CHAPTER - IV

THE KANDYAN KINGDOM'S EARLY CONTACT WITH THE ENGLISH EAST INDIA COMPANY, AND THE PYBUS MISSION
From the early days, Sri Lanka, which was at a strategic cross roads of international trade between the East and the West, has been visited by foreigners from time to time. But the first Briton (or, rather, Englishman in the period before the union of England and Scotland in 1707) to visit the island arrived only late in the sixteenth century. He was Ralph Fitch who landed in Colombo in 1588.

But the best known Briton to live long years, though unwillingly, was Robert Knox. A captive in the Kandy kingdom for nineteen years, six months and seventeen days, he was compelled to live in many Sinhalese villages almost as one of the Sinhalese. He observed their life and manners very closely.

Knox was always hoping to escape. Knox succeeded in getting several letters to Colombo. One of them reached Madras. The Dutch Governor of Colombo took pity on the captives and sent them some money. But the captives had to rely on their efforts to escape.

Knox, writing in his autobiography which was discovered in manuscript only early in the present century, said bitterly. "The East India Company, in whose
service 29 men were taken, use no other means (to save charges, I believe) than letters" to rescue them. This was unjust. Sir Edward Winter, the Agent in Madras, was instructed from London to take steps to secure their release. Accordingly, Winter sent a ship to "Zeilon to redeem the English captives". But the Dutch stopped her very near Madras and sent her back.

But in the same year a letter from Winter did reach the king in Kandy. Shortly after, a Dutch ambassador, Hendrik Draak, went to Kandy for the same purpose. The king summoned all the captives to Kandy. But at this time a revolt broke out against the king. When he had suppressed it, he was not inclined to release the captives.

The English failed to have the captives released mainly because of Dutch hostility. The Dutch were willing to pass on letters, but they would not do anything more. They suspected the English of trying to establish themselves in Sri Lanka in order to break their monopoly of cinnamon. They were justified. For, the Directors in London, in asking Madras in December, 1669, to take
further steps to have the captives released, also asked what the prospects were of bringing the king's cinnamon to a port on the east coast of Sri Lanka, which was not under Dutch control. Shortly after, another letter, while mentioning the captives, asked that some cinnamon plants be obtained from Sri Lanka and planted in St. Helena, the Company's settlement.

Finally, in 1679, Knox and another captive, Stephen Rutland, escaped, going through Anuradhapura, to the Dutch Fort in Aripu. They arrived there on October 18, 1679. The Dutch received them courteously and sent them on to Mannar. From there they went to Colombo, where the Governor, Ryckloff van Goens (Junior) received them. He accompanied them to Batavia. From there Knox proceeded to the English factory in Bantam and, finally, to London. He was there in September, 1680 after having been absent for over twenty-three years.

As already stated, the British endeavoured to find an opening for their trade. Their attempts to have Knox and his companions freed were not altogether altruistic or compassionate. The Directors in London thought that the correspondence with Rajasimha in Kandy
could be utilised to broach a proposal for trade relations. The British desired to break the Dutch monopoly of the Sri Lanka cinnamon trade, and to take their share in a flourishing India-Sri Lanka trade. The Dutch were quite aware of all this and did all they could to frustrate the efforts.

"The most menacing prospect for the Dutch lay in the trade the English and Danish merchants who from the 1650's were sailing into the port of Kottiyar in Trincomalee Bay in their port-to-port small scale trading in the Bay of Bengal; the Kandyan ruler, for his part, actively encouraged this. The Dutch, on the other hand, were apprehensive about his control over the ports on the east coast, not merely because it threatened their economy and trading interests; they realised that trade links could mature into political ones, and that it was through these ports that these would be established. All these questions assumed much greater urgency when the English East India Company began to show interest in acquiring a trading settlement on the east coast of Sri Lanka."

In 1759, the Dutch Governor, Jan Schreuder, resolved to enforce the payment of arrears and dues on land. These arrears had accumulated over a length of
time because the administration was lax. The dues related to gardens planted with official consent which were liable for a third of the produce and those planted without consent which had to pay half. Large tracts of cultivated land had been abandoned by the villagers and occupied by others during a recent war. When the Governor decided to enforce the payment of arrears and dues, the problem of ownership of land arose. There was much unjust extortion. Troops were sent to enforce the orders. They had directions to destroy trees in case of opposition. Naturally this led to wide resentment.

