

Ceylon: the JVP uprising of April 1971

Solidarity London pamphlet 42 / 25p

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Introduction

In early April 1971 an uprising took place in Ceylon. It was organised by the JVP (Janata Vimukhti Peramuna or People's Liberation Front) and directed against both the policies and the police stations of the United Front Government of Mrs Bandaranaike.

Mrs Bandaranaike's coalition had achieved a landslide victory (115 out of 151 seats) in the General Election of May 1970. It comprised the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) - a bourgeois party prone to making 'left' noises; the pro-Moscow C.P. - a petty bourgeois party, prone to making pro-Moscow noises; and the Lanka Sama Samaj Party (LSSP) - a large and variegated group of tropical social-democrats, of impeccable Trotskyist parentage, who had been the pride and only mass party of the Fourth International for years - although excluded from the fraternity at the end of 1964.

These strange bedfellows had been returned to power on a joint programme of promises to increase the rice subsidy, to reduce prices, to cut unemployment, to 'Ceylonise' certain businesses and to 'control' the import-export trade. At various times all had also made various rhetorical references to Socialism. The 'victory' of the Bandaranaike Government was hailed as a 'great popular triumph' and 'a great anti-imperialist event' by most sections of the 'left' throughout the world. (1)

The uprising of April 1971 was unusual in several respects: in the youth and heroism of its supporters, in their massive disaffection from the more traditional parties of the left, and in their extraordinary ideological confusion. The insurgency was suppressed with great ferocity. Thousands of young people, many still in their teens, were tortured and killed in police stations throughout the island. Many more have disappeared. A further 14,000 are being detained without trial or charges. The press, totally censored, publishes poems in honour of the hated police and moralising homilies on Buddhism. The rights of assembly and free speech have been suspended, arrests can be made (and bodies disposed of) without forms or formality. (2) Sandhurst-educated Lt Col. Cyril Ranatunga has already staked a claim to immortality with the famous saying (justifying the execution of prisoners): 'We have learned too many lessons from Vietnam and Malaysia. We must destroy them completely'. (3)

In a touching unanimity not seen for decades, Britain, the USA, the USSR, India and Pakistan, East and West Germany, Yugoslavia and Egypt all supplied weapons for the specific purpose of putting down the revolt. At the most critical moment China granted a large interest-free loan and some gratuitous reassurance to the effect that thanks to Chairman You Know Who's teaching 'the Chinese people had all along opposed both ultra-left and right opportunism'. (4)

We have not heard the end of these bloody events.



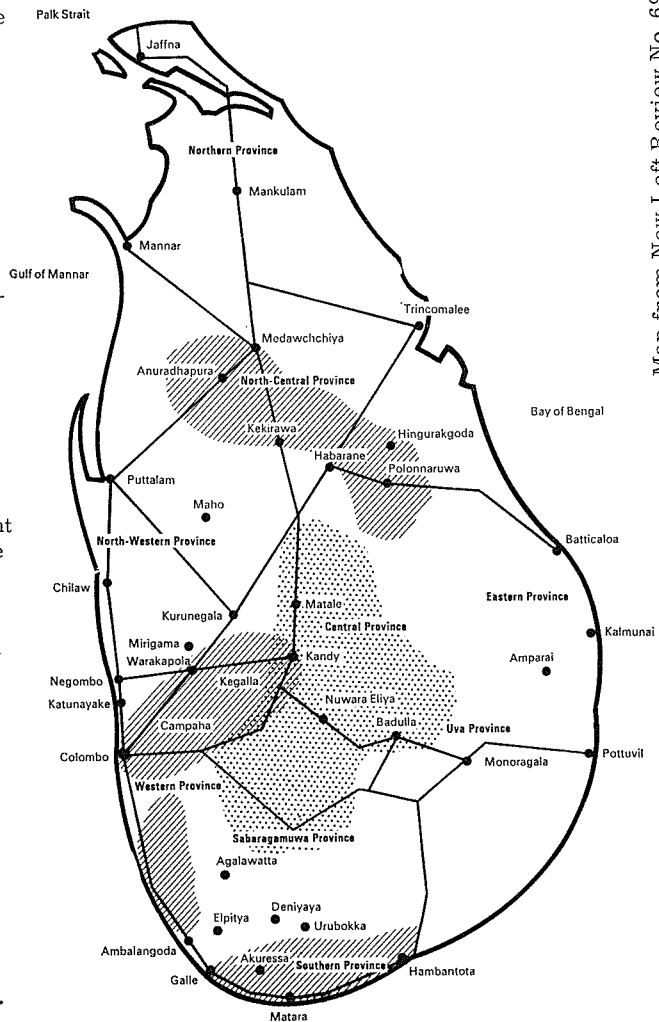
Slowly, information is still filtering through. But already a whole mythology is being manufactured about various aspects of the uprising. In this respect we would draw particular attention to an article by Fred Halliday ('The Ceylon Insurrection') published in issue 69 (September 1971) of *New Left Review*. Excellent as far as the historical and economic background is concerned, the article both creates and perpetuates political mythology when it comes to discussing the JVP and the insurrection itself.

It is our aim to demythologise the situation, before various fairy tales gain even wider credence and do even further damage. The youth in Ceylon fought with tremendous courage and total dedication. But the strategy and tactics of the JVP (and its ideas as to what it would do with 'power' had it achieved it) were so hopelessly confused (where they existed at all) that they could only lead to bloody defeat. A whole generation of student and peasant revolutionaries has been senselessly slaughtered, while the working class passively looked on. Someone at least should try to draw some lessons. It is owed to those who survived.

In September 1971 two of our supporters passed through Ceylon on their way to England. They travelled widely throughout the island and spoke to many people. (We hope to publish some more of their observations in due course.) While in Colombo they recorded an extensive interview with Edmund Samarakody, one of the founders of the revolutionary movement in Ceylon. We are pleased to bring sections of this interview to our readers.

Samarakody, now over 60, was one of the founders of the Trotskyist movement in Ceylon in the early 1930's. He was imprisoned by the British between 1940 and 1944 and again for several months about a year later. He was first elected to Parliament in 1952. He resigned from the LSSP in 1964, because of its increasingly opportunist policies, and was a founder member of the LSSP(R). (The (R) apparently stands for 'Revolutionary'). This organisation (like the IMG in Britain) is affiliated to the 'United' Secretariat of the Fourth International. A short while ago, Samarakody left the LSSP(R), disillusioned by its chronic Reformism. Samarakody has legally represented Rojan Wijeweera, the imprisoned leader of the JVP in the Ceylon courts. Although his views differ radically from ours - he still considers himself a Trotskyist - what he has to say about Ceylon is both interesting and relevant.

The interview is followed by an article on the background to the Ceylon events. Those who are unfamiliar with the island's economic problems, social composition or recent history may prefer to read this article before they read the interview itself.



Map from *New Left Review* No. 69

On this map of Ceylon the diagonal shading indicates areas of insurgent activity. The central massifs is represented by dots and the main roads by straight lines.

Attitudes and social basis of JVP

- Q. Little information has reached the West about the long-term objectives of the JVP. As an outsider, one gets the impression that their action was primarily an attack on police stations and that there was little attempt - either before, during or after - to develop a mass consciousness amongst the people concerning an alternative society.
- A. That's right. An outsider would get that impression very clearly.
- Q. For instance in a number of villages we visited, we asked whether the insurgents put up posters on walls, or conducted loudspeaker propaganda from vans or lorries. We were told they didn't. What is your information on this? Did they produce leaflets explaining what they were doing?
- A. They did hardly any of this. Your impressions are correct. The fact that everybody, including the political parties and even the police (until very late in the day) were taken largely unawares, proves there was very little in the way of mass mobilisation before April 5, 1971. After that it became more difficult.
- Q. When the insurgency started, were there any sympathy strikes anywhere? Was there any manifestation of working class support?
- A. No. As a matter of fact in the first few days there was a mood of hostility among certain sections of the workers. But later this lessened.
- Q. What is the attitude now of the working class to the rebel youth? Benevolent neutrality? Or just neutrality? 'Don't want to know' or 'don't want to be involved'?
- A. I'd say that the attitude is now 'benevolent neutrality'. They admired the youth but I don't think they'd act on that sympathy.
- Q. What is your explanation for this lack of support?
- A. That's a long story, related to the politics of the J.V.P. (1) We can come back to that. One explanation you will hear is that the uprising was provoked by the Government, before the J.V.P. were really ready. You will also be told that a 'front' consisting of the JVP, the LSSP(R) and the Young Socialist Front (Y.S.F.) in the plantations were 'preparing for mass mobilisation' and struggle and that the Government, fearing the possibility of a mass following, decided to strike first. The JVP say they acted in self-

The Samarakody interview

defence rather than face extermination.

Q. I am more interested in what different sections of the population did. Was there such a front?

A. There is no evidence of any organisation having sought to mobilise the masses. The JVP were very much alone. There was no real front. Even if it had originally been taken unawares, the JVP carried on its armed struggle for nearly 40 days, after April 5. That would have been long enough for appeals for mass support to be issued - either by the JVP or by other members of the alleged Front. This didn't happen.

Q. What about the areas where the JVP were in control?

A. They were in control of certain areas for nearly 3 weeks, fairly large areas where the police and army could not move. There is no evidence of them making any appeal, either to the working class or to the peasantry in whom they had such deep belief. They didn't even appeal to the rest of the youth.

Q. What about their attitudes before the uprising?

A. The way they behaved after the uprising is consistent with their actions prior to it. The Government had come to power in May 1970, with the full support of the JVP. (2) During the first period they didn't attack the Government.

In the first week of August 1970 the JVP called its first big public meeting. In numbers it was a big success. Their politics appeared clearly. There were pictures of Mao, Lenin and Che Guevara, Sinhalese flags, portraits of the Buddhist leader Darmapala. (3) There were plenty of Sinhalese nationalists too. But no Tamils. The line of the JVP was 'critical support' of the Government.

They held a large number of meetings like that, attracting the rank and file of the coalition parties. The 3 Government parties (SLFP, LSSP and CP) eventually issued a joint statement denouncing the JVP as being linked with the C.I.A.

During the whole of this period - and previously while they had been forming underground, i. e. since about 1965 - the JVP was talking a lot about Ceylon history. Now they also spoke about unemployment, the need for quick measures, solutions to immediate problems, etc. But they had no concrete programme. They referred to themselves as patriots, talking of the grievances of the rural masses. They issued journals. They had no faith in the working class. At one point they were laughing at a strike - quite explicitly. They used a Sinhalese term meaning 'a fight over a cup of porridge'. (4)

Did you know...

That Rojan Wijeweera, leader of the JVP, has claimed that the masses could only be mobilised on the basis of patriotism.

'When we add up the hatred of all social classes who are continually being attacked by imperialism and neo-colonialism it is patriotism ... A marxist-leninist in the epoch of anti-imperialist struggles is a real patriot'. (Deshapremie, JVP youth paper, August 8, 1970).

This 'patriotic' stance was to take precedence over the defence of the elementary economic interests of the workers.

'Strikes for successful demands such as higher wages and other privileges are aimed at diverting the minds of the workers away from the class hatred against imperialism.' (Janatha Vimukthi, Sept. 5, 1970)

But this changed in the last 3 weeks before the uprising. After the proclamation of the Emergency (May 16, 1971) they supported a strike meeting of printing workers - 500 to 600 of whom had been sacked. By that time some of their members were in unions such as the Land Development workers. They were also active in various Agricultural Departments.

Q. What was their attitude to the Tamil plantation workers?

A. They made frequent references to Mao. They kept saying the main revolutionary force in Ceylon was the rural peasantry. This does not include the plantation workers. They hardly ever specifically referred to the plantation workers, the most exploited section of the population in Ceylon. But they kept using slogans like 'Against Indian expansionism'. We have been able to get at their study course material. In these notes they definitely refer to the plantation workers as 'illegal immigrants'. They use the word 'kallatawni' - a term with racialist and chauvinist undertones. (5)

We have had discussions with these chaps. After 2 or 3 months the police started harassing their poster stickers. Some of them came to me for legal help. Even Wijeweera, although he knew we were critical of their politics. We said it was not marxism. We said 'You must prepare the masses'. He said that the masses would rise 'spontaneously'.

Q. There seems a strange confusion here. The masses will rise 'spontaneously'. And yet the JVP undertakes a coup, to help 'spontaneity' on its way! Our view is that meaningful social change can only be made by conscious people, knowing what they want and striving to achieve it. Those who scoff at this must believe that social change will be brought about either by professional revolutionaries ... or by guerillas, who start an 'exemplary action' and hope it will be followed. This is Che Guevara ... or even Debray.

A. There is no question that it is part of a wider current. At the last World Congress of the Fourth International, even Bala Tampoe, a leader of the LSSP(R), moved away from marxism and took the position that for a whole period, guerilla warfare will be the relevant form of struggle in Latin America. But the reality, here in Ceylon, is that hundreds and thousands of young fellows are being exterminated. And with due respect to Guevara himself, his was a most adventurist action : 25 people and a leader going from hill to hill for over a year.

Q. What about the social basis of the JVP? Were they predominantly students? or predominantly youth sent to work in the agricultural settlements? or declassé people without a job? The most widely held belief is that it was mainly the educated unemployed. Is that correct?

A. May I explain? I'd say the basis of the JVP was largely the lower petty bourgeoisie, both rural and urban. In the rural areas it was the children of the small landowners (1 acre, 2 acres), their educated children, school-going children. Or young people going to university or who had passed out and were now without a job. The rural poor, the very poor or landless were not part of this movement. It was largely the educated unemployed. But the young educated employed were also involved. Conditions were not at all satisfactory for them. Imagine being pushed into a job where you can only get 150 rupees a month. Some ministers are now saying a large number of those arrested had jobs. Why should they revolt? Of course they were the most conscious. In the rural areas they were students back from the colleges, educated people in small jobs, clerks in government departments. Also young Buddhist monks. Becoming a Buddhist monk is a way of getting some help, perhaps a scholarship. A large number of people getting into robes in the last 10-15 years have done it as a way of advancement; very soon after, they remove the robes.

In the urban areas there was some support for the JVP from employed youth, clerks getting about 200 rupees, working in factories both private and public. Also from students, not only in the higher schools or universities, but also at lower levels (even in secondary education) - there were a lot of quite young people supporting the movement.

There's something special with regard to education in Ceylon which is not generally found in other underdeveloped countries. We have had a free elementary education system for many years. Illiteracy was stamped out in Ceylon long ago. That is not so with regard to most backward countries. Then even schools of collegiate level were established by the Government. After 1956, after Mr Bandaranaike became Prime Minister, there was a surge forward of the petty bourgeois masses. In fact his following was a petty bourgeois following. There were demands for more and more schools and education. Then the full schools led to universities. 3 or 4 universities were established. So we have an extraordinary situation in a backward country. The education system was such that in the last 10-12 years you find an unorganised movement round the demands for schools, better teachers, better

laboratories. Round the schools problem, there was an 'unorganised organisation' that intervened in social life. At election time they became very important. Teachers, students were the people who organised.

Q. The JVP must have organised, over the last 9 months, a pretty tight system of cells, internal communications, and so on. Had they during that time instilled into their supporters any idea of what they wanted political power for? Or did they just say 'this lot in government are no good, we will be better, put us in their place', without explaining to the people what the real functions of power were? What was basically their concept of socialism?

A. A sort of equalitarianism. They were against the colonial system, the plantation economy. They even said 'we must destroy the plantations'. This isn't just a joke. 'We must destroy the plantations and have a rice economy'. They always go back to the past. They talk of the time of the Sinhalese kings, and their irrigation system. The past is constantly being harped upon here in Ceylon. Because they have no clear vision of the future, they've got to go back to the past. 'Ceylon was the granary of the East', and that type of thing. Their idea of the future is very, very blurred.

Q. They don't say that socialism means power at the base and decision-taking by workers' councils or peasants' committees?

