a big barrel in a jeep provided by the Army at Mannar. We got our other needs from Silavatturai traveling along a jungle clearing by bullock cart: it was on these trips that we stopped at the Abyssinian well. Meat for curries was no problem because there was plenty of Rabbit, Pig and Deer in the Jungle. When the C.O. went to Mannar for a drink he would get us some more edibles, and Beer. The beach doubled up as “Heads” for us.

Our duties were simple. We would leave camp in two groups of two sailors and split up to proceed north and south of the camp along the beach, keeping a weather-eye open for suspicious boats. We had our rifles but, more importantly, tea and sugar. We would go about 10-12 miles and rest. We used to dig a hole in the ground and light a fire and brew tea. All the while we were watching out for *vallams*. We would return to camp at first light. We never caught a smuggler and don't know what we would have done if we did!

One day, Hugh Koelmeyer was cleaning a .22 rifle in the Armoury and did not check whether it was loaded. He accidentally pressed the trigger and the bullet went through the cadjan walls hitting C.S.B.Ratnayake, who was levelling the sand outside, in the foot. It was about 0930 and the two officers, Lts. Nathanielsz

and Balthazaar had left for Mannar in the jeep. The only transport available was a bicycle, but it had "flat" tyres. Anyway, don't ask me how, I pedaled it to Silavatturai and contacted the C.O. at Mannar. He came about 1700 and dispatched Ratnayake to Anuradhapura hospital.

When the light faded, we lit a hurricane lamp and hung it on the roof. In about half an hour, the chimney became as black as the night with soot, and it was darkness till dawn after that. As usual among Navy types, we used to tell yarns and lies to keep going and, some how or another, a story about bears crept in. At about 2200 one night there was a shout "Bear in the hut!". It was every man for himself. Bryan Thiedeman, weighing about 200 lbs, jumped from bed to bed, landing right on Peter Singho's face. While the rest of us were up, the old cook lay bleeding on the sand floor. Worse, nothing could be done: SBA Baron was too busy repeating Buddhist "*gathas*". Peter Singho was taken to hospital the next morning and what a sight he was when he was brought back! Only his eyes and mouth were visible with the whole face covered in plaster of paris!

Those were the days!

## Supplementary Chapter 4

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### **"VIJAYA" GOES TO GRIMSBY**

**Capt.(S) A.G.Devendra (Rtd.)**

In 1953, H.M.Cy.S. "Vijaya" left for the U.K. for refit, with the Coronation Contingent taking passage on her. She underwent a major D/2 refit at the Humber Graving Docks at Grimsby, which cost us approximately 1.6 million Pds.Stg. which, at the 1953 conversion rate, amounted to about Rs.25 million. We arrived at Chatham in March 1953 on the very day Queen Mary (Queen Elizabeth's grandmother) died: maybe the shock of our presence was too much to bear!

We had had a very eventful and memorable trip to the U.K., defeating the prognostications of the skeptics who betted cases of liquor that "Vijaya" would never make it to the U.K.

We berthed at Bombay and the Ceylon Ambassador, Sir Edwin Wijesinghe boarded us and received the Captain and crew.

We next berthed at Port Said, after Aden,. Our Pilot was an Egyptian (the Egyptians had, by then, nationalized the Suez Canal) who was indemnified (as all Suez Canal Pilots are priviledged), and he took charge of the "Vijaya" at the head of a convoy of about 25 ships. Naval ships generally head the convoy, followed by the merchant ships. We ran aground in the Canal. A temporary underwater repair cost us a hundred Egyptian pounds – a princely sum in those days, and we limped all the way to England with a defective and noisy propeller!.

*En route* we were following Marshal Tito's yacht, which warned us of the presence of World War II mines still floating around. We stopped at Malta and Gibraltar and at the latter port

those who could afford it hopped across to Lalinca, at the southern point of Spain, for the customary R&R exercise!

While in the U.K. we participated in the Queen's Coronation and at the Naval Review. We also participated at the Naval Review at Portsmouth. Since "Vijaya" was in the hands of the dockyard (Humber Graving Dock, Grimsby – a truly Grim port – with winter temperatures of -30 degrees F!) Proctor took charge of another Algerine class Minesweeper commissioned H.M.Cy.S. "Vijaya II" for the Review.

While Murray, Proctor, Sanmugaratnam and Matthysz lived ashore, I remained on board to supervise the refit. Proctor, who was in command, was recalled to Ceylon to prepare for the impending visit of the Queen, and Murray took over.

With the refit completed satisfactorily we set off for home to be in time for the Queen's visit.

## Supplementary Chapter 5

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### JOINT EXERCISES TRINCOMALEE

(JET 1950 – 1962)

**By Capt. M.M.A.Wahid**

For well over a decade, from 1950 onwards, the seas off Trincomalee and into the Bay of Bengal would, for six weeks in the year, be teeming with ships of the Commonwealth navies ranging from ocean minesweepers to cruisers and aircraft carriers. In the first two years it was not designated as Jet exercises but the Royal Ceylon Navy's Algerine class ocean minesweeper H.M.Cy.S. Vijaya was joined by a few frigates of the British Royal Navy such as the Loch Glendu, the Loch Fada and the Loch Alvie in exercises on a smaller scale. But subsequently, more and larger capital ships participated in the exercises.

They would assemble in March or April of each year for this purpose and build up to a vast array of forty to fifty ships. They would be supported or rather intercepted on the high seas by submarines and by aircraft of the Commonwealth air forces. The exercises would extend into the Bay of Bengal as far as the coast of Malaya. With the handing over of the Trincomalee Naval Base to the Ceylon Navy in 1957, the latter hosted the JET exercises.

After spells of a fortnight on exercises, the combined fleet would return for a weekend in Trincomalee Harbour. During these forty eight hours in the port, there was the regular circuit of cocktail parties and inter-navy sports tournaments. Many thousands of officers and crews from the navies of Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India, Pakistan and Ceylon would daily disembark at Pepperpot Jetty and throng the Wardroom of H.M.S.Highflyer (or of H.M.Cy.S.Tissa in later years) in the dockyard or the Fleet

Canteen in Inner Harbour Road.

In the evening, they would be joined on the football and hockey fields by the civilian population of Trincomalee for the regular inter-navy tournaments, which drew large crowds.

Although the Royal Ceylon Navy ultimately had four vessels in the frigate or ocean minesweeper category, it would always be represented at JET by only one ship each year, due to operational requirements. In sports, this meant that the Ceylon Navy had only about 140 officers and crew to choose its teams from, while other navies had a few thousands available. Yet, every year it was the Royal Ceylon Navy which won the inter-navy cricket tournament, while the British Royal Navy invariably won the soccer finals.

As for hockey, there lay another tale. The hockey finals would always see the Indian and Pakistan navies pitted against each other. The Jet sports programme was always drawn up so that the hockey finals were held on the final day of the six weeks exercise period. It drew record crowds from the town. The Royal Marines would march in and would be dispersed around the perimeter of the grounds before commencement. This did much to ease the tension.

At night on weekends, Trincomalee Harbour was a sea of lights from over forty warships which lit the waterfront. But citizens would wake up on Monday mornings to see the harbour empty – for the fleets had left for the fortnight long exercises.

The Fleet would sail after midnight on Sundays on a tight departure schedule. They would leave their berths and manoeuvre in the darkness, so as to pass through the entrance under the Dockyard Signal Station at exact distances of 1.5 cables (or 2 cables in the case of cruisers and aircraft carriers). These distances were closely monitored by the staff of the conducting authority. A slight deviation from this stationing distance meant a reprimand over the VHF channels.

On passing Round Island, ships moved into protective formation and were darkened. They sailed along with no navigation lights and no radar as these would give away the fleet's position to the 'enemy' awaiting them. The 'enemy' were the submarines that had sailed the previous day to various unknown dispositions at sea to await, 'attack' and 'destroy' mainly the tankers and stores ships, which simulated a convoy of merchantmen and which the close support group of cruisers and carriers protected.

By the time they passed Foul Point Lighthouse, the main body would be protected by the screen of about thirty destroyers and frigates in horseshoe formation, at an appropriate radial distance from the main body. They would be stationed as an anti-submarine screen, using their equipment to detect and attack any underwater 'intruder' who may try to reach the unarmed vessels of the convoy. Submarines, if they penetrated the screen, would on reaching the merchant vessels, release flares onto the surface of the sea to simulate the firing of torpedoes. Similarly any vessel on the screen on detecting any echoes off a submarine would detach itself from the screen and chase it, throwing a hand grenade over the side at the moment of firing, to simulate depth charges or squids. These moments would be recorded by the attacker and the attacked.

The success, or otherwise, of the attack would be discussed at the debriefing that took place in Trincomalee during the fortnightly break. At these, the submarine commanders would indicate to the assembled naval audience, on charts, how he penetrated the screen without detection or how successful or otherwise the dummy attack was.

Sometimes the ships would be spread out into the more widespread anti-aircraft screen, to fire barrages at enemy aircraft attempting to approach the main body. Air attacks were carried out by aircraft of the R.A.F., Indian Air Force or the Royal Ceylon Air Force from bases in Ceylon, India and Malaya.

There seemed to be a hoodoo that covered the exercises.

Every year a fatal accident would occur. Once, a Pakistani destroyer was refueling from a tanker, when the rigging lines supporting the hoses parted and a Pakistani seaman was killed.

The most damaging of accidents took place in 1954, when the destroyer H.M.S.Hogue in changing station in darkness, ploughed directly at full speed into the cruiser I.N.S.Mysore. When the destroyer extricated itself, the crumpled bow of the Hogue held some crew members of both ships, some dead, some alive. The destroyer was towed to Trincomalee by Lieut. F.G.Serpanchy using a tug from that port.

During JET 62, in my final year of exercises, I was in command of H.M.Cy.S.Parakrama. The Indian Admiral Soman had been in command of the last phase of that year's exercises. He announced dramatically, "Operations successfully completed, victory celebrations will be held tomorrow at Trincomalee in Tissa wardroom" and he commanded the seven nation fleet to take up formation for the triumphant entry into Trinco.

As I sat on my chair with relief at the end of the grueling six weeks, I said to my officers "At last we have had an accident-free year." As I uttered these unprophetic words, I saw on the port beam a plume of water shoot hundreds of feet into the air in the vicinity of the aircraft carrier H.M.S. Hermes. Within a few minutes a voice on the VHF speaker crackled "Friendly aircraft ditched".

The aircraft, in attempting to land, had banked steeply to starboard in order to avoid the superstructure of the carrier and the wingtip had hit the water, causing it to plummet into the sea. All that remained on the surface was a floating helmet.

## Supplementary Chapter 6

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### THE "BLUE WATER" FLEET - THE SHIPS THAT SAILED AWAY

The pride of a Navy resides, primarily, in its Fleet. While Quality may actually reside in its leadership, its personnel, its training, its operations, its service to the Nation and other un-quantifiable things, one cannot deny that it is the Fleet that is the most visible part of the Navy and which contributes most to pride in service and *esprit de corps*. The Navy, during the World War, had ships that went to sea and took part in operational duties. These ships have been memorialized in "The History of the Navy in Sri Lanka. (1) The Ceylon Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve." They need no mention again.

In the past-1956 era, a far-seeing Prime Minister, appreciated the need for the country to exercise effective control over the seas around us – not merely the Palk Strait – and began building up a Fleet that would lift us from the "One-ship Navy" that we were, to something more respectable, something we could take pride in. Those of us who threw in our lot with the Navy about this time believed in, and awaited the fulfillment of this promise. For a while, the pride and the promise bloomed; but the time of flowering was brief, and the promise withered on the bough. Still, there was a brief period when Hope and Pride in a "blue water" Fleet flowered and, it is perhaps with a sense of nostalgia for lost youth that I like to think back on the ships that sailed during that all-too-short Summer before the Winter of our Discontent.

The ships of the R.Cy.N were, then, informally categorized into three classes: "King" class, "Animal" class and "Bird" classes.

## **‘KING’ CLASS SHIPS**

### H.M.Cy.S. “Mahasena”

MAHASENA, (Commissioned 4.5.59 – Cdr.Proctor in command) was an ex-Canadian “River” class Frigate, ex-H.M.C.S.“Violetta”, ex- H.M.C.S.“Orkney”, built by Canadian Yarrows Ltd., Esquimalt, B.C. and launched on 18<sup>th</sup> September, 1944. Later sold to Israel and commissioned under the name “Mivtakh”. Sold to R.Cy.N. and taken over by Ceylonese crew at Djibouti and sailed home. Pennant No. 228.

Displacement:	1,445 tons standard (2,360 tons Full load)
Dimensions:	283 (p.p)291 ½(w.l.) 301(o.a.) X 36 ½ x 13 ½ feet
Guns:	1 x 4 inch, (3 under Israeli configuration) 8 x 20 mm. AA.
A/S weapons:	6 D.C.T.
Machinery:	Triple expansion. 2 shafts. I.H.P. 5,500 = 20 kts.
Boilers:	2, of three-drum types
Oil fuel:	585 tons
Radius:	6,000 miles at 12 kts.
Complement:	160

Commissioned in 1959, de-commissioned on 31.5.62, MAHASENA had only three short years in the Navy, but she was the first ship bigger than a Minesweeper that the Navy acquired. It was not her condition, but her misfortune to have been selected for the Far Eastern cruise that decided her unfortunate fate. Bought during the Arab-Israeli wars from one of the warring nations, the R.Cy.N crew had not only to take over the ship, but sail her safely through the war-zone. Israel had to provide air cover for her over her own waters, the Gulf of Aqaba, and she had to sail into international waters under the neutral flag of Ceylon. Many are the sailors’ yarns told about ghosts in her mess-decks, because it was

widely believed that she had been used to bring Jewish settlers to Israel from Europe and to remove unwelcome (to Israel) Arab people in the "Promised Land". She ended her days in a Hong Kong 'breaker's yard.

### H.M.Cy.S. "Gajabahu"

GAJABAHU (Commissioned 26.4.60 – Capt. Murray in command) was a Frigate of the same class as MAHASENA, built by Canadian Vickers Ltd. Montreal, P.E. and launched on 8<sup>th</sup> August, 1943. Also bought by Israel in 1950 from Canada (ex-H.M.C.S. "Hallowell", ex- "Misnak"). She was sailed by an Israeli crew to Ceylon and taken over in Trincomalee. Pennant No.232. Built by Canadian Vickers Ltd., Montreal, she was completed on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1944. Being of the same class, the two ships were almost identical in build and specifications.

GAJABAHU was the last of the bigger ships acquired by the Navy and was in commission even longer than the "Vijaya" was. At a time when all the Navy had was her, she did her work very usefully, keeping the sea-going skills of the officers and sailors alive and, when the new intakes began arriving, serving as a training ship very creditably. In addition to this and her normal sea operations, she went on several cruises, keeping the White Ensign flying and, when the Insurgency took place, she was there to play her role of defender of territorial waters. She was de-commissioned in 1978.