There was also much anger over the Dutch policy of reclaiming land within the cinnamon growing areas which had been cultivated without official knowledge. The official policy, which set great store by the cultivation of the cinnamon, was that areas near cinnamon fields had to be abandoned, and some of these areas were paddy fields. The Government gave alternative land only for those areas which, though not held as grants, had still been paid for. Lands thus reclaimed were reserved for cinnamon. Whole plantations of coconut and jack fruit were destroyed. Further, collecting rent had been farmed out, and the renters were extortionate.
A plot was formed in Kandy in July 1760, to assassinate Kirti Sri Rajasimha. It was discovered and foiled by his father-in-law Narayanappa, and the conspirators were punished. He seems to have made the king believe that it was a Dutch plot formed in collusion with pro-Dutch elements in Kandy.

War broke out in January, 1761. The Kandy forces won many initial victories, including the capture of Matara, in the south. The Dutch had been hampered to some extent by the intimidating presence of a British naval squadron under Admiral Cornish at Trincomallee. But the Dutch in South India, both on the Coromandel and the Kerala coasts, rushed reinforcements. Moreover, the Kandy forces had suffered heavy casualties.

It was during this period that the Kandyan king Kirti Sri Rajasimha turned to South India. The main powers at the time, in South India, were the British in Madras, the Dutch in Nagapattinam and a few other settlements on both the coasts, the Nawab of the Carnatic, the Raja of Thanjavur, and the usurper, Hyder Ali, in Mysore.

It is necessary at this stage to examine in detail the statement of a Sri Lankan scholar, V.L.B.Mendis. According to Mendis, "There are grounds to believe that after the
outbreak of the 1760 rebellion the Kandyan court contemplated an international alliance against the Dutch into which the English East India Company would have been drawn. He also says that the Nayakkars of Kandy "entertained a plan to establish a close federation between Ceylon and the States of Tanjore and Madura, mutual trade advantages with the union under one crown as an ultimate objective".

It would be evident from the following discussion that both these projects were entirely visionary. The Nayakkars were ruling over neither Madurai nor Tanjavur in the 1760's. The Marathas were in power in Tanjavur having displaced the Nayakkars in the previous century. At this time and for many years to come, the British needed to be friendly with the Dutch.

The British attempted to utilise the dispute between Rajasimha and the Dutch for their own purposes. They opened negotiations with the king to acquire a trading settlement and concession in or around Trincomallees.

The Dutch, coming to know of the king's negotiations with the British, kept a close naval watch on the
Kandyan ports. Therefore, the British could not send any official embassy to Kandy. However, they denied the Dutch claims of monopoly, and took their stand on the freedom of the seas and free mutual relations with Asian rulers. It was not till during the American War of Independence (1774-1785) in this period that the British came to blows with the Dutch over the right to search neutral vessels. Hence there was no question of any "international alliance" against the Dutch. But it is possible that the Dutch, fighting for their survival in the Maritime Provinces, feared one.

The Kandyans turned to the French. A squadron under Admiral de la Haye "appeared off the east coast" of Sri Lanka, and with him the Kandyans sought an anti-Dutch alliance. De la Haye took possession of Kottiyar. But he too could not offer the king what he wanted, armed help against the Dutch, also for the same reason as the British. France was then at peace with Holland.

The Dutch reacted vigorously. They turned the French out of Kottiyar and carried the war to the Coromandal coast where they expelled the French from Santhome (now a part of Madras) which the latter had seized from the Portuguese.
Excluding the Dutch and the British in South India what are the other possible sources of help for the Kandyans? In 1761 Hyder Ali, who later made himself formidable, had just established his usurped power in Mysore. He could not help. The Raja of Tanjavur was out of consideration.

The other possible source of help was Mohammad Ali, the Nawab of the Carnatic. He seems to have considered the king of Kandy a sort of "country gentleman of Madurai or Tanjavur". He declined any help on technical grounds. The king's uncle, Konnama Nayakkar, had sailed to South India without official credentials lest the Dutch, who were in complete control of the seas around Sri Lanka, should seize them and the purpose of his visit to South India is known to them. The Nawab seized upon this fact. He asked why the Kandyan had no official credentials and why no official had been sent.