A. No. They denounce and expose the wrongs of capitalism, the exploitation and the misery. But they did not have an anti-capitalist programme. They talked about the fight against imperialism. But they did not have any anti-imperialist programme as such. When they were in control of certain areas they never initiated social change. They never even suggested that they were going to take over the estates. They left them untouched. In the 2 or 3 weeks they were in control of certain areas they did not say to the people 'this is yours'. 'We are fighting for you to be able to control this'. 'Form your Committees'. 'Expropriate the capitalists'. They had no economic programme. That is why I say that in practice they were not anti-capitalist. (6)

Q. That is ambiguous. Did they not turn against the Government because it was a capitalist government?

A. No, they never said that. They never denounced it as a capitalist government. They stepped into a situation where the people's discontent was growing rapidly. They said the government weren't doing anything, that they weren't implementing their pro-

Did you know...

That the history of the JVP is in many ways unique in the annals of politics. Rojan Wijeweera appointed himself General Secretary and then appointed his own Central Committee. The JVP has never held a single Conference, either secretly or openly. Even the Bolsheviks held conferences (albeit manipulated ones) under conditions of Tsarist illegality.

mises. They asked 'where are the jobs?'. In Parliament Perera (one of the LSSP Ministers) was explaining that the government could not take over the estates. Or even the foreign banks, as they had promised. The revulsion of the people was such that it was possible to do propaganda against the government without developing an alternative programme of one's own. The JVP said they wanted to push the government forward.

Q. Did they have any fundamental criticism of parliamentary government as such, of Parliament being the locus of power instead of People's Committees?

A. No. They only said 'you can't have Socialism through Parliament', which is of course correct. But having sent the government to power in Parliament they could not tell the people we must destroy this type of government. We must have a different kind of power. They never said that. That is why the people could not understand.

JVP and foreign affairs

Q. What was the attitude of the JVP to foreign affairs? What were their views on Cuba? Yugoslavia? China? Russia? Did they think about such problems? Does a theoretical framework emerge through your reading of their papers?

A. No. They confined themselves to local matters. In one meeting, to be fair, they pointed out that American Imperialism had got hold of a small island in the Indian Ocean called Diego Garcia and wanted to make a naval base of it.

Q. Do you know how they have reacted to the actions of the Chinese government, and first of all to the 'rapprochement' with the Americans?

A. This was the biggest shock to them. Not the American business but China's attitude to the uprising.

Q. What did China actually say or do at the time of the uprising?

A. First, they said nothing. Within a week or ten days the Korean Embassy was asked to pack up. When the Korean Embassy people went to the airport, only the Chinese Embassy people were there to bid them good by. There was talk that the Chinese were involved in what was going on. In the meantime a letter had arrived from the Chinese Government to the Ceylon Government offering support and a loan. This was not published by the Prime Minister till a month afterwards. That letter proved a terrible shock to everybody, including the JVP people. (See Appendix V)

Did you know...

That the Chinese press has censored all news about events in Ceylon. On May 22, 1971 the Chinese paper Renmin Ribao published a map on 'the excellent revolutionary situation in the world'. There is a symbol denoting mass struggle in India ... but nothing whatever for Ceylon.

- Q. Did they say it was a forgery?
- A. No, they were just shocked. They were young chaps, you know. A number of them learnt from it, and will have to draw the necessary conclusions. Courage alone is not enough. A few people with guns going into police stations? Of course, they killed a few constables. But eventually most of them were wiped out. Actually, they showed unheard of courage.
- Q. What about the Russians?
- A. They did not say anything. They just sent MIG fighters, with pilots and technicians to train Ceylon pilots. Nobody in Ceylon would know how to handle those. They didn't send their own people to fly them.
- Q. Is it your impression that there was any external manipulation of this movement? Or did it spring from exclusively indigenous causes and dissatisfactions?
- A. It would be in many people's interest to prove foreign intervention. But having taken action against the North Koreans the government had very soon to admit there was no proof of any foreign complicity. The Prime Minister explained the reason this action was taken was because this particular Embassy had no regard for the advice they were given. They were going about too freely forming friendship societies and organisations she objected to. She felt that in the interest of 'security' they should go back. She categorically stated there was no question of foreign interference or foreign aid.
- Q. What about this serialisation of the works of Kim Il Sung in a national daily, over a period of a year?
- A. That type of thing may have had some effect, although we used to laugh when we used to see the story of the revolutionary activities of Comrade Kim Il Sung. It is true that since the Chinese, and in particular since the Cuban Revolution, the whole country has been flooded with literature from these places. The Embassies were also trying to increase their influence by having parties, link-ups, etc. There was also corruption of the more usual kind, with various trade union bureaucrats. But all these things only had a marginal influence.
- Q. From what you say there seems little doubt that the uprising was a genuine indigenous movement.
- A. No question about that.
- Q. But very confused in its conceptions?
- A. True. Most of the leading elements were ex-CP (Moscow) or ex-CP (Peking). Their concepts dominated everything. They all called themselves 'marxist-leninists'. (7)

Did you know...

That the Ceylon Maoists allege that the JVP was 'got together by Soviet revisionism and its agents in Ceylon ... for the purpose of halting the forward march of Mao Tse Tung Thought'. According to Shanmugathasan, General Secretary of the Ceylon Communist Party (Maoist) Rojan Wijeweera, leader of the JVP, was 'expelled from the Soviet Union in order to enable him to enter the ranks of the marxist-leninists in Ceylon'.

That the Ceylon Maoists also campaigned consistently against the JVP, helping the government by calling them 'terrorists'. Sanmugathasan, the Ceylon mini-Mao, originally hoped to share the fruits of office and to secure a ministerial post in Mrs Bandaranaike's administration. Losing his seat in the election, he turned against the United Front. His initial loyalty to the Coalition did him no good, however, for he was nicked during the Emergency.

In a recent letter to Mrs B. (Prime Minister) Sanmugathasan complains that 'some of those who worked actively in support of your Party are still under detention'. He also complains that the police had removed (from his Party's Colombo offices) 'several hundred books including translations of the Works of Chairman Mao Tse Tung, leader of the Great Peoples Republic of China, which came to your rescue last April with a loan of Rs 150 million'. (See Ceylon Committee Bulletin No. 3, obtainable from The Ceylon Committee, 24A Elm Bank Mansions, London SW13.)

The people's committees

Q. Could we now discuss the question of the People's Committees, of which so much was made immediately after the return of the Coalition Government. Were they government creations or did they emerge as a result of a surge from below, to try and push the government forward?

A. There was no such movement from below. But before we turn to the Committees, let me tell you about a different movement from below, not in relation to the factories. Immediately after the elections, the masses were surging forward asking for radical changes.

Q. In relation to what?

A. In relation to jobs and unemployment. They were demanding that the banks, estates and companies be taken over. Thousands came from the rural areas for the celebration of the victory, one month after the elections. They had big posters, flags, slogans: 'Take over the estates'. For the first time. Before, those were Party slogans. But after the elections this became real for the masses, because it was linked to the question of employment.

Our problem in the rural areas is not a question of asking for land. It's a question of jobs. The government has been distributing land over the years. Our so-called peasants are part-time agricultural labourers. Five years ago I was taken to an area where the people had been given land from the government ten years ago. They said they wanted assistance to build their houses. You have to come to the area and see. In a 15 year old house you can see the sky through the thatch. There is hardly any income from that land. The people will tell you: 'we do not live on the land. Two or three days a week we go and work as labourers on the adjoining estates'.

That is the reality. The mass upsurge that followed the elections was linked up with the desire and demands of the rural masses for jobs.

Q. That is very interesting. Could we now turn to the Committees? I think in places they were even called 'Workers Councils'.

A. At the start, there was considerable interest in those Councils. In the factories, the workers enthusiastically participated in the elections, although they were rigged. The trade union bosses saw to that. Nevertheless large numbers of workers took part.

Q. Did the Committees originate by government appointment? Or did a whole group of people in a factory or on an estate get together, without noti-

fication from above, and decide that they would elect a Committee?

A. First, legislation was passed. Regulations were framed. Under these regulations each Minister in charge of a particular department had an 'appointed day'. On this day the workers were to be asked to assemble to elect a Committee.

Q. With what functions?

A. That's the point. The Committee would have purely advisory functions. No question of management at all.

Q. The real decisional authority would rest in the hands of the government. The Committees would act as rubber stamps, to endorse governmental decisions?

A. That's right. The function of these Committees has nothing to do with management. It's a question of advising the management with regard to waste and all that. Any capitalist would like it.

Q. Did this legislation stipulate how often such elections were to be held? Or how many workers could elect one representative to the Committee?

A. No, there are regulations enabling each Minister to make special regulations for his department.

Q. How widely was this responded to? How many workers on the appointed day mobilised themselves to elect the Committees?

A. The reports are that the workers did get interested. They went canvassing for votes, etc.

Q. Were the people elected to the Committees by and large members of the CP or LSSP? Or were they any rank and file workers not belonging to any specific organisation?

A. Largely they belonged to the Coalition parties. But a minority of outside rank and file workers definitely got in.

Q. Was there any provision for revocability of those elected? Or was it like Parliament: once you're there, you're in until the next election.

A. No. No recall at all.

Q. Did the JVP participate in these elections?

A. Not in an organised, open way. But some of their members were elected in various places.

Q. How did they present themselves? Without a political label?

Did you know...

WHAT THEY SAID BEFORE THE 1970 ELECTION (see Ceylon Daily News, May 23, 1970)

The People's Committees will rescue the poor from under the iron heel of bureaucracy.

Dr N. M. Perera

The People's Committees will bring bureaucratic rule to an end. Corruption will be brought to light.

Colvin R. de Silva

People's Committees will check the activities of ministers and MPs.

T. B. Ilangaratne

We will do away with the present system of administration and administer the country through People's Committees.

Felix D. Bandaranaike

The aim of the People's Committees will be to eliminate inefficiency and corruption in the public service and to break the privileges enjoyed by the capitalist class.

T. B. Subasinghe

The People's Committees are open to anybody, irrespective of race, religion or caste.

Sirima Bandaranaike

Following the insurrection all political gatherings on the island were forbidden except those held with specific police permission. The ban included meetings of the People's Committees. Perhaps some people might have attended ...

A. Without a label. Even within their own organisation their methods were very secretive.

The repression

Q. Could we now return to the present situation. We have very little information about the extent of the repression. Could you tell us what you know about it?

A. You will be aware of the fact that the government itself has stated that about 1200 young persons had been killed.

Q. In the course of the fighting?

A. They did not explain. They just said 1200 had been killed. But it is widely known that the figure is well over 15000 killed. And of those a minority would be people who were actually fighting, for instance attacking the police stations. A very large majority were killed after they were taken into custody. The orders were 'Don't burden us with captured people'.

Q. Is it widely known that many people were killed after having been captured?

A. The fact that people were shot by the police and the Army, after they had been taken into custody, has been seen by many people. It was done not so secretly. It was done openly, the idea being to terrorise the people. There's no proper fencing, no proper walls around many police stations in rural areas; it's possible to see what's happening. People living around these police stations saw that after dark prisoners were taken behind the station, made to dig their own graves, lined up and shot. Sometimes young people, including girls, were hung up alive by their feet by the side of the police station. And the people were asked to come and see. And then there were large numbers of dead bodies floating down the rivers. That is of course now known everywhere.

Q. What about the thousands still being detained?

A. I would like to tell you that part of the 'investigation' of their cases means 'special treatment' by the police. Those who are detained in gaol should normally remain in gaol. But these detainees are taken out by the police from time to time. They are beaten up in order to get confessions and statements. As a matter of fact I got a complaint from the leader of the JVP, from Wijeweera himself. He complained to his brother that 2 weeks ago he was taken out of gaol and kept in a house for about 8 days. For 2 days he was beaten up. In the presence of a government lawyer, a crown counsel, police beat him up and got him to make a statement.

Did you know...

That a Counter-Insurgency Unit, set up by the Ceylon Army and Police in the wake of the insurrection, is adorned by the presence of ... Peter Keuneman, leader of the pro-Moscow C.P.

Q. What do you mean a Crown Counsel?

A. For the first time certain government lawyers, Crown Advocates, have been given the powers of the police, investigating powers. And part of this investigation is with regard to detainees. 'Take these imrrisoned people and question them'. But part of the questioning consists of the prisoners being given certain 'treatment': they are physically assaulted. Wijeweera has complained to his brother that he was assaulted for 2 days. His brother made a statement to me (as Wijeweera's lawyer). I have submitted this statement to the Prime Minister and also to the gaol authorities. Today I got a reply acknowledging receipt. These atrocities are of course unprecedented in Ceylon.

Samarakody's attitude

Q. What about your own attitude to the current events?

A. I might as well tell you about our attitude to this, starting from the remarks I have already made. It was an uprising of the youth, related to the problems of the youth which have become quite acute over the years, due to the failure of successive governments. In my view it was a very courageous undertaking without any hope of success. The question remains what is our attitude to it? Is there any question of supporting a struggle of this nature? The position we have taken is that we have to defend the youth against the actions of the government, however adventurist the uprising was. There are two sides and there's no question of watching from the sidelines. Our side is the side of the oppressed. But there is no question of actually promoting that struggle, because it was so completely adventurist. But we have to oppose the government in its actions against the youth. We made this very clear and I think we are the only group in this country in the present situation to take up a categorical position in relation to what the government has done. We condemned the atrocities and killings. We called on the government to release all the detainees and to withdraw their attacks on democratic rights. It was a very difficult thing to do. We also indicated our views, not only to the Prime Minister, but we circulated our letter to the P.M. to all the trade unions. Under the Emergency it is completely illegal to issue leaflets. So we sent the letter where we made all these demands to all the trade unions. As a matter of fact the police have started investigations into that matter and I believe that they are contemplating action against us for circulating that letter. I took up this question of our attitude to bring out the attitude of the Healyites. They have said nothing and done nothing. Of course it is difficult for any political party to be active in the present situation. You can't publish a paper and so on.

SLL supporters

- Q. You mentioned the attitude of the SLL's supporters in Ceylon, the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL). What was their attitude to the 1970 General Election?
- A. That is interesting. Like the JVP they too called upon the people to support Mrs Bandaranaike's coalition. The masses 'had to go through the experience' of the Coalition Government. That was their theory. One month after the Coalition Government was formed, they had a banner headline in their paper saying 'We have made a mistake : Down with the Coalition Government!'
- Q. Well, that's a big step forward compared with Britain! For as many General Elections as I can remember the SLL have been telling people to vote Labour - 'taking them through' one experience after another! What was the attitude of the RCL to the JVP?
- A. They criticised the JVP politics very severely and I think their criticism was by and large correct. They are constantly arguing and they came into almost physical clashes with the JVP. But in relation to the uprising they have been completely silent and at sea.

Present attitude of LSSP(R)

- Q. What is now the attitude of the LSSP(R) -'official' section of the Fourth International - to the Coalition Government? The IMG in Britain is making great play of the LSSP(R)'s struggle against the government.
- A. The General Secretary of this organisation is Bala Tampoe, secretary of the Ceylon Mercantile Union, which is a fairly important trade union. He carries out his politics through the C.M.U. On April 30, 1971 Bala Tampoe addressed a letter to the P.M. in which, among other matters, he argued with Mrs Bandaranaike whether those who had participated in the uprising could properly be regarded as terrorists (the government had denounced them as 'terrorists'). Bala Tampoe points out that one of the Cabinet Ministers, Mr L. Gunawardene, himself did not refer to the insurgents as terrorists.

'The view taken by our General Council that the young persons who have been involved in the uprising cannot be properly regarded as terrorists appears to have been endorsed by Minister of Communications Mr Leslie Gunawardene, in an article published in the Ceylon Daily News on 27 April. He has not once referred to the insurgents as terrorists in that article but has described them either as young rebels or as insurrectionists!'

In this letter Tampoe also says there shouldn't be a concerted military offensive by the Armed Forces against the insurgents as a means of compelling them to surrender, because that would mean, in the words of the P.M., that many young people would lose their lives unnecessarily.

'It would be an act of inhumanity for you to order a concerted military offensive by the Armed Services against the insurgents unless they surrendered themselves, since such a military offensive would mean that "many young people on the threshold of their lives will be killed or maimed fighting for a cause they have already lost" as you yourself have declared.'

I would say all this is a very mild type of criticism. It isn't even a criticism; it's just raising an issue or two. And this in a situation when it was known that thousands and thousands had been massacred, slaughtered. This letter doesn't become a revolutionary. Bala Tampoe throughout seeks to cover himself, shield himself by the words of the P.M. and Cabinet Ministers, without himself characterising or seeking to characterise the rebels. He makes use of the language of the government ministers. (8)

Degree of LSSP degeneration

Q. Let us talk about future perspectives, at governmental level. Could Mrs Bandaranaike's government remain in power if the so-called working class parties withdrew their support? If the CP and LSSP withdrew? Could the SLFP govern by itself?

