Chapter Ten

CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS
In the preceding chapters the administrative machinery for the conduct of foreign affairs in India was described. The Prime Minister and Minister for External Affairs is at the apex of the pyramidal structure that constitutes this administrative mechanism. The Minister of State, the Deputy Minister and the two Parliamentary Secretaries assist him in the performance of his work. Below the Prime Minister is the Ministry of External Affairs with its headquarters and field establishments. The real core of the system is the foreign service, organized in a hierarchy and forming a chain of command and of responsibility, flowing downwards and upwards and converging on the Prime Minister and Minister for External Affairs. The foreign service includes all those serving the Ministry in any official capacity at home or abroad. This is mostly constituted of the two permanent services - the Indian Foreign Service and the Indian Foreign Service (B). Besides, there are also the Information Service of India, now being merged into the career foreign service, the few non-officials who serve as heads of missions and posts abroad, the small specialist staff serving mostly at the headquarters and the large number of persons, mostly foreign nationals, employed in the overseas establishments on a temporary basis.
The primary function of the External Affairs Ministry and its field establishments abroad is to carry out the foreign policy of the government. The Prime Minister and Minister for External Affairs is responsible to the Cabinet and Parliament to initiate and carry out this task with their approval. The Ministry and its various establishments and the personnel manning them constituting the foreign service operate under his authority and control. They render the necessary assistance to him to formulate and implement the policy as directed by him.

A proper estimate of the whole mechanism would be related to the question, how far it has succeeded in acting as an efficient instrument of the foreign policy of the government. In what way has it endeavoured and realized its function of assisting the government in formulating and implementing foreign policy? To what extent has its organization responded to the demands and challenges of foreign policy? A full analysis of this question will need a different approach from what has been adopted in the case of the present study. This would require a study of the interrelationship between foreign policy and administration, and seeing them as part of a single undifferentiated system and process, while the present study is confined, no doubt with a certain degree of unreality, to a description of the mechanism. It might also be that the foreign service has not yet had enough time and experience to develop a distinctive philosophy and ethos. Sixteen years constitute too short a period to define the traditions and character of the service. It may not, therefore, be possible to see nothing more than certain trends which might grow into
definite attitudes and philosophy only in course of time under corresponding circumstances.

The nature and organization of the foreign service have been influenced by certain factors relating to its origin and growth. Two factors, in particular, are relevant to the circumstances pertaining to the origin of the service. These were the general traditions of the Indian administrative system and the adoption of the British model in planning the new Indian foreign service and the Ministry of External Affairs.

The administrative system and traditions that existed before the transfer of power were carried over, more or less intact, into the period after the advent of independence. On account of the fact that the final act by which independence came to the country was through a process of transfer of power the necessity to make any violent break with the past was not immediately precipitated. This was combined with the pressing need to preserve a strong administrative apparatus to tackle the problems that came in the wake of the partition of the country and the outbreak of communal violence. The traditions of the old administration were thus enabled to be preserved and, thereafter, to be continued after independence. They naturally exerted their influence on the organization and working of the foreign service also. The plans for the creation of a foreign service had been formulated even before the formation of the Interim Government. The same plans were now "revised and expanded" in order to suit the needs of the foreign service of a country soon attaining independence. These plans were drafted
and revised and were finally implemented by some of the senior members of the Indian Civil Service - 'the steel frame' of the old administrative system. Moreover, till to-day, the leadership of the foreign service has also remained with persons who had belonged to the ICS. A good many of the persons recruited into the foreign service at the time of its inception had belonged to the central or provincial services, the defence forces and the social classes which were closely associated with the previous administrative set up. The entire establishment had also been trained in the old system of administration. It was natural that the new persons entering the service of the Ministry should also be inducted fast into the ethos of the existing system. But the earlier administrative system could not provide complete guidance to the new service, as the latter envisaged functions which had not been undertaken previously. This gap was naturally filled from the British model - the administrative system which was most familiar of all to India. The organization of the British Foreign Office and Foreign Service has thus left abiding impressions on the administrative system for the conduct of foreign affairs in India.