### H.M.Cy.S. "Vijaya"

VIJAYA, (Commissioned on 7.10.49 – Lt.Cdr.Kadrigamar in command) was an "Algerine" class Fleet Minesweeper that was our first ship. As Prime Minister D.S.Senanayake remarked at her commissioning, it was the most appropriate name to give her. She was built by Redfern Construction Co., Canada, laid down on

30<sup>th</sup> October, 1943 and launched on 15<sup>th</sup> February, 1944. Used as an escort vessel by the R.N., commissioned as H.M.S. “Tillsonburg” and H.M.S. “Flying Fish” – her name when she was transferred to the R.Cy.N. on indefinite loan. Pennant No. M 370.

The Algerine class Minesweepers were considered the fastest and most efficient of their type in the R.N. “Flying Fish” had been “mothballed” in Singapore after the war and it was from here that an R.N. crew sailed her to Trincomalee with key R.Cy.N. personnel understudying them. The rest of the Ceylonese crew joined her in Trincomalee for familiarization and “working up”, after which she sailed to Colombo.

Displacement:	1,040 tons (1,335 tons Full load)
Dimensions:	235 (o.a.) x 35 1/5 x 11 1/5 feet (max)
Guns:	1 x 4 inch, 4 x 40 mm.AA, 2 x Saluting, 2 x D.C.T.
Machinery:	Triple expansion, 2 shafts.
I.H.P.	2000 – 16 ½ kts
Boilers:	2 of 3-drum type
Complement:	85 – 100

VIJAYA was the ship that will always be remembered in the Navy, and not for sentimental reasons only. After her commissioning, under her first C.O., Lt.Cdr. Kadirgamar, she performed many operational and training duties, sailed on many memorable cruises – even when she was not “in the best of health” – and played a crucial role in having trained seamen in the Navy when the days of expansion dawned. After almost 15 years of service she was de-commissioned on 31.3.63 and served as a static training ship for the NMA. The emotional hold she had on many is best expressed in the unprecedented act of the Captain of the Navy, Cmdr.Rajan Kadirgamar who, when appointed to that position, elected to fly his Broad Pennant simultaneously at Naval Headquarters, Colombo and on the hulk of the de-commissioned “Vijaya”, his first major command. The cyclone of 1964 cast her adrift and aground and, when the time came to dispose of her, it was discovered that

she was still the property of the R.N. Special arrangements had to be made to get over this problem. Her Ship's Wheel is preserved and on display in Sri Lanka's first Maritime Museum, in Galle.

### H.M.Cy.S. "Parakrama"

PARAKRAMA (commissioned 12.9.58 – Lt.Cdr.Caldera in command) was also an "Algerine" class Fleet Minesweeper, differing from VIJAYA mainly in that she had steam turbines, while VIJAYA had reciprocating engines. She was built by Harland & Wolff Ltd., Belfast, laid down on 11<sup>th</sup> January, 1943, launched on 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 1943, completed 15<sup>th</sup> October, 1943 and commissioned H.M.S. "Pickle", Pennant No. M 293. she was placed in reserve after the war and brought out of reserve and docked in U.K. for alterations and additions, before being taken over at Devonport and sailed to Ceylon by a R.Cy.N. crew.

PARAKRAMA is remembered as a very good ship and one we should not have lost. The part she was made to play in the Far Eastern cruise was her undoing and her sale was regretted by all in the Navy. Her condition was good enough for the purchaser not to scrap her but to convert into a Singapore-Hong Kong Ferry. De-commissioned on 13.12.63, her ultimate fate is unknown but her Ship's Bell still proudly hangs outside Naval Headquarters.

## **'ANIMAL' CLASS SHIPS**

### H.M.Cy.S. "Kotiya"

KOTIYA was a "Ford" class 3101 series Seaward Defence Boat, described (in 1958-59) as "an entirely new design of naval vessel, their purpose being to detect, locate and destroy submarines, in the approaches to defended ports. Their armament includes depth charge release gear and flares. Modern electronic equipment is used in association with their armament. The boats have comprehensive electrical installations."

Displacement:	120 tons standard 160 tons Full load
Dimensions:	110 (pp.), 117 ¼ (o.a.) x 20 x 4 ½ feet
Guns:	1 x 40 mm. Bofors AA.
A/S weapons:	Depth charge release gear.
Machinery:	2 Davey Paxman diesels.
Foden engine on centre shaft. Speed = 18 kts	
Complement:	20

KOTIYA was the victim of Cyclone “Emily”. Secured alongside the 2-fathom jetty in the Dockyard, with her engines removed for overhaul at the workshops, she was in no position to be sailed. Her C.O. had to wait on the pier and watch her being repeatedly bashed against the jetty till her sides stove in and she sank at her moorings in two fathoms of water.

### H.M.Cy.S. “Aliya”

ALIYA (Commissioned 18.1.57 – Lt.Cdr.Caldera in command) was an “Empire” Class Seagoing Tug, of a type built by Cochrane & Sons Ltd., Selby, Yorks., England. Date not known. H.M.S. “Adept” (ex-“Empire Barbara”) was in Trincomalee when the take-over of the Base was negotiated. She was transferred to the R.Cy.N. around this time. There had been another Fleet Tug, by the same name, “Adept” but of the “Assurance” class which the RN lost during the war.

Displacement:	503 tons (Full load)
Dimensions:	105 x 26 ½ x 12 ¾ feet
Machinery:	Triple expansion. I.H.P.: 850 -10 kts.

She was also de-commissioned on 31.3.63.

## **‘BIRD’ CLASS SHIPS**

These were the unarmed vessels purchases in the early fifties for anti-II and anti-smuggling work, and were of two types:

### **H.M.Cy.S. “Hansaya” and H.M.Cy.S. “Lihiniya”**

HANSAYA (Lt.Chanmugam in command) and LIHINIYA (Commissioned 4.1.55 – Lt.Dharmadasa in command) were metal-hulled, hard chine craft designated Long Patrol Boats (LPB). They were built for the Navy by Korody Marine Corporation, Italy.

Displacement:	36 tons
Dimensions:	63 7/12 (pp.) 66 (o.a.) x 14 x 4 feet
Machinery:	3 General Motors diesels

Both were de-commissioned in the ‘seventies and disposed of.

### **H.M.Cy.Ships “Diyakawa”, “Korawakka” “Seruwa” and “Tarawa”**

These were wooden-hulled vessels chosen to operate in the shallow waters of Palk Bay. Designated Short Patrol Boats (SPB), SERUWA (Commissioned 15.7.55 – Sub Lieut. Jilla commanding), DIYAKAWA (Commissioned Bo’s’n F.A.A.Serpanchy commanding), TARAWA (Commissioned Bo’s’n Christoffelsz commanding) and KORAWAKKA (Commissioned Bo’s’n commanding joined the flotilla at the Karainagar Base.

Displacement:	13 tons
Dimensions:	46 (pp.), 48 (o.a.) x 12 x 3 ft
Machinery:	2 Foden FD.6 diesels.

All were decommissioned in the ‘seventies, but DIYAKA-WA served as a survey vessel for the Hydrographic Unit till all were disposed of.

In addition to the MAHASENA, GAJABAHU, VIJAYA, PARAKRAMA and ALIYA, other ships were also looked at. In fact, “Jane’s Fighting Ships: 1958-59” shows pictures of a “Loch” class Frigate, H.M.S. “Loch More” which “is officially stated ..... will be transferred to the Royal Ceylon Navy”; and of a “Bar” class Boom Defence Vessel. H.M.S. “Baron” which “..... is officially stated ..... is to be purchased from Great Britain for the Royal Ceylon Navy”. However, these transfers did not take place: events of a different nature intervened.

S.D.

## Supplementary Chapter 7

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### **"M.G.S." OF THE ACADEMY: Teacher to the Navy**

On December 9<sup>th</sup>, this year,(2000) the Sri Lanka Navy completes fifty years as a regular force. But Instructor Commander M.G.S.Perera, the man who trained generations of officers and sailors and the man who created the Naval & Maritime Academy, will not be there to witness this anniversary. He left us for "the other shore" just last August, a full fifty years after he joined the Navy. As the last of his "Schooleys" (the naval term for Instructor Officers) yet around, it was my loss that I was not able to attend his funeral, and to speak the words that I should have spoken then. But, at last, a few months ago, I had the opportunity to articulate them, in the most appropriate of places and at the most appropriate of gatherings. And on this, first, anniversary of his death, it is appropriate that I pay a tribute both to MGS, the head of my branch and describe in some detail the growth of Training in the Navy.

The Royal Ceylon Navy was born in Colombo. It first ventured out to establish a training unit in Diyatalawa. There, up in the hills, "Thistle Camp" and four married quarters were taken over from the Air Force and Army respectively, and commissioned HM-CyS RANGALLA on 28<sup>th</sup>.August 1951. Training was limited to "square bashing" on a parade ground of the Army Training Camp, and some induction into the skills required of a seaman – as long as no access to the sea was required. With the taking-over of the British Bases, the camps in Diyatalawa were distributed amongst Ceylon Armed Forces and the Navy training camp was moved to better quarters: first to "Ella Camp" in 1957 and later to "Uva" Camp. By the time I joined the Navy (as an Instructor Lieutenant in 1960), we were in "Uva". MGS had, by this time, completed his

time in that rank and was awaiting promotion as the first Instructor Lieutenant Commander. It was one of a series of “firsts” he achieved in the Navy.

He had started his career as a Teacher after qualifying for the “Ceylon Teacher’s Certificate”, in English and Sinhala. Teaching at a school in Galle, one of his fellow-teachers was the great Sunil Shantha. MGS (“Steve” to his friends) had an insatiable urge to learn and this drove him to the then famous Victoria Jubilee Technical Institute (VJTI), in Bombay where he was awarded the Licentiate in Mechanical Engineering (LME) with honours in 1947. He was not a wealthy man and had to husband his financial resources to achieve all this and many are the stories he has told me, while relaxing over a drink, of the experiences and difficulties he underwent during his student days – with never a word of complaint. After two more years studying Machine Design and Practice, he returned home in 1949, joining the Navy in August.

The “Ceylon Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve” (CRNVR) was then expanding, gearing itself to become the “Royal Ceylon Navy” in a few months’ time and MGS enlisted in August 1949. The Navy - a small band of 100 plus Volunteers at this time - had no idea of the value of his qualifications and took him in as only Petty Officer Stoker (P/O S/M). It was around this time that the Navy acquired its first ship, HMCyS. VIJAYA, (ex HMS FLYING FISH) and he joined her in Trincomalee as part of the first all-Ceylonese crew to sail her to Colombo for commissioning.

The Navy soon realized that his expertise was being wasted, and promoted him Engine Room Artificer Cl.1 and, not long after, took the unprecedented step of directly commissioning him Instructor Lieutenant in 1952. No-one, I think, made it so fast from Petty Officer to Lieutenant. After the mandatory eight years in rank he was promoted Instructor Lieutenant Commander in April 1960 and, later, Instructor Commander in 1964.

I speak of him and his achievements as the last of the In-

structor Officers who worked with him. At the beginning, he was the only Instructor Officer in our one-ship Navy. He was given a large room, called the "Royal Ceylon Navy Schoolroom", in HM-CyS GEMUNU, where his task was to teach the basics of almost everything naval to Officer Cadets selected for training at Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, England. As the Cadet intakes grew in numbers and frequency, he needed assistants with University degrees. His first assistants were Inst.Lieuts. S.Navaratnaraja and V.W.H.Botejue (to teach Mathematics and Physics) and the officer who was to introduce Sinhala to the Navy, M.L.Mendis who went on to become the longest-serving "Schooley" of all. Further expansion was needed and in 1960 H.D.L.M.Palmon, E.M.A.Perera, T.Mahadewa and I were commissioned. A proper training establishment for Officer Cadets – including the first "Gun Room" – and for sailors was established in Diyatalawa and not long after that, MGS was appointed the Commanding Officer of HMCyS RANGALLA – the first non-Executive branch officer to be appointed to command. The Navy was experiencing a shortage of officers then, and he had only us Instructor Officers on his staff. So RANGALLA became the first "ship" to be manned entirely by Instructor Officers. It was with this complement that MGS established the first Naval Technical Training Centre, to train Artificer Apprentices before they were sent to Indian training schools.

About this time he proceeded to England to specialize in Meteorology at the Royal Naval Air Station, HMS CULDROSE, becoming the first and, perhaps, the only naval officer to qualify as such. He also undertook a study tour of BRNC Dartmouth and the Engineering Colleges at Manadon and Plymouth, and HMSS SULTAN, FISGUARD, RALEIGH, COLLINGWOOD and CALEDONIA.

In 1961-62 disaster struck the Navy: the "Far Eastern Cruise" fiasco and the involvement of the (then) Captain of the Navy in the first attempted "*coup d'etat*" (all the other conspirators were Army, Police or Civil Service officers). A part of the price the Navy had

to pay was that, along with many other assets, the Navy had to hand over Diyatalawa to the Army in 1963. So we did a “flag shift” from Diyatalawa to Kochchikade, which became the new HMCyS RANGALLA, again with MGS in command. Cadet, recruit and technical training was put “on hold” then, as another price we had to pay was that enlistment was frozen and the Navy was left to wither away. As anticipated by all thinking people, this ill-advised move led to disastrous consequences less than ten years later when, threatened by the JVP uprising, the Navy had no effective ability to patrol the territorial waters and the country had to ask for Indian and Pakistani ships to guard our shores. I will not list the other “punishments” meted out to the Navy, as they did not directly influence training. However, in RANGALLA, “in-service” educational courses were conducted for officers and sailors at the new “Naval Educational Services Centre”.

In 1966, the sun shone on the Navy again, and a large intake of sailors was recruited but, alas! the infrastructure for training had, by now, been dismantled. A “quick fix” was required. The shore establishment at Trincomalee, HMCyS TISSA, was hastily shifted to a group of under-utilized buildings and the TISSA barracks was re-commissioned HMCyS PARAKKRAMA II (in memory of the best ship the Navy had, which had been sold off in 1964.) This new establishment, commanded by Lt.Cdr. (later Vice Admiral) A.H.A.de Silva, had the task only of training this large new intake of recruits. Of the Instructor officers I, alone, was attached to it to teach English to the recruits. Since the numbers of trainees was too great for one man, I evolved a system of “de-centralised” teaching, using the Executive (i.e. ‘sea-going’) Officers as instructors. The new establishment performed its task well and was de-commissioned on completion.