A. Yes. There would probably be a link-up with the UNP. Already there are indications. The crisis is there and it is growing. We have a military police state here today. For instance the Prime Minister recently went to a meeting, 50 miles from here, by helicopter because she was afraid of the people.

Q. When and where did that happen?

A. In Colvin de Silva's constituency, about two weeks ago. A passion fruit plantation was being inaugurated. During the past 3 to 4 months there have been unparalleled massacres, tortures. People can't forget. You can't go on the road without meeting somebody who has suffered. They cannot withdraw the Emergency Regulations. They dare not allow any public meeting to be held or newspapers to be published. All papers are heavily censored. I stopped buying my evening paper. There's no point.



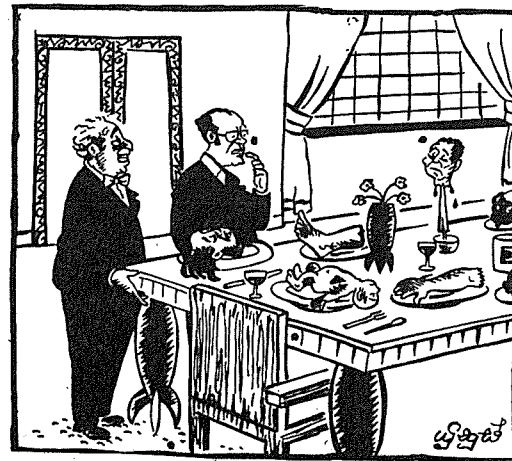
If religion is the opiate of the people I want to be pusher-in-chief... as well as Finance Minister.

- Q. Are parties like the LSSP even making verbal protests about civil liberties, the censorship, detentions without trial ?
- A. They cannot. They are loyal members of the Coalition, aren't they?
- Q. It seems amazing that people like N. M. Perera and Colvin de Silva, who have been in gaol in the struggle in the years gone by, should now be so totally integrated into the Establishment.
- A. A lot of water has passed under our bridges. A lot of dead bodies too. They are only old names. The people themselves have changed.
- Q. Have these former Trotskyists actually denounced the insurgents? I don't mean just saying that they were 'misguided' or that the movement was premature. I mean physically, intellectually and emotionally identifying with the counterrevolution.
- A. N. M. Perera said 'Exterminate them!'.
- Q. I understand that some of the CP leaders recently went to Moscow to get the line. Under pretext of getting medical treatment!
- A. Yes, they are expected back at any moment.
- Q. Do you think they will leave the government?
- A. It is not impossible. Things are happening in the working class. At the time the revolt took place the working class was dazed. They did nothing. As I told you some small sections even cooperated with the police. But a revulsion followed, when they found the government was behaving like this. And then there is the economic situation. Prices are rising. In reality the workers are moving away from their leaders.
- Q. If the CP withdrew from the government, is it conceivable that the LSSP might remain Mrs Bandaranaike's sole political partner?
- A. It is not inconceivable.
- Q. This would probably mark the height of degeneration of any Trotskyist tendency, anywhere in the world. Even worse than Anarchists in a bourgeois government in Spain in 1936-1937. Do the LSSP still call themselves Trotskyists?
- A. Sometimes. For instance they recently commemorated Trotsky Day, the anniversary of the murder. The Party organised Trotsky Day ... In recent documents they still refer to 'the Revolution' ...

Did you know...

That Leslie Gunawardene, LSSP Minister of Communications in the Bandaranaike government, proclaimed in 'The Nation' that the JVP rebels were 'right-wing reactionaries'. This was endorsed by LSSP Minister of Plantations, Colvin de Silva. The comrade Ministers didn't say however that the JVP had for years been sabotaging Ceylonese industry, plotting the assassination of leading Party officials, mixing broken glass with the tea leaves or watering the workers' toddy ... all at the instigation of the Deuxieme Bureau and M.I. 6.!

That in Ceylon the pro-Moscow C. P. is attacking the ex-Trots from the left. This is best shown in this cartoon from ATHA, the paper of the Communist Party of Ceylon. Former U. S. Defence Secretary Robert McNamara visited Ceylon some time ago in his capacity of high official of the World Bank. A banquet in his honour was given by ex-Trot Perera, Mrs Bandaranaike's Finance Minister.



'When you have a guest to dinner, you must serve him the food he is accustomed to.'

The historical legacy

An understanding of the insurrection which broke out, in April 1971, in certain areas of North-Central and South West Ceylon requires information, not readily available to Western revolutionaries. It also requires the ability to transpose one's thinking into a very different economic, ethnic and cultural context.

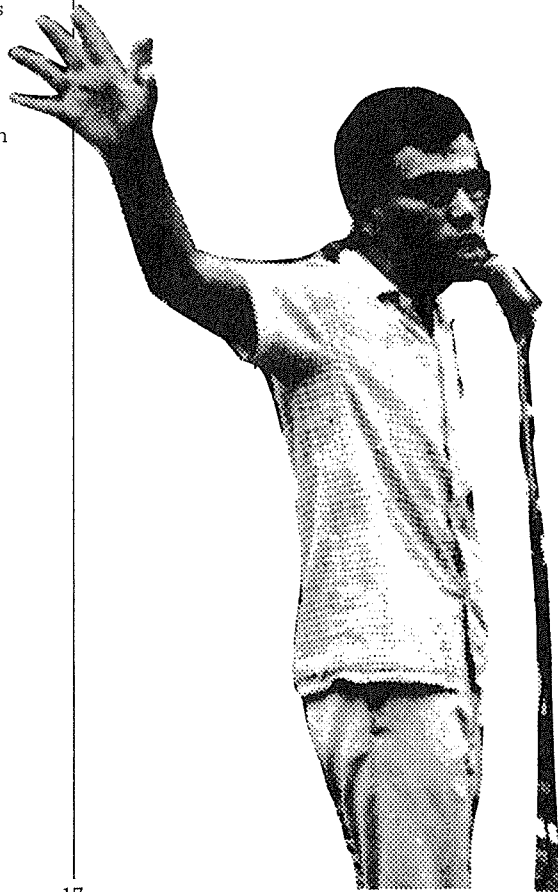
We have written at length about the tensions that are engendered and the conflicts that erupt in advanced industrial societies, which modern capitalism fully permeates and controls. (1) These insights however are of limited value in appreciating the problems of an underdeveloped island, whose social structure remains moulded by centuries of imperialist rule (first Portuguese, then Dutch and finally British) and whose whole economy reflects the legacies of that domination, legacies which in fact prevent it from becoming a 'modern capitalist' country.

This is not to say that a purely economic analysis will suffice to interpret the whole recent history of Ceylon. It will not explain, for instance, how a superexploited Tamil plantation proletariat only developed a communal consciousness - or how Buddhist 'socialism' (in fact Buddhist-inspired Sinhalese chauvinism) secured a mass basis in the middle fifties - or finally how readily the Lanka Sama Samaj Party (LSSP), the erstwhile pride of the international trotskyist movement, degenerated to the point where it is now in the vanguard ... of revolutionary repression - all this in a country endowed with universal suffrage since 1931 and boasting the second highest literacy rate in Asia. (2) It does mean however that economic factors have a greater specific weight in some circumstances than in others. In the case of modern Ceylon their role has been paramount.

The imperialist domination of Ceylon has, since its earliest days, been closely related to events in Europe. Vasco de Gama, the Portuguese explorer, had reached India by sea in 1498 and in 1505 the Portuguese, further exploring the trade routes to the East, first occupied the coastal lowlands of Ceylon. They never ventured into the higher areas of the interior, where the Kandyan nobility and the kings of Kandy were to retain their power for another three centuries. The Portuguese exploited the island's abundant wild cinnamon and converted part of the population to Catholicism. Today, as one travels throughout the South-western corner of Ceylon, one comes across Catholic churches and shrines, painted blue or silver, among the coconut plantations and paddy fields. One also comes across petty traders and artisans with names like Fernando, Monteiro, de Souza, Pereira and Gomez.

In 1658 Ceylon was occupied by the Dutch. This occupation was a remote repercussion of the prolonged conflict in Europe between the Dutch and Iberian ruling dynasties. (2A) The Dutch consolidated control over the lowlands of the island and developed cinnamon

Background to the uprising



plantations in a systematic way. There is little left of their influence in modern Ceylon except for the legal system they bequeathed (based on Roman-Dutch law) and the names of some Eurasian 'burghers'.

It is to events in France that we must trace what happened to Ceylon, a hundred and fifty years later. Internally, the French Revolution was coming to an end, but the revolutionary armies had marched to the estuary of the Rhine. On February 16, 1795 the Batavian Republic had been proclaimed and the Treaty of the Hague (May 16, 1795) recognised it as a French protectorate. Britain, then the main counter-revolutionary force in the world, objected to such radical neighbours, and feared the threat implicit in anything even remotely related to the French Revolution. The British therefore attacked the Dutch in Ceylon, in 1796, and eventually evicted them, occupying the 'Maritime Provinces'. It took them nearly 20 years to occupy the highlands. In this Britain was short-sightedly helped by the Kandyan nobility. In 1815, on British instigation, they rose against the last King of Kandy. British forces marched into the highland capital to depose him. But they stayed . . . for the next 133 years. Not the least of their legacies are the many double-decker London Transport buses, still painted red, which come to Colombo to die.

At last central Ceylon was open to European penetration. Roads and forts were built and the island garrisoned in typical colonial manner. Uprisings in the 1820's and in 1848 were put down. Thus 'pacified' and controlled Ceylon was ready to be commercially exploited.

The second half of the 19th century witnessed two major events which were profoundly to affect the future of Ceylon: the introduction of coffee and tea as major export crops and the importation of a Tamil proletariat of South Indian origin to man the plantations.

The first crop the British introduced was in fact coffee. Its spreading bushes grew well between 1500 and 3000 feet. So did the silver oak necessary to provide the shrubs with the right amount of dappled shade. The slopes of the central highlands were divided among hundreds of prospective planters who reached Ceylon from Britain, eager to make a fortune. For a few pounds they would purchase vast tracts of land, part of it jungle, which they would clear and on which they would plant the sturdy crop. The upland villagers, who had previously used these lands for gathering wood (still the staple fuel in Ceylon) provided the initial labour force for the new plantations. But they refused to move into them and to give up their thatched huts of sunbaked brick or mud and the little plots in which, in the villages below, they eked out an existence of a sort, growing paddy, tapioca, plantains and a few vegetables. They worked on the new estates by day, but returned each night to their subsistence holdings. They could not, in the 19th century 'be broken into the mould of a plantation proletariat'. (3)



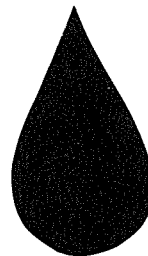
This was not good enough for imperialism. The exploitation of coffee is a labour-intensive business. The labour has to be on the spot. Over a period of two decades, in the middle of the 19th century, nearly a million Tamil workers were therefore imported into Ceylon, under a system of contract labour, from the vast 'untapped' reserves of British South India.

E. F. C. Ludowyk's The Story of Ceylon (4) gives a graphic and harrowing account of the conditions under which this was done. About a quarter of the men, poorly nourished to start with, died of dysentery, tuberculosis and other diseases, either on the journey or after reaching the island, where they faced appalling living conditions and intensive exploitation. Vast fortunes were amassed, in London, on the basis of their labour. In the whole gruesome history of British Imperialism only the transport of slaves from Africa to the West Indies can bear comparison with what was done to the Tamils.

In the 1880's tea replaced coffee as the major export crop grown in Ceylon. (Dry-leaf, a virus disease, had been spreading havoc in the coffee plantations.) The cultivation of tea soon spread to wide areas of the South-central highlands and has been subject to constant rationalisation ever since.

A typical tea estate would spread over hundreds or thousands of hillside acres. The shrubs, seldom more than three feet high, are tightly packed and the leaves have to be plucked by hand, every few weeks. Unlike the coffee bean, which can be dried at leisure in the sun, the tea leaf has to be dried quickly and this is done artificially, by blowing hot air over it. Tea estates are dotted with large factories, with walls of corrugated zinc, covered with dazzling aluminium paint. In these ovens, the leaf is dried, crushed and packed. The industry is more capital-intensive than coffee, requiring a much larger initial investment. Whereas the coffee plantations had been in the hands of small entrepreneurs, some of them Sinhalese, a high degree of monopoly soon developed in the tea estates, which came under the control of a small number of firms based either in London ('sterling firms') or Colombo ('rupee firms'). As Halliday (5) succinctly puts it 'monoculture was thus increasingly capped by monopoly, within the plantation economy' Even today, 25 years after 'independence', some 30% of all tea-growing land in Ceylon is still directly owned by sterling firms like Brooke Bond and Lipton. British capital has also strongly penetrated the larger Ceylon-based companies which own a further 26% of the tea lands. (In 1968 only 25% of the tea lands were still in the hands of smaller, Ceylonese enterprises. The remainder - less than 20% - was owned, as small-holdings, by wealthy Ceylonese farmers.) (6)

Foreign domination of Ceylon's tea-based economy is greater however than these figures would



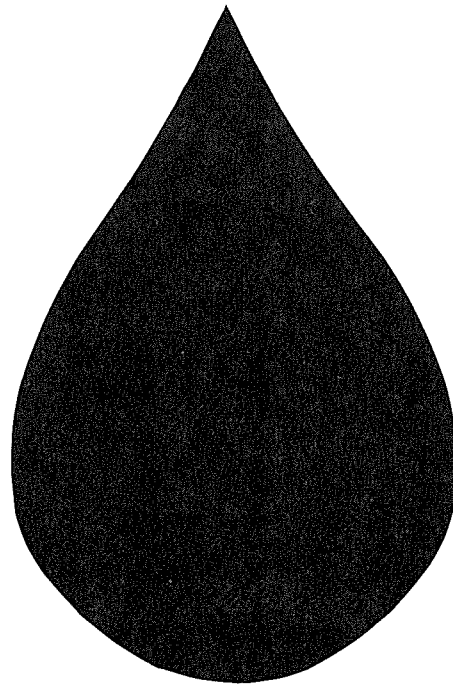
suggest. Most of the marketing, shipping and insurance of Ceylon tea is in the hands of British agency houses. Britain, the USA, Australia and South Africa alone buy over half of Ceylon's annual output, via auctions run by the major firms, in Colombo and London. Under 2% of Ceylon's annual output of tea is sold directly to foreign purchasers. (7) Ceylon's continued subjection to imperialism can be gauged by these figures.

The social structure

In the tea estates the 'Indian Tamil' labour force are lodged in 'coolie-lines' provided by the employers. These are long, one-storey, terraced buildings, built of brick and wood, situated high in the hills, often at a considerable distance from the nearest village, and to which the only access may be a path or a track. There is seldom a piped water supply and no electricity. Sanitation, where it exists at all, is very primitive. Each 'line' will consist of some 50 to 100 living units, in which the plantation workers and their families, often also employed on the plantation, will live under unbelievably crowded conditions. The difficult terrain, physically exhausting nature of the work, dependence on the employer for accommodation and geographic fragmentation of the labour force all make it difficult for a collective consciousness or for concerted action to emerge. Toddy shops and temples ensure adequate diversions.

This is a genuine proletariat, literally owning nothing but its labour power, with 'nothing to lose but its chains'. In August 1971 a male worker on such an estate would earn 3.13 rupees a day (just over 20 new pence) and a bonus of 6 cents for every pound of leaf plucked above a minimum of 23 pounds. When 'flush' crops are picked, bonus can only be earned after the first 30 pounds. The basic rate for women is 2.46 rupees per day. Men and women work 10 hours a day, 6 days a week.