In any case, even if the Nawab had a mind to offer help, he could not have done so purposefully. By 1761 he had virtually become a protege of the British in Madras. It was they who were to fight his
battles against Hyder Ali in the coming years. The Kandyans were unrealistic in expecting any assistance from him.

But they were justified in expecting it from the British in Madras. The British keenly resented the monopolist trade practices of the Dutch. There was also bad blood over recent developments in Bengal, where the Dutch had a settlement in Chinsurah, near Calcutta. Nevertheless, the Kandyan hope was a vain one, for it was the international situation that ultimately guided British policy at this time, and they were friends with the Dutch in Europe. They were not likely to jeopardise that in order to help the king of Kandy. In such a situation it is difficult to see how the king of Kandy could have fashioned an "international alliance" against the Dutch.

There is also a theory that the king of Kandy had deputed two separate emissaries to the different powers in South India. It was the king's uncle who visited Madurai and Tanjavur on his behalf. Another emissary called on the Nawab of the Carnatic and on the failure of that mission he met the British Governor and
Council in Madras. The British names him the emissary "Makandar Moodiar", and the Dutch "Uduma Lebbe, son of Maula Muhandiram". He seems to have been a Moor, or a Sri Lanka Muslim. He met the Governor in Council three times, according to the Dutch records.

When the British decided to send an emissary to Kandyan Court a new chapter opened in the history of Sri Lanka. John Pybus who was chosen to go to Kandy, received his instructions in a document dated April 6, 1762. Pybus was then a member of the Madras Council. The Pybus Mission in 1762 was the first diplomatic attempt on the part of the British to penetrate Sri Lanka.

A letter Lord Pigot, the Governor of Madras, wrote to Pybus on April 6, 1762, sets out his instructions. It began as follows:

"The king of Kandy and Emperor of Ceylon having sent here Makandar Moodiar as an Ambassador to solicit and obtain our assistance to protect him and his country from the oppression and usurpation which the Dutch had long endeavoured to establish and to prevent which he
has maintained wars against them these two years. We have considered the representations of his Ambassador of which you will receive a copy and resolved to send thither a trusting person to treat with the king on such matters as may be necessary and to make such observations of the country power and the nature of the government as may tend to promote the future advantage of the Company with regard to trade on that island. To manage these negotiations and enquiry, our choice has fallen on you and we are persuaded you will discharge your commission to the best of your abilities. That you may thoroughly comprehend our intention on this occasion, we think it necessary to give you the following information and instruction for the rule of your conduct.

Pybus was instructed to keep his mission a close secret lest it should alarm the Dutch. He was to accompany Admiral Cornish who was sailing to Trincomallee with a squadron and to land there without the knowledge of the Dutch. The king had already guaranteed him protection.

The most important instruction was that, since the company did not intend to enter into any definite
arrangements with the king or to quarrel with the Dutch, Pybus was to avoid making any promise or offering any definite proposals. Still, he was to act and speak as if the Company did intend to help the king seriously, and to learn from him what he expected of the Company and what he proposed to give in return.

Pybus was to secure the particulars of all the treaties and engagements that existed between the king and the Dutch. He was to ascertain whether the Dutch were empowered to protect all the ports and to ply a monopoly in Sri Lanka trade. He was also to study the country thoroughly for its political institutions, its economy, its armed forces, its trade and its roads.

Pybus was to examine the nature of the government. He had to find out whether the King was an absolute monarch, whether he was a man of enterprise and capacity, whether he took the field himself and whether he personally conducted the administration. He was also to learn whether there were any leading men who were likely to rebel against the king. In particular, he was to ascertain all about his revenue; whether it was in coin or species, how it was collected, and whether there were any royal prerogatives.
The envoy was also to learn whether the Kandyans had experience of navigation, whether they could build ships, and what materials they had for this purpose. He was also to study the climate and learn whether water was plentiful. "In short", concluded these extraordinary instructions delivered to an ostensible diplomatic envoy, "you are to make all such observations and enquiries as may tend to convey to us a just idea of the nature and produce of the country, the government, the forces, the revenues, the trade, the inhabitants, customs, dispositions and abilities in affairs of war, policy commerce that we may form a clear judgement of what advantage may at present or herein be drawn from them for the benefit of the company".