The continuity of the past and the acceptance of the British practices had their advantages and disadvantages on the Indian foreign service and its working. They provided a ready model from which a quick copy could be made. Even at its birth the foreign service was provided with a tone and a character, established administrative practices and procedures, and a sense of stability and continuity. Whenever anything was felt wanting
about the techniques of organization there was something immediate to turn to and adopt from - whether it be the rules regarding recruitment and training or the fixation of service conditions or the delineation of the general principles of the foreign service organization or the determination of administrative procedures and practices. It thus enabled quick results to be obtained with a minimum effort, at a time when the speed with which things were done was vital. Further, the two sources from which the foreign service derived much of its principles of organization were also fortunately well-adapted to each other so that the introduction of the new service into the existing administration proceeded with a minimum dislocation of the rest. Finally, some of the persons drawn from the old services into the new foreign service were extremely able and possessed valuable experience.

At the same time, much was also lost in this process. There were fewer challenges to be met and no need to experiment and innovate boldly. The new service was never put to strain to discover its personality and individuality. The process was much too easy and it so readily acquiesced into the established structure that it became a victim of the same weaknesses that were present in the parent system. It did not also need to develop in full the spontaneous dynamism and vitality to rejuvenate itself. Moreover, not everything inherited from the past or taken over from the British system was good for the new service. The principles and practices of an administrative
system essentially suited to the requirements of a colonial government and operating primarily in the sphere of domestic activity could not completely serve the needs of the foreign service of a new and independent country. The previous administration had similarly functioned on a compartmental basis, real co-ordination of policy taking place at the level of the Secretary of State and the India Office in London. This was particularly true of foreign affairs, in which the real policy-making functions were performed only in London. The problem of co-ordination in government, particularly between foreign affairs and other spheres of government activity, thus became an inherent weakness of the new system. Similarly, under the earlier administration there had been no need for a full foreign policy mechanism, so that when the Department/Ministry of External Affairs came to assume the full responsibilities for foreign affairs after the transfer of power it was found that some of the functions that necessarily went with these responsibilities had already been taken over by other Departments/Ministries. It was only in slow course of time that functions like that of commercial diplomacy and external publicity which are essentially of the foreign service could be taken over by it. Similarly, as was made clear in the White Paper of January 1943 announcing the Eden Reforms and as became evident in practice in the reforms undertaken in later years, the British Foreign Service organization at this time was itself in need of major reforms. Some of these weaknesses of the British Foreign Office probably found their way into the Indian service also.
For example, co-ordination between foreign affairs and economic matters and the integration of the function of external publicity with the foreign service were inadequate in the British Foreign Service at this time. The integration of the Information Services with the Foreign Service came in Britain in 1946. Provisions for co-ordinating economic and foreign policies have also been developed since to a high degree in Britain. But in India, the organizational deficiencies in these respects have not yet been made up in full.

The growth of the administration for foreign affairs during these years has been remarkable. The significance of the growth is brought out all the more when it is remembered that the organization was built up practically from scratch. This growth is evident about all aspects of its organization. From being one of the smallest branches of government in 1945-46 the External Affairs Ministry is today one of the largest Ministries in the Government of India. It employs nearly 1,400 persons on its staff at the headquarters alone. The number of Indian representatives abroad on the eve of the formation of the Interim Government was only thirteen, of whom only the Permanent Representative at the UN had Ambassadorial status. The number of Indian missions and posts as on 1 April 1962 was 128, of which 81 were diplomatic missions - sixty-four headed by Ambassadors, twelve by High Commissioners and five by Ministers. In 1961-62 there were 278 officers and 545 other persons serving in the missions and posts abroad. The Indian Foreign Service
was started only in 1947 but by 1961-62 its officer strength had grown to 336. The cadre strength of the Indian Foreign Service (B) was nearly 2,300 in the same year. The total budget expenditure of the Departments of External Affairs and of Commonwealth Relations was only Rs. 5.5 million in 1945-46, while the budget allotment to the Ministry in 1962-63 amounted to Rs. 45 million, more than eight times the 1945-46 figure.

