

YOUNG

SOCIALIST

EDITORIALS ON: Ourselves; The 1977 General Election
First Steps to Dictatorship; The Subversion of Democracy;
Curbing the Trade Unions; New Economic Policies; The
Left Today; The Coming International Crisis; The
Politics of Oil; Afghanistan

N. M. Perera - Apostle of Social Change
by Colvin R de Silva

The Background to the Formation of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party
by Kumari Jayawardena

The Manifesto of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party - 1935

April 1971 - A Vain and Inglorious Adventure
by N. M. Perera

The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna - What is it? Where is it going?
by Victor Ivan Podi Athula

March 1980

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YOUNG SOCIALIST

Number 1

March 1980

Editorial Notes

Ourselves

After a regrettable lapse of almost ten years, "Young Socialist" appears once again before the English reading public. In view of the rapidly soaring cost of printing today it may not seem to be an especially propitious moment to publish this journal. However on account of the complex and confused political conditions prevailing in the country and the paucity of left-wing magazines in English with commentaries on the local political scene, we consider it a duty to revive this journal despite the difficulties of publication.

We do not intend making any comments on this entire past decade. Indeed this would be a near impossible task. However mention must be made about certain highlights of the recent past and the present.

The 1977 General Election

Ever since 1956, the masses of Sri Lanka have demonstrated a political maturity and a skill in manipulating the ballot, which is perhaps unrivalled even in Britain, the birth place of parliamentary democracy. Governments have succeeded governments as a result of sharp national electoral swings. Undoubtedly this is the direct consequence of the universal franchise of 1931, achieved perhaps for the first

time by any former colonial country. Similar national swings manifested themselves in India only in the late seventies.

1977 July elections witnessed a landslide victory for the UNP, reducing the SLFP representation in parliament to negligible proportions and the leftwing parties to nought. Some brief observations should be made about this decisive verdict of the people. A major factor, in our opinion, was the prominent rightward shift of the SLFP, beginning early in 1974 and culminating in the expulsion of the LSSP from the the United Front government in September 1975. After Mrs Bandaranaike's visit to west Germany, an ill-concealed shift towards subservience to imperialism began to manifest itself. There was talk of setting up a Free Trade Zone with proposals to give the green light to foreign multinationals to invest in the island. An aggressive attitude was developing towards the Left partners of the United Front, as shown by the banning of the procession organized by the Ceylon Federation of Labour in connection with its Annual Conference in November 1974, followed by the hasty declaration of a curfew. Undoubtedly these policy shifts demoralized the masses who had until then backed the government in view of its anti-capitalist measures, spear-headed by the LSSP in particular. The drastic taxation measures against capitalist elements, proposed by the late N. M. Perera in his budget of 1974, were completely revised by Felix Dias who succeeded him as Finance Minister in 1975.

It must be admitted that there were acts of omission and instances of misjudgement

on the part of the Left as well. There was too much reliance on purely parliamentary measures and too little rapport with the masses. Spontaneous mass actions were frowned upon through the desire - perhaps as a tactical necessity - to preserve and protect the coalition alliance. Reform of the economy, however sound in straight monetary terms, was pursued vigorously, often oblivious of the difficulties of the masses. In a period of genuine mass upsurge when radical changes seem viable and inevitable, mass psychology itself undergoes fundamental changes. Hitherto passive layers demonstrate a remarkable capacity

for struggle and self-sacrifice. In such situations calls upon the people to "tighten their belts" fall upon willing ears. Such was not the situation unfortunately after 1971 - particularly after the destructive and abortive JVPinsurrection which was inevitably followed by a period of Emergency and a strengthening of the repressive arms of the State. The masses crept back into passivity and a sullen silence after the jubilant victory of May 1970. In the circumstances, austerity measures only demoralized the masses and to a degree roused their resentment. Of course, the government itself was caught up in the crisis of the capitalist world economy, rapidly rising inflation and the consequences of the oil price hike, a justifiable move by the Arab world against imperialist exploitation of Middle East resources.

Of course, under the pressure of the Left Parties, certain highly significant and positive anti-capitalist measures had been achieved, notably the introduction of a new Republican Constitution in 1972 which constituted a final political break with Whitehall and provided greater powers for the people's representatives and a framework for more speedy social and economic changes. The Land Reforms and the nationalisation of company estates was a radical step in as much as the tea plantations had hitherto constituted the principal economic base of British imperialism in this country.

In the final analysis, however, these achievements could not compensate for the scarcities in the people's necessities and the frequent spells of austerity they were compelled to undergo. The officious attitudes of certain SLFP Ministers and V.I.P.s only alienated the masses further. All they desired now was a change - any change from the prevailing climate of austerity and scarcities, nepotism and corruption. Memories in Sri Lanka are short. The turn-over of young voters, without mature experience of preceding regimes is particularly rapid. Only the UNP, in the people's minds, had the strength and the capacity to replace the SLFP. The United Left Front of the LSSP and the CP was tardily formed and could not make the necessary impact in time. This, coupled with the skilful electione-

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ering tactics of the UNP, made certain the landslide victory for the latter. Those who remained hostile to the UNP, continued to back the SLFP which they regarded as the one possible bulwark against the UNP. It was not strange, therefore, that the Left found itself totally isolated in the elections of 1977.