In 1949, a year after independence, the first UNP (United National Party) government - under the premiership of Don Stephen Senanayake, to whom we shall be returning later - passed an infamous Parliamentary Election Amendment Act. This automatically disenfranchised more than half a million Tamil plantation workers of Indian origin. Many of these families had been living in Ceylon for 2 generations or more. The Act ensured that they would not only be denied the vote but also the free weekly ration of rice to which every 'Ceylon citizen' was then entitled. An unbelievable situation has since developed in which this plantation proletariat, which produces the bulk of Ceylon's wealth, which is undoubtedly the most exploited section of the population in Ceylon, and which could be the most explosive force in Ceylonese society, plays no direct role whatsoever in the political life of the country. Meanwhile Communists and Trotskyists (8) went on practicing their parliamentary manoeuvres and sowing their parliamentary illusions.



As for the superexploited Tamil proletariat it has until recently only produced a few communal organisations (initially sponsored by the British) and a few Company unions (one of them was even led by a certain Thondaman, himself the owner of a large plantation). There is clearly no direct or automatic relation between exploitation and militancy.

Before we discuss the recent political history of Ceylon a few words must be said about the other ethnic groups that inhabit the island and about their position in the social structure. We have already mentioned the Tamils of Indian origin, relatively recent inhabitants of the island. There is also a Tamil population of indigenous origin, of about equal size. Together the Tamils constitute about 30% of the population of Ceylon. The 'Ceylon Tamils' have lived in the northern part of the island and along the Eastern coastline since before the Christian era. The early history and legends of Ceylon are full of the battles waged by their kings and warriors against the kings of Kandy.

The area inhabited by the Ceylon Tamils is dry and dusty and cultivation far more arduous than in the lush highlands and south-west. The Ceylon Tamils are industrious but being Hindus are rigidly divided along caste lines. The internalised acceptance of caste is widespread. For instance the Maviddapuram temple in Jaffna still denies access to members of the lower castes. It is difficult for western revolutionaries to grasp all that this implies in terms of the maintenance of a hierarchically-structured status quo. There can be few other domains in modern society where an ideological superstructure retroacts so powerfully on the economic base. Considerations of status, the playing out of patriarchal roles, the acceptance of traditional beliefs such as the belief in untouchability, and religious mystification form a reactionary nexus from which few succeed in escaping - and whose essential function is the maintenance of rich and poor, exploiter and exploited, in a state of social 'cohesion'.

Most Ceylon Tamils work in a rural sector which has not been touched by the plantation economy. From Jaffna, some of them have been trading with South India for centuries. In British times the Ceylon Tamils provided an important part of the administrative bureaucracy and of the police force (in this, Britain was only replicating her Indian policy of 'divide and rule' whereby Muslims were appointed rulers in predominantly Hindu areas and vice versa). The ruling elite of businessmen and landowners in Jaffna have been loyal tools of imperialism for decades. In 1947, at the time of independence, they hastily created their own communal Party, the Ceylon Tamil Congress. It supported the first UNP government and has recently opposed the proclamation of the Republic.

The other 70% of the population of Ceylon are

Did you know...

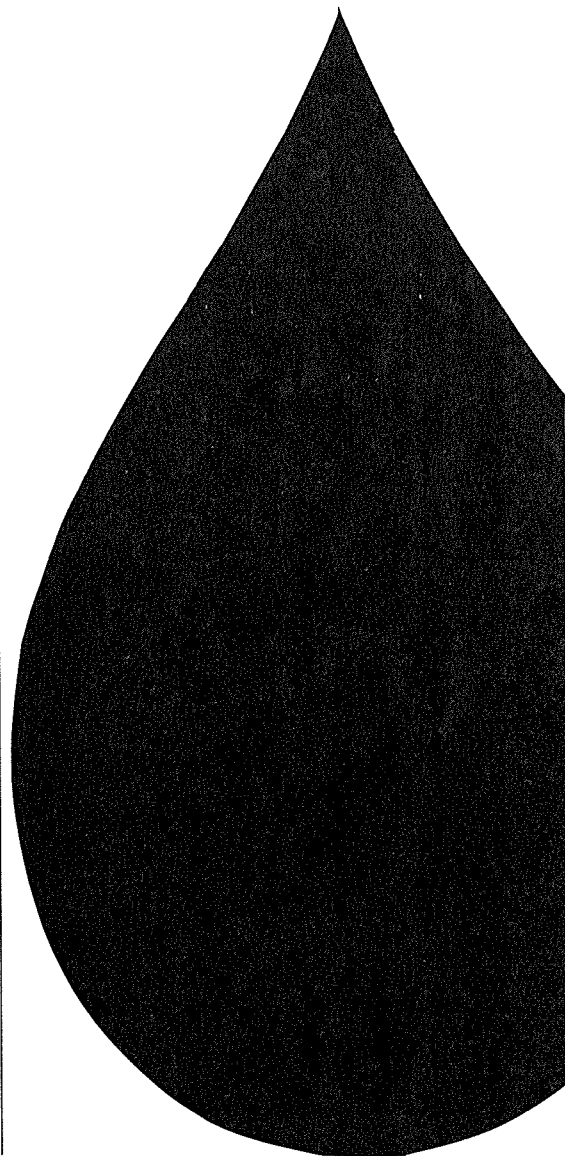
That neither the Stalinists nor Trotskyists in Ceylon have ever campaigned systematically against 'untouchability' in the Northern province. To have done so would have lost them the valuable parliamentary support of high caste Hindus. Even in its heyday the LSSP never systematically produced theoretical material in Sinhala (let alone Tamil) ... but only in English. This ensured that decision-making remained in the hands of its upper-class, English-speaking (and often British - educated) leaders. Much the same applies today to the Communist Party (Marxist) of India.

Sinhalese. They speak a different language and ('officially' at least) are Buddhist. The Sinhalese are themselves divided into 'low country' and 'Kandyan' strata - in a ratio of 3 to 2. The low country Sinhalese occupy the southern and western coastal areas and have been in contact with European exploitation for nearly five centuries. Some are modern industrial workers. Others work in the rubber or coconut industries.(9) The majority, however, are involved in agriculture, handicrafts and fishing.

There is an established Sinhalese bourgeoisie in Colombo, based mainly on trade and the commercialisation of agriculture. It has been parasitic on imperialism since its birth and has learnt from it many of its methods of manipulation. Its political mouthpiece has been - and remains - the UNP. So subservient to imperialism was this local bourgeoisie that it never even developed a nationalist Party of its own to struggle against British rule. The UNP was an ad hoc product, hastily put together just before independence so that there should be no 'power vacuum' following the end of British rule. In their utter compliance to imperialism the bourgeoisie of Jaffna and Colombo differed from the Indian bourgeoisie who had at least formed the Congress Party. This difference is partly explained by the fact that the Indian bourgeoisie were the heirs to a precolonial industry (based on silk, cotton and jute) which gave them a certain independent scope for capitalist accumulation. They also inherited far larger post-colonial internal markets for their products.

The Kandyan Sinhalese, on the other hand, have only been in contact with imperialism since the British conquest of the uplands in 1815. Because of this they have jealously preserved many of their traditions and customs . . . and both their Buddhist beliefs and its temporal agents, the Buddhist hierarchy. Most are subsistence peasants cultivating paddy (rice) in small individual holdings. Village life in the Kandyan uplands is dominated by clerically-minded landowners, chieftains and monks. Side by side with semi-feudal forms of land tenure will be found a mass of individual smallholders and a genuine agricultural proletariat, 'ex-peasant farmers who have become landless through the development of capitalism in the countryside and through demographic or economic pressures on the land . . . in the late 1960's 30% of the peasantry were landless labourers, working on the plots of other peasants as sharecroppers'. (10)

The grip of the Buddhist hierarchy on this section of the population is considerable. Processions carrying rice, fruit and vegetables to the local Buddhist monks will repeatedly be met on the main road between Kandy and the old Sinhalese capital of Anuradhapura. The temples, with their white hemispherical stupas, are centres of political intrigue, corruption and anti-Tamil racism. Most Buddhist monastic orders (or Sangha) are themselves large landowners and extremely



wealthy. It is not unusual to see saffron-clad Buddhist bonzes being chauffeured about in modern limousines amid the bullock carts of their flock. The noisy espousal of Buddhism is widely recognised by the more cynical youth as a stepping stone to a scholarship, an export permit or a local job. As one of them put it 'it has about as much to do with religion as joining the YCL in Russia has to do with communism'. The Buddhist orders and the landowners of the uplands helped launch Bandaranaike's Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) in 1951. Sri Lanka means Holy Ceylon, which in itself implies a whole nexus of political attitudes and outlooks.

To these ingredients should be added the educated youth of Ceylon. The small size of the island had made it possible for imperialism to leave Ceylon with an established educational system. Even before 'independence' some 65% of the population were literate and the proportion has risen steadily since. Primary and secondary education are free and nearly everyone under the age of 35 has had both. This creates enormous problems in one of the few underdeveloped countries which is genuinely underdeveloping. Over 100,000 new school-leavers enter the labour market every year. This should be seen against the background of wider demographic and economic facts, such as the increase in the total population of the island from 6.6 million in 1946 to 12.5 million in 1970, (11) of an average per capita annual income (in 1971) of \$132 (about £50), and steadily rising unemployment. The number of registered unemployed rose from 21,000 (in 1945) to 71,000 (in 1955) to 200,000 (in 1965) to nearly 700,000 (in 1971). The rise has been precipitous in the last few years, (12) affecting the educated youth, at least as much as other strata of society. As their expectations are, for obvious reasons, still work-oriented this creates an explosive new dimension.

What of the working class in all this? There is a small urban working class but the vast majority of the population live in rural areas. The 1963 census mentioned 313,000 people involved in manufacture, 289,000 in trade, banking and insurance, 138,000 in transport and communications, 35,000 in building and 9,000 each in mining and the power industry. Against these figures should be set the 1,682,000 involved in agriculture and forestry, 416,000 involved in handicrafts and over 650,000 in a mass of other petty trades which defy classification and which might range from the illicit distillation of toddy to the preparation of toothpaste from burnt rice husks, from urban stall-holder to village tyre repairer, from pineapple packing to the hollowing out of canoes, or from sifting river mud for precious stones to sitting on the neck of an elephant and guiding it in lugging timber.

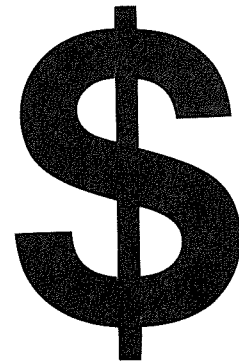
The ceylonese economy

The overall structure of the economy is dominated by the three export crops - tea, rubber and copra - and by the rice crop, grown for local consumption. Rice lands occupy 1,742,469 acres in Ceylon, compared with 1,200,000 acres devoted to coconut, 674,539 acres devoted to rubber and 597,490 acres devoted to tea. Although these figures conjure up some idea of how green the island looks they give no idea of its economic predicament. In 1967 total exports were Rs 1,690 millions. Of these, 63% came from the export of tea, 17% from the export of rubber and 10% from the export of coconut products. In other words 90% of all Ceylon's export earnings came from the export of three primary products. (13)

An economy of this kind (which suited imperialism to the hilt and whose limitations Ceylon's weak indigenous bourgeoisie had been unable to transcend) is of course critically dependent upon fluctuations in world prices. World tea production has been increasing at the rate of 2-3% per annum but the world demand for tea has been stagnant for years . . . as the middle classes took to coffee. Ceylon's export income has slumped in the last decade, due to drastic changes in the terms of trade. Comparing 1960 with 1969, the country's income from tea has decreased by Rs545 million, from rubber by Rs 194 million and from coconut products by some Rs 50 million. (14) Over the same period the prices of Ceylon's imports rose. The result was a foreign exchange deficit which grew from Rs 95 million in 1957 to Rs 744 million in 1969.

The various governments which have ruled Ceylon since independence have sought to cope with the problem through foreign loans. In 1955 Ceylon's foreign debt stood at Rs205 million. By 1969 it had reached the astronomical figure of Rs 1,375.5 million. (15) Servicing this debt is taking up an increasing proportion of the country's resources and is at present running at 20% of Ceylon's export earnings. Moreover the International Monetary Fund, from whom most of the loans have been secured, is insisting on increasingly stringent financial guarantees, the most recent of which (April 1971) were kept secret, despite electoral promises to the contrary. In terms of economic policy, it is difficult for debtors to call the tune and imperialism is again intervening in the domestic politics of Ceylon.

The local bourgeoisie has been totally incapable of halting the drift. There has been no significant land reform since independence - which would have helped solve the problem of rural unemployment as well as increasing agricultural production - and the foreign loans have been used to finance imports rather than to develop or diversify the economy. Although the country's gross national product has been slowly increasing - and although this has involved all sectors of domestic production - industrial production has not increased as a percentage of total output, in other words there has



been no significant change in the structure of the economy. Even at a very mundane level little has been done. Ceylon still imports onions from Bombay and dried fish from other parts of India. She 'still spends more in importing chillies than she earns from tourism.' (16)

The food bill still constitutes 53% of all imports (rice alone accounting for 15%) - and this is an extremely fertile land, which could be exporting food, in particular rice. All this is perhaps best epitomised in the fact that 40% of the island is still covered by dense tropical jungle.

This stagnation derives from both specific and general causes. We have already referred to the comprador nature of the indigenous bourgeoisie, nurtured by imperialism. But the general causes are of more universal significance, for they have wide political implications for the left.

The capital equipment needed for building up a modern industrial infrastructure is today more and more expensive. The investment required to launch the economy of an 'underdeveloped' country into a phase of self-sustained growth is usually more than these countries can themselves afford. Foreign capital will only be attracted if 'stable' political and social conditions seem likely to guarantee a steady return - in other words if the regime is suitably authoritarian or the mass of the population suitably prepared to face the 'realities' of further exploitation by foreign capitalists - or alternatively if the country in question is seen as of strategic importance on the chess board of international power politics.

Moreover indigenously-owned industrial production needs a market (either internal or external, or both). External markets are restricted by the economic policies of the advanced capitalist countries. Internal markets are restricted by the poverty of the population. Poverty engenders poverty just as wealth engenders wealth. The accumulation of capital in economically backward countries therefore usually takes place through the reduction of production costs of their primary - usually agricultural - products, i. e. at the cost of further exploitation of a rural population little above (and often well below) subsistence level. This shows not only how utopian any talk of socialism is when applied to these countries (17) but the difficulties many of them encounter in even limping along the road to state capitalism. (17A)

No backward country can today industrialise without resorting to the rule of an authoritarian bureaucracy, for police regimes and police methods can alone ensure either the acceptance of foreign exploitation or the 'discipline' required for the necessary further exploitation of the peasantry. Only the defeat of capitalism (and of state capitalism) on a

world scale will break this inexorable vice.

It follows that those on the left who see the future of the Revolution in the 'Third World' are labouring under a gigantic delusion. The establishment of ruthlessly exploitative state capitalist regimes in 'backward' countries is neither a precondition of socialism nor -despite widespread misconceptions to the contrary - does it weaken the older type of capitalism, the main origin of whose raw materials is today increasingly synthetic and the main market for whose products is today increasingly internal. (18) It follows that it is only after a thorough and genuine revolution in the first (and second) worlds that humanity as a whole will be able to take advantage of the international division of labour created by capitalism and of the geographical disparity in the distribution of the world's resources, and genuinely to assist the exploited and oppressed in Asia, Africa and South America. Revolutionaries in the West cannot divest themselves of this role and seek vicarious satisfaction in the 'progress' of 'the revolution' elsewhere. According to an old Ceylon myth 'it is only 40 miles from Ceylon to paradise'. As far as revolution is concerned the distance is substantially longer...

Ceylon: 1947-1971

This is the broad panorama against which Ceylon's political life has been played out during the last 25 years. In 1947 Ceylon held its first general election and Britain handed over formal power to a UNP administration, supported by the Ceylon Tamil Congress. The first government was headed by the grotesque figure of Don Stephen Senanayake - a white country squire and wealthy landowner to the marrow of his bones, but with a black skin. His corrupt rule, during which he succeeded in placing most of his relatives in government posts and in disenfranchising the plantation proletariat, came to an abrupt end in 1952 'during a mock -English equestrian outing'. (19) After due intervention by Lord Soulbury, the British Governor General, Don Stephen was succeeded by his son Dudley (who also happened to be the Governor's god-child!). In response to rising rice prices (due to the Korean war) D. S. cut the rice subsidy and stopped school meals. Massive civil disobedience and a general strike led to the calling out of the troops and to bloody suppression. His image badly dented, D. S. had to resign - to be followed on the stage of Ceylon politics by Sir John Kotelawala (the big-mouthed, authoritarian nephew of old Don Stephen), who had been sent down from Cambridge as 'uneducable'. The UNP thereby earned its sobriquet of 'uncle-nephew Party'.