Back in Kochchikade MGS, with his usual foresight, had already started planning to set up a proper Naval Academy. Lt (E) D.C.D.Lecamvasam, the Engineer officer and I were serving in Trincomalee, but we had been chosen to join him in this venture.

Soon we began to receive trainloads of material to be installed. The logistics of this operation was fantastic, and a nightmare, too, as MGS had no proper staff to help him. But he had had to face a similar situation when he dismantled RANGALLA in Diyatalawa and distributed its equipment in Colombo and Trincomalee; and so his fertile mind found ways and means where lesser minds found only obstacles.

Finally, MGS himself arrived in Trincomalee and the "Naval & Maritime Academy" was born on 15<sup>th</sup>.January, 1967. There were separate schools for Navigation, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical & Electronic Engineering, Communications, Supplies & Secretarial Practice, Cookery & Stewarding, Science & Mathematics, Languages & Humanities, Diving and Physical Education, as well as a large number of workshops and a foundry. Later, a Patrol Craft and, still later, the de-commissioned VIJAYA were lent to the Academy. Here he found the opportunity for analysis and experiment, creating an environment in which the staff did "brain-storming" sessions where the future of the Navy was discussed, debated and even presentations made to the Prime Minister. These were heady days, and many of the ways in which the Navy developed in the 1970s saw their genesis during these sessions. MGS designed new courses to keep in line with the way the Navy was progressing. Among them were the amalgamation of the old Visual Signaling (V/S) and Wireless Telegraphy(W/T) branches into one, called "Communicators"; and the cross-training of seamen and engine room sailors as "Seaman Mechanics" to enable the small number of sailors that the small Patrol Craft (that were all we had as a fleet, then) could be equally at home on deck and in the engine-room. All these were the product of MGS' fertile mind.

He did not think the Academy was useful to the Navy alone, either. He knew that it was a national institution, and that the Navy, alone, could train all sea-going personnel. He undertook to train Police launch drivers, 11-ton fishing vessel masters, seamen and other sailors qualifying themselves for merchant marine service,

staff for the Ceylon Shipping and Fisheries Corporations. Many of those we trained went to sea with Academy certificates. During the Navy's Silver Jubilee celebrations in 1975 I, as Commandant, brought part of our equipment for the Jubilee Exhibition and was moved to find many of our merchant marine trainees (then serving in many parts of the world) had come to see us, and say "thank you". Their thanks were, really, for MGS.

But perhaps his greatest achievement was that he showed the world that our Navy could fully train officers from cadet upwards, who could hold their own with naval officers in any Navy, anywhere. By this time he had not only toured Royal Navy training schools but had done a further study tour of the US Navy Academies at Annapolis and Washington and the US Naval Western Command School at San Diego. He had been elected a Fellow of the Royal Meteorological Society, Fellow of the Institute of Marine Engineers and a Member of the Institute of Navigation. He was eminently qualified to carry out the task of training all types of officers: no longer did we have to ask England or India to train them for us. The first intake of these Cadet Officers was in 1969 and it must have caused MGS great satisfaction when two of them rose to command the Navy.

The Instructor Officers whom MGS brought into the Navy served the Navy and the country well. Lt.Cdr. Botejue ran the Telecommunications Centre at Welisara, Lt.Cdr. Palmon headed the Electrical and Electronic Engineering branch before becoming Chief Engineer of SLBC, Lt.Cdr. E.M.A.Perera qualified in Oceanography, set up the first Hydrographic Office, and proceeded abroad to work with international Oil Companies; Lt.Cdr. Mahadewa was elected a Fellow of the Institute of Marine Engineers, and went on to be a Director of the Confifi group of companies; Cdr.(later Commodore) Mendis followed MGS as Commandant and also became the first naval Commandant of the Kotalawela Defence Academy which he elevated to University status. I, too, became Commandant of the Naval and Maritime Academy, head-

ed the Recruitment and Personnel Administration directorates, and went on to be a Director of several companies, Chairman of the Colombo Brokers' Association and a Founding Director of the Colombo Stock Exchange. Lt.Cdr.Navaratnarajah, alone, chose early retirement and served a long and happy second career in Nigeria. Not a bad contribution from the small bunch of "Schooleys"!

MGS himself went further up in his career, becoming the first Instructor Officer to be appointed Naval Officer-in-charge, Trincomalee, (NOICT, now called Commander, Eastern Naval Area). He was, therefore, the first (and only) Instructor Officer to have been appointed to command both a shore establishment and a Naval Area. After this he returned to Colombo, preparing for retirement as Instructor Commander as Director, Naval Training. After retirement he was snapped up by the Ceylon Shipping Corporation and appointed Staff Captain to train merchant navy cadets on board their ships. Those cadets are respected Master Mariners sailing the seven seas now. But of those aspects of his life I will not speak.

Early this year, it was a poignant moment for me when the incumbent Commandant invited me to visit, and walk around the Academy with him. I was impressed by what it had evolved into (it is being considered for the grant of University status) and the other training institutions that had sprung from it. I was also asked to speak to the trainee officers and Staff about the Academy. It was a kind gesture, which I appreciated, because the present Commandant was an Officer Cadet whom I had graduated when I, myself, had been the Commandant. And so I spoke – about the birth and growth of Training in the Navy, about the dark days we once went through, about our re-emergence to importance and how the Academy was born. Most importantly I had, at last, the chance to tell them about the man who created it, the man who had been my own Commandant and to ask them to stand up in silent tribute to that man, Inst. Cdr. M.G.S.Perera – "Teacher to the Navy".

MGS, the man, was a most engaging and enjoyable character. Of moderate height and modest in manner, he could charm anybody with his simplicity and vast fund of stories, anecdotes and tales of the supernatural. His broad smile, bright eyes and informality won him many friends and, in those happy days in Diyat-alawa - where there were Army and Air Force camps larger than our own little RANGALLA - it was to MGS that people from all Services came for advice and solutions when they were faced with unusual problems, whether they were mechanical or personal.. The Wardroom was a happy, relaxed place where many officers of the other Services felt more at home than in their own Messes. And over all the revelry, the music and the humorous banter, the benign and smiling MGS presided and kept the peace. The Navy had, in those days, many a colourful personality, many of whom contributed in great measure to making it a great place to be in. The very fact that, at MGS' funeral, every retired Navy Commander alive was present is proof enough of how much his contribution had been appreciated.

Today, when the Navy has many training bases, it is proper for us to remember that **“MGS was the Academy, and the Academy was MGS.”** The time has come, I believe, for the Academy and the Navy to hang a portrait of him there. This, I ask of them.

*[This has, since, been done]*

S.D.

## Supplementary Chapter 8

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### OPERATION "GOSHEN"

Cdr.(E) E.L Matthysz, J.P; RNR.

The cyclone hit Trincomalee on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1964 creating vast destruction in the Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Jaffna areas. Lots of officers and myself stationed in Trincomalee came on Christmas leave on the 22<sup>nd</sup> night unaware of a cyclone that was affecting those areas. I received a telephone call from Naval Headquarters on 24<sup>th</sup> December very early in the morning informing me that a cyclone had affected Trincomalee and I was directed to leave for Trincomalee immediately and a vehicle was sent for me to proceed. I had the company of Lt. Cdr AHA de Silva and we proceeded accordingly and on reaching Kantalai we found trees obstructing our progress, but somehow the road was passable due to the villagers and cultivators in those areas who made a clear passage for vehicles to proceed. Besides the trees that had fallen, communication was completely disrupted and electrical power was non-existent.

Reaching Trincomalee with considerable difficulty, we entered the dockyard and found the place deserted, because most of the civilian workers in the dockyard went to look after own affairs. Their own houses were damaged and they were only concerned about their families for the moment. By that time a Social Services Officer Mr. Kohoban Wickrama and a few officers had come and, at a conference with the Government Agent, Mr.Brian Senanayake, we made a plan to get relief. There was no bread being baked in the town from which the Navy got their supplies, so the G.A. and I proceeded by jeep to the Royal Bakery and threatened the people that if they don't start baking, somebody will get shot

by me as I was the only armed officer. However, things seemed to have improved though the dockyard had no lights as the dockyard generator had been affected. The roof of the generator station had blown off, and there were no people to work with to restore broken power lines and so forth.

Our morning breakfast in the Ward room consisted of porcupine and rotti. The Porcupines were in the deep freeze as these were brought to me by Lt. AK Doray, who shot these two porcupines while on patrol and presented to me just before I was leaving by train that night. So my direction was that they be put into the deep freeze - this was the only meat we could lay our hands on. It was made into a black curry and we all enjoyed it, but the humorous part was that we had porcupine curry for dinner and Christmas morning breakfast also. Anyway, everything in the dockyard was restored after a few days and we certainly enjoyed Christmas because by that time everyone had settled down to normal life. The dockyard workers had returned to work; though some were on the point of dismissal because they didn't come to work. However, things went smoothly after the next few days and that was what we encountered as a result of the Cyclone.

The harbour craft H.M.Cy's "Kotiya" was sunk at the 2-fathom jetty. The "Vijaya" ran aground close to the office I worked at. The Air/Sea rescue craft L 122 was a total wreck. The harbour craft were all beached and out small team of clearance divers headed by Lt. Marty Somasunderam got down to the task of clearing the beached craft. There was no hope for "Kotiya" – she was completely damaged and you could see her just below the water. We had enough of powerful boats to assist in the salvage of some of the beached craft and I directed the dockyard to install an engine that was available into a standard 25 foot motor cutter, which everybody thought was not a good idea, but it certainly helped in towing some of the bigger craft into deeper water. After we had restored out small salvage operation in the harbour, we had

the task of moving the "Vijaya" which was finally accomplished and taken into deeper water.

Sometime in March, Commodore Kadirgamar communicated with me on the SSB and summoned me to come to Colombo as early as I could. Having complied (he gave me a chance of coming to Colombo as well) I attended the conference and the decision was that we should undertake the salvage operation of the Indian Ferry "Goshen" which had been left high and dry at the time of the cyclone, beached well and truly on the Talaimannar beach within 100 to 150 yards from the Talaimannar Pier. The vessel was understood to be parallel to the beach, so I returned to Trincomalee as directed and formulated what was necessary for this salvage operation. My team consisted of Lt.Marty Somasundaram, Inst. Lt.H.D.L.M. Palmon and Lt.K.K. Fernando, Steward Kandasamy and civilian dockyard workers mainly from the Fire Brigade.

A convoy was prepared with cooking utensils, bedding, a small generator, our communication sets and the necessary essentials to strike camp. So we took off from Trincomalee for Vavuniya, Mannar and came to Talaimannar Pier around 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> March. We had to occupy a damaged Customs building, which, with a few renovations, was repaired sufficiently for us to occupy, while conducting the operation of the salvage which was within 100 yards of our building. Of course we lost no time getting down to business. We spent a quiet evening and of course established a source from which we could get our good "old stuff" – sometimes from Talaimannar and sometimes the bus used to bring it all the way from Mannar. Conversation that whole evening was how this operation was to be conducted and the next morning we got down to business. With the assistance of the Railway we used some of their material with the idea of putting these rails under the "Goshen" and quietly moving her towards the water. After a few days, we abandoned it

because we found the “Goshen” too heavy, and every time we put a railway line under it, it disappeared under the sand.

The next thing was, with the assistance of the Railway Department, we obtained a bulldozer (that took us a few days). When it came, we build a complete basin out of sea sand round the “Goshen”. Calculations were made to accommodate depth and the volume of water needed. The edges of the basin had to be build sufficiently high to accommodate the vessel when she floated slightly.

While this was going on, there was very little we could do except watch the procedure of the basin being built. It gave us a few days to look around Talaimannar, especially the fishing villages and the Roman Catholic church, and many people from around the area got to know of this operation and visited the site. We got into conversation with a few and there was particularly one person who interested me, she was a portly fisherman’s wife who came with a few children in one of the fishing *wadi* vans. She told us of the cyclone reaching their village and water coming up so fast that she picked up her 2 or 3 children under her arms and proceeded to higher ground. There they met the Parish Priest and told him that he must do something “religious” to try to stop this water which had now reached the church compound. So the priest brought the statue of St. Mary to this place and dipped it in the sea and within half an hour the waters appeared to recede. I was intrigued because it the portly woman (the fisherman’s wife) who explained this as a miracle.

Every evening, we got into the jeep and proceeded to the Pesalai Toddy tavern and consumed a little toddy and fried *salayas*. I really enjoyed the thirst quencher at the end of our operation for the day. One morning, a soldier of the army detachment in Talaimannar brought a fish basket with a number of white gull eggs. He didn’t know whether it was seagull or hens’ eggs and told them that these are first class for omelette/fried eggs and requested him to take a few with him and show his colleagues and he left the balance with us. I insisted that Kandasamy makes 2 poached-fried

eggs and it looked just as good as the hens' eggs.

In the meantime, the basin created by the bulldozer was being filled with water for nearly 1-1/2 days and while this was being done, we had a certain amount of rest except the pain of mind wondering how the sand basin could withstand the weight of the water in this big basin. We made allowances for seepage and as it gradually filled and came to about 5 inches to the brim, we tried pulling the "Goshen" but it would not budge. Something had gone wrong with our calculation, but Lt.Cdr. Palmon assured us that it has to come up with about 1 or 2 inches more. We were reluctant to put pressure on the banks of the basin even with the help of others and our own crew. So the filling went on and finally, amid great joy and excitement, it began to move with just 2 inches from the brim of the basin. We then continued to pump a little more, taking a risk and the "Goshen" moved in the basin and we walked her to a position parallel to the Talaimannar pier.

Meanwhile we had to careful not to let the bows of the vessel touch the sand basin. Having positioned her into place, Lt.Somasunderam and his team of divers prepared stacks of dynamite in preparation for the breaching of the basin, so that with the outflow of water there would be some momentum in the vessel forcing its way out.

The next day was a day of further excitement and this preparation was more or less ready. We were joined by a Railway official from the Indian Railways Mr.Ragunathan. Because the bulldozer was an Indian Railway bulldozer, he was most helpful as he was also a mechanical engineer. The time and tide were taken into consideration and the sand basin was breached. The vessel surged forward with the help of a number of people pulling on ropes that were fitted to the vessel. Nothing tangible took place except that the vessel came half way past our breached sand bar and got stuck. The end result was that the divers had further work to high pressure hose the bottom to relieve the vessel from sitting on the sand. By this time, I had learned my lesson – I got amoebiasis

by drinking toddy and informed Naval Headquarters of my position and I had no alternative but to return to Colombo and enter the Military Hospital on the directions of the Commander of the Navy. So I took train the same night seeing the vessel stuck half way and left the balance work to Lts. Somasunderam and Palmon.