First Steps to Dictatorship

Armed with an easy two-thirds majority in parliament, the UNP Government with J. R. Jayawardena at its head, lost no time in subtle moves to subvert the traditional processes in the country and clip the powers of the very masses that brought it into power. J. R. has undoubtedly proved himself to be the most astute bourgeois politician who ever headed this country. Beside him the late Dudley Senanayake appears almost naive and childlike. With superb demagoguery the curtailed interests of the local big bourgeoisie were quickly restored. Constitutional and other means were used to cow opponents and insure the new regime against any future possibility of mass electoral opposition. A reign of terror was unleashed by goonda elements against the supporters of the previous government in town and country alike in the wake of the election. Over 50 Commissions were instituted to "investigate" the corruption and "crimes" of officials, M. P's and Ministers of the SLFP regime.

The Republican Constitution of 1972, which held out an ever-present threat to vested interests was replaced by a new Constitution. The Republic of Sri Lanka became the "Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka". J. R. well understood the value of words and their impact on a people imbued with certain values traditionally and through decades of struggle by the Left. "Socialism", "Democracy" and "Dharmishta" were used as terms indiscriminately to disguise the authoritarianism of the new regime and its utter subservience to Western imperialism.

The new economic policy of relying upon aid from foreign imperialist agencies and reproducing a miniature Singapore in this

island by opening the door to foreign private investors and hopefully the big multi-nationals required an atmosphere of "stability", to use capitalist jargon. This meant curbs on the free expression of the popular will and, in particular, the decimation of the vigorous trade union movement that had grown up in the country. Such steps were necessary in order to re-assure foreign capitalist interests that this was a country which gave promise of free and untrammelled exploitation of a plentiful reservoir of docile and cheap labour. The new constitution clipped the traditional powers of Parliament and transferred authoritarian powers to an executive President. The scheme of proportional representation sought to ensure that electoral swings of the sort manifested in recent years would not be repeated. In the existing bourgeois framework the UNP, it was hoped, would have an edge over all other political parties, at worst, an electoral alliance between proponents of the status quo was expected to provide an effective constraint against any possibility of the Left gaining governmental power through electoral means.

In the possible event of a UNP defeat in 1983, the staggered term of the Presidential office would ensure continued control of the legislature, elected by the people, and reduce it to impotence in the face of the executive powers vested in the President.

The Subversion of Democracy

Besides constitutional "guarantees" of UNP domination Government has utilized its steam-roller majority in Parliament to enact legislation that directly infringes upon the fundamental civil liberties of the people. Certain acts of violence in the North provided the pretext for rushing through the so-called Tiger Law "Prohibiting of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and other similar organizations Law No: 16 of 1978" and the "Criminal Procedure (Special Provisions) Law No. 15 of 1978" ostensibly directed against the "terrorist" movement in the Northern Peninsula but in fact applicable to any part of the island where opposition to the government might manifest itself. This is a draconian piece of legislation which puts on the statute books powers which previous governments could only

wield under conditions of Emergency subject to periodic review by Parliament. The State of Emergency in the North has now been ended but according to the news media certain tensions still prevail in the peninsula. And in the meantime what atrocities were committed in this region during the past year in the name of law and order only an objective and impartial inquiry will reveal. From our experience of the past two years it is hard to expect such an investigation from the present government.

Curbing the Trade Unions

The worst hit during this period of UNP Rule have been the trade unions. Born of years of struggle and built upon the blood, sweat and tears of the working people the Unions have already been subject to drastic curbs and face the threat of near-annihilation as organs of working class struggle. For any action a pretext is always handy. This time it was the threat of strike action by the GMDA protesting against the holding of local postgraduate examinations and insisting on their "right" to sit foreign (i. e. British) examinations. Of course on this particular issue we stand for the decision to foster the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine (which was initiated and first set up by the pre 1975 United Front Government) and to give preference to local medical degrees. However this threat by a section of medical men became the pretext for clamping down on the entire trade union movement of the country the so-called "The Essential Public Service Act of 1979" under which any sector threatened with working class action could be declared an Essential Service. Strike action in such a sector would then automatically become illegal. Activists could be jailed, their property confiscated and any person aiding such activists could also be subject to similar penalties. The harshest aspect of this legislation was the extension of similar penalties even to lawyers defending anyone accused under this law in court. They could even be struck off the roll of Attorneys. This was an infringement of the fundamental and traditional right of any accused to be legally defended in Court. It was an outrageous travesty of basic democratic rights. Of course under the pressure of a spate of working class protests the latter

provision was withdrawn. But it will remain for ever as an indictment of the "democratic" pretensions of this government and a foretaste of things to come.