Pybus, who sailed to Sri Lanka in a naval squadron under the command of Admiral Cornish, landed in Muttur, off Trincomalles, on May 5, 1762. He left for Kandy the same day and arrived in Gannoruwa, the ferry point on the Mahaveli Ganga, on the road to Trincomalles, on May 23. He was lodged in a house on the Gannoruwa side of the river.
An escort accompanied him on his journey. In a diary he kept, he explains the system of travel on the part of distinguished personages in the country. Village headmen "assemble the people from the Different villages to assist in any business of the king's, who are to accompany those who demand them on such service to the end of their district, where they are exchanged or relieved by others summoned by the Head men of the next district for that purpose, and this is practised in each district as you pass through".

On May 24, Pybus had his first audience of the king. Pybus's account of this fills many pages. He was a short tempered man by nature, and he resented the obligatory ceremony of presenting a letter to the king on bended knee.

All that passed by way of diplomatic negotiations at this audience was an inquiry by the king whether the British in Madras were his "steady and sincere friends". Naturally, the British envoy replied that they were. The king said that "he esteemed my being
sent to his court on the verbal representation of a Private Messenger from him, as a very great mark of our confidence in him, and that as he ever heard the English Nation were remarkable for their good faith, he had long been desirious of their friendship; concluding with desiring my opinion whether the Governor and Council of Madrass were his steady and sincere Friends, or not; to which I answered, that although his messenger had brought no Letter, yet, as we had no doubt of his being sent by him, we considered the Representations he had made to us in the same manner light (sic) as if they had come from himself, and therefore did not hesitate upon dispatchg (sic) a person to his court, as he had desired; That I could take upon myself to assure him he would find the English punctual to any engagements they might enter into with him; That the Governor & Council of Madrass, in particular, were very heartily inclined to be his steady and sincere Friends, and sent me to let him know so; and that I should be ready to wait upon him to discourse in Private upon Business whenever he thought proper. He then desired I might be told that he had not words to express the joy and satisfaction he felt at what I had said to him".
From this Pybus drew, rather hastily, the conclusion that the King would "grant us any privilege to induce us to settle on the island, and assist him in driving off the Dutch".

After nine days, from May 25 to June 2, when "nothing particular" occurred, Pybus was taken to a house within Kandy. The officer in attendance told Pybus that "the more myself and servants kept within the house, the more pleasing it would be to the king; as, by walking the streets, my servants might probably get into some dispute & quarrels with the Cingalese, which would give the king much uneasiness". Rightly did Pybus conclude that the Kandyans were "not willing I should be too well acquainted with the place and its situation". He promised that "I would be careful my servants should not be seen in the streets". The court took other steps to isolate the envoy and his servants. A guard of ten or twelve persons from the palace, armed with "Europe Arms" was quartered on the house. The officials made it out that it was a compliment to the envoy. But "I am satisfied it was (to) prevent my having any communication with the inhabitants". Further, "the Vackeel's Brother, who had continued with me all the time I was at Gunnoor, was now forbid to come, but
by particular order when sent for by the officers who visited me daily, to act as an Interpreter".

On June 4, Pybus was informed that the king, to show "his desire to make every thing as easy to me as possible, had appointed a Council consisting of his Generals and other Head Men, to meet and enter into Business with me, who would acquaint him with that I might propose".

Pybus met the council for the first time at 9 O' clock that night. Thus began the tortuous negotiations with each side attempting to outsmart the other. But they were foredoomed to failure because the English had not the slightest intention of granting what the king was very eager and anxious about. They merely wanted to find out whether they could get something for nothing.

That the Kandyans had not the slightest inkling of the British attitude was repeatedly clear from what the spokesmen of the Court said on many occasions. Now, before Pybus met the Council, a "General", who, according to Pybus, "is a very sensible well-behaved man, a great favourite of the king's & seems well inclined towards
the English", said in "a long Harangue" that the king had shown Pybus special favours (like the house in Kandy and permission to ride in a palanquin in town) because he wished "to enter into (an) Alliance and Friendship with the English Nation; the Regard which had been paid by that Nation to the Representation made to them by a Private Messenger of his only, without any Letter from him".