Progress was recorded not only in terms of size but also in a number of other respects. With little experience from the past to guide it, the Ministry has succeeded in building up a reasonably workable organization capable of meeting the various responsibilities entrusted to it. The organization of the headquarters and of the missions and posts abroad has been regularized broadly on the same lines as that of foreign services in advanced countries. The foreign service has also grown into a functionally integrated and self-contained organization. It started with responsibilities for purely political and consular functions, but since then commercial and publicity functions have also been brought under its spheres of activity. It provides a full and life-time career within its organization to its members. For purposes of recruitment and training schemes were formulated and have been in operation during these years.

Certain favourable factors accounted for the remarkable development of the service in these various directions. The role of able and experienced administrators recruited from established services like the Indian Political Service and the Indian Civil Service has been very significant in this respect.
By their very recruitment into it, the Indian Foreign Service like the Indian Administrative Service came to inherit a part of the tremendous prestige of the older services and this tended to attract good talents into it in later recruitment. The effective leadership of the Prime Minister at the head of the Ministry, the continuity of this leadership over the entire period of the history of the service in its most formative stage, the personality of the individual who has held the office of the Prime Minister and Minister for External Affairs and the relative success of the foreign policy that the service was seeking to implement were some of the other factors moulding the character of the foreign service during these years.

Still there are certain aspects of the organization of work in the Ministry which call for some anxiety and revision. One of the most important in this respect is that of inter-departmental co-ordination. The increasing identification between 'foreign' and 'domestic' affairs calls for corresponding co-ordination between the External Affairs Ministry and other branches of government. But, at present, except at the level of the Cabinet and its committees there are no systematic arrangements in existence to effect this co-ordination. The need for such co-ordination is particularly important between the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministries of Finance, of Defence, of Commerce and Industry, of Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs etc. It is relevant to point out here that the potentialities of the Economic and Co-ordination Division in the Ministry have not yet been fully exploited in
realizing this essential co-ordination. It was suggested earlier that the interdepartmental committee system, so widely employed under the British administration, could with profit be introduced in India also. The proposed system of regularly deputing a few officers of the foreign service to work in other Ministries and an equivalent number of officers from the home services to work in the missions abroad might, however, prove to be an important means of co-ordination as and when the proposal comes to cover significant sections of the foreign and home services. It might, however, be that with the increasing complexity and the changing patterns of international relations attempts at co-ordination cannot ever be carried to levels of perfection, but it is for the same reason that greater attention has to be paid to this question.

The internal organization of the Ministry also requires to be revised in certain respects. The question of devising an institutional pattern within the Ministry for more effective co-ordination is relevant in this context. It was seen earlier that there is need to realize means for better co-ordination among the various divisions in the Ministry. The need to make a more scientific redistribution of work among the Secretaries and the divisions also demands early attention. The organization of the Ministry has shown a certain degree of flexibility in dealing with changes in situations in the past, as for example in the creation of the UN and Conference Division or the China Division when the pressure of circumstances and of work demanded
them. But this flexibility has not always been complete on account of the rigidity of financial and other rules of administration.