In 1956 a second general election saw the emergence of Ceylon's alternative bourgeois Party: the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) of Solomon Bandaranaike. Bandaranaike, an erstwhile pillar of the UNP, had seen his personal ambitions thwarted as first Don Stephen's son, then his nephew, succeeded the old man

Did you know...

That in Ceylon's first General Election (in 1947) the Communist Party of Ceylon at first decided to support the UNP (just as the British C.P., a little earlier, had at first decided to support Churchill and the 'progressive Tories').

at the helm. Himself son of a wealthy landowner and a turn-coat Anglican, Bandaranaike espoused Buddhism as a stepping stone to office. He skilfully manipulated the growing rural discontent, using it as a weapon, but diverting it from its legitimate target, the archaic structure of land tenure, and directing it against the 'alien' and 'westernised' elements in the leadership of the UNP - and against the 'foreign' Tamils. Bandaranaike succeeded in his act of posing as a champion of Sinhalese Buddhism (or as he preferred to call it 'Buddhist socialism'), out to 'cleanse' the island and restore it to its pristine grandeur ... of over 2,000 years ago! In this he was ably assisted by hordes of Buddhist monks (or Bhikkus) formed into the Eksath Bhikku Peramuna (United Monks Front) and ruthlessly used by the ambitious and unscrupulous chief priest of the Kelaniya Temple, Mapitima Buddharakkhita Thero.

The SLFP was returned with a substantial majority. The power of its main supporters (the Kandyan Sinhalese) was based on the ownership of large rice fields - whereas the UNP bosses were mainly owners of rubber and coconut plantations. (20) The ease with which the reactionary and racialist message of the SLFP was taken up and echoed by the impoverished masses of Ceylon had however little to do with a preference for rice. Its causes are not easily grasped using the traditional categories of modern politics. What the facts remind one of most is the way millions of Germans accepted the racialist outpourings of Adolf Hitler, labelled 'national socialism' or of the way the vicious propaganda of Enoch Powell evokes a certain echo among British working people. These facts may not be to the liking of revolutionaries but cannot be dismissed because of that. Chauvinism, mysticism and other forms of false consciousness are of easier access to the masses than an internationalist class outlook. To grasp the universality of exploitation and the fact that 'the workers have no fatherland' is the most difficult of all - particularly when those who should be preaching this message have themselves capitulated to nationalism or are reluctant for electoral reasons to tread on the religious toes of reaction.

Once in power, the SLFP proved just as reactionary as the UNP. It passed the 'Sinhala only' language bill. To preserve the image built up by its radical electoral rhetoric it terminated the Defence Pact with Britain and nationalised ... the Colombo Port Authority and a Bus Company. Having sown chauvinism, they reaped pogroms. In May 1958 widespread anti-Tamil demonstrations broke out throughout the island. A Public Security Act, viciously anti-working class in both design and content, was passed in 1959. It has been frequently used by all subsequent governments, including the most recent one. The first SLFP regime came to an abrupt end in September 1959 when, in a scene reminiscent of prohibition days Chicago, Bandaranaike was gunned down by a

hired monk, acting on the instigation of Buddharakkhita who had quarrelled with the Premier over some shady rice deal. Thus did Solomon Bandaranaike, the turn-coat Anglican, achieve nirvana (nothingness).

A caretaker government under Mr Dahanayake held office for a few months. Then in June 1960 a third general election was held. 'Leadership of the SLFP, in the best traditions of the UNP, now devolved onto Solomon Bandaranaike's closest relative, his wife Sirimavo'. (21) Nepotism flourished again. But Mrs Bandaranaike's main claim to fame will probably reside in the fact that she succeeded in persuading a mass Trotskyist organisation to join a bourgeois government - and a particularly reactionary and obscurantist one at that.

In 1962 there were a number of important strikes, among others a portworkers' strike, a strike of bank employees and a big strike at the Welawatte textile mills. The government defeated some of these strikes by a policy of 'sitting them out'. The Army were called in to break strikes in essential services. A vast movement of resistance gradually developed. A joint committee of trade unions was set up in 1963, comprising workers in both private and public sectors which formulated a programme of twenty one demands. These centred around basic democratic rights. An enormous May Day rally was held in 1963, certainly the biggest in the whole history of Ceylon. Popular expectations were rising rapidly. It is necessary to appreciate this to understand the alarm of the ruling party and the monstrous nature of the LSSP decision to join the government. Mrs Bandaranaike, faced with this rising tide of militancy could not exercise open repression. She signified her willingness to hold talks with the Opposition. Even before her beckoning finger had ceased to move the Trots were rushing to Temple Trees for 'consultations'. An emergency Congress of the LSSP was held, which authorised the Party's representatives to join the government (see Appendix I), which they did in July 1964. Adequately covered on her 'left' Mrs Bandaranaike's regime set about breaking strikes with a vengeance. Strikes at the Velona garment factory and at the Ceylon Transport Board were put down, with the more or less open support of the LSSP bureaucrats. The Coalition Government also signed a pact with India, legalising the deportation of 'surplus Tamil labour' (525,000 plantation workers) which the increasing rationalisation of the tea estates was making 'redundant'. The LSSP plantation workers' group justified this, claiming that 'the unemployment problem on estates would be reduced and as a result estate employers would be free to provide better facilities to the workers'.

The fact of a Trotskyist party joining a bourgeois government cannot be dismissed as a passing error of collective judgment, or as some form of historical accident, due to the sun. It has deep roots and should logically have an impact on political thinking at least

Did you know...

'Disruptions, especially strikes and go-slows must be eliminated and the development of the country must proceed . . . Some feel that these troubles can be eliminated by the establishment of a dictatorship. Others say that workers should be made to work at the point of gun and bayonet. Still others maintain that a National Government should be formed to solve this problem . . . My conclusion is that none of these solutions will help to get us where we want to go . . . Therefore, gentlemen, I decided to initiate talks with the leaders of the working class.'

Mrs Bandaranaike, July 1964.

as lasting as that of anarchist participation in the Popular Front government during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1937). The LSSP was the only Trotskyist organisation ever to have achieved a mass basis. That a large majority of Ceylonese Trotskyists supported the decision to jump onto the Bandaranaike band-waggon only reveals the advanced state of political decomposition already reached by the LSSP in 1964. The fact that representatives of such an organisation could happily sit on the higher bodies of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International shows the advanced state of decomposition of that body too. And, in case the SLL is feeling self-righteous at this point, it should be pointed out that their pre-1964 criticisms of the LSSP and of the United Secretariat centred on the espousal, by these bodies, of the international perspectives of 'Pabloism' (centuries of 'degenerated workers' states', possibility of the Communist parties moving to the 'left' as a result of mass pressure, etc.) and not on the social composition of the LSSP, its dedication to parliamentary politics or its crass opportunism. (The SLL at that time was itself deeply embedded in the Labour Party, campaigning for the retention of 'Clause Four' of the Party's constitution, for the Rapacki Plan for European disarmament, for Messali Hadj in Algeria, etc, etc. It was as opportunist an organisation as anyone could ask for.) The fate of the LSSP(R), the Trotskyist rump which refused to join the coalition government in 1964, is also instructive (see Appendix III).

At some stage the full political lessons will have to be drawn - and they go very deep indeed. The whole emphasis of Trotskyism for several decades has been centered on 'capturing positions' in traditional organisations. Its well-known vice has been the practice of various form of 'entry' ('partial', 'deep', 'very deep', etc.). The emphasis on the ideological and organisational autonomy of the working class has been played down. The development of a genuine mass consciousness has been neglected - or crudely equated with the development of the party itself. No attention has been devoted to the innumerable mechanisms such as religion, the family, the content of education, which tie the masses (and many party members) to traditional ideology and ways of thinking. And yet these bonds, in times of crisis, reassert themselves with devastating effect. An obsession with tactical considerations has produced a political monstrosity, where talk of mass action and 'the proletarian revolution' are combined with manipulatory and elitist practices, and an arrogant disregard for what the working class is itself trying to do or express. The whole problem requires a far more systematic analysis than can here be entered upon.

In January 1965 the country's fourth general election was held. The UNP was returned to power. Simmering rural discontent had again found an outlet in the return of a bourgeois party. No one had ever preached the message that the salvation of the working

Did you know...

That when Philip Gunawardene, founder member of the LSSP, died in March 1972 N.M. Perera, current LSSP Finance Minister in the Bandaranaike government, declared (in a long article in the Ceylon 'Daily Mirror') that Philip Gunawardene had been the 'father of Trotskyism in Ceylon', and the 'ideological leader of the LSSP'. Perera also boasted that the LSSP 'was the strongest Trotskyist Party in the world'.

That two of the founders of the Trotskyist movement in Ceylon, Philip Gunawardene and Vernon Gunesekera, ended their political careers as members of the UNP.

That Jack Kotelawala, LSSP leader in the Uva District, was permitted by the Party to be official Legal Officer of the Ceylon Estates Employers' Federation. In this capacity he would appear in Court for the employers against the workers. He eventually crossed over to the UNP ... and became Ceylon's ambassador to Moscow!

That Neal de Alwis, LSSP Member of Parliament for Baddegama, was once Chairman of the Southern Province Planters' Association.

That when Colvin de Silva's daughter married a Stalinist leader a few years ago the entire UNP Cabinet - from the Premier down - attended the ceremony.

peasantry lay in its own hands, in the formation of its own village committees, controlled from below. Dudley Senanayake was brought out of the storeroom to head the new administration. Having learned a thing or two in the previous decade he played ball with the Buddhists. The whole calendar was reorganised. Instead of a regular rest day, Buddhist holy days were declared compulsory rest days (unfortunately, these occur quite irregularly). The rice ration, which had been partly restored, was again cut. This enabled Senanayake to boast, at the next general election, of having cut Ceylon's rice imports from 600,000 tons a year to 300,000. For three and a half of its 5 years in office the third UNP government ruled under Emergency Regulations . . . passed by the SLFP. Its only economic achievements were the construction of an oil refinery outside Colombo, financed by the Italian ENI combine - and the obtaining of promises from the World Bank concerning the financing of a hydroelectric scheme at Mahaveli. The agreement gave the World Bank a big say in determining Ceylon's internal expenditure.

Throughout the whole of this period the LSSP played the role of a loyal, social-democratic type 'opposition'. In the middle of the Public Sector strike in 1968, when J.R. Jayawardena, leader of the UNP right wing, was declaring that the strike posed 'a grave threat to the state and to private property', the LSSP paper proclaimed editorially that 'the strike should be settled without provoking more and more sections of the working class into the fight'.

In May 1970 were held what may prove to be the last elections in Ceylon's history. In the absence of an alternative the parliamentary see-saw now swung again in the direction of the SLFP and of its 'communist' and 'trotskyist' allies. The mandate for radical change was impressive. The United Front secured an overwhelming majority (115 out of 151 seats). The SLFP allocated itself 19 of the 23 Cabinet posts, granting 1 to the pro-Moscow Communist Party and 3 to the LSSP. With an old-world cynicism bred of long contact with imperialism and its methods, the 'lefts' were given the posts where they were the most likely to incur popular discontent, namely those concerned with the day to day realities of housing, the plantations, and the overall management of the economy. The device is well known in British politics - whether it be making Aneurin Bevan Minister of Labour or putting Barbara Castle in charge of Labour's abortive Industrial Relations Act - but had still to be fully exploited in the Ceylonese context.

Hardly were the government in office than they began chalking up failures at an impressive rate. Unemployment, which had been steadily growing during the previous administration, took a sharp swing upwards. The rice ration was increased . . . but at vastly increased prices. N.M. Perera, the LSSP's Minister of Economic Affairs, spoke of the

'inadvisability' of taking over the tea estates. Imperialism, in the background, was still calling the tune. The foreign banks were left untouched, despite electoral promises that they would be nationalised. Nothing was done to curb the power of the ultra reactionary Lake House Press Combine, although when the election results had been returned thousands of young people had marched on the Combine's headquarters in Colombo and attempted to sack them.

Carried forward by the momentum of its left rhetoric the government resorted to a number of 'left' gestures . . . or gestures that were intended as such, but hardly impinged on the realities of everyday life. The government established diplomatic relations with N. Korea, N. Vietnam, and the Provisional Government of South Vietnam. It suspended relations with Israel. But even in foreign affairs the government were not free agents. (Although preaching anti-imperialism (the government) continued the Rs 10 million worth of tea exports to South Africa and soft-pedalled even at the wretched Lusaka Conference of non-aligned countries. The coalition had promised to expel US Ambassador Strauss-Hupe, named by the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee as a C.I.A. associate and vetoed as ambassador to Morocco: he remained US ambassador to Ceylon'.(23)

During this period workers in struggle repeatedly came up against the Stalino-'Trotskyist' bureaucracies in the unions. The LSSP paper bemoaned the fact that trade union questions had become a 'headache for comrade N. M. '(Perera). Purges of rank and file militants have become common in both the C. P. and the LSSP and whole union branches have been suspended for daring to criticise the politics of these parties. When 800 workers in the Davasa group came into conflict with the LSSP leadership over the question of the help given by the Coalition Government to the employers, the LSSP reacted by expelling the workers from their LSSP-controlled union.

It is against this general background that one must view the emergence of the JVP and the insurrection of April 1971.

At the time of the JVP insurrection the Ceylon Government declared a State of Emergency. No voices were raised in the Colombo Parliament against this proclamation. Most of the Emergency Regulations decreed early in 1970 have been maintained ever since.

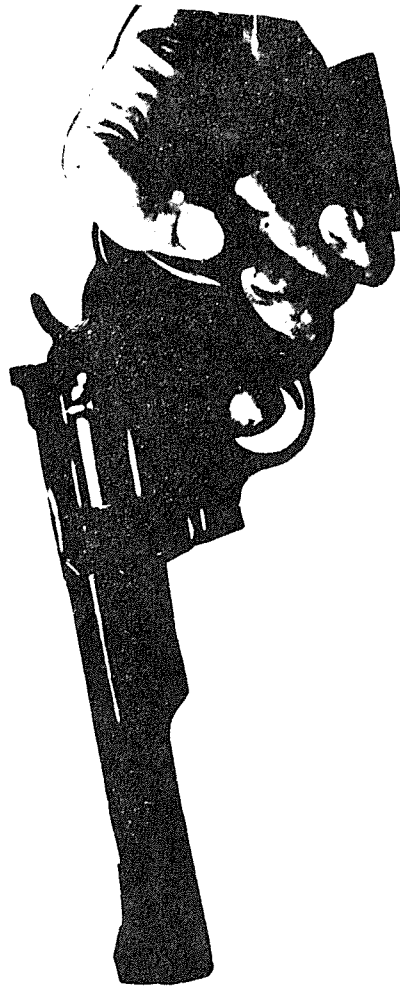
Under these regulations no public meetings may be held without police permission. Censorship of the press was instituted. This censorship was in fact strengthened, a few months later, by specific instructions issued by the government to the editors of various papers. The censorship extends to matters that have nothing to do with the insurgency or with 'national security'. Editorial comment on any subject has to be submitted for approval by the competent authority. The Censor has used these instructions to curb criticism of the government on any matter of policy or administration. The Regulations also forbid anybody to put up posters or handbills, or to hand out leaflets, without prior police permission.

The Essential Services Order, originally decreed in 1942 (during the period of British rule) and rescinded in 1947, has been reintroduced by Mrs Bandaranaike and her Stalino-'Trotskyist' supporters. This order declares strikes illegal in any industry or service proclaimed as 'of public utility or essential to public safety or to the life of the community'. The Order has been applied not only to the supply of water and electricity but to wage disputes at Hentley Garments Ltd., and in the Ceylon Pencil Company. The government has declared the Order as applying to a host of minor industries, including 'the manufacture and distribution of ice, soap, bottles, wire, nails and bicycle tyres'. The Order has also been declared as applying to 'the services provided by any mercantile or commercial undertaking engaged in the importation, exportation, sale, supply or distribution of goods of any description whatsoever'. What this really amounts to is the abolition of the right to strike.