I got admitted at the Military Hospital the next morning and I was treated for Amoebiasis in a big way by Dr. Major Thurai-rajah, who was then the Officer In Charge of the Military Hospital. I received news through Dr. Vernon Fernando who visited me that evening that the “Goshen” was finally salvaged. I was only sorry I could not wait for the final salvage operation.

After a few days, according to Lt. Somasunderam, they left Talaimannar and returned to base (Trincomalee) triumphantly having completed a task that has never been undertaken in the method we adopted ever before in Sri Lanka. Some of the equipment like the Naval Fire Brigade pumps were ruined because of the friction with salt water and sand.

*(NOTE: The writer began a series of stories about his experiences in the Navy at mt request. However, he was able to complete this one and he gave it to me a few days before his death. May the turf lie lightly over him. SD)*

## Supplementary Chapter 9

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### LOOKING BACK AT UNIPOM

Lieutenant F.J.Dominic

*(Written for, and published, in the NMA Journal*

*"Vidsindhu", 1969)*

The United Nations India-Pakistan Observers Mission (UNIPOM) was established in September 1965 in pursuance of the Security Council resolution of 20<sup>th</sup> September 1965, which demanded a cease-fire in the fighting between India and Pakistan, and requested the Secretary General of the U.N. to provide the necessary assistance to ensure supervision of the cease fire and withdrawal of all armed personnel. The cease-fire came into force at 0300 hours on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1965.

UNIPOM was charged with the supervision of cease fire outside Jammu and Kashmir. UNMOGIP (United Nations Military Observer Group India-Pakistan), an older organization had since 1949 been charged with the supervision of the cease fire between India and Pakistan in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The two organizations maintained a close administrative co-ordination and co-operation and supervised the cease fire as a whole throughout the area of conflict.

Ceylon, a member of United Nations, was also requested among many other countries to provide military observers to assist the Chief Officer appointed by Secretary General in supervision of cease fire. Ten Service personnel were selected and flown to UNIPOM Headquarters, Lahore, West Pakistan, on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1965.

## Mission

UNIPOM was an observation mission whose function was to observe and report on compliance with the cease fire, and oversee the withdrawal. In order to assist in carrying out these functions, the entire conflict area of 100 miles was divided into sectors in each sector two UNIPOM stations were established, one on either side. The number of Milobs (Military Observers) in a station depended on the extent and the situation prevalent in that sector. Initial appointment of O.I.C. of a sector depended on the suitability of a Milob and not on seniority.

Once experience was gained by all, the senior member of the team was appointed as O.I.C. Lahore was chosen as UNIPOM Headquarters on the Pakistan side and Amritsar was chosen as Headquarters on the Indian side. In all 14 stations were established, 7 on either side in or close to the Forward Defence Locality (F.D.Ls).

The area of conflict extended from Sialkot in the shadows of Kashmir's mountains in the north, the rough fertile wheat, sugar cane and cotton fields of Punjab, through Rajasthan Desert to Runn of Kutch in the south. This stretch was supervised by about 89 Milobs which included the staff at UNIPOM Headquarters, Lahore. Milobs often lived in mud huts and bunkers in these areas to carry out their duties. In the Northern Stations (all stations other than those in the Desert), the Milobs had fairly comfortable places to live in and were close to the F.D.Ls. They were able to get to the front line easily to carry out investigations of complaints of cease-fire violations received, to be in area to show the forces the presence of U.N. personnel, to drink tea and have spot lunch with the Sector Commander of the area, and at the end of it all, be able to return to the U.N. Station and have a fairly comfortable night. Whereas in the desert, U.N. Stations were often 50 to 100 miles from the front line, here the Milobs had to go to the front line in pairs to live at the front line to anything up to 10 days at a stretch

in mud huts, bunkers, tents and in temporary huts constructed out of dried branches and twigs, available in plenty in the desert, and endure extreme temperature that changes from 110 – 120 during day to about 60 – 65 during the night. On completion of their turn of duty at the front line, these Milobs return to the main sector U.N. Base for a fresh water bath, clean clothing and rest for two to three days before being sent out to a different sector of the front line.

## **A day for a Milob**

It starts off after breakfast at 6 A.M. when all complaints of cease-fire violations received during the night are reviewed and serialized. Milobs are then detailed to investigate the complaints commencing with the complaints considered very serious. Milobs proceed out in pairs and maintain constant communication with their station, by wireless sets installed in Jeeps. Milobs proceed direct to the Command Headquarters from where the complaint was forwarded, and after a cup of tea with Officers present, are escorted or directed to the area of Violation.

Once in the area further cups of tea follow, while the details of the violations are discussed with the Officer in command of that particular area. Lunch arrangements are also made by this Officer, if not already arranged at Command Headquarters. The Milobs then proceed with this Officer or his representative to the exact spot where the violation occurred, to obtain first hand information from forces on the spot. If the violation was of a serious nature prior arrangements are made for Milobs of the opposite station to turn up at the area of violation. After establishing communication with opposing Milobs, and after informing both forces of the presence of Milobs in area, the Milobs meet in the cease fire area separating the two forces. These meetings between Milobs often called upon the Milobs to walk straight towards the barrel of an M.M.G. or cross anti tank mine fields, where mines can be easily located. All information and statements taken according to the particular Vi-

olation are exchanged at this meeting. Further investigation on either side if required was carried out to confirm or disprove the complaints. Once satisfied that the complaint has been fully investigated, and after many more cups of tea, the Milobs return to station, usually after very late lunch, either with Officer in charge of the sector or at Command Headquarters. On return to station Milobs had to type out their detailed report on investigation carried out, which includes findings and remarks by O.I.Cs. These are made ready for dispatch to U.N. Headquarters by 0800 the following day, by special dispatch service, which operates daily in the Northern Station. Desert Stations forward a summary of the report by wireless and forward the full report by aircraft dispatch service, which operates thrice weekly. The arrival of dispatch service was always eagerly awaited by Milobs, as private mails and P.X. stores were delivered via this service.

Often in the desert sector, single engined OTTER aircraft were used to airlift Milobs from their forward position to an area of Violations which were inaccessible by jeeps. These aircraft often landed and took off from emergency air fields prepared in the desert, or a straight stretch of desert that looked a suitable landing strip. A work of praise is due to the Canadian Air Force personnel who manned these aircraft, who did a wonderful job under trying and dangerous conditions without a major mishap.

### **The lighter side of the investigations.**

Often investigating complaints of cease fire violations did not pass without some hair raising, hilarious incidents. To mention a few at the beginning of the mission, Milobs were required to survey and chart the actual position held by the troops, and locations of mine fields. This was to enable the UN to keep a tag on all positions as at time of cease-fire, and to prevent any advance or laying of further mine fields. Once, when a Continental Officer, a serviceman from the resistance group of World War II, proceeded to walk across a mine during the survey, the field local Officer or-

dered him not to proceed any further. Whereupon this Continental Officer, proceeded to point out all the mines that were laid and refuse to return and continued to cross the mine field. Irritated, the local officer threatened to stop him, if he does not stop. At this order the Continental Officer, whose command of English was not very good, sat in the centre of the mines and called upon the local officer, "You shot". Crisis was averted by the timely arrival of the Sector Commander, who persuaded the Milob to come off the field and use a different route to carry on his task. There was another occasion when two Milobs (one Ceylonese) were required to investigate an alleged cease-fire Violation. Having completed their investigation on their side, they were coming out of a mud hut to proceed to the opposite side to carry out further investigation when, unannounced, an M.M.G. opened up on them. Reflexes were good and both Milobs hit the bench alongside the hut, just in time to avoid the slugs. The net results were two infuriated Milobs and a strong report regarding this incident to U.N. Headquarters.

Often meetings of opposing Commanders were arranged at the C.F.L. to formulate an definite cease-fire area. These meetings usually took place after a serious cease-fire Violation or after a series of cease-fire Violations in that area. The Commanders meet at the C.F.L. along with Milobs from both sides and proceed to discuss everything else except the problem of land. This often helped in easing the tension, as these discussions often led to the discovery, that sometime or other before partition, both Commanders had served together. This leads to further friendly discussions about old times.

While the discussion between Commanders continue tea and short eats are served by both sides. Milobs make it a point to eat the same amount of short eats and drink same number of cups tea on both sides. Once the friendly atmosphere has been established the Milobs get to the problem in hand, for which a solution is found in matter of minutes, both Commanders being more than willing to compromise.

## Compensatory Time Off

Popularly known as C.T.O. At the start of the mission no time off was given to any Milob for 2 months, due to shortage of Milobs and extra pressure of work. Once the situation improved, seven days C.T.O. was given to a Milob after 30 days of duty at a station. During this period a Milob may make use of all U.N. facilities (aircraft and jeeps) to get to most of the places in India and Pakistan. There were 3 weekly U.N. flights to Rawalpindi, Sirinagar, Delhi and Karachi from Lahore, which the Milobs made use of during C.T.O. Milobs were also afforded special U.N. rates at hotels and house boats recommended by the U.N. Generally all Milobs on C.T.O. arrived at U.N. Headquarters prior to commencement of C.T.O. and report to U.N. Headquarters after completing C.T.O. when arrangements were made to rejoin station for further 30 days of peace keeping.

## Withdrawal

At the Tashkent declaration of 10<sup>th</sup> Jan'66, it was agreed that all armed personnel of the two countries be withdrawn by 25<sup>th</sup> February 1966 to a position held by them before 5<sup>th</sup> August 1965. During this phase Milobs were required to observe and report what both sides were doing to implement the withdrawal plan to which they had agreed, and to investigate and report on complaints.

Concerning non-implementation of the withdrawal plan, in order achieve a smooth withdrawal, the Milobs were called upon to use their good office when requested by either party to assist in arbitration with extreme care, arrange meetings of opposing Commanders to facilitate smooth implementation of the withdrawal plan, to check as far as possible on demolition and mine lighting, to supervise the use of explosive by both sides to dismantle defence work, and most of all to report on any destruction or removal of civilian property.

The withdrawal was carried out in two phases. Phase I: Withdrawal of Armed Forces to a specific distance from cease fire line. Phase II: Removal and nullifying all defences. On completion of the above phases, all Armed Forces on the other side of International Border and cease fire line were withdrawn, and completed by 25<sup>th</sup> February 1966.

The Milobs were required to inspect all occupied areas after 25<sup>th</sup> February to ensure withdrawal plan had been implemented and report accordingly to Headquarter UNIPOM.

### **Closure of Mission**

Once the task of overseeing withdrawal was completed, all Milobs were withdrawn to Lahore, commencing 27<sup>th</sup> February. Presentation of U.N. medals to Milobs for services with UNIPOM followed. A Farewell Cocktail Party by Chief Officer to Milobs closed the mission on 15<sup>th</sup> March, after which all Milobs returned to their countries leaving behind the U.N. Field service for mop up operation.

## Supplementary Chapter 10

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### THE NAVAL CONTRIBUTION TO MARITIME DEVELOPMENT IN CEYLON

Lieutenant (E) D.C.D. Lecamvasam

*(Written for, and published, in the NMA Journal  
"Vidsindhu", 1969)*

The rapidly altering socio-economic structure in the developing countries of Asian and Africa calls for a reappraisal of old values and throws a search light on blind allegiance to the established order and traditions. In this context the writer believes that the Royal Ceylon Navy has faced the winds of change squarely and adapted itself to function in a new and more productive role.

The Navy has provided an answer which is both revolutionary and realistic. On critical evaluation, and by applying the yardstick of judgement by results, the writer believes that this change is fortunate and very desirable. It is an example that should be followed by all developing countries which can ill afford the luxury of maintaining large Armed Forces whilst waiting for a war to occur. The Royal Ceylon Navy will continue to function as the sole authority to preserve our maritime integrity, whilst playing a major role in all the maritime affairs of the country and in its progress towards economic independence and prosperity.

## The Development of Navies and their Justification.

The Navy, to most English-oriented and literate people, is a mixture of Lord Nelson, John Paul Jones, Horatio Hornblower, Nicholas Montserrat and a little of Joseph Conrad. To the die-hard Empire Builders, or even detractors of the imperialists, it perhaps smacks of gunboat diplomacy and of “Showing the flag”. To simple and more earthy folk the Navy is simply ships and sailors and all that they stand for – Wine, women and song, though not (perhaps) necessarily in that order.

What is the real situation? In a world where scientific and industrial progress is proceeding at such a rapid pace as never before in human history, it is difficult to arrive at rigid definitions as well as to allow the blind acceptance of static patterns of conformity.

The accepted customs and conventions developing from earlier “laissez faire” attitudes and even the lives and enterprises of individuals and organizations devoted to culture, art and non-materialism (as opposed to spiritualism), are slowly but surely giving way to the spectre of materialism.

The heralding angels (or are they grim specters come to haunt our civilization?) of this age, *viz*, Gross National Product, Utility value, Cost Effectiveness and Marginal quotas, are ruthless in their efficiency and demand standardization and rationalization. So we come to the Navy. The conventional, if not classical, conception of Navies was armed vessels and fighting men, organized purely for the protection of merchant shipping. They were at times, also used to attack and plunder coastal cities as well as for defence. From these basic ideas grew the mighty Armada and the Royal Navy. The conflagration of the last World War engulfed most nations of the world and, in the resulting inferno, it was a most natural act for other countries too, to acquire Navies of their own.

Thus it came about that Ceylon, for better or for worse, was committed to owning and maintaining a Navy created and geared for traditional war time needs. This financial commitment, though comparatively small, is a significant burden on an already crippled economy, unless measures are taken to revitalize the Navy in a new and more positive role than hitherto.

Why does a country have a Navy in the present day? Larger and more developed countries justify it to some extent by referring to the world tensions which exist, the cold war and the major trouble spots which flare up from time to time, which, if not smothered in time by a show of force, could easily lead to a worldwide conflagration. In more settled times these armed forces are used for ceremonial purposes and to train men and fighting units to achieve a higher state of readiness and fighting efficiency. All countries could very justifiably claim that the presence of a disciplined body of men in a smart uniform, suitably equipped with modern arms and equipment enhances the prestige of that country. Nobody will deny the stirrings of one's heart on ceremonial occasions, or even when men march off to die, perhaps in lands unknown and for causes uncared for as the bugles blow, flags and ensigns flutter and sounds of brass and drum rise above the crunch of marching boots.

This is the primeval instinct of man, the hunter and the survivor it is in the blood of every nation and momentarily every one, however lowly or insignificant, is overcome by an animal sense of pride and elation. This, therefore, is a very useful tool to weld and mould a national consciousness a unity and a sense of purpose. Demagogues and politicians know this only too well.