Then began a contest of wits. The Kandyans asked "what particular matter or Business the Governor & Council of Madrass had empowered me to communicate to him" (The king of Kandy). Pybus replied that he had been sent on the king's representation, to learn what proposals he had to make to the British and what he expected of them. "But they declined giving me any answer upon these points to, alleging that their directions were to hear from me what I had to propose".

This was an impasse. Pybus broke it to some extent by asking whether the king would "grant the English liberty to settle upon this island, and upon what footing, or with what Priviledges". The Kandyans made no direct reply to this, but asked specifically "in what manner, and how far, the English could Assist him (the king), both by Sea & Land, in his Enterprizes", against
the Dutch. The courtiers said that the king had "sent a person to Madrass to represent to the Govr. & Council of Madrass that the Dutch, who had been settled upon this Island for many years, had till very lately behaved themselves well towards the king, and complied with whatever he had recommended to them; That within this year and a half or 2 years they had observed a very different conduct, and shown no regard to the king's orders or advice; whereupon he had commenced a war against them, and sent his armies by Land to punish them, which he was sufficiently well able to do".

Till now the Dutch were administering the Maritime Provinces as servants of the king. This was only a legal fiction. It was not a fact that only two years previously, about 1760, the Dutch had become 'disobedient'. There had been many clashes between them and the Dutch. Nor was the present war going well for him. In 1765 a Dutch military expedition against Kandy succeeded, and the King had to accept a hard treaty.

Pybus had his answer. "I was not empowered to make any promise or engagements, and could only in General Assure them, that the English were well inclined to enter
Friendship & Alliance with the king, and that it was necessary, before anything was concluded, that the Govr. & Council of Madrass should be acquainted, what Privileges the King was willing to grant them, should they determine upon sending him Assustance; which I therefore desired they would communicate to me'.

Strangely enough, Pybus is more frank in his official report than in his private diary on this point. The Kandyans, he says there, urged that "as they had made me acquainted with what his Majesty demanded from us on his part, it rested with me to let know what indulgences we expected in return. This appeared but reasonable..."

Pybus says he had two alternatives at this stage. "Though I saw the very little probability there was of entering into Treaty with them on such a footing and your Honour &c (that is, the Governor or Madras and his Council) had furnished me with no directions on the subject, I had no other alternative left but of declaring my real sentiments, or of making some proposals that might carry with them the Appearance of an Intention on our parts to cultivate an Alliance and Friendship with them..." He chose the latter alternative, "declaring, however, at
the time of making them, that they were not to be con­
sidered, or in any respect construed, as a treaty or
agreement finally concluded or entered into, but subject
to such alterations or Additions as you might see proper".

Pybus proposed a draft treaty. In brief, he
suggested that the English East India Company be per­
mitted to establish "a settlement or settlements" in
Trincomalle Bay, or Battaicalao, or Chilaw, or at any
other place in the island which it might find convenient.
It would have liberty to procure cinnamon, and the king
would order his subjects to furnish the commodity to it
on the same conditions under which they provided it to
the Dutch. Pepper and betelnut should be sold only to
the English. The people should be prohibited from tra­
ding with any settlement other than English. The English
should be allowed to erect forts, warehouses and other
suitable buildings. At any time when it was necessary
for the English to help the king with troops, he should
provide the troops with their needs at his charge and
pay the officers the batta as followed on the Coromandal
coast. The king should "make over to the East India
Company certain countries or from whence they may be
enabled to reimburse themselves for such charges" on
military establishments and fortifications.
The articles would have placed an onerous burden on the king. He was to give the British a territorial foothold, a rigorous commercial monopoly, and access to the king's resources if the need developed. Even as his articles were translated into Sinhala to be placed before the king, the Kandyans "pressed me very earnestly to declare whether or no, if the king should grant every thing I had proposed, I would take upon me to assure him that the Governor & Council would assist him against the Dutch".

When Pybus trotted out his stock reply, "His Majesty might be assured the English were very desirous of cultivating his Friendship and Alliance, but I was not empowered to enter into any particular engagements with him, nor could I take upon myself to say how far you might approve of the proposals I had made, or others what you might have to make", the Kandyans replied very reasonably in Pybus' own words, "that as the Govr. & Council of Madrass, in consequence of a representation made to them by his Majesty's Vackeel of the situation his Affairs were in with the Dutch, and that he wanted our Assistance, had thought proper to send me, a member
of their Council, to treat with him, it appeared somewhat surprising that I was not empowered to enter into any agreement or give any positive assurances whether he might depend upon our assistance or not".