Under the Emergency Regulations the Board of Directors or the Manager of a Public Corporation may 'in their absolute discretion' dismiss a worker suspected of a) any activity prejudicial to the interests of, or dangerous to the security of Government; b) complicity with, or being privy to the activities of a proscribed organisation, or c) contravening or failing to comply with any Emergency Regulation or any order or rule made thereunder. These suspensions cannot be challenged before any Court or Tribunal. The suspended worker is not entitled to any salary during the period of suspension, unless the Board of Directors of the Corporation, in their discretion, agree that he be paid half his salary.

Among those detained without trial are a number of government servants. Their salaries have been stopped and many of their families are in very difficult circumstances. In a number of cases Advisory Committees, appointed by the government, have recom-

Epilogue



mended the release of specific prisoners who 'under the present law of the land could not be indicted and brought to trial' . . . only to be overruled by the Ministry of Defence. Habeas Corpus has of course been suspended and many prisoners have been denied proper access to lawyers to help prepare their defence.

People in Ceylon may today be arrested by order of the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Defence. Under such circumstances the person arrested must be informed of the grounds of his detention, although this is often done very belatedly. When people are arrested by the police, however, there is not even this minimum provision. Under the Emergency Regulations police arrests may be made without warrant. Arrested persons may be kept in prison for 15 days without even being produced before a magistrate, and without the police having to notify the fact of the arrest to any other authority or person. The enormous power this gives to the police can readily be imagined. If a person is arrested in the street, without witnesses, his family may spend the whole 15 days searching for him. Moreover the arrested person is in police custody (often in terrible conditions in a police station), and not in judicial custody (in a prison). He can be beaten up, tortured or killed, without the outside world even knowing he is there.

Under the Emergency Regulations the Ceylon Police are entitled to dispose of dead bodies (by cremation or burial) without inquest - and without even the need for a death certificate signed by a doctor. Police officers may themselves decide whether a person is dead or not before he or she is burned or buried. There is no obligation to keep records of any kind. These are not regulations relating to the immediate aftermath of a battle, but to the day-to-day life of the country, sixteen months after the insurgency. Even ordinary bourgeois law requires an inquest to be held on any person dying in custody.

Under the Emergency Regulations, the Courts can accept as evidence any statement made to the police by defendants in their custody. The Courts may also accept as part of the case against defendants hearsay 'evidence' made by co-defendants. Such 'confessions' are often obtained under duress, or with a view to securing less harsh treatment. It requires no great effort of imagination to envisage the use to which they could be put. Statements by the defence are liable to 'censorship'. The trials are held before 3 judges. There is no jury. There is of course no independent mechanism for complaints against the police, the police itself - as in Britain - being the only body entitled to investigate such complaints.

During the election of May 1970 the United Front (SLFP, LSSP, and CP) issued a manifesto which proclaimed that 'the Armed Services and the Police, which the UNP regarded merely as instruments to oppress the people and to defend the interests of big capital and political reaction, will be reorganised so as to identify

CEYLON P. M. COAXES BACK

MONEY MEN

(Evening Standard, August 24, 1972)

'Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike's decision to offer generous incentives to foreign businessmen who invest in Sri Lanka (Ceylon) indicates how far her United Front coalition government has departed from the socialism it proclaimed on the election platforms in May 1970.

All her attempts to rescue the country from the economic stagnation of the past few years have failed and the new investment incentives, which the Prime Minister announced herself in her other capacity as Minister of Planning, go far beyond any previous concessions to foreign capital, even those offered by the preceding right-wing National Party Government.

In a move to erase the socialist image built up since the election by policies of nationalisation and restrictions on private business, the Government has invited foreign business to invest in a wide range of projects, including industry, fishing, and tourism.

Investment would be most welcome, says a Government White Paper, in enterprises making use of local raw materials and developing local technical skills.

Foreign investors in industry and fishing are offered a tax 'holiday' for 8 years, the right to remit profits abroad, a tax holiday on dividends and permission to bring in foreign workers who would pay no tax and be allowed to send money home to their families.

There will also be a rebate of customs duty on all industrial products exported by these new ventures.

Foreign advisers have also recommended the development of fisheries, especially deep-sea trawling and fish-processing.

Investors in hotel construction and in the development of other tourist facilities have been offered a five-year tax holiday followed by 15 years of 50% taxation.

They will also be able to remit profits and dividends abroad, bring in foreign personnel and enjoy all the other benefits given to investors in industry.

The new determination to attract foreign capital shows the total victory of the middle-of-the-road elements in the ruling coalition . . . '

them with the national and progressive aspirations of the people and to reflect their interests'. This reformist rubbish, of which any marxist should be ashamed, has been exploded for all to see. The same police force, used by the UNP to 'oppress the people' is now being used by the left-supported Coalition ... for exactly the same purposes.

The Coalition Government in Ceylon is still saddled with over fifteen thousand political prisoners. Having detained them without trial for over a year, it has recently been faced with pressing demands to bring matters to a head. To this end a Criminal Justice Commission Bill was rushed through the Ceylon Parliament, in April 1972. This made law (and retroactive law, at that) most of the provisions of the Emergency Regulations. It even strengthened some of them. Thus the new laws entitle the Commissions of Investigation to limit the duration of pleadings by defendants, to regulate the admission of the press to such investigations and to exclude the public from all, or part of them. Evidence submitted by Government analysts is not liable to cross-examination. In fact those presenting such evidence need not even appear in Court. Any state bureaucrat may, in order to keep his job, make any statement requested of him - and that statement will be accepted as unchallengeable truth ... even if it keeps a detenu in prison for years. One does not have to support the political perspectives of the JVP to denounce such monstrous provisions.

There is evidence that the government is now using its new powers against all its critics on the left. Various political tendencies are being persecuted, whether they protested or not at what was being done to the JVP, and whether their protests were vigorous or mealy-mouthed. All these groups are now confronting their moment of truth.

The new legislation, in its viciousness and anti-working class character, is today unparalleled in any bourgeois democracy. But let not our 'democrats' wax too indignant. What has happened in Ceylon is a harbinger of what those in power will resort to anywhere if their privileges are ever seriously challenged. What is new and extremely important is that the legislation - and the anti-working class terror it has permitted - have been endorsed and supported by the established parties of 'the left' in Ceylon. There is no wriggling out of this. It should give every genuine socialist deep cause for concern. In fact it makes a re-examination of his whole outlook imperative.

In the original (1961) introduction to our pamphlet 'Socialism or Barbarism' we proclaimed the need for a 'total theoretical reconstruction'. We stated that this 'presupposed a radical break with all present organisations, their ideology,

their mentality, their methods of work, their actions'. We stressed that 'everything which has existed and exists in the workers' movement (ideology, parties, unions, etc.) is irrevocably and irretrievably finished, rotten, integrated into exploiting society'. The bitter experience of Ceylon is further testimony to this irrefutable fact.

Much of our information concerning the Emergency Regulations was derived from the Open Letter sent to Mrs Bandaranaike, in December 1971, by the Ceylon Civil Rights Movement. (This letter was published in issue No. 3 of the Ceylon Committee Bulletin, obtainable (10p + postage) from 24A Elm Bank Mansions, London SW13).

Detailed information concerning the new Act can be obtained from Bulletin No. 2 (May 1972) of the Ceylon Solidarity Campaign, obtainable from 9 Dennington Park Mansions, London NW6.



Various theories have been put forward as to why the left, in advanced capitalist countries, should support national liberation struggles.

The Communist parties, for example, support such struggles because nationalism in the Third World seems to collide with the interests of the U.S. National liberation is thus thought to 'weaken' U.S. imperialism. They hope that Russia, which supports these movements ideologically and/or materially, will benefit.

The Maoists follow a similar logic, though after Nixon's visit to China, one suspects that Mao's 'anti-imperialist' zeal may be directed only against the Russian bureaucracy. Western Castroites and 'progressive' liberals of all hues support such movements out of a sense of 'moral duty'.

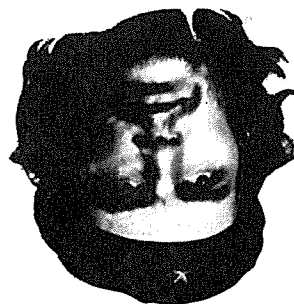
For these people, national liberation is a universal blessing which should be given to - or taken by - the 'leaders' of the Third World. One should add perhaps that these noble sentiments don't stop these same Castroites and liberals from supporting capitalist 'leaders' like McGovern in the U.S. - or calling for a return of the Labour Party in the next British elections.

Trotskyist support for national liberation is a bit more sophisticated. It consists of grand (and banal) historical schemes. First, the national liberation movements should be supported 'unconditionally' - this is the communal bed of all Trotskyists (Mandel, Cliff, Healy, Ali, etc.). Whether the support is 'critical' or 'uncritical' is another matter - and here Trotskyists part company and proceed to their respective rooms.

But, someone may ask, why the support in the first place? The answer provided is an example of historical scheme-making: U.S. imperialism will be 'weakened' by such movements. Such a 'weakening' will impart another 'transitional' twitch to the 'death agony of capitalism' which in turn will foster other twitches ... and so on. Like all mystifications, Trotskyism fails to give a coherent answer as to why, especially since 1945, imperialism has been able to grant political independence to many ex-colonial countries, a possibility that Lenin and Trotsky explicitly denied.

The theory of 'permanent revolution' blinds Trotskyists to the realities of national liberation. They still consider that the bourgeoisie, in the Third World, is incapable of fighting for 'national independence'. But they fail to grasp that the 'permanent revolution', in Russia for example, both began and ended as a bourgeois revolution (in spite of the proletariat's alleged 'leading role' in the unfolding of the process). In Russia, the bourgeois stage (i. e. both February and October) very concretely ensured that there would be no future 'socialist' unfolding. The 'permanent revolution' carried out by the Bolsheviks only brought about a state-capitalist

Third worldism or socialism



reorganisation of the economy and social life. The 'solving' of the bourgeois tasks will destroy, as it did in Russia, all the autonomous rank and file organisations of the working class (councils and factory committees). They become subordinates of the state, which is the organism par excellence for carrying out 'belated' bourgeois revolutions.

Any bureaucracy, given favourable conditions, can 'solve' the bourgeois tasks in the Third World. The 'permanent revolution' doesn't need the working class, except as cannon fodder. The accumulation of capital, through expanded reproduction, is the basis of its bureaucratic power and whether the bureaucracy accumulates successfully or not is besides the point. In any case there has never been a 'pure' capitalist country which has 'solved' all its bourgeois tasks. Even Britain still has a queen!

Trotskyist support for movements of national liberation, however 'critical', is thus support for another social group . . . and not for the working class or peasantry. Trotskyists present their support for the leadership of various national liberation movements as a 'tactic' which will allow them to gain control of the movement. In their mythology, the leaderships of such movements are incapable of carrying out the struggle for national independence. As we have seen, this is nonsense, pure and simple: the Chinese, Cuban or North Vietnamese bureaucracies went 'all the way' in expropriating western capitalists without an ounce of help from any of the Fourth Internationals. They also mercilessly slaughtered or imprisoned all Trotskyists in those countries. Insofar as Trotskyists babble about a 'democratisation' of such regimes through 'political revolution', they are the reformists of state capital.

Lenin's theory of imperialism, written in 1916, is usually quoted by all the trad left groups to sanction their support for national liberation. The theory holds that a Western 'labour aristocracy' has been created out of super-profits squeezed out of colonial countries. This is a bourgeois concept because it places national factors above class analysis. Concepts such as 'proletarian nations' versus 'imperialist nations' flow naturally from such an analysis - they were in fact peddled in the 30's by fascists. Nowadays, Gunder Frank with his theory of 'the development of under-development' and Emmanuel's 'unequal exchange' provide fresh examples of the bourgeois-leninist attitudes so deeply entrenched in the left.

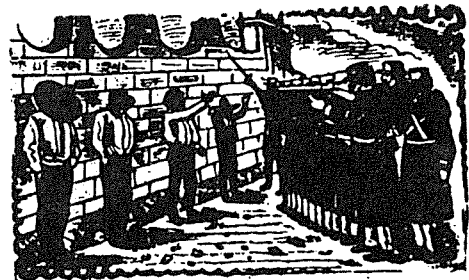
Nationalism and class struggle are irreconcilably opposed. A nation is a bourgeois reality: it is capitalism with all its exploitation and alienation, parcelled out in a single geographical unit. It doesn't matter whether the nation is 'small', 'colonial', 'semi-colonial' or 'non-imperialist'. All nationalisms are reactionary because they inevitably clash with class consciousness and poison it with chauvinism and racialism. The

nationalist sentiment in the advanced countries is reactionary, not only because it facilitates the plundering of the colonial workers and peasants, but because it is a form of false consciousness which ideologically binds the western workers to 'their' ruling classes. Similarly, the 'nationalism of the oppressed' is reactionary because it facilitates class collaboration between the colonial workers and peasants and the 'anti-imperialist' nascent bureaucracies.

The Trotskyist myth that a successful national liberation will later unleash 'the real class struggle' is false, as the examples of Ethiopia, North Vietnam, Mexico under Cardenas, and Brazil under Vargas bear out. It is a rationalisation for the defence of new ruling classes in the process of formation. As historical evidence shows, those new elites usually become appendages of the already existing state capitalist bloc. To this degree Trotskyism is a variety of vicarious social patriotism.

Any intelligent person can see that the fate of the advanced capitalist countries doesn't depend on the Third World's ability to cut off supplies of raw materials. The Third World's ruling classes will never get together to plan or practice an effective boycott on a world scale. Furthermore, the U.S. and Western Europe are becoming less dependent upon many of the products of the Third World. Add to that the falling prices for raw materials in the world market, the protectionist barriers in the advanced countries, and one gets a picture of imminent barbarism in the Third World. Its bargaining position vis-a-vis the West weakens every year. Third Worldists should seriously ponder about these tendencies.

National liberation struggles can be seen as attempts of sections of the native ruling classes to appropriate a larger share of the value generated in 'their own' countries. Imperialist exploitation indeed generates this consciousness in the more 'educated' strata of the Third World. These strata tend to consider themselves as the repository of 'the Fatherland'. Needless to say, a worsening in the trade terms for raw materials in the Third World aggravates this situation. The growth of many national liberation movements in the past 25 years is a manifestation of the imbalance existing in the world market. The Third World countries plunge deeper into decay, famine, stagnation, political corruption and nepotism. National rebellion may then be channelled into active politics by discontented army officers, priests, petty bureaucrats, intellectuals and (of course) angry children of the bourgeois and landlord classes. The grievances of the workers and peasants are real too (the above-mentioned worthies largely account for them), but the nationalist leaders can still hope to capture the imagination of the exploited. If this happens one sees the beginnings of a national liberation movement based



explicitly on class collaboration, with all the reactionary implications this has for the exploited. They emerge out of the frying pan of foreign exploitation into the fire of national despotism.

For such regimes to survive against the open hostility of the Western capitalist bloc, or its insidious world market mechanisms, it is imperative that the regimes become dependent on the state capitalist bloc (Russia and/or China). If this is not possible, an extremely precarious balancing act ('neutralism') becomes the dominant fact of life (as shown by Egypt or India). Without massive assistance from the state capitalist bloc it is impossible for any such regime even modestly to begin primitive accumulation. The majority of the Third World countries don't have the resources to start such a programme on their own. And even if they did, it could only be done (as any accumulation) through intensified exploitation. Higher consumption levels and welfare programmes may temporarily be established by these regimes. Those who can see no further than economic steps to 'socialism' usually quote this to explain why Castro is 'better' than Batista or Mao 'preferable' to Chiang. Without dealing with the reactionary implications of such reformism at a national level, let's see how the argument works internationally. Castro supported the 1968 Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia, Ho Chi Minh defended the Russian crushing of the Hungarian revolution of 1956 and Mao supported Yahya Khan's genocide in Bangla Desh. Thus what is 'gained' at home is lost abroad, in the form of heaps of corpses and massive political demoralisation. Does the trad left keep account of such a reactionary balance sheet?