## **Particular relation to a small Island Nation**

Let us examine the factors which justify the existence of a Navy in the context of a small island nation such as ours. We have already said that Navies were originally established primarily for the purpose of defence and subsequently, or perhaps simultaneous-

ly, for offence. In this nuclear age of guided missiles, when travel to other planets is a reality, the idea of a small country maintaining a traditional Naval force large and capable enough of substantially effecting the outcome of a major Naval battle is not economically feasible, even it were justifiable.

Furthermore, in a country dedicated to the principles of co-existence and non alignment, the establishment of an armed service for offence is not in keeping with her declared policy or national aspirations. However, this can only be theoretical conjecture as no country would claim to maintain armed forces for offence. The justification for it stems from their fear – fear of physical aggression, economic subjugation and other violations of their territorial rights or national liberties. If the argument for the retention of a Navy based on classical lines is purely for defence, there are too many instances in the recent past of smaller and weaker countries being summarily invaded by larger and more powerful ones. As we have already discussed, the cost of maintaining forces sufficiently large and capable of affecting the logical conclusion of such a battle would be astronomical and one that a small country could ill afford. The question of maintaining such a force on subsidies derived from foreign aid would be diametrically opposed to our principles of non-alignment and furthermore it would result in our being utterly dependent on the continued goodwill of the country that dispensed the aid.

Therefore one arrives at the inevitable conclusion that a small island nation should have a Navy with certain minimum basic offensive and defensive capabilities but essentially geared to national needs and aspirations of that country, subject to its political and economic factors.

In the midst of heavy defence spending and military expansion by most newly emerging countries it is perhaps a sign of our stability and maturity that we have kept our heads and not followed blindly. The defence expenditure in Ceylon is one of the lowest in the world. This should not lull us into a sense of complacency until

we see ourselves playing a more positive and productive role in the country. The following figures give an idea of the weightage given to defence expenditure in as observed from 1968/69 Estimates of Revenue of the Government of Ceylon.

Head of Expenditure	Amount	Percentage of Total Budget
Percentage of Defence Budget		
1. Defence	159,350,055.006.8	
2. Health	221,334,496.009.4	
3. Education	479,849,504.0020.5	
4. Industries & Fisheries	208,474,049.008.8	
5. Army	42,036,909.00	29.5
6. Navy	20,413,170.00	26.4
7. Air Force	19,551,536.00	12.6
8. Police	46,622,444.00	12.2
Total Estimated Revenue 1962/1969 -		Rs. 2,338,509,171.00

Whilst a realistic balance has been maintained between the various major heads of expenditure, it is arguable whether the correct emphasis or financial provisions has been made for the Navy to ensure maximum utilization of all its capabilities. A case in point is the latest attempt of the Army to get afloat in the TAFII operation, thereby duplicating the Naval presence in the Northern waters.

The relative values of financial and political expediency may be illustrated by the fact that the United States appears to be quite content to spend Rs.15,000 million to effect the death of one Vietcong soldier and spend an estimated \$30 billion annually in fighting someone else's war, whilst we in Ceylon are scraping the barrel to find Rs.20 Million out of a total budget of Rs.2,400 Million to pay the Navy.

Therefore, it is imperative that we harness ourselves to play

a more positive and productive role in the country's development.

## **Historical maritime background of Ceylon**

Ceylon from its early days has been involved to a great extent with the sea. This is no doubt a consequence of its being an Island and, as such, being dependant upon trade with foreign countries and the import/export of essential commodities. With a fairly extensive coastline, a large maritime community therefore developed.

Though there have been several sea-faring adventurers like LANKAPURA and KITHNUWARAGAL in the days of the ancient Sinhalese kings—notably Parakramabahu (1153 – 1186 A.D) – a continued and developing interest in the sea has not been maintained. There are instances in our recorded history when our trade ships, ambassadors of goodwill and religious missions have ventured as far afield as Rome, and Siam, but there is no evidence by which we can ascertain whether or not these ships were actually owned and operated by Ceylonese. Armed invaders have set forth from Ceylon, laid waste and returned with hostages, even going to the extent of conquering certain parts of India. We have to assume that the fleets of ships necessary for these journeys were our own.

Along with these activities, the daily task of harvesting the products of the sea must have taken place from the time man hunted for food. In spite of all these, as well as the consideration of the inter-mingling of the foreign blood during different periods of our history, the maritime development of the country has been remarkably static. Within the three hundred years of foreign domination, with the advantage of the direct influence and close intimacy with the great Western Naval powers of the time *viz* Portugal, France, Holland and Great Britain, we have not shown sufficient sea faring skills and maritime growth as could be expected.

This perhaps, was a calculated move on the part of our

erstwhile conquerors. It was necessarily in their interest that there should not be any further maritime development in the Island as it would result in their strategic trade and military expansion meeting with opposition or competition from the indigenous inhabitants.

In fact, delving even further into our history, one finds that the historical references to our maritime activities have, almost without exception, been in passing. This apparent backwardness in an Island race, to explore and dominate the sea and harvest its bounty in all its variety, can only be understood in the context of the natural gifts of an Island Paradise where Man, till very recently, wandered at will in the Biblical garden of Eden. This is apparent in terms of the socio-economic factors then prevailing in Lanka.

The fierce competition, the lack of living space, and the battle for economic survival commenced in European countries long before they reached the peaceful, if not slow, tempo of the East. It must have been very satisfying to exist in our geographic, economic and cultural insularity, so much so, that apparently very few indeed have shown the questing spirit and the will and determination to venture forth into the unknown.

The wheel has now turned full circle. The so-called under-developed countries of the East are awakening. The chiefly agricultural and stagnant economics are now slowly but surely being diversified. Industrialization and utilization of all available resources has resulted in the rapid development of resources and increased production in these countries. It is not a mere play on words that has resulted in these countries now being termed "Emergent Forces" or the "Developing Countries" as opposed to the earlier sobriquet "Under-Developed".

## **The moulding of a Navy suited to our national requirements.**

Where does the Navy in Ceylon stand in these times of transition? A few years back, it had come to the cross roads and, both for its own sake as well as that of the country, it is to be hoped that the correct decision has been made. “Change or perish” is one of Nature’s inflexible laws and an incontrovertible fact in competitive socio-economic structures.

From the time life originated in this planet, through the extinction of Dinosaurs, Pterodactyls and Coelacanths, we have observed this law at work. Therefore, by extension to the socio-economic structure it should come as no surprise that, in an age and in a country where real value is asked for every cent of expenditure, the Navy too should be asked to account for itself.

To change purely for the sake of changing or, in more frivolous terms, to be fashionable for personal convenience or to justify one’s survival as a body are selfish (but true) motives and have no validity in our argument. For a country coming to grips with modern development and economic survival every avenue by which unproductive expenditure drains away the country’s economic life blood, must be analyzed and ruthlessly plugged. We must be happy that the Navy has not chosen the easy way to selfish survival nor for foolish publicity nor for self aggrandizement. A real challenge has been met in a practical and realistic manner, very unobtrusively and almost overnight.

The uninformed or the unobservant may argue that in essence we still have the functions and organization of a classical Navy. To a certain extent this would be true but a deeper, qualitative, analysis will make the changes apparent.

As a disciplined armed service of the Government based on the traditions of the Royal Navy, we still maintain our traditional service customs and links with other Navies. The training the Of-

ficers and men have received is on par with the best available in the Commonwealth, but there again, regrettably, attuned to a purely wartime role.

The changes have come from within the Navy itself. It has accepted non-Naval tasks of a wide variety and magnitude and performed these diligently and expeditiously. There is ample proof that the Navy has performed whatever task it has been allocated, to the complete satisfaction of the Government. The Navy Act Chapter 358 of the Legislative Enactments of Ceylon has been amended to, constitutionally and democratically, allow the Navy to perform these non Naval roles with due authority.

## **Maritime Development and Its Scope in Ceylon**

Therefore, in keeping with the earlier definitions, the Royal Ceylon Navy performs its natural functions of protecting our National maritime integrity and satisfying our ceremonial requirements. It assists in Anti Illicit Immigration, anti smuggling, internal security, relief work in national disasters (e.g. 1964 Cyclone and in flood relief duties) etc. The Royal Ceylon Navy Diving and Salvage Unit, the Hydrographic Unit, the Dockyard Trincomalee, the Naval Agricultural Project, Tissa Vidyalaya and the Naval & Maritime Academy, are some of the sections of the Navy which render special services to the Nation in their respective spheres. It is worthwhile mentioning here that the quantum of services rendered by these newly established units is far out of proportion to their financial provision and capital expenditure. The purpose of this article however is not to eulogise the Navy, nor to praise it for what it has done in the past, but to critically examine and reappraise its functions to see what optional contributions the Navy can make to the Maritime Development of Ceylon.

Let us examine our resources and assets. The Navy in Ceylon, small as it is, has a disciplined body of men, all highly trained and specialized in their particular skills. It has a ship and a number

of coastal Patrol Craft and the machinery and equipment to repair and maintain them. They have the resources of other ancillaries and base support in the North, East and West of Ceylon. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that in the maritime sector, there is no other organization or institution that can undertake all varieties of Maritime tasks or provide assistance, as the Navy can.

What does the maritime development in the Island signify in real terms? We have already observed that a very large community has grown about the maritime belt, especially in the North East, North West and South West of Ceylon, in the way of migrant fishermen and those working in salterns. They have used natural resources, human labour and skills, combined these, and wrestled with the elements to provide for themselves and their families. The concept of organized scientific maritime development would go several stages further. It would include a study of the resources available, i.e. natural, human, technical and economic. How could these be combined and utilized best serve best the needs of the community as a whole?

After an assessment of these resources a feasibility study would be made of various development projects regarding their utilization and optimum productivity – a matter of maximum exploitation – bearing in mind the present and future needs of the country. Some of the possible areas for further or fresh development in the maritime sector in the island are: Merchant shipping, Coast guard duties, Harbour Duties, Pilotage, Diving and Salvage, Docking and Slipping, Ship Repairs, Ship/boat building industry, Hydrographic Charting and Surveying, making Coastal Anchorages and Berths for small craft and assisting the Port Commission, (or the proposed Port Trust), Port (Cargo), Fisheries and Ilmenite Corporations in their tasks. This seems an enormously wide area over which to cast our net, but it can be clearly seen, that the common factor which binds all these is the sea. Without a doubt, even in the present parlous state the Navy is in, we can still claim to be the most efficient and competent organization to tackle any task on

our home ground – the sea!.

## **Areas of maritime activity in which the Navy can assist**

Let us briefly consider the quantum and scope of the Naval contribution to each of these and where it can most effectively assist the nation in its struggle for socio-economic development.

### **Merchant Shipping**

A national carrier for the sea transportation of our import/export trade is a vital requirement. This has been accepted by the Government in spite of powerful vested interests attempting to scuttle the project in its paper stages. The Navy has the basic skills essential to operate such a service efficiently. It is more than likely, if this large and complicated undertaking were to be handed over to a corporation, that it too would follow in the steps of most of the others and turn out to be a sterile, unproductive and inefficient organization. This will naturally run at a fantastic loss, thereby justifying the critics. It is essential therefore, to establish this on a firm commercial basis backed with technical – in its widest sense – expertise, so that it will function economically and within the marginal cost effectiveness.

Naturally the Navy is too small in its present state to man a fleet of ships, but given the opportunity and means to expand it can very competently undertake this task.

### **Coast Guard Duties**

These would be normal Naval duties in protecting our sovereignty and patrolling our territorial waters. In addition, it could effectively take on the task of the Customs and Excise and TAFII operations in the North

### Harbour Duties.

Even at present, some experienced Naval officers are serving the Port Pilot Service. The Port Commissions is the present authority for maintenance of harbours and provision of normal service to their users. A Port Trust is envisaged in the near future as the controlling body for all anchorages and harbours in the Island. In either event, the Navy can still be of assistance in providing skilled personnel and services, from Pilotage to the laying and maintenance of Navigational aids in harbours. A case in point would be that of Trincomalee harbour where, instead of publication of services and establishments, the Navy could very well maintain the harbour as well as provide all the required services for its users.

### Ship Services

Normally all the port services are handled by civilians. In a case when the required technical skills are not available, the Navy could furnish these. Presently the supply of water to ships in Trincomalee is handled by the Navy, but it would seem more practicable and economically justifiable to extend this to bunkering too.

### Ship repairs, Docking and Slipping.

These need skilled, experienced, technical personnel. The Navy already provides assistance to merchant ships requiring repair and maintenance facilities in Trincomalee. However its scope is limited due to the non-availability of a dry dock.

Since Colombo harbour is already congested and there is a waiting list to use the dry docks, and as there is no suitable space to either build new ones or to extend the present dry docks, it would seem that Trincomalee is a suitable

place to build a large dry dock to take in the gibber ships of containarized transmodalism. This would in effect assist the growth of a new industry in the Trincomalee area.

### Ship and Boat Building Industry.

Apart from rather intrepid and sporadic attempts to produce small craft, there has been, so far, no organized effort to build ships and boats on a large scale in Ceylon. This is an industry where a heavy technical outlay is required in capital expenditure. It is perhaps for this reason that no commercial firm has undertaken ship-building as a major industry in Ceylon. This therefore, is an unexplored field in Ceylon and provides excellent prospects for investment and industrial growth.

The Navy has the required skills to man such an industry. Again, the Navy in its present state is numerically small to handle such a task without adequate preparation and expansion but it must be accepted that it is the only organization with the requisite skills at present and, if entrusted with the task, will carry out its duties with efficiency. It is essential to make this an economically viable unit to compete with foreign competitors.

Trincomalee offers scope for development in the ship and boat construction sector in many ways. The presence of an already established Naval Yard, an unexploited deep water harbour, the unbuilt-upon land surrounding the harbour and the availability of timber as a raw material are some of its prime advantages. It is noteworthy here that the above, when considered in conjunction with facilities and assistance presently offered by the Navy to merchant shipping and Government and semi-Government institutions in an around Trincomalee, offer a sound argument for the Navalisation as opposed to Nationalisation, of the Port of Trincomalee.

## Hydrographic Surveying

For safe navigation and exploitation and exploitation of our coastal belt it is essential to maintain up-to-date, accurate records of the seas surrounding the Island, and its harbours. There are Naval personnel trained in this direction already engaged in this work. In this connection, it is pertinent to observe that we are still using Admiralty Charts drawn on surveys made by the Royal Navy in 1915.

## Fisheries

The operational side of a modern Fisheries organization would benefit greatly by utilizing Naval skills in navigation, boat operation, maintenance and repairs, communications, and Fish detection. Refrigeration equipment and other processing plants could be operated and maintained by drawing upon Naval technical skills. Naval units could render assistance to vessels in distress and in fact are being used for this purpose even now. Other areas in which assistance is already being rendered are:-deep sea trawler operation, repairs to vessels, communications and training.