Pybus himself admits that "this method of reasoning carried with it some weight" and that his "inconclusive answers" made the Kandyans "little satisfied, as they had reason to be". His lame answer was that this was because the Governor of Madras considered the proposals "a matter of too much consequence to leave to the management of one person".

Pybus met the Kandyan negotiators again on June 7. He expected to learn what the king had to say about the proposals he had made. Instead, they "several times pressed for a positive answer, whether, if every thing I had proposed was complied with, the English would assist them". Pybus replied that he could not say, "I had not come to determine anything conclusive, but to hear what the king expected from the English Nation; that I had only in general mentioned such points as seemed to be of the most consequence; That the Govr. & Council would
probably have Alterations to make to these proposals; That in particular the Reception (sic) of English ambassadors was a matter that must be left to them to determine; that for these Reasons, I could not take upon me to give any Positive (sic) Assurances with Respect to the Assurances they were to have from the English; that I could not deceive them by promising what did not depend on me to perform; but that, in Genl., I was empowered to assure them the English were very well disposed to be their Friends and Allies".

When, dissatisfied with this answer, the Kandyans asked Pybus whether he had anything further to propose, he "answered no; but repeated, that I could not tell what the Govr. & Council of Madrass might have further to offer; and that I must them understand, that what I had said upon this subject was considered to be conclusive or determinate; that every thing must be referred to the decision of the Gentlemen at Madrass & that I supposed his Majesty would send some one from hence to bring him their determination".

The final meeting was held on June 19. The Kandyans, in discussing Pybus' proposals, objected a long time upon the subject of the Cinnamon Trade; The
difficulties that attended collecting it; acquainted me with the manner in the Dutch collected it and with the method the king proposed (we) should be supplied with it". The Kandyans also objected to the proposals that, in times of war, the king should bear all the expenses of the English army, "such as Stores, Batta to Officers, Xc". To this Pybus replied that "as no Body could answer for the fortune of war, should we undertake one in support of the King, it might perhaps continue as long as the war upon the Coast had done, the Expenses (sic) of which had amounted to an immense sum of money; and that it was not reasonable, if we undertook it, that the Company should bear the charge of carrying it on, as it would be done at the king's particular request".

Pybus was not anxious to discuss the points. "It was to little purpose our saying much upon these subjects, as they would be fully & finally answered by the Govr. & Council of Madras". This meeting ended at past 3 in the morning. All of Pybus conferences started late at night and lasted till early in the morning.

On June 24 Pybus obtained leave to depart. He was in Trincomallee on July 2. He sailed for Madras the
the same day on board 'the Falmouth', the flagship of Admiral Cornish. Pybus had asked for permission to leave by way of Batticalao, evidently to spy out the land. But he was not allowed to. All through his journey and stay in Kandy, he was under close observation.

Nevertheless, Pybus devotes more than half his report to an account of what he saw and heard. Naturally, he devotes much attention to cinnamon, which he calls the "most important Branch" of the "Trade carried on to & from this island by the Dutch East India Company". The article of Beetlenut is the next most considerable export this Island affords and "pepper is the only other export of any consequence the Dutch company reserveto themselves".

The Dutch also captured between a hundred and fifty to two hundred elephants a year for export, though the king allowed them to take between twenty
and thirty. The imports, Pybus says, were silk, tea, sugarcandy, chinaware, piece goods from the Coromandal coast and Bengal, iron and steel from Europe, and "Japan Copper from Batavia".

The draft treaty that Pybus proposed is preserved in the Tamil Nadu Archives, Madras. It contained fourteen articles.

It is important to note that, in the first article Pybus does not specifically ask for Trincomalle as a place of settlement for the British. It is only one of many choices. Pybus would have been glad if Battacalao or Chilaw or any other place had been offered. This disproves the view that the Pybus mission had the acquisition of Trincomalle for an objective because of its strategic importance. It was only later, when the French admiral, de Suffren, showed the strategic value of Trincomalle, that the British became aware of the fact.