The need to reorganize the methods of work in the Ministry is a further question needing immediate attention. The administrative principles, practices and procedures followed in the Ministry are not entirely correlated to the nature of work carried on in it. The Ministry deals with situations that are in constant flux and over which it has no control. Naturally, the administrative procedure in the Ministry should also have a corresponding adaptability and dynamism. The excessive formality, meticulousness and 'paper-mindedness', the obsession with audit and accounts, the over-sensitivity about security questions, the premium put on caution which becomes an excuse for inaction, the fad about 'economising' which is often at the expense of essential work to be done etc. sap the system of its vitality and dynamism and give the impression that the Ministry moves laboriously and ponderously. The house-keeping work of the Ministry engages more time and attention than is due. The number of annual, half-yearly, quarterly or monthly statements to be prepared by officers is endless. 'Work' means desk-work of the routine, house-keeping type. It is also difficult to escape the impression that the system stifles free initiative and bold thinking within the service. The tendency is to play safe all the time. The tone of work is defensive and apologetic rather than aggressive and innovative. Even when the general
approach to a situation is clear there is often an unnecessary and, therefore, exasperating slowness about action. A revolution in the concept of work in the Ministry, deliberate encouragement of drive and initiative and the devising of scientific administrative practices and procedures that quicken the pace of work are urgently needed in the Ministry if the foreign service is to discover its full potentialities.

The problem of over-centralization of work in the Ministry has also come in for constant reference in discussions earlier. Decision-making tends to be done exclusively at the higher levels. 'Policy decisions' of even a minor nature are taken at the level of the Prime Minister and the Secretaries. Even at the relatively higher levels of the hierarchy the work done is of the type of glorified clerical assistance. Papers are pushed on to the 'PM' (Prime Minister) or the 'FS' (Foreign Secretary) or the other Secretaries. This is because of the absence of any systematic and institutional devices for delegation of work. The problem of delegation of work and of responsibility is one for which no final answer might be possible, and yet it is one of the most important aspects of administration in the Ministry. The consequence of its lack is that at the higher levels - the Prime Minister and the Secretaries - there is a crushing load of work. At the same time there is no corresponding reduction of work at the lower levels. With more systematic arrangements for better delegation of work and greater encouragement to franker discussions of policy at all
levels it should be possible to reduce the volume of work at the higher levels and to develop a sense of participation and consequently a greater sense of responsibility for policy within the foreign service.

The general tone of the administration has possibly something to do with the comment sometimes made that the service lacks initiative and drive. What happens, in particular, to the new recruits to the foreign service who enter it with such fervent idealism? (For, nearly half the persons in the higher branch of the foreign service today are below forty years of age, most of whom came in through the process of regular recruitment and it is mostly on them that the future of the foreign service depends.) Is it that the administrative system stifles their free initiative and drive, that the springs of their personal vitality are dried up and that their full personality and potentialities remain hidden and undiscovered? Does the system impose such restraints that they come to live in a safe world of intellectual isolation unaffected by the dynamic currents of social life, and become mentally fossilized? Of course, it is true that, excepting for a very few, all of them linger on in the service and lead their normal lives. But is this because they find in the service an opportunity to discover themselves through challenge and response or is it only that the service affords them a safe and steady career, security and social status which are not easily obtained outside? If there is any element of truth in the statement that the service lacks free initiative it is perhaps worth examining if
there is any truth in such explanations and to find out the truth of this equation between these human elements and the organization of the service.

Indian diplomatic representation abroad has widened considerably after the transfer of power, but as was pointed out earlier the total picture is still not entirely satisfactory. The inadequacy of Indian representation in certain areas like Africa is evident not only from the number of Indian missions and posts established in them but also from the pattern of staffing of the existing missions and posts, the lack of personnel in the foreign service who are specialized in African affairs and languages, the system of concurrent accreditation, the amount of money spent on the establishments there etc. The foreign policy of the country emphasizes the need to cultivate goodwill and friendship with the peoples of Asia, Africa and other underdeveloped areas, but this is not represented in the organizational and administrative arrangements of the headquarters, the field establishments and the personnel organization of the Ministry. The behaviour of Indian diplomatic officials abroad towards their Afro-Asian colleagues has also come in for severe comment often. It is stated that the Indian officials adopt a superior, 'big-brotherly' and patronizing attitude at Afro-Asian capitals that causes irritation and resentment. All these express a certain lack of correlation between policy and administration. The need for better co-ordination in working between the missions and posts and the headquarters was also pointed out earlier. The flow of instructions and reports
between the Ministry and its missions abroad requires to be improved. It is partly in consequence of this that it often appears that the Ministry lacks a proper sense of anticipation regarding developments in the various parts of the world.