## Assistance to other maritime institutions

It has already been established that the Navy is a highly efficient, trained organization and has the requisite skills to assist and service most types of maritime activity. The only limiting factor would be that, in the event of a heavy and sudden demand for its services, it may not be able to cope due to its relatively small numbers and lack of machinery and equipment.

However, assistance is already being rendered to the Port (Cargo), Mineral sands, and Fisheries Corporations to operate, maintain and repair their vessels as required. Therefore with better facilities and a slightly increased cadre it would be possible to

establish one single authority for the operation, repair and maintenance of all floating craft in Trincomalee. This would eliminate the duplication of costs and effort that is likely to ensure, if due regard is not paid to this requirement.

## Training

Till very recently, the only form of organized training in the Nautical sciences was conducted by the Colombo Port Commission and that too was very limited in content. Subsequently, though several private individuals/establishments have engaged themselves in training persons in Maritime Engineering and Navigation, there has been no organized well regulated training, recognized by other authorities. The Navy has all along felt that was a most unsatisfactory state of affairs for an Island Nation and, one-and-a half years ago embarked on an ambitious project to establish a Naval and Maritime Academy in Trincomalee. This has again been done without fan-fare and publicity, but to date, about four hundred trainees ranging from Engine Driver/Cox'n rates to Technicians/Masters and their Naval equivalents, have passed through the Academy.

Regulations are in the process of being ratified to make this the premier Maritime Training Institution in the Island. It will have a range of training course suitable to all users of the sea and waterways. In fact, there is no reason why, with the proper emphasis on development, this cannot be the premier Maritime Institution for the whole of South East Asia. So far, apart from the Naval Trainees, the Fisheries Corporation and the Police have made use of our training facilities and they appear to be quite satisfied with the results.

Whilst on the topic of training, it will not be out of place to suggest here a part solution to the country's unemployment and economic ills. National service has been suggested before, but no action has been taken perhaps because one thinks immediately

in terms of Military Expansion, thereby automatically invoking a negative response. However, if one examines it in the context of all youths of 18 years undergoing a two year period of service for National Development in labour projects, it is quite feasible and an excellent training for building a nation. These national service men and women could be divided into various training units for the initial indoctrination course, similar to the Pioneer regiments, and thereafter distributed to serve in various capacities ranging from labour to apprenticeship. The Navy could undertake their initial training as well as subsequent development in to useful work.

## Conclusion

For an island nation with a history of civilization dating over 2000 years, the Maritime Development of Ceylon has been remarkably static. This may be attributed in part to our national characteristics and in part to the inhibitive influence of foreign domination.

The country is now experiencing a surge of Agricultural and Industrial growth, resulting in vast socio-economic changes in our pattern of livelihood and human relationships. Whilst development is proceeding at a rapid pace on several fronts, development of the country's maritime resources is only just beginning.

This is vast field still relatively untapped not only in Ceylon but also in the rest of the world. The Navy is alive to its responsibilities to the Nation and it honestly and urgently believes that it can, in a very real and effective manner, assist the country in its march to economic independence and prosperity.

The Royal Ceylon Navy has changed from its traditional pattern and is seeking to relate itself to the country's future and present-day needs. Where else can it best and most effectively, serve and what more natural than to put its trained, skilled and disciplined forces to work in all spheres of Maritime activity in the country?

## Supplementary Chapter 11

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### A HANDFUL OF MUSTARD SEED

*(The Buddhist story of Kisa Gotami is of a mother, grief-stricken over the loss of her only child, roaming the streets carrying the dead child in search of someone who could bring her child back to life, is well-known. The Buddha, understanding that no preaching or philosophizing would help her, said, yes, she could bring her child back to life, but only if only she could bring him just a handful of mustard seed. Overjoyed, she turned to go; "But" said the Buddha, "The seeds must be from a household which has not known death". Kisa Gotami began her search. Everyone was ready to help her but, when she mentioned the conditional clause, they could only say, "Alas! Sister, then we can't help you." Tired out at day's end she returned to the Buddha with the realization of the universality of death. In 1971, the Navy became one of those households that could not help Kisa Gotami. This was when the Navy, in its small way, lost its first members in armed conflict. There is little record of these instances in official records but we who lived then pooled our memories together at a get-together at a Sri Lanka Naval Association meeting - "Lest we forget". SD.)*

#### NOCHCHIYAGAMA – L/S Thiele

The first detachment sent out from "Tissa", Trincomalee, in 1971 comprised Lt.Cdr.L.R.Rajasingham, CPO E.A.Jansen, P/O Sri Shanmugam, L/S Thiele and some junior sailors, including EM D.C.A.Cader and A/B Fernando. Arriving at Nochchiyagama, CPO Jansen was detailed to proceed to Medawachchiya, while the rest remained at Nochchiyagama. That night P/O Sri Shanmugam, L/S Thiele, EM Cader and A/B Fernando were on duty at the Pow-

er Station. Thiele and Fernando were posted outside the station. After some time, A/B Fernando needed to relieve himself and went inside. EM Cader was sent as the replacement. They soon came under fire and took cover behind a parked lorry, while engaging the insurgents. Cader was a recruit of the 1968 intake and had never had to face an emergency, and he was very nervous. Hearing the exchange of fire, Lt.Cdr.Rajasingham sent a group of soldiers from the Army detachment to lend support. At this time, the insurgents were wearing uniforms very similar in colour to the Navy “Blues” and, at night, the differences could not be made out. The Army arrived and engaged the enemy wherever they thought they were. Bullets were flying everywhere and nobody knew friend from foe. Cader, increasingly nervous at the escalating fire-fight, chose this moment to move to a more sheltered position. Seeing the moving figure, a soldier fired a burst that felled Cader, mortally wounding him. Shortly afterwards the terrorists withdrew and Lt.Cdr Rajasingham arrived in a jeep with an Ambulance. The Ambulance was dispatched to Anuradhapura, with the jeep following. *En route*, the terrorists laid an ambush and fired on the Ambulance, killing the civilian driver. Forestalling efforts of others to go into attack, Lt.Cdr.Rajasingham ordered Cader to be transferred to the jeep and for all to jump into the jeep and proceed to Anuradhapura. Here Cader was admitted to Hospital but, unfortunately, succumbed to his injuries.

A/B D.C.A.Cader Off. No. B 2400, thus became our first battle-field casualty since 1950 and his name is first on the list in the Navy War Memorial in Trincomalee.

## CHUNNAKAM

In far-away Jaffna, where there was no JVP insurgent activity, the Navy suffered its next casualties. As is well-known, the Armed Forces and Police had been infiltrated by JVP sympathizers, who remained as “moles” within the system. The Navy got some intimation of the ring-leaders but, in the absence of any evidence, could not act. Almost immediately after the first JVP attacks on the Police Stations, orders were sent out to arrest the suspected personnel and some were in “Elara”, in Karainagar. One of them was, on this day, the Leading Seaman on duty at Chunnakam Power Station and, when a jeep on a routine mission went there, a message was sent for him to report to the C.O. on his return. As ill-luck would have it, he had an SMG in his hand and understood the meaning of the seemingly innocent message. He ordered all there not to move and opened fire. Two, who tried to prevent him, were killed on the spot – PO C.A.Gunasekera, A 321 and S/M N.T.J.Costa, B 2010. While the others took cover or escaped to get word across to “Elara”, the JVPers collected all arms and ammunition, loaded them into the Jeep, and forced a civilian driver lent to the Navy by the Pungudutivu A.G.A. to drive them out. They passed every road block with ease and even went into the Jaffna Fort where Rohana Wijeweera, JVP leader, was under remand custody. “Elara”, by this time, had contacted senior naval officers on duty at “Temple Trees”. With the little time available, the only instruction was that they should be prevented from leaving Jaffna at any cost. The last road block in position was the Police point at Elephant Pass. Here, they were stopped but, in the melee, all lost their lives. It is regrettable that an innocent civilian driver, too, had to lose his life. But for the JVP sympathizers, there are no regrets and it is not necessary even to record their names in such a publication as this.

## Supplementary Chapter 12

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### INSURGENCY '71 - SOME PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

MCPO E.A.Jansen

The Navy was called upon to fight on land, to safeguard law and order against a group of revolutionaries, for the first time in 1971. I was then in Trincomalee and I think it will be interesting to set down at least my personal experiences so that some things that happened in those days will not be forgotten.

At that time, although the Navy had standard operational procedures when going on Emergency duties, things happened so fast that we did not have the time to follow them. So we did what we could, with what we had.

The first day H.M.Cy.S. Tissa was called to stand by, we were all summoned to muster at about 1300 outside the Quartermaster's Lobby. We were immediately detailed to go to certain areas, with no notice whatsoever. The junior sailors, who lived in the messes, immediately rushed and collected some belongings. I was living in a married quarter, so I did not find time to do that, and went along in the clothes I was wearing. I just told my wife that I was going on emergency duty and would be gone for some days.

We were packed into two jeeps and big Port (Cargo) Corporation truck that looked like a bus, and sent off to Anuradhapura. Lt.Cdr.J.Jayasooriya, Lt.L.R.Rajasingham and I, with about 30 junior sailors. Lt.Rajasingham and a group of sailors were detailed to remain in Nocichyagama, about 9 sailors and 1 were to remain in Medawachchiya and Lt.Cdr.Jayasooriya and the rest went to Anuradhapura. We went to the Police Station where I was met

by the Sergeant and about 8 P.C.s who greeted us with the news that the S.I., who had been the OIC of the station had abandoned station with his family as soon as things became tough. The P.C.'s families who were living in the married quarters were afraid to live there. In our usual naval style, I had a few words with the D.M.O., Medawachchiya Hospital, and got them all admitted to the ward as patients! We could understand their fear because we were, ourselves in a heightened state of alert as the jungle was in front of us and abandoned land behind.

Our main problem was food. We had to live on old sweets, over-ripe plantains and, as the main diet, rice and pumpkin crushed and cooked together! I had Rs.200/- given by Lt.Cdr.Jayasooriya, but I kept it to give cigarettes to the men. Only after about four days, a jeep and truck came along and Captain Noel Weerakoon of the Army told me he was taking arms and ammunition to Anuradhapura: I sent word through him to Lt.Cdr.Jayasooriya for food, toilet materials, etc. About 15 minutes later, I heard the sound of gun-fire from the main road to Anuradhapura, not far from the Police Station where we were. I decided to go out to investigate, against the pleas of the Police Sgt. who said that it was the grandchildren of X (a politician) who were behind the shooting. However, we decided to go in the direction of Rambewa bridge, about two miles away. Arriving there I saw the jeep that Capt. Weerakoon had come in, overturned and hood down in a few feet of water. Ammunition and pouches were all over. I instructed the sailors to make a noise and distract attention and went down and collected all the ammunition and pouches. On our way back, I noticed a Morris Minor parked in a garden, without wheels. The occupant of the house was a Buddhist Priest who said he had removed the wheels because the insurgents were demanding the vehicle and he had said all his tyres and tubes were worn out. However he agreed to get it going so that we had an emergency vehicle to get a message across to Anuradhapura. I later met the Army truck which had taken Capt. Weerakoon to Anuradhapura. They thanked us for coming to help and I handed over the recovered items to them.

Capt. Weerakoon succumbed to his wounds in hospital.

One evening, it was about 1800, two well-dressed persons – one in shirt and tie and the other wearing nationals – came into the Station compound and wanted to see me. They said they were the D.M.O. and the Executive Engineer. But the Sgt. whispered that the one in shirt and tie was a Police Constable (Karunaratne) who had got a political promotion to S.I and was the OIC who had abandoned this Station. The other was a snake bite specialist! I politely asked them to leave the premises, and they did: but only after I told the S.I. that I would shoot him for abandoning post, leaving the men without leadership. He subsequently reported back to Anuradhapura Police Station where he was placed under arrest. He later went off his mind, was treated in the Mental Hospital, was discharged from the Police and is now supposed to be in Canada!

Another evening, a convoy of jeeps, cars and trucks arrived at about 1800. It was the OIC Padaviya Station who had abandoned the Station along with all the Public Servants. I told the young S.I. that I was sorry but that I could not find accommodation for the whole crowd overnight. He then left for Anuradhapura. (Long years later, this particular S.I. was killed when the LTTE attacked and overran Chavakachcheri Police Station.) He handed over to me a JVP suspect whom I locked up, but looked after. When the Navy detachment was withdrawn some days later, I handed him over to the Police Sgt. some weeks later, when I was at the Habarana detachment, I went to Anuradhapura to collect medical supplies for the Maternity ward. I met a few of the P.C.s there who told me they had withdrawn a few days after we left. I inquired about the JVP suspect, and they said they had left him behind and, by the time they went back, he had died.

About a week to ten days later, Lt.Cdr.Jayasooriya came back and we all closed ship and returned to Trincomalee. I had not lost a single sailor in our confrontations but had lost a Police Constable, PC Ratnayake, in cross-fire at about 2300 one night.

On the way back, we saw streamers across the road from Mihintale to Horowapatana, saying “*Api Sadarayen hamuda piligamu*” (We welcome the Services gratefully). At all these places we came under fire from the JVP who were using shotguns. Ultimately, we had to abandon one jeep, which was damaged. The driver of the vehicle I was badly wounded on his ankle. Although we had another capable of driving, A/B (Driver) Jayalath refused to give up but continued to drive up to Trincomalee with his ankle tried up in the banian which I had worn without washing for the last week, at least.

At Dockyard gate, we were taken direct to the Dockyard Signal Station and quarantined there as Lt.Cdr.Jayasooriya had contracted Chicken Pox! We were thoroughly de-briefed and I asked NOIC(T), Asoka de Silva for a drink, mostly for the elderly Security Branch sailors who had gone with me: they had proved very useful because they were used to staying up late into the night in their normal duties. Despite bars being closed during these days, NOIC managed to grant my request. I also believe he was good enough to get me the award of a Commendation.

About a week later, about 30 sailors and I joined Lt.Cdr.F.N.Q.Wickemeratne and Lt.(L) Siriwardena at Habarana detachment. The purpose was to apprehend JVP suspects. We toured all the remote villages in places like Palugaswewa, Dutuwewa, Huruluwewa, Galenbindunuwewa, Ritigala, etc. – more than see those places than anything else. The people were too poor to indulge in subversive activities. By this time, we were getting plenty of sugar, tea, biscuits etc. from Colombo and we used to pack them and distribute them to the villages. I noticed that, in certain places, both parents had to go to work on the chena where they grew Kuruakkan, Mustard and “*Batu miris*”, which they did not have to fertilise. The children would be left alone in the houses with a Kurumba, or a cooked tortoise as food for two or three children.