There are no records in Tamil Nadu Archives at Madras of the details about the arrival of the envoy from Kandy, the copy of the instructions given to Pybus
by Madras office to which he refers, the contents of
the letter he took to the king of Kandy or of the letter
to him received on the 'Falmouth' on his return. The
Report of Pybus is to the 'Select Committee'. It is
possible that the Committee maintained secret archives
which have not been preserved.

Pybus did his best to procure economic and
other information as he had been instructed. This is
embodied in the official report he submitted to the
Governor of Madras on his return. But he was not a
successful eavesdropper on Kandy.

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On the day Pybus arrived in Cannorua the Vakil
who had accompanied him from the coast was replaced by
his brother, who was appointed his companion. The new
man was a Government agent who was set more to spy on
Pybus than to give him information. According to Pybus
this man was his main informant. Possibly, the agent
supplied Pybus with misinformation at the orders of the
king. Further, the envoy was kept under strict confine-
ment throughout his embassy. The king perhaps became
aware that Pybus had instructions to spy. Perhaps also,
he wished to keep Pybus' presence in Kandy a secret from
Dutch spies. Yet another reason why Pybus was not a good
spy was that he was not a patient man. Difficult to please, he was prejudiced from the start of the embassy. He began to despair of it even when he was in Gannaruwa, on the way to the capital. He grumbled perpetually and was eager to find fault. He created a bad impression.

That was the view of the Dutch spies.

For the information he brought back to Madras was vague and superficial, though, as far as it went, it was not very inaccurate. Pybus himself admits that what he learnt of local conditions was obtained with much difficulty and, what is more, only at second hand. He says, "... No one was suffered to come near the House (in Kandy) where I lodged but such as had the king's permission; no person allowed to converse with my servants in the Malabar language but the Linguist appointed by the king to attend twice a day, when the Officers paid their visits; and neither myself nor servants were permitted to go out of the House after my removal to the Town of Candia (Kandy) but when sent for to the p(a)lace on Business. It must have been very difficult, under such circumstances & such Government, to have procured any intelligence or information that could be depended on".
The Pybus mission was doomed to failure from the start because the company in Madras could not possibly commit the Directors in London or the British Government to a war against the Dutch, which would have seen the result had they given armed help to the king. The king was bound to be disappointed. He and his advisers could not have been well informed if they expected British help in the then prevailing international situation. But the Madras Council had no objection to what was in reality a spying expedition.

The Directors of the East India Company in London, in a first letter to Madras which had reported the mission, urged, in their reply dated March 3, 1763, caution, but gave tacit approval of what they had done. In a second letter dated December 30, 1763, which was in reply to a communication from Madras of November, 1762 they approved the Council's action. They said that they proposed to refer the question of Dutch trade monopoly to a conference between Britain and Holland that was then in session to try and resolve their differences.
But the British Government, to which the Dutch Ambassador in London made a representation, became angry with the Company. The Foreign Secretary, Lord Bute, reprimanded the Directors sharply. The Government was eager to be friends with the Dutch at this time. The Company's action, he said, was prejudicial to the national interest.

The Directors in London were of the same view when they came to know of the mission "long afterwards". They hoped that Madras had not given any offence to the Dutch. They did not think that they could accept from the king any grant of Dutch settlements, but they had no objection to any other part of the king's dominion which was not under the Dutch. So long as the Anglo-Dutch treaties were not contravened, they approved the initiative that Madras had taken towards creating a foothold in the island. In fact, Madras "should lay hold of the opportunity to procure some cinnamon plants which are ripe in the month of September and from which the tree is cultivated. These could be sent to Bencoolen, Anjengo, Bombay, where they may thrive".
But the Directors feared that the king would insist on military assistance as the price for any concessions. The British could not offer this help without violating the Anglo-Dutch treaties. "We should not draw upon ourselves the odium of involving the nation in a new war". The Directors also feared that the Pybus mission might lead to undesirable consequences. If Madras did not help the king militarily, he might turn to the French, and they would be only too willing to assist him. If, on the other hand, the British did send military help to the king, the Dutch might declare war against Britain and join hands with the French. The French danger to the British had by no means ended in South India. Though Lally had been defeated, there were many Frenchmen hoping to retrieve the situation. Though the Directors and the Madras Council were one in hoping to utilise the Pybus mission as an opportunity to learn about conditions in the Kandyan kingdom at first hand, the Council seems to have been oblivious of the possible international implications and consequences of what they had done in deputing Pybus to Kandy.
The Sinhalese had said of Rajasimha II that, in seeking the Dutch help to expel the Portuguese, he had "given pepper and received ginger". They might have made the same remark of Kirti Sri Rajasimha. His invitation to the British in Madras cost him dear.
REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. A merchant by profession, Fitch was commissioned by the "Turkey Company" to travel to India and ascertain what openings there were for the English trade. For more details about his travel to India and other places, see Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques & Traffiques of the English Nation made by Sea or Overland to the Remote & Forthest Distant Quarters of the Earth at any time within the compasse of these 1600 yeares*, III, p.280.