The ideological repercussions of such international events are difficult to gauge, but are no doubt reactionary. The further bureaucratisation of the Third World merely reinforces working class prejudices and apathy in the advanced countries. The responses of the imperialist bourgeoisies will be to mount further protectionist barriers and, at the same time, to increase the profitable arms trade. The bureaucratisation of the Third World will enhance the prestige - both ideological and diplomatic - of the state capitalist bloc, in spite of the latter's inter-imperialist rivalries. This process will be accompanied by an increasing demoralisation and cynicism in the circles of the trad left. This is already patently clear today: in many demos covering international affairs, portraits of Ho, Mao, Castro, Guevara and a host of other scoundrels (Hoxha, Kim-Il Sung, etc.) are obscenely paraded. Such cults express the ideological debasement of our times, and it's no accident that working people feel only contempt or indifference towards the trad left and the heroes it worships.

Another equally important dimension of national liberation struggles is ignored by the trad left. It is



the question of working class and peasant democracy and of the revolutionary self-activity of the masses. National liberation will always repress such autonomous working class activities because the bourgeois goals of national liberation (i. e. nation-building) are opposed - in class terms - to the historical interests of working people (i. e. the liberation of humanity). It thus becomes clear why all the leaderships of national liberation movements attempt to control, from above, any initiative of the masses, and prescribe for them only the politics of nationalism. To do this it is necessary actually to terrorise the working masses (Ben Bella's FLN massacred dozens of Algerian workers during the Algerian war of 'independence', Ho's Viet Minh helped the British and French to crush the Saigon Workers' Commune of 1945 and later assassinated dozens of Trotskyists; Guevara publicly attacked the Cuban Trotskyists and Castro's attacks against them in 1966 sealed their fate even as reformists of the Castroite ruling class.) The state capitalist elites, even before they take power, must attempt to erradicate any independent voice of opposition, and their complete rule wipes out any possibility of even meagre measures of bourgeois democracy.

Support for any national liberation struggle is always reactionary. It usually consists of:

- 1) support for a client state of the state capitalist bloc, which amounts to defending state capitalist imperialism against Western imperialism;
- 2) support for despotic regimes which destroy, together with classic bourgeois property forms, any independent organisation of the working class and peasantry.

It is often claimed that a distinction must be made between the reactionary and bureaucratic leaderships of national liberation struggles and the masses of people involved in such struggles. Their objectives are said to be different. We believe this distinction seldom to be valid. The foreigner is usually hated as a foreigner, not as an exploiter - because he belongs to a different culture, not because he extracts surplus value. This prepares the way for local exploiters to step into the shoes of the foreign ones. Moreover the fact that a given programme (say, national independence) has considerable support does not endow it with any automatic validity. Mass 'consciousness' can be mass 'false-consciousness'. Millions of French, British, Russian and German workers slaughtered one another in the first World War, having internalised the 'national' ideas of their respective rulers. Hitler secured 6½ million votes in September 1930. The leaders of national struggles can only come to power because there is a nationalist feeling which they can successfully manipulate. The bonds of 'national unity' will then prove stronger than the more important but 'divisive' class struggle.

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In practice all that revolutionaries can currently do in the Third World is to avoid compromise on the cardinal issue: namely that working people have no 'fatherland' and that for socialists the main enemy is always in one's own country. Revolutionaries can strive to create autonomous organs of struggle (peasants or village committees or workers' groups) with the aim of resisting exploitation, whatever the colour of the exploiter's skin. They can warn systematically of the dangers and repression these bodies will face from foreign imperialism and from the nascent bourgeoisie or bureaucracy. They can point out that their own societies are divided into classes and that these classes have mutually incompatible interests, just like the classes in the 'foreign' societies that oppress them.

Although difficult this is essential and the only road that doesn't involve mystifying oneself and one's own supporters. In South Vietnam, for instance, the conflict of interests between rulers and ruled is obvious enough. No great effort is needed to see the gulf separating the well-fed corrupt politicians and generals in Saigon and the women, riddled with hookworms, breaking their backs in the paddy fields. But in the North? Is there really a community of interests between the Haiphong docker or cement worker and the political commissar in Hanoi? Between those who initiated and those who suppressed the peasant uprising of November 1956? Between those who led and those who put down the Saigon Commune of 1945? Between Ta Tu Thau and his followers and those who butchered them? To even demand that such issues be discussed will endanger the revolutionaries. Could there be better proof of the viciously anti-working class nature of these regimes?

Some 'Third World' countries are so backward or isolated, and have such an insignificant working class, that it is difficult to see how such a class could even begin to struggle independently. The problem however is not a national one. The solution to the misery and alienation of these workers and peasants is in the international development of the proletarian revolution. The revolution in the advanced capitalist countries will decisively tip the scales the world over. The success of such a revolution, even in its earliest stages, will liberate enormous technological resources to help these isolated, weak and exploited groups.

Owing to the different social, political and economic weights of various Third World countries, proletarian revolutions or revolutionary workers' councils in these countries will have varying repercussions on their neighbours, and on the advanced countries. The effects will, however, be more political than economic. A workers and

peasants' take-over in Chile (which will irretrievably smash the Allende state) will not damage the American economy. But such an explosive event might provide a revolutionary example for the workers of Argentina, Peru, Bolivia, etc., and help the American workers to gain a revolutionary consciousness. The same could be said of Nigeria, India or even Ceylon in their respective contexts. He who rejects this perspective as 'improbable' or 'impossible' abandons any revolutionary perspective for the workers of what is loosely called 'the Third World'. In fact there are everywhere only 'two worlds': that of the exploiter and that of the exploited. To this degree, the international working class is one class, with the same historical objective.

We leave it to the trad left to support the imperialism of its choice, be it Russian, or Chinese, or any new shining light in the Stalinist cosmos. For us, the main enemy will always be at home, and the only way we can help ourselves and the workers and peasants of the Third World is to help make a socialist revolution here. But it would be tantamount to scabbing if at any moment we supported reactionary movements which exploit - no matter in how small a way - a section of the international working class.



Appendices

I

TROTting TO THE MINISTRIES

When the LSSP decided to jump onto the Bandaranaike bandwagon it was by no narrow-margin decision. At the Colombo Congress of the LSSP; held on June 6 and 7, 1964, 579 delegates decided in favour of the Coalition; 75 were against the proposal.

The majority justified their entry into a bourgeois government, singing paeans to the SLFP. '...The SLFP is not a capitalist party. The fact that it is functioning within the capitalist framework does not make it a party of the capitalist class ... The power of the entrenched Catholic Church has been weakened and Buddhist tradition and culture have been given their due place. The ordinary man has been given a place in the political and social life of the country ... The progressive character of the internal policy of the (Bandaranaike) Government has been reflected in the external policy which it has followed ... Diplomatic connections with socialist (sic!) countries ... have been carried forward'. (Problem: How degenerated does a Trot have to be before he calls a 'degenerated workers' state' socialist?)

At the Colombo Congress a resolution by the 'Center' group (which included Colvin de Silva, Leslie Goonawardene, Doric de Souza, etc.) also called for a Coalition Government, although basing their call on a somewhat different analysis.

The opponents of coalition left the Party, constituting themselves the LSSP(R).

After the LSSP had entered the Coalition the United Secretariat of the Fourth International did not 'forthwith expel the LSSP from the Fourth International', as Halliday (op. cit.) alleges. This is pure IMG-Ligue Communiste mythology. The comrade Ministers (N.M. Perera, Anil Moonesinghe and Cholmondeley Goonewardene) were admittedly expelled. But over 500 delegates who had voted for the coalition were only suspended. No action was taken for some time against the 'center' group of Colvin de Silva and Leslie Goonawardene.

That this is so is best illustrated by the declaration issued by the first Congress of the LSSP(R), held on July 18 and 19, 1964. This Congress called on the United Secretariat of the Fourth International 'to expressly declare that the entire

membership of the reformist LSSP are no longer regarded as members of the Fourth International and that Colvin R. de Silva and Leslie Goonewardene be expressly expelled by name in so far as they were members of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International and are now serving as advisers to the Ministers of a bourgeois government'. The expulsions had clearly not yet taken place.

The resolutions of the various LSSP groups, presented to the 1964 Congress, are published in Volume I, no. 2 of Fourth International (obtainable from 186A Clapham High Street, London SW4), The SLL at that time was supporting the LSSP(R).

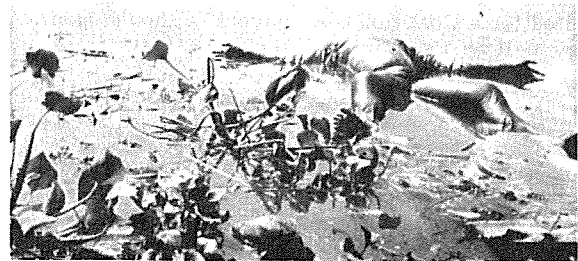
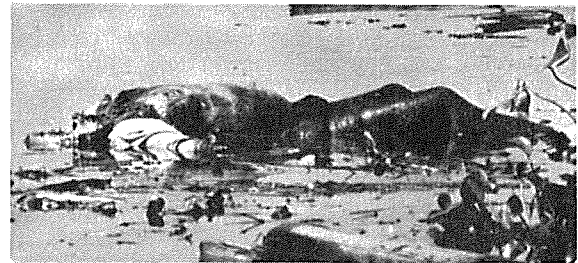
II

SOME LSSP PARLIAMENTARIANS

1. Mrs K. Abhayawardhana (Borella)
2. Bernard Soysa (Colombo South)
3. Mrs Vivienne Goonewardene (Dehiwela-Mt. Lavinia)
4. Wimalasiri de Mel (Moratuwa)
5. Chandrapala Goonasekera (Kottawa)
6. Mangala Moonasinghe (Bulath-singhala)
7. Leslie Goonewardene (Panadura)
8. Cholmondeley Goonewardene (Kalutara)
9. W. Neal de Alwis (Baddegama)
10. Colvin de Silva (A galawatte)
11. N.M. Perera (Yatiantota)
12. Dhanapala Weerasekera (Dehiowita)
13. Sumanapala Dahanayake (Deniyaya)
14. Athanda Senewiratne (Ruanwella)
15. L.C. de Silva (Ambalangoda)

Also the following, of whom we have no pictures for posterity:

16. Wilfred Senanayake (Homagama)
17. V. Nanayakkara (Kiriella)
18. P.O. Wimalanaga (Kolonne)
19. D.P.W. de Silva (Balapitiya)



And those at the receiving end...

III



THE BALA TAMPOE AFFAIR

When Trotskyists are confronted with the openly counter-revolutionary activities of the LSSP they shrug their shoulders, say it has really 'nothing to do with Trotskyism as such', and proceed to dismiss what was once the largest party of the Fourth International as 'not really Trotskyist at all'. They point out that the 'renegades' were expelled by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. To their administrative minds this closes the matter.

For reasons given elsewhere (see p. 29) we consider this an inadequate response. But for the sake of argument let us accept it. And let us turn our attention to the 'undegenerated', 'residual', 'official' Ceylonese section of the Trotskyist United Secretariat: the LSSP(R). Is the LSSP(R) any better than the LSSP? Or has the degenerative process affected them too? And if it has, what is the reason for their degeneration? How will it be 'explained' by the SWP, the IMG, the Ligue Communiste and others such, all currently proclaiming the LSSP(R) as the leaders of the Ceylon Revolution? We can only guarantee one thing, namely that the common Trotskyist parentage of both LSSP and LSSP(R) will be the last interpretation their previous and present international affiliates will offer.

The main social basis of the LSSP(R) is in the bureaucracy of the C. M. U. (Ceylon Mercantile Union), the largest white collar union in the country and one of the most conservative. Bala Tampoe, gen. sec. of the LSSP(R) is also general secretary of the C. M. U. The C. M. U. has a distinguished strike-breaking record, first achieving notoriety in November 1967, when C. M. U. members at the Welawatte Textile Mill actively engaged in blacklegging. In November-December 1968, during the Public Servants' strike, Tampoe suspended a C. M. U. branch secretary for bringing out his members in solidarity with the other unions.

So disreputable, over a period of years, had the activities of Bala Tampoe, his section and his union become, that the United Secretariat itself had to set up a 'Commission on Ceylon' to look into the

matter and to report to the 1969 'Ninth World Congress.

The report reached the leadership of the International. But it went no further. In a praiseworthy act of political sanitation, the American journal 'Spartacist' (Box 1377, GPO, New York, NY 10001, USA) has brought the report to a wider public, in their issue No. 21 (fall 1972). The report of the 'Commission on Ceylon' mentions:

a) 'a series of incidents which together constitute compromisingly close relations between comrade Bala and the Ceylonese embassies or missions of the imperialist countries'.

b) '(Bala Tampoe's) trip to the U. S. in the summer of 1967 financed by the Asia Foundation'. (The Commission's report tactfully omits to mention that the Asia Foundation is well known to be in receipt of C. I. A. funds - or that during the said trip Bala Tampoe had a private interview in Washington with McNamara, then U. S. Secretary of Defence. The scene has a certain piquancy: Trots everywhere calling for 'Victory to the NLF' while a member of their leading political body has private discussions with U. S. imperialism's War Minister!)

c) '(Bala Tampoe's) acceptance of a small private luncheon invitation at the residence of the British High Commissioner during the 1966 plantation workers' strike - a luncheon that was also attended by Thondaman, a trade union leader who was playing an open strike-breaking role against the plantation workers'.

d) '(Bala Tampoe's) attendance at a small dinner party at the West German Embassy for visiting Chancellor Kiesinger'. (The Secretariat's report tactfully omits to mention that Kiesinger was a former member of the Nazi Party.)

e) 'A letter sent to the Ceylonese Prime Minister on 22 January 1966 by comrade Bala in his capacity as Union General Secretary concerning the State of Emergency in which he implied support for the imposition of a curfew in response to the

"violence" that occurred in Colombo'.

f) 'Comrade Bala's policy in regard to the struggle against devaluation of the rupee in November-December 1967. The C.M.U. did not support the strike that took place at that time in the private sector. Serious questions are raised concerning why the LSSP(R) did not take the lead in fighting for united action by all the trade unions and working class parties against devaluation'. (In a separate report the Indian Chairman of the Commission went so far as to say that 'the role of the LSSP(R) during some of the recent strikes in Ceylon (like the Government Employees' strike and workers' strike action against the devaluation measures of the UNP government) and its consistent refusal to have joint action with other working class parties has been such as to place the Party in the camp of the enemy as opposed to workers in action'.)

The Indian representative on the Ceylon Commission of the United Secretariat adds the following charge:

g) 'There is enough evidence to show that the C.M.U. is controlled bureaucratically by comrade Bala. His wife is an important paid functionary of the C.M.U.'. (The nepotism of the UNP and SLFP now finding an echo in the LSSP(R)?) 'There is an unfortunate tendency on the part of comrade Bala to subordinate the politics of the LSSP(R) to the needs of the C.M.U.'.

Despite these sundry uncontested peccadilloes the Commission on Ceylon of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International recommended no more than that 'the double function of comrade Bala as the secretary of both the C.M.U. and the section be terminated as rapidly as possible'. (Three years later Bala Tampoe, of course, still holds both functions.)

In 1969, the Ninth World Congress of the United Secretariat, having considered the report of its own specially appointed Commission, proceeded (a) unanimously to reject a motion calling for the disaffiliation of the LSSP(R); (b) unanimously to endorse the LSSP(R) as the Ceylonese section of the Fourth International; (c) unanimously to elect Bala Tampoe to the new International Executive Committee!

Since the 9th Congress the degeneration of the LSSP(R) has been gaining momentum. It failed to criticise the JVP's Sinhalese chauvinism, its adventurist substitution of armed struggle for serious ideological and political preparation, and its denial of the leading role of the working class in socialist revolution. On April 19, 1971 the United Secretariat's Intercontinental Press, in search of a little reflected glory, claimed that the JVP and the LSSP(R) were participants in a 'single revolutionary front', leading the uprising. This again was pure mythology.

As pointed out by Spartacist 'The JVP was brutally repressed and thousands of its members and suspected members were indiscriminately killed or arrested. For weeks the bodies of young people killed by the armed forces floated in the rivers of Ceylon. It is a fact that not one member of the LSSP(R) was taken into police custody at that time - even accidentally - surely inexplicable favoritism on the part of the bourgeois state towards an organisation which the United Secretariat claims was equally the vanguard of the uprising'.

