

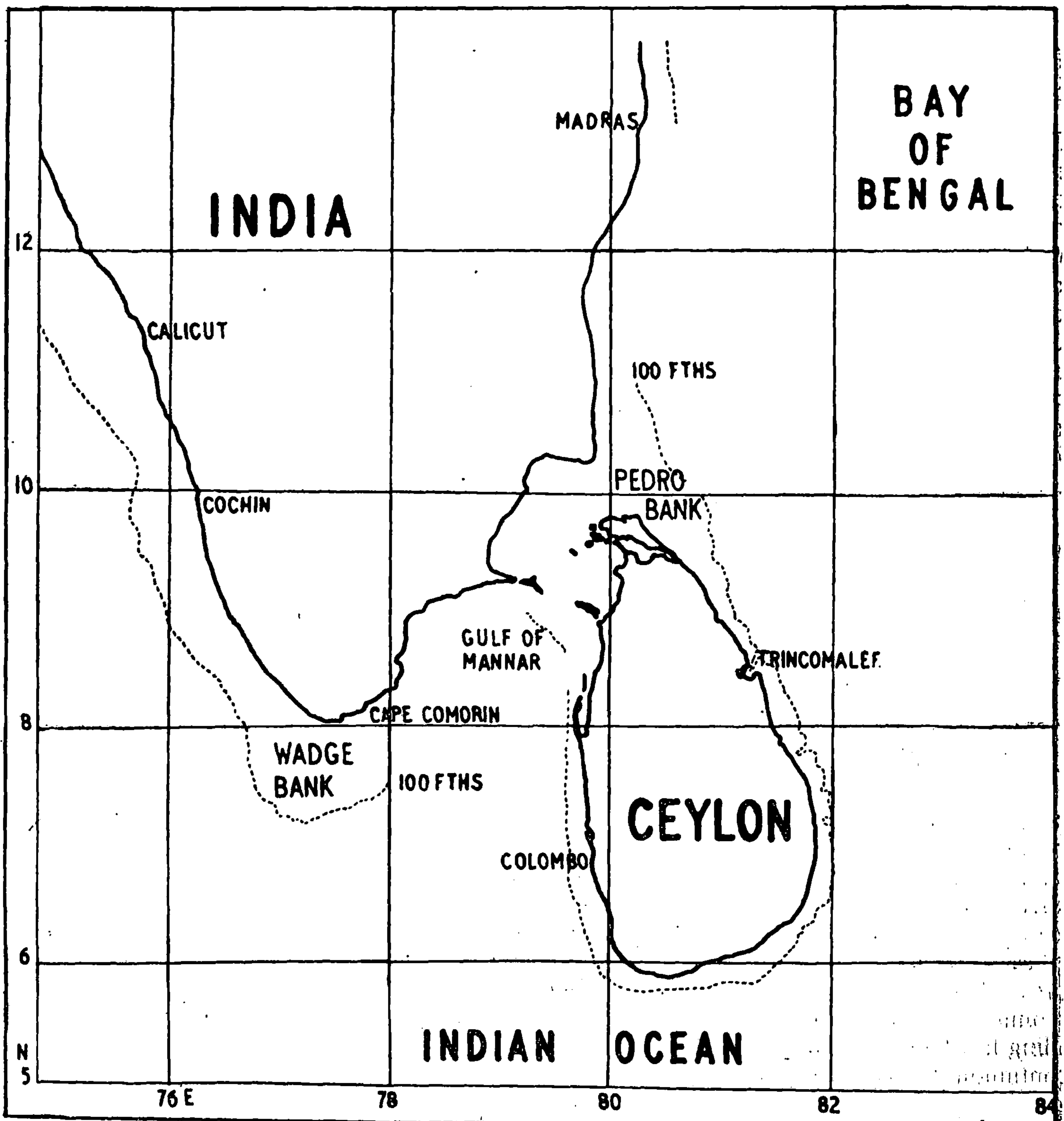
PART I—RESOURCES

I. INTRODUCTION

The Fishing Industry. The fishing industry of Ceylon produces only about half the Island's requirements of fish and the rest has to be imported. The under-developed state of the industry is mainly due to the limited knowledge of our fishery resources, to the continued use of primitive types of craft and gear, and to fishing operations being carried out mainly as a cottage industry without sufficient capital or credit to expand. In addition, the fishing industry with its poor returns, exhausting work and physical dangers is at present a very unattractive profession to follow so that a considerable number of young fishermen turn from fishing to more lucrative pursuits.

Resources have to be evaluated by gathering precise information on the types of fish found in various areas and the best season to fish for them. Craft and gear have to be improved to extend our fishing areas and fish them more efficiently. Above all, the fishermen have to be educated into realising the potentialities of what can become one of the more profitable and efficient industries in the Island.

The Government Administration is endeavouring to improve the industry to the level where it can offer the young men of the country a chance to make a satisfactory living through fishing, and by raising the economic standards of fishermen to remove the social advantages that are usually attached only to traditionally unremunerative professions.



Map showing areas adjoining Ceylon. (ex British Admiralty Chart No. 70)

The Land. The island of Ceylon is about 25,300 square miles in area, lying between latitudes 6°N. and 10°N. and longitudes 80°E. and 82°E. Its greatest length is 270 miles, in a north-south direction, and its greatest width, from west to east, is 140 miles. The land area is compact except for the Jaffna Peninsula in the north and the nearby islands in the north-west. The only semblance of a physical link is with the south-eastern coast of India across Adam's Bridge, which is a narrow line of islands and shallows that together form the head of the Gulf of Mannar. Along with India, our near neighbours are the Maldivé Islands (400 miles to south-west) and the Andaman and Nicobar Archipelagoes (about 700 miles to the east), while directly south of Ceylon the ocean extends unbroken by land as far as Antarctica.

Three-quarters of Ceylon's land area are lowlands, that is, with an altitude below 500 feet. These form the vast plains constituting the northern half of the Island and the wide coastal belt of the southern part. The central hill country ranges in height from 3,000 feet to 7,000 feet, and is towered by several peaks, the highest of which is Pidurutalagala (8,296 feet).

The Climate. The climate of Ceylon seldom experiences extremes of heat and drought, and the prevailing equable conditions are due to the surrounding expanse of sea and the central hills. The mean annual temperature on the lowlands is 80°F. In the hill country the temperature falls at the rate of 1°F. for every 300 feet rise ; this region is also subject to greater temperature variations, both diurnal and seasonal.

There is little variation in the length of day through the year because Ceylon lies close to the Equator. But the seasons are primarily determined by the monsoon winds that blow across the Island. The south-west monsoon prevails from May to about August and brings the "wet season." A great part of the moisture collected from the Indian Ocean is released on the south-western region as these winds climb over the central hills in their passage forward. Some localities on the western slopes register as much as 200 inches of rain, mainly received during this period. In the "cool season" from November to early March, the other monsoon blows from the north-east, spreading its smaller content of moisture on the north-eastern hill slopes and plains. Inter-monsoonal periods of short duration form the "hot seasons", marked by little wind and high humidity. Moreover, thunderstorm activity often precedes evening showers of rain, derived from local convectional air movements—such rain though meagre falls on widely scattered points over the Island. On the basis of the annual distribution of rainfall, the land area is broadly divided into zones. The lowlands to the south-west and the western hill slopes together form the Wet Zone, with an annual rainfall of over 75 inches. The Dry Zone (50 to 75 inches rainfall) includes a greater part of the land north-east of the central hills. Two narrow coastal regions around Mannar in the north-west and Hambantota in the south-east form the Arid Zones, with an annual rainfall less than 50 inches.