One arrested suspect was kept in the garage of the Habarana Rest House. One day, when I came back from my rounds, I

found him asleep. I asked the SBA to take a look, to find he was dead. I informed the OIC and cross-examined all whom I suspected of assaulting him. All denied. So, at about midnight, I armed myself with a gallon of diesoline and ordered all those I suspected of assaulting him to come with me to perform a cremation ceremony at the Illukwela jungle. There were lots of dead branches of trees and logs to make a pyre. We collected a good many and dumped them on the dead suspect, poured the diesoline and lit the fire. Suddenly, all the others jumped up and bolted to the village road, leaving me. I came back to the jeep and went to pick them up. They told me they had all been attacked by "*Debaras*". The next morning, all had swollen arms and legs. This must have been the revenge of the dead suspect.

## Supplementary Chapter 13

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### CIRCUMNAVIGATING SRI LANKA UNDER SAIL IN A 27 FOOT WHALER

Lieut.Cdr.M.H.Weliwitigoda

This exercise was undertaken as a result of a suggestion made in jest by the Commander of the Navy the late Real Admiral D.V.Hunter at a cocktail party held at the Wardroom, Rangalla, Kochchikade. He suggested that the locally made whalers should be tested and proved for buoyancy, sea worthiness and sailing capabilities by sailing a fair distance at the height of the Southwest monsoon. Being in high spirits, I suggested that it would be ideal if an exercise was conducted to circumnavigate the island, visiting the various Naval Establishments en route. Admiral Hunter was delighted and gave his assent to this.

I was then the 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant of SLNS "GAJABAHU" which was under the command of Commander A.W.H. Perera, and was in dry docks. I had forgotten about the rash suggestion I had made at the cocktail party, till I received a minute from the Commander of the Navy to submit to him the proposed itinerary, logistic requirements & the crew that was to man the whaler. It was only then, that I realized the immensity of the task I had undertaken. I always relished a challenge and this was just down my line. A signal was promulgated calling for volunteers to form the crew of the whaler, the response was excellent and the volunteers were whittle down to the following.

- 1) LCdr Nadarajanesan who had done a fair amount of Dinghy & Enterprise sailing in harbour.
- 2) A/B A.T.Fernando an excellent seaman and a jack-of-all-trades.

- 3) Tel.J Abeywickrama a good hand, but with no experience in sailing
- 4) S/Lieutenant Srikantha a good, intelligent officer with no experience in sailing.
- 5) Surg Lt.M. Amarasinghe, a medical officer specialized in diving, but with no sea going or sailing experience. There was a change in Nos 1 & 2 who had to join “Lanka Rani.” A.T.Fernando was replaced by L/Sea Santhiapillai a good seaman with no experience in sailing. A list of items required and itinerary were forwarded to Admiral Hunter who authorized it.

At this stage, I would like to briefly describe a 27ft whaler and the purposes it is used for. The whaler is a double ended clinker built, single banked boat, mainly propelled by oars and is primarily used as a life boat and purposes of securing a vessel. It is used to carry the bouy jumpers & shipwright in the Royal Navy. It can also be sailed and is rigged fore and aft and carries of a fore, main and mizzen sail. It is fitted with additional buoyancy tanks and will not sink even if the boat is swamped. The boat is exposed to the weather with no cover for the crew. The main reason for testing the boat was that this boat was built by Harrison Lister Engineering Ltd; with local timber, consisting of jak, *halmilla* & teak and made to Royal Navy specifications. Two jury compartments were built at the fore & after end of the boat for storing dry rations, charts, a Very’s pistol and other personal items that would be required during the voyage. Instructions were carried out to familiarize the crew in rigging the boat and the various nautical terms used in sailing. On first seeing this open boat Surg.Lt Cdr. Amarasinghe was dumbfounded, and would not believe that this was the craft that we were expected to spend at least twenty days, the estimated time of the voyage. I thought he would back out, but his sense of adventure overcame his fear.

At 1500 on the 28<sup>th</sup> July 1971, being in all respects ready to proceed on this venture, we set sail from Kochchikade pier and

were seen off by the representatives of Harrison Lister Engineering Ltd; Commanding Officer SLNS Gajabahu and well wishers. A light breeze of 5/7 knots from South West saw the shaler move at approximately two knots past the pilot station and out to sea. The Lanka Rani which was manned by a Naval crew passed the whaler, sounding a couple of short blasts on her siren in a sign of recognition and in salute, the crew of the whaler acknowledged this by waving. The wind dropped further and we were hardly making way, it was painful sighting Galle Face green hour after hour. At approximately at 2000 when abeam of Panadura we were becalmed and it was decided to anchor till the wind freshened. At sunset a Hurricane Lamp was lit and hoisted on the mainmast. Having anchored, I informed the crew to get some sleep and I remained awake in the stern thwart. We had a transistor radio which was tuned to B.B.C providing light dance music. The sea was calm and it was a moonlight night. The only sounds that could be heard were the music and the gentle lapping of the water against the sides of the whaler. The sails were brailed and the entire crew was dozing lying on the thwarts. I was dozing too, when a rattling noise awoke me.

The wind had freshened and the movement of the boat was striking the Hurricane Lantern against the mast, the time was just past midnight. I woke the rest of the crew and set sail in a stiff wind of 15/20 knots. It was exhilarating to move after a slack period of nine hours. When we anchored off Panadura we could see the loom of Barberyln light. At about 0030 we raised Barberyln light and passed it abeam at 0200. The light at Point de Galle was raised at 0400, we were now getting the full force of the South West wind blowing at approximately 20/30 knots, I estimated our speed to be about 7/8 knots.

We rounded Point de Galle at 0500 and now the wind was broad on our starboard quarter and we had an increase of speed, in nautical language we were running before the wind and speed made good was approximately 10 knots. Dondra light was raised

at 0530 and passed abeam at 0700. We were becalmed once again and were drifting dangerously close to the rocky shore off Dikwella. Orders were passed to Braille up the sails, ship crutches and oars and row away from the rocks. The crew must have rowed for about 15 mts. When the wind freshened, orders were passed to “unship oars” and store them in the boat, but I forgot to order “unship crutches”. I walked from a stern on the capping to clear the main sail that was fouled, suddenly the boat rocked and I slipped on the capping and was impaled on a crutch prior to falling on the floor boards. I must have lost conscious for a moment and was in excruciating pain. This was the outcome of bad seamanship of not unshipping crutches when not in use. We were now just outside the Naval Base at Tangalle and got alongside the Tangalle fisheries pier with the assistance of a fishing boat.

On arrival at base Surg/LtCdr Amarasinghe examined me and informed me that I was bleeding internally from the rectum, I was taken to the Government Hospital Tangalle, and was referred to Matara hospital and finally ended up in the accident ward of the General hospital accompanied by Surg Lt Cdr Amarasinghe. The remainder of the crew remained with the boat at Tangalle. I was subject to an emergency operation at the General hospital, but that is another story.

LCdr C.M.J Fernando was nominated to take command from Tangalle for the next two legs namely Arugam bay and on to Trincomalee. I am now relying on accounts that appeared in the daily papers as the narrative with the official log maintained by S/Lt.Sri. Kantha had been misplaced at Naval Headquarters. Having left Tangalle course was set to pass inboard of the Great and Little Basses, light houses.

This is a treacherous stretch of sea, where the current from the Arabian sea and the bay of Bengal converge and it resembles a seething foaming disturbed sea very much a-kin to the Bay of Biscay. This stretch was successfully traversed and the real challenge came at Arugam Bay. When coming in to beach the whaler, 12 to

15 foot waves were encountered and the whaler broached and was swamped, most of the food and miscellaneous items were lost, but the compass was saved. Sub inspector Namasivayam of Pottuvil was a great help, having organized the assistance of the locals the whaler was floated again. Having replenished the food items that were lost they departed Arugam Bay and reached Trincomalee in record time.

I had recovered after the operation and was given the go ahead by the Surgeon. I traveled to Trincomalee and took charge of the whaler to finish what I had initiated. We departed Trincomalee in the afternoon and after a series of short tacks cleared Round Island and shaped course for Pt. Pedro. The weather was good with a stiff breeze of 20/25 knots and a two foot sea. We made good time and raised Mullativu light by 2300. Pt Pedro light was raised at 0400, and rounded it at 0600. K.K.S was sighted at 1200. The whaler came to anchor off Kovilam at 0200 as it was impossible to sail with an ebb tide of 6 knots. The following morning a Patrol craft took the whaler in tow and proceeded to the pier at Karainagar. The crew went ashore for a well deserved rest.

On completion of three days it was decided to continue the voyage on to Talaimannar. We started early morning and obtained the assistance of a Patrol craft to tow the whaler to a position one mile North of Kovilam. This saved quite a lot of time by avoiding a series of short tacks. By the time the tow was slipped it was well past noon. When we cleared Delft it was dark. A storm broke and all hell was let loose, rain came down in torrents there was lightning, and visibility came down to a few yards.

Sail was shortened and we were driven willy nilly along with the storm. At about 0400 the whaler touched bottom and we still did not know our location. At 0800 there was enough light to discern that we were about 100 yds from ashore and there was a fishermens' Wadiya on the beach. I went ashore to ascertain our position and was told it was a place called Moonampitiya which was in the bight between Devils point, and Talaimannar. The fish-

ermen were very hospitable and we decided to stay till the storm abated.

The whaler was beached, the fishermen provided us meals which was rice and various types of fish cooked together. A hot meal was a luxury to the five of us who existed on stale bread, tinned fish, half boiled eggs or roast beef saturated in sea water. We spread out the sails, on the sand in the Wadiya and dropped off to sleep with the storm raging unabated outside.

It was now thirty six hours since we left Karainagar without making contact with either the Naval detachment Talaimannar or the Naval base at Karainagar. I realized that Naval authorities, may have initiated search operations, my hunch was confirmed, when we saw a Dove of the RCy AF. Flying low over the track we were expected to travel between Karainagar and Talaimannar pier. We tried to attract their attention by firing Very's cartridges and waving, but this proved futile. This sortie was carried out for about three hours in the morning and again for the same period in the afternoon. That evening we had a war council and decided that the following morning the three officers would trek through the jungle to reach the main Mannar, Jaffna road and try to reach the Thallady Army camp. The fishermen volunteered to guide us to the main road which they said was approximately 4 kms from where we were. Leaving Santhiapillai and Abeywickrama to tend the whaler, Sri Kantha, Milinda, and myself accompanied by two fishermen left at first light. We were dressed in swimming trunks, jerkins, tennis shoes and straw hats. After trekking what appeared to us to be 6 kms rather than 4 kms, we reached the main road. During our trek, we sighted jungle fowl, peafowl and came across the fresh dung of Elephants.

The road was straight as an arrow and there was no visible sign of a vehicle from either side. We squatted under a tree by the road side and awaited the arrival of a vehicle. After about 45 minutes we sighted a cloud of dust moving towards us. The three of us got on to the centre of the road to bum a lift when the vehicle came

up to us we found three soldiers in the rear of the jeep, who leveled their assault rifles in a menacing manner, I observed that the safety catches were off, the rifles were cocked and ready for immediate use. A second Lieutenant was seated in front.

I promptly put my hands up and so did the other two. I was identified by one of the soldiers and everything was "tickity boo". What we were told by second Lieutenant Saliya Kulathunga was, there had been a breakout of the Jaffna jail by some hard core J.V.P. cadres and they thought the motley looking crowd they encountered were the jail birds.

They were proceeding to Thallady and gladly offered us a lift. We were also informed that there was a depression in the Arabian sea and the Met office had issued a bad weather warning for the next seventy two hours: warning fishermen not to put out to sea on the west coast. I then realized that Naval Headquarters would be anxious to know what happened to us. My surmise of the RCy.A.F 'Dove' was correct. We arrived at Thalady camp and were given a warm welcome by the C O of the camp Major Denis Hapugalla. We apologized for our bedraggled state, and were treated to chilled beer, boy-oh-boy! That was great. A message was passed through Army, Thallady to NHQ giving the location of the whaler and its crew, and that we will set off, on the weather improving. This message was also passed to the Naval Detachment Talaimannar. After a good "booze", a refreshing shower we were treated to a sumptuous lunch and provided transport to the place we were picked up from. It was late evening when we got to our temporary adobe. We had a discussion and decided to set sail for Talaimannar weather permitting at first light the following morning. We had "*buth*" with the "all-in-one" curry and made known our intentions to our gracious host. We had a restful night and in the morning gave our hosts some tins of corned beef, packets of cream crackers and a few tins of canned fruit for their hospitality. They refused any monetary consideration. Having thanked our benefactors profusely, we set sail for Talaimannar which was ten

nautical miles in a South-westerly direction. A series of long tacks had to be made as the wind was blowing from right ahead and the whaler will not sail closer than two points to the wind.

At approximately 1400 we sighted the pier at Talaimannar, the sailors at Talaimannar must have been on the lookout for us, we saw a fiber glass dinghy equipped with an O.B.M. making way towards us. The dinghy came alongside, it was manned by A/B Randeniya better known as “KK” (which in Sinhala is obscene but the equivalent in English would be foul mouth) and A/B Robin Attygala. Their offer of a tow was greatly appreciated as it would have taken at least another four hours to get alongside the pier. The tow was slipped in close proximity to the pier and the whaler came to anchor in a fathom of water. We were accommodated in a bungalow in close proximity to the pier, which I believe was a circuit bungalow used by the Customs. There was a slight let-up in the weather, and an enjoyable evening with plenty of the old stuff by courtesy of K.K., sing song and warm food was had by all. The best treat was that we had the luxury of five beds with Arpico foam mattresses and cotton pillows instead of the wooden thwarts that we had to be satisfied with on the whaler. A sound sleep was had by all.

The following morning Milinda, Sri Kantha and myself reconnoitered the sand banks in Adams bridge to ascertain a navigable passage to the Southern side, this was a must, as the sand banks keep shifting. A suitable passage was found between the fourth and the fifth sand bank and it was a gamble that it would remain so, for another twenty four hours. The out going or incoming tide reached speeds of 8/10 knots and it was decided to tow the whaler through Adams bridge. We returned to the circuit bungalow planning to leave the following morning. The weather had improved marginally, although the bad weather warning was still in force.

Having informed the detachment at Talaimannar to transmit a message to NHQ of our ETD and also a message to the O.I.C Kalpitiya to inform a craft on patrol to R/V with the whaler at

Kudurumalai point the following morning. We left Talaimannai pier being towed by the fiber glass dinghy, powered by a 15 HP OBM manned by Robin Attygalla and Randeniya. The only incident worth recording was that the tow rope parted and the whaler was in danger of being swamped. Attygalla through instinct, a result of many years of experience, executed a 360 degree turn and recovered the tow. The passage through Adams bridge was tortuous with an incoming spring tide of 8/10 knots, 5/6ft breakers and 25 knots South West blowing were experienced.