On April 30, 1971 Bala Tampoe wrote to the Prime Minister. The co-leader of the 'single revolutionary front' discussed the massive executions of JVP militants. Unwilling to take responsibility for even the mildest protest Tampoe hid behind the LSSP Cabinet Minister Leslie Goonewardena. 'Mr Leslie Goonewardena himself seems to believe that "excesses" have been committed by the armed services since the uprising began.' A little later Bala Tampoe sent a further letter to Mrs Bandaranaike. (The Ceylon section conducts its revolutions by correspondence.) In this he implores Mrs Bandaranaike to change her ways. The letter was published in full in the June-July issue of Peace Press. 'Even at this late stage' Bala Tampoe pleads 'we would urge you to consider whether any consideration of "public security" can be consistent with the continued denial of the fundamental safeguards of liberty and life that have been provided under the Criminal Procedure Code'. And this at the height of a 'revolution' which the LSSP(R) claims to be 'supporting'... if not leading. For an analogy from within their own historical tradition, let the Trots imagine Lenin whining to Kerensky about the latter's violations of bourgeois law!

'In September 1971 one Lord Avebury of "Amnesty International" was expelled from Ceylon after attempting to enter a youth detention camp. A government communique identified Bala Tampoe as one of the individuals who had accompanied Avebury. It further stated: "Lord Avebury was in close contact with several persons who appeared to be anxious to embarrass and discredit the government and to smear the image of Ceylon, in this island and abroad". To disassociate himself from the terrible charge of wanting to discredit the government - which had just brutally butchered thousands of young insurgents - Tampoe rushed off an indignant letter: "...the insinuation ... is not only false but obviously malicious. Never in my life have I said or done anything to smear the image of Ceylon in this island or abroad". ...

'... In August 1971 a resolution of the General Council of Tampoe's C.M.U. resolved that "the General Council will mobilise the entire membership of the union to make whatever sacrifices that the mass organisations of the people may consider necessary" if the bourgeois government will undertake

measures "to break Ceylon free of the stranglehold of imperialism upon it, and thereby to enable the people to set about the establishment of a genuine socialist democracy in Ceylon".

'Official' Trotskyism today calls upon a capitalist government - which has just demonstrated its reactionary nature in blood - to help build 'genuine socialist democracy'. It commits the working class to make 'sacrifices' in the interests of such a government. Is further comment really necessary?

IV



HISTORY À LA MAO

In May 1972 N. Sanmugathasan, General Secretary of the Ceylon Communist Party, published 'A short history of the left movement in Ceylon'. (obtainable from Banner Books) This is in the bast tradition of Stalinist historiography and Stalinist politics, as the following quotes will show:

'It is the ABC of marxism that in any colonial country directly ruled by a foreign imperial power, the correct slogan should be one of national independence. The two stages of the struggle for independence and that for socialism are two distinct and separate ones, and they cannot be telescoped into one.'

'On October 16 (1917) the enlarged meeting of the (Bolshevik) Central Committee elected a Party center headed by Stalin to direct the uprising ... Stalin played a role, during the October Revolution, second only to Lenin's.'

'Lenin's request was that this letter (his 'Political Testament') be read to the (13th) Congress. It was done by Stalin himself.'*

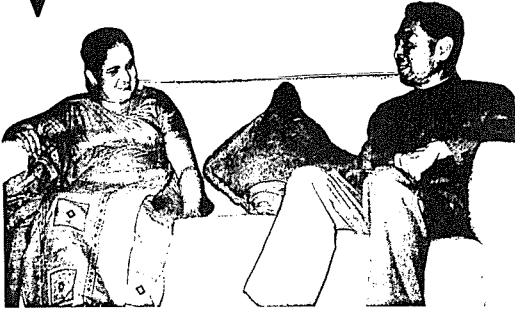
'Trotsky was murdered by his female secretary's lover, in a fit of jealousy.'

* For a real account of what happened, see Trotsky and the suppression of Lenin's Testament by M. Brinton in Solidarity, vol. VI, no. 6.

Did you know...

That pupil Sanmugathasan has recently failed to satisfy his examiners. Perhaps they felt him weak in history. Anyway, in his absence abroad, (in China) the pro-Peking Communist Party of Ceylon issued a press statement removing Sanmugathasan as Party Secretary and expelling him from membership of the Party. The statement, which appeared in the 'Ceylon Daily News' on July 11, 1972 accused him of 'persistently acting ... in violation of the principles of Marxist-Leninist-Mao Tse Tung thought'. We shed no tears as Stalinists expel other Stalinists, particularly while they are on study leave, trying to find out how Stalin did it.

V



CHOU EN LAI'S MESSAGE

I am grateful to Your Excellency and the Ceylon Government for your trust in the Chinese Government and your friendly sentiments towards the Chinese people. The friendship between China and Ceylon is in the fundamental interests of the two peoples and can stand tests. The Chinese Government and people highly treasure the friendship between our two countries and no one with ulterior motives will ever succeed in trying to sow discord and sabotage our friendly relations.

Following Chairman Mao Tse-tung's teaching the Chinese people have all along opposed ultra 'left' and right opportunism in their protracted revolutionary struggles. We are glad to see that thanks to the efforts of Your Excellency and the Ceylon Government, the chaotic situation created by a handful of persons who style themselves 'Guevarists' and into whose ranks foreign spies have sneaked has been brought under control. We believe that as a result of Your Excellency's leadership and the co-operation and support of the Ceylonese people these acts of rebellion plotted by reactionaries at home and abroad for the purpose of undermining the interests of the Ceylonese people are bound to fail.

We fully agree to the correct position of defending state sovereignty and guarding against foreign interference as referred to by Your Excellency. The Chinese Government and people admire this and firmly support Ceylon in her just struggle towards this end. As Your Excellency is deeply aware the Chinese Government has consistently abided by the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, has never interfered in the internal affairs of other countries, and is also firmly opposed to any country interfering in other countries' internal affairs, and particularly to foreign reactionaries taking advantage of the opportunity to carry out armed intervention. I would like once again to reaffirm this unshakable stand of the Chinese Government.

In the interests of the friendship between China and Ceylon and in consideration of the needs of the

Ceylon Government, the Chinese Government in compliance with the request of the Ceylon Government, agrees to provide it with a long-term interest free loan of 150 million rupees in convertible foreign exchange. We would like to hear any views which Your Excellency might have on this matter. We are prepared to deliver a portion of the loan in May and sign a document on it. As for other material assistance, please let us know if it is needed.'

Ceylon Daily News, May 27, 1971.

Footnotes

Introduction

- (1) As late as December 1970 even Tricontinental, the 'guevarist' journal published in Havana, could describe the return of Mrs Bandaranaike and her stalino-trotskyist buddies as 'a serious blow against imperialism'.
- (2) The best eye-witness accounts, to date, of the repression are those of René Dumont (Nouvel Observateur, May 23, 1971) and of Jacques Ducornoy (Le Monde, June 16-19, 1971). Both have been translated into English and were published in the June-July 1971 issue of Peace Press (Conflict Education Library Trust, 6 Endsleigh Street, London WC1).
- (3) Press Conference of April 18, 1971. (International Herald Tribune, April 20, 1971.)
- (4) See Solidarity, vol. VI, no. 11, for full text of the statement, which was published in the Ceylon Daily News, May 27, 1971. (See Appendix V).

The Samarakody interview

- (1) The Peace Press report referred to in our introduction starts 'On April 6 the people of Ceylon woke up to find themselves facing a revolution'. The formulation says plenty. Workers cannot be expected to mobilise themselves for a 'revolution', they first hear about on the wireless or in their morning papers. The working class will only move in a revolution if it feels it is its revolution, something felt deeply to relate to the conditions of its own existence.
- (2) As explained in our article on the background to the Ceylon events, the backbone of the United Front government elected in 1970 was the SLFP, with its 'programme' of 'Buddhist socialism'. The initial emergence of Bandaranaike's SLFP (and of political Buddhism) as a mass force in 1956 deserves a fuller analysis than we can here give it or than is given to it in Halliday's article. Halliday tells us, for instance, that in 1956 'swarms of (religious fanatics) criss-crossed the island urging the population "to be ready to sacrifice their lives for the restoration of Buddhist Ceylon" ... Swept along on a tide of foaming clericalism and racism laced with "anti-imperialist" cant, the SLFP won a massive triumph in the general elections'. We are then informed that 'Bandaranaike had succeeded in capturing, canalising and confiscating the deep frustrations and wrath of the impoverished rural masses ... the function of

his rabid clerico-chauvinist demagogy (being) to divert the pent-up anger of the poor against their class brothers of another ethnic group: the Tamils'.

Descriptively, this is excellent. But it ends where it should begin. Why did the masses accept to have their frustrations 'confiscated' and their anger 'diverted'? What makes the 'soil' receptive, not once but repeatedly (and not only in Ceylon but everywhere) for this kind of usurpation? Halliday nowhere mentions that for opportunist reasons, neither Stalinists nor Trotskyists had ever dared attack religion as such. Nor does he mention the fact that again for opportunist reasons, both brands of prospective leader not infrequently attended temple ceremonies.

- (3) Dumont (op. cit.) tells us that the JVP up to 1970 had 'won supporters among the mass of students and the Sinhalese Buddhist peasants by glorifying the past...'
- (4) Halliday's account of the JVP's attitude to the working class is eloquent, both in what it says and in what it omits. He tells us that the JVP considered the non-plantation peasantry as the 'main force' of the Ceylon Revolution and that they organised and propagandised on this basis for several years. Not surprisingly, at the time of the uprising the JVP 'had only embryonic contacts and links with the working class'. Not very candidly Halliday then tells us that 'the attitude of the urban working class to the insurrection is not yet entirely clear'. On the contrary, it was immediately crystal clear: total indifference. There was not a single strike of railwaymen, or of road workers, or of transport workers, or of electricians or of telegraphists, or of workers in petrol distribution that might even marginally have disrupted the government's repressive plans. There was not a single factory occupation, not a single industrial demonstration in a town of any size. Dumont (op. cit.) mentions that from the Victoria Bridge in Colombo he 'saw corpses floating down the river ... watched by hundreds of unmoving people'.
In a back-slapping handout (Ginipupura Newsletter No. 5) a spokesman for the JVP says 'the JVP were not slow in recognising their own weakness. For instance in the autumn of 1970 (sic) they recognised that they had very little influence in either the urban working class or the Tamil minority'. So much for the diagnosis. The treatment is conceived of in typically bureaucratic and

administrative terms: 'by December 1970 they had initiated united front activities with other revolutionary marxist parties'. In more sophisticated language Halliday speaks of the JVP's 'organisational convergence with two revolutionary forces already working in these sectors' (the LSSP(R) and the YSF).

The complacency, opportunism and sheer patronising arrogance of the JVP statement takes some beating. They change policy in relation to the working class as one might change a shirt. Or rather as one might borrow one. 'We don't seem to have any workers. Should be some around, shouldn't there? Who's "got" some? The LSSP(R)? Quick, a United Front with the LSSP(R)!'.

We learn with interest (Red Mole, 24 April - May 8, 1971) that when 'the JVP leaders made contact with the LSSP(R) ... they discovered that the differences were very slight'. We had long suspected it!

- (5) Halliday writes that 'the JVP considered the Tamil plantation proletariat to have fallen victims to the chauvinism of the SLFP and its allies, and hence to have become immured in a defensive communalism of its own'. He does not explain however that the JVP by its public utterances (and its slogans, such as 'Against Indian Expansionism') did little to destroy such communalism and may have done something to reinforce it.
- (6) The JVP's action seems to have been essentially military, and waged largely by its own forces. If they had really been planning insurrection for several years, they ought to have had some idea of what to do with power if it came their way. There is no evidence of village soviets having been encouraged - or even properly discussed. 'After the occupation of the police station, what next?' would have been a legitimate question from any peasant to any member of the JVP. There is no evidence of even an embryonic answer.
- (7) Even after the Emergency had been proclaimed Ginnipupura Newsletter No. 5 could conclude a propagandist article on behalf of the JVP with a phrase which provides a sort of all-time high in mystification. 'The struggle in Ceylon' we are told, 'led by marxist-leninists and inspired by Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, will move on to greater strength till peoples' power is established'. With that kind of 'inspiration', the one thing we can be certain won't be established is 'peoples' power'. Mao, through Comrade Chou, has already denounced the 'chaotic situation created by a handful of persons who style themselves Guevarists'. Ho Chi Minh suppressed the Saigon Soviet in 1945 (see Solidarity vol. V, No. 5) and organised the murder of Trotskyists like Tha Thu Tau. (Hanoi moreover endorsed

Russia's suppression of the Czech attempt at 'peoples' power'.) Guevara? Well, he's dead - but the 'guevarist' Tricontinental supports Mrs. Bandaranaike. As for Fidel, mum's the word. He's too busy telling miners in Chile they mustn't strike against 'their own' government.

How much longer is this mystification to continue? And how much longer are muddled revolutionaries going to continue perpetuating it - through refusal to denounce it? Answer: as long as they fail to see the invariably counter-revolutionary nature, in practice, of everything that today goes under the name of 'marxism-leninism' (a term, incidentally, coined by Stalin).

- (8) Halliday's article refers to the LSSP(R) as 'a small minority of genuine revolutionary militants ... headed by the trade union leader Bala Tampoe, Secretary of the Ceylon Mercantile Union'. This again is pure mythology. For further information about this character, his national 'section', and the 'International' that covers up for him, see Appendix III.

Background to the uprising

- (1) See Modern Capitalism and Revolution by Paul Cardan (Solidarity, 1965), Hungary '56 by A. Anderson (Solidarity, 1964), and Paris, May 1968 by M. Brinton (Solidarity, 1968).
- (2) A rate of 81%, according to the 1972 Report of the Ceylon Department of Census and Statistics. In Asia, this figure is only exceeded in Japan.
- (2A) Portugal had been independent since the 12th century and it was as an independent state that she had 'colonised' Ceylon. But in 1580 Portugal had been conquered by Spain, King Philip II of Spain becoming Philip I of Portugal.
- (3) F. Halliday, 'The Ceylonese Insurrection', in New Left Review No. 69 (September-October 1971). This is by far the best informed and most interesting account of the background to the insurrection to have been published to date. We have borrowed from it extensively for this synopsis. Elsewhere in this pamphlet will be mentioned our disagreements with its analyses and interpretations of the insurrection itself.
- (4) E. F. C. Ludowyk, 'The Story of Ceylon', Faber, London 1967. £1.75.
- (5) Op. cit
- (6) Ferguson's Ceylon Directory 1970-1971.

- (7) *ibid.*
- (8) There is no doubt that until the early sixties everyone was agreed that the LSSP were Trotskyists, and not 'Trotskyists' or ex-Trotskyists. The Trots would even boast of the LSSP as their 'mass party'.
- (9) The rubber plantations are mainly in the hands of low country Sinhalese land-owners. Coconut, on the other hand, is mainly a smallholder crop - 70% of all coconut-producing land being held in units of 20 acres or less. Coconut not only provides copra and thatch. The husks, after rotting in sea water, provide coir which is the basis of the matting and rope industries.
- (10) Halliday, *op. cit.*
- (11) There has also been a steady fall in the mean age of the population: in 1971, 8.5 million of Ceylon's inhabitants were under the age of 35.
- (12) Le Monde, June 18, 1971.
- (13) Central Bank of Ceylon, Annual Report for 1969.
- (14) *ibid.*
- (15) *ibid.*
- (16) Halliday, *op. cit.*
- (17) That is if by 'socialism' we mean anything more than a ruthless primitive accumulation ('development of the productive forces') carried out on the backs of the peasantry by a semi-military regime tolerating no opposition (and certainly no autonomous working class or peasant organisations) and preaching the virtues of 'marxism-leninism'.
- (17A) Where the primary product is oil, this is usually 'nationalised' and the transition from semi-feudal social relations to state capitalist ones is more straightforward.
- (18) See Modern Capitalism and Revolution by P. Cardan (Solidarity, 1965) for what this has done to the internal structure of modern capitalism.
- (19) Halliday, *op. cit.*
- (20) Marshall Singer, The Emerging Elite : a study of political leadership in Ceylon, Cambridge (Mass), 1964, pp. 85-87 .
- (21) Halliday, *op. cit.*
- (22) Halliday's statement that the LSSP were 'forthwith' expelled from the Fourth International isn't strictly true. (See Appendix I).
- (23) Halliday, *op. cit.*

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