2. Robert Knox, *An Historical Relation of Ceylon*, p.21. Knox's book was published in 1681 in London and became one of the most popular travel books of the times in English.


11. For these developments see V.L.B. Mendis, *The Advent of the British to Ceylon*, pp. 24-25.

12. There were also the Setupathi of Ramanathapuram and the Zamindar of Sivaganga, in the far south. But they were tributary States. Both the Nawab of the Carnatic and The Raja of Tanjavur claimed their fealty. In fact, the Nawab also asserted that the Raja of Tanjavur himself was a tributary of his.


21. Ibid.

22. He came to Madras as Writer on June 28, 1743. He was over carried in his ship to Machilipatnam, and he had to find his way to Madras by land. Eight years later he exchanged the pen for the sword when Robert Clive set out from Fort St. George on his famous march to Arcot where, after capturing the fort without resistance, he defended it heroically in a great military feat of the British empire. Clive had originally left Fort St. David in Cuddalore which, with the French capture of Fort St. George in 1746, had become the principal British settlement on the Coromandal coast, and sailed to Fort St. George which, though already restored to the British now, was still placed under the other fort. Richard Prince was the Deputy Governor. All but fifty of the European soldiers in Fort St. George accompanied Clive in the campaign against Arcot. Clive's force consisted of two hundred Europeans and three hundred
sepoys. There were eight young officers, Lieutenants Pybus, Bulkley, Revel and Tremwith, and Ensigns Glass, Morrice, Dawson and Turner. Pybus had volunteered for military service.

The next available reference to Pybus in the Madras records is dated 1754. He had then become Senior Merchant. He was "Supra Vizor" in Fort Marlborough, in Indonesia.

Returning to Madras, he became "Assaymaster" at the mint in Fort St. George in 1758. His appointment was not without controversy. His predecessor in the office, Edward Edwards, refers in a private letter to "one Pybus, who now has care of it (the mint) and says he can make an Assay as well as Mr. Edwards; however, the beauty of it is, no person will trust him with their Gold or Silver.

As a civilian this time, Pybus played his part in the repulse of the French siege of Fort St. George, from December, 1758, to February, 1759. After the siege he left for England on leave. On his return in the same year he became a member of the Governor's Council. See H.D. Love, Vestiges of Old Madras II, p.428, 491, 550 562 and 589.


25. The manuscript in Tamil Nadu Archives, Madras, *Military Sundries*, Vol.XVII, (hereafter *Military Sundries*) consists of Pybus's Report to the President at Fort St. George, the remainder includes the diary he maintained on his trip (hereafter *Pybus Diary*). Most of the details furnished in this chapter are from these two sources.


27. Ibid., 24th May, 1762.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid., 4th June, 1762.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.


37. Ibid.

38. For the text of this treaty proposed by Pybus, See Appendix - I.


40. Ibid.


42. Ibid., p.13.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Pybus Diary, 7th May, 1762.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
54. Ibid., p.15.
55. Ibid., p.16.
56. Ibid., p.18.
57. Ibid., pp. 14-18.
58. L.A. Mills, Ceylon under British Rule 1795-1942, p.2.
60. Military Sundries.

61. There was a ferry here over the Mahavelli Ganga which runs on three sides of Kandy on the road to Trincomalee. There were other ferries on the road to Colombo and Galle.


64. For details of the letters from Madras to court see Letters from Madras IA and from court to Madras see Letters to Madras, India Office Library, London.


67. Ibd.