We cleared Adams bridge by 1015 bade goodbye to Robin and KK and set sail Kudurumalai bound. The full force of the South West monsoon was felt, but this helped us to proceed at about 8 kts. We passed Vankalai in the late afternoon and reached Kudurumalai at about 2000. There was no sign of a Patrol Craft at the R/V position and it was decided to anchor. The sails were struck and the whaler came to anchor 2 miles off Kudurumalai point awaiting the arrival of the Patrol craft. At about 2200 a tropical storm blew up and we started dragging anchor. Anchor was weighed and we sailed an East West course under shortened fore sail and a mizzen sail, this continued till the following morning till a Patrol craft was sighted. On approaching the whaler the O.I.C. of the Patrol craft P/O Wijesinghe inquired as to what time we had reached the R/V position, when informed that it was 2000 the previous night he informed that he had been at the R/V position at 1730, but as the weather had taken a turn for the worse, and he had parted his anchor cable and decided to return to base. The personnel at base did not expect the whaler to arrive at the R/V due to bad weather. The P.C. craft took us in tow and proceeded to base arriving at the Kalpitiya base at 1100. We had a shower a cold beer and a gourmet lunch of sea food. This was the most harrowing leg of our journey so far.

Torrential rain, with one member of the crew constantly baling out the water, wet to the skin and shivering with cold made us all miserable. The sight of the Patrol craft was an absolute ton-

ic. We spent one week at Kalpitiya recuperating from the ordeal, awaiting an improvement in the weather conditions before embarking on the final leg to Colombo.

To save time at tacking we were towed out to Kudurumalai point. The weather had improved slightly the tow was slipped and we set sail on the final leg. That night we spent at sea having passed Talawila, Chilaw. Progress was painfully slow, since we had to sail up wind. Early next evening we passed Negombo and the glow in the sky, and the loom of the Colombo light house were sighted. The end of this epic voyage was in sight. All the pain, cold, and tiredness was overcome and all onboard were overjoyed. We entered the harbour through the Northern entrance and came alongside the Kochchikade pier at 2230. The pier sentry thought he saw a ghost when he was hailed to collect our head rope. So ended an exercise which had been a bee in my bonnet for some time.

I wish to place on record my thanks to Admiral Hunter for throwing this challenge, if not for which, this voyage would never have been undertaken. He was a good yachtsman, and was my guruk, who taught me the rudiments of sailing. Admiral AWH Perera for sparing me while the Gajabahu was in dry docks. The Commanding Officers of all establishments visited for their support and encouragement. Major Denis Hapugalla and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Saliya Kulathunga who assisted us when in trouble. I must compliment Harrison Lister Engineering Ltd; for constructing a boat as good or even better than those built by the Royal Navy. Finally my shipmates who formed the crew and went through all the rigours of sailing in a boat exposed to the elements and who learned the finer points of sailing on the job. The distance covered was 890 nautical miles and sailing time of 16 days. It is regretted that dates and times may not be accurate as this narrative has been compiled after lapse of 26 years, though the dates and times may not be accurate the incidents mentioned were really experienced.

## Supplementary Chapter 14

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### ADMINISTRATION AND MAINTENANCE OF LIGHTHOUSES FORMERLY OWNED BY THE SRI LANKA NAVY

By Commodore C.I.F. Attanayake SLN

*(This paper was submitted to me when I asked for first-person  
accounts for a projected book)*

#### Introduction

The Sri Lanka Navy, on behalf of the Government of the Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka accepted and assumed full responsibility for the management and administration of the under mentioned Lighthouses in Sri Lanka on 1 April 1976. These Lighthouse were previously administered by the Imperial Lighthouse service of the United Kingdom.

Barberyn Lighthouse (110ft.high x 25 feet diameter) situated in an island 300 yards off the Western coast at Beruwela.

Dondra Head Lighthouse (160 feet high x 35 feet diameter) situated at the southernmost point of Sri Lanka.

Great Bases Lighthouse (100 feet high x 25 feet diameter) situated at sea 8 miles off Kirinda coast.

Little Bases Lighthouse (100 feet high x 25 feet diameter) situated at sea 30 miles North East of Kirinda.

These four lighthouses are internationally-known lighthouses. They are used by mariners of all nations to guide them along international sea lanes. Between Australia and the East, and

Africa on the West these four lighthouses form the most important navigational landmarks in the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean. Hence their proper maintenance and control is a vital necessity, grave responsibility and a moral obligation, in order to maintain them in peak condition always.

### Construction of great basses and Little Basses lighthouses

The Great Bases and Little Basses rock lighthouse situated at sea in the Indian Ocean on coral reef off the south – eastern coast of Sri Lanka were built by the British Imperial Lighthouses service of the Department of Trade and Commerce between 1864 and 1876.

These lighthouses were built from granite stone blocks quarried from Dalbeatty in Scotland. Rocks from the Cornish quarries of Cheeswiring and Penryn were cut to include wedge on the adjacent sides to snugly fit into each other, and were brought here to build these lighthouses. These stone blocks were first assembled ashore at Galle. Each one was numbered, dismantled and then shipped in barges to the present sites at Sea and reassembled on the coral reefs tremendous engineering and well coordinated logistics exercise. It took nearly 10 years to build these two rock lighthouses.

### Initial Operations

Initially kerosene oil was used as the illuminant for lanterns at these Lighthouses for several years. These Lanterns were rotated by a gearwheel mechanism whose clockwork gearing had to be manually rewound by the Lighthouses Keepers once every 3 hours. With the invention of electricity by Michael Faraday, they were replaced with carbon filament and subsequently Tungsten filament electric lights powered by diesel operated generators.

During recent times they have been modernized and are electronically operated to precisely provide the relevant characteristic of the lights. They are amongst the most modern and powerful lighthouses in the world. The characteristic of little basses is two white light flashes every 10 seconds and that of Great Basses is one red flash every 15 seconds.

With the reopening of the Suez canal, the Dondra Head lighthouse practically assumed great importance. It is the landfall for all shipping from the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Aden to the Bay of Bengal, Singapore, the Far East and Australia.

### Administration

The Imperial Lighthouse Service which administered these lighthouses prior to hand over to the Sri Lanka Government, collected light-dues from all ships calling at Colombo, for the upkeep and maintenance of these lighthouses. These lighthouses also helped the British Government to promote their one time monopoly of the far Eastern export trade and shipping since the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

The author had good fortune of serving as the Superintendent and Naval Officer-in-Charge of the Sri Lanka Navy lighthouse Service for almost 8 years, in addition to other Naval duties. Hence he had opportunities to meet the Lighthouse Keepers regularly and to talk, and sometimes to live with them in their isolation. These Lighthouse Keepers (Light Keepers) take a great pride in belonging to this unique service. The fathers and grand fathers of some of these Light Keepers have also served on these Lighthouses for generations. These Keepers stationed at great Basses and Little Basses have to spend a very lonely existence far removed from human habitations for continuous 6 weeks at a stretch until they are relieved. Prior to the Sri Lanka Navy taking over these lighthouse from the British, the keepers had to spend continuous 3 months before they were relieved. People who can perform these

duties efficiently for long hours under monotonous and arduous conditions need to be temperamentally suited and are indeed a rare breed.

### Operation & Maintenance of Lighthouse Equipment

The operation of all equipment installed in these lighthouse is the responsibility of the Light Keepers who have received all necessary instructions and are fully acquainted with the various procedures. The Light Keepers are also responsible for certain minor maintenance work and periodic routine check of the equipment. The senior Principal Light Keepers (PLK) is in charge of the Lighthouse and work out a watch system to ensure efficient operation of the equipment.

### Feeding of Light Keepers

All Light Keepers stationed at Great Basses and Little Basses are fed free. Victuals are issued on a set ration scale. No cooks are provided at Great Basses and Little Basses and Light Keepers themselves are responsible to prepare their meals. At the other two Lighthouse, a victualling allowance is payable to Light Keepers, and no free food is provided.

### Provision of Victuals and Stores

Victual and stores for the Light Keepers at Great Basses, which include tinned foods are provided from the Colombo depot. Cash purchases of victuals are also made at Tissamaharama. This function is entrusted to the store keeper. Prior to the actual date of relief operations, all items of victuals and stores are bagged, packed and transported from the Colombo depot by the Lighthouse service vehicle to Kirinda harbour.

## Relief for the Great Basses and Little Basses Lighthouses

The Light Keepers at the rock lighthouse Great Basses and Little Bases are relieved once every 6 weeks. The reliefs are done from Kirinda harbour. There are 4 Light Keepers at each of these Lighthouses to operate the navigational lights and to maintain the machinery and equipment. The Principal Light Keeper (PLK) is in charge, and others are Senior Assistant Light Keeper (SALK), Junior Assistant Light Keeper (JALK) and Apprentice Light Keeper (ALK). The change-around is staggered and two of these Light Keepers are relieved once every 6 weeks during relief operations so that there is continuity. This system of staggering the change around, besides giving continuity, does not bring about delays in hand over to relief Light Keepers.

The relief of Great Basses and Little Basses Lighthouses is carried out by the Lighthouse vessel PRADEEPA with the assistance of a 32 foot wooden surf boat. This surf boat laden with relieving Light Keepers, fuel, provisions, stores, spares etc is towed from Kirinda harbour commencing at first light. Relief operations are normally done during early forenoons, as weather and sea conditions at these Lighthouses deteriorate in the afternoons and sometimes become impossible and dangerous.

Before PRADEEPA leaves Kirinda harbour of effect operations, the surf boat is launched a day prior to the commencement of the reliefs, is made ready in all respects. The Launching (and beaching after the end of relief operations) of the surf boat is done contract and is a manual operation. The Store Keeper supervises the operation. The labour for the operation is obtained from the Kirinda village.

## Execution of Relief Operations

The PRADEEPA on arrival at Kirinda harbour from Colombo, anchors approximately a cable from the shore. Due to submerged rocks at the entrance to the Kirinda harbour being a navigational hazard to ships and craft, PRADEEPA always endeavours to enter Kirinda before sunset.

The relief consists of the change around of Light Keepers, provision of victuals including fresh and dry foodstuffs, stores, diesel fuel, lubricants, spares and fresh water. The movement of personnel from anchorage to shore/return and the transportation of victuals and stores from the Boathouses at Kirinda to PRADEEPA is carried out by a Rubber Inflatable Dingy (RFD) propelled by a 40 Horsepower Outboard motor (OBM). The RFD and the OBM is carried on board PRADEEPA.

The PLK reports daily by radio the sea and wind conditions experienced at Great Basses and Little Basses and also indicates whether the relief is possible or not. On receipt of this information, PRADEEPA sets out at first light from Kirinda with the surf boat and crew in tow. Depending on the prevailing sea conditions at the respective lighthouses, PRADEEPA closes to about one cable from the lighthouse when the surf boat is released and PRADEEPA thereafter drops anchor. By means of oars, the surf boat approaches the landing of the Lighthouse to about 15 to 25 yards and anchors with the assistance of a head rope from the landing. The surf boat then secures in such a manner so as to ride the swell and surf.

Transfer of personnel, victuals and stores is effected by a line attached to the crane erected on the landing of the lighthouse. Routine transfer is not attempted in unfavourable sea and weather conditions. The Boatswain (Bosun) who is in charge of the surfboat, with the assistance of the Light Keepers is responsible for the transfer from surf boat/landing and vice versa. The Bosun in final authority to make the decision whether the transfer is possible, or not. Generally the officer in Charge of PRADEEPA accepts the

Bosun's decision and judgement on the matter. Transfer of diesel fuel or fresh water is by a system of buoyant hoses which has additional buoys attached to it. Aboard the PRADEEPA there is approximately 300 yards of hose for this purpose. The surfboat is not used for this operation. The RFD passes a heaving rope to the landing, to this rope is connected the buoyant hose which the PLK couples to the filling point.

The PRADEEPA is equipped with additional portable fuel tanks to transfer of fuel and these tanks are carried in the hold.

The time taken for transfer of personnel and stores is dependent on the sea and weather conditions and quantity of stores. Under safe landing conditions, the transfer 1600 gallons of fuel takes approximately 3 hours.

The Light Keepers at Great Basses and Little Basses are entitled to Saturdays, Sundays and other Statutory holidays for the period they are actually on duty at Great Basses and Little Bases. For a 6 weeks tour of duty, they are therefore entitled to approximately 2 to 2 ½ weeks of earned leave. Thereafter till they are required on duty they are 'on call' and are required to indicate their whereabouts to the Superintendent of the Lighthouses Service. This period of on call is about 3 ½ weeks for which they are in receipt of full pay.

### Repairs and Maintenance of Equipment

During the relief operations, the Naval Service Mechanics also attend to any major repairs and overhaul of generators, pumps, machinery and navigational equipment at the lighthouses. Minor and emergency repairs to this equipment are done by the Light Keepers themselves. If defects occur in between the reliefs, the Light Keepers inform the symptoms of defects to Naval Headquarters by radio communications equipment installed at all Lighthouses. Then specific instructions are conveyed by radio to

these Lighthouses to effect emergency repairs by the Light Keepers themselves with emergency stocks of essential spare and tools issued to them.

At Great Basses and Little Basses there are three diesel generators of 50 KW each (one used at a time) to provide power to operate the electronically-controlled main navigational light and for domestic lighting and operation of fresh water, sea water and fuel pumps and other machinery. The main navigational light (panel of 8 x 8 Locomotive headlamps of 500 Watts each) is surrounded by enormous glass lenses and prisms which concentrate the light into beams that can be seen up to 20 miles away at sea to guide ships along safe sea lanes and away from dangerous coral reefs and rocks at night. There is also an emergency navigational light operated with 3 Kw diesel generator for use in the unlikely event of the failure of all three diesel Generators.

### Difficult Living Conditions

Sometimes when sea and weather conditions are really bad especially during the months of January/February and August/September, relief operations get delayed by several days and sometimes weeks due to the inability of the relief vessel and Surfboat to approach these rock Lighthouses in the ocean. As a result the Light keepers have to live under difficult and trying conditions conserving their food and precious fresh water. Rain water is also collected automatically during rainfall by a network of drains located around the top of the Lighthouses, filtered and stowed in underground tanks at the Lighthouses base for emergency use. Fishing and their drying/curing is also resorted to by the Light Keepers in order to supplement their rations, and also as a past-time.

## Proud Tradition

However, in spite of the arduous conditions these Light Keepers have to live to in isolation at sea far removed from human habitations, they take a great pride in belonging to this unique services. These Lighthouses and their Keepers have provided yeomen service to mariners of all nations and guided them safely along international sea lines for over hundred years and continues to do so in the future. We salute all those brave and dedicated Light Keepers who have served in the past and also continue to serve at present and in the future.