A serious weakness of the working of the Ministry in the present context is the absence of systematic arrangements for long-term planning. The correlation between long-term and short-term policies and actions is essential for the working of a dynamic policy. The formulation of policy should be based on a clear assessment of the basic national interests and of the relative importance of different areas and countries in terms of political, economic, commercial, strategic, military and other factors. The purpose of long-term policy planning is to keep in view this perspective approach towards foreign policy objectives and not to be detracted by immediate considerations and goals. In a world of flux it might, however, be necessary to review constantly such assessments and objectives. It is only in the prospect of a clear definition of objectives from the policy-makers that the foreign service can effectively participate in the process at all levels of decision-making and implementation. A standing agency consisting of the area and function experts in the Ministry with representatives from other government agencies like the Planning Commission, the Ministries of Defence, Commerce and Industry, Finance etc. can possibly fulfil the necessary advisory function in this respect.

Certain aspects of the personnel organization in the Ministry also require to be improved. As noted earlier, important strides have already been taken in this respect such as in the efforts to create an integrated foreign service. But these efforts are yet
to be carried to their logical conclusion in the case of integrating the Indian Foreign Service (B) and the Indian Information Service with the Indian Foreign Service. The methods of recruitment and training for foreign service also require to be improved through a more scientific assessment of needs and means. This is particularly true of the IFS (B), which, even after the passage of nearly a decade of the first announcement of its constitution, functions on the basis of the rules for its initial constitution and such orders as were issued from time to time. Personnel management in the Ministry, particularly on questions like recruitment, training, transfers and postings, etc. should be based on scientific methods of career-planning. The needs of the service in respect of specialization in functions and tasks are to be assessed on a long-term basis and schemes are to be formulated with a view to provide enough personnel with adequate area-wise and functional specialization. Without a conscious effort to develop the foreign service on lines of perspective career-planning it may fail to provide reasonable satisfaction as an efficient instrument of foreign relations.

It is interesting to speculate how far the foreign service will be able to carry out its work if and when it is called upon to act as the instrument of a different policy and under a different leadership. The Indian foreign service came into existence with the birth of an independent foreign policy for the country. During its entire period of existence it has functioned under the leadership of the same person and in the context of the same policy. The basic premises of the policy also received a wide acceptance in the country, even though on certain details
of implementation it might have been assailed at times. The growth of the foreign service was closely interrelated to the growing success of the foreign policy. In these circumstances it is only natural if an identification in spirit has taken place between the foreign service and the foreign policy. If this has happened will the foreign service be able to function with the same apparent adaptability if and when there takes place a change in policy and leadership? The generally accepted traditions and philosophy of the civil service in India corresponds to that of the 'civil service neutrality' in Britain. It was partly on account of this (and partly because there was a basic continuity in the administration even when the transfer of power took place) that the civil service organization of India showed a remarkable adaptability to the changes in and after 1947. Some of the most successful diplomats of India during these years have been persons belonging to the old Indian Political Service and the Indian Civil Service. Whether in Moscow or Leopoldville, Kathmandu or New York, Teheran or Cairo or at home in New Delhi they were able to perform their functions with devotion and energy. It may not be illogical to expect that the same traditions would be carried on by the foreign service also. Not all members of the foreign service today necessarily have full faith in the foreign policy they implement, but in no known instance have they allowed their differences to come out into the open or to affect their basic loyalty to work. But, from a different angle, this impersonal efficiency may seem to have one possible weakness. It might encourage the tendency to be proper and meticulous, but weaken enthusiasm and zeallessness. It might make the foreign service only an implement of rather than a participator in the process. Its prevailing note will be of caution rather than of excellence.