The seeds of fascism are already discernible on the political horizon. The authoritarianism of the UNP Government and its desire to present a rosy picture of "stability" to foreign investors have not stopped at legal measures either. "Goonda" squads are already on the rampage. Beginning with assaults on University undergraduates by organized thugs violence has been unleashed outside the law on peaceful trade union pickets. It is significant that in the recent attacks on workers picketing against the reduction of annual leave trade union leaders were particularly selected for maltreatment both by thugs as well as the official "guardians of the law". The vehicles in which these thugs travelled are a pointer to the organized nature of the assaults.

New Economic policies

The United Front Government may have been tactless in its policy of import curbs and its belief that the people were ready to undergo sacrifices in their essential commodities for a distant future which was beyond their sight. But basically the economic policies of that government were realistic and corresponded to the long-term development needs of the country. The nationalization of basic sectors of the economy - in particular of company owned estates and the state monopoly of the import and to some extent the export trade - could very well have laid the foundations for self-reliance and the planning of production on a national scale. Unfortunately rightward trends in the leadership of the SLFP virtually halted the process and actually reversed it in 1975 with the expulsion of the LSSP from the government.

What the SLFP then began the UNP as accredited representative of the comprador bourgeoisie in the island carried through to a logical conclusion after 1977. Although unable to alter fundamentally the nationalized sector it has sought to erode it by various indirect means. Lands confiscated under the Land Reform Law have been partially returned to their former owners or huge

sums paid to them by way of compensation. The private sector has been drawn in to "manage" certain state Corporations. The efficiency of other state institutions has been brought to a new low by packing them with favourites and supporters of the UNP while experienced personnel have been penalised blatantly for their service to the previous government. Certain "unprofitable" Corporations are likely to be scrapped although their "unprofitability" is largely of the government's own doing.

Almost total reliance is being placed on the private sector as well as foreign private capital and imperialist monetary agencies. Government's aim appears to be to convert Sri Lanka into a minor version of Singapore or South Korea. The Free Trade Zone is yet floundering after two years of great promise and expectations. Light industries such as garments manufacture predominate in this zone exploiting the cheap labour of hundreds of hapless young women deprived even of protection by the hard-won labour laws of the country. Thus far the expected "transfer of technology" has remained a myth.

The accelerated Mahaveli Diversion Scheme has remained a chimera. Only recently the Finance Minister decided to take yet another trip abroad with a begging bowl in view of the fact that inflation had driven the estimated cost of the Mahaveli Scheme upward by several hundred million rupees. One wonders what the next few months of the growing international economic crisis will result in.

But world inflation apart this government must accept the fullest responsibility for the growing economic crisis of the country. Having subordinated itself fully to the I. M. F. it is compelled to carry out the dictates of the latter.

Imports have been fully "liberalized". Every conceivable item of foreign manufacture including inessential luxuries is available

today on our shop shelves - at a price. Despite the petrol hike thousands of new motor cars enter the island each year clogging the roads and making travel a near nightmare for the average citizen particularly in a situation of deteriorating public transport. Traders, blackmarketers, import-export agencies and gem muckalish have never had it so good. There is money in their hands. The fabulously expensive buffet and night clubs of five star tourist hotels are crowded with locals night after night. The "pleasures" of the west are part of the day-to-day life of this new elite. Our cultural values are being steadily eroded.

On the other hand however, the "Welfare State" that was Sri Lanka is in jeopardy. It is no secret that the World Bank and the I. M. F. have demanded a complete end to subsidies. That the government has acceded to this demand is also evident from pronouncements by government spokesmen. Already various important subsidies have been cut, and the process is continuing by stages. Where once upon a time the late N. M. Perera was sarcastically referred to as "Gazette Perera", today price hikes on various essential commodities are being levied without any announcement whatsoever to the public.

Apart from the minority that have obtained temporary money from employment in the Middle East, the salaried classes are being fast proletarianized, the proletarians are being driven to destitution. The greatest sufferers are the rural poor, among whom, according to medical evidence, malnutrition and actual starvation have reared their heads in recent years to an alarming extent.

The rich are undoubtedly growing richer and the poor poorer. But this is the inevitable UNP dispensation which the Left predicted before 1977. Not all the demagogy and publicity circuses of President Jayawardena's Government can hide this fact. The day of reckoning is not far off.

The Left Today

In the meantime the Left is in temporary disarray. The glitter of commodities in

the market inevitably affects the psychology of the people, even of those who only stare, but cannot buy. But this can only be a passing dream. It is true that the promise of things to come has temporarily caused a rightward shift in the masses. But, as history has proved time and again, social reality must eventually assert itself. Politics knows of no short cuts.

Unfortunately, certain sections of the Left, in their impatience, have forgotten that, even as we ride on the crest of a wave, it is often necessary to "fight against the stream". Short-cuts to "revolution" can only end in the opposite of what is intended. Our ultra-Lefts must learn this lesson - not too late we hope. There are others who look rightwards and seek unprincipled combinations with parties rent with internal contradictions and yet unable to step out of the miasma of the past. At this moment it would be suicidal for the Left to compromise itself with amorphous groupings such as these.

What is necessary is unity in action, in actual struggles against the UNP's efforts to decimate the working masses and step up its moves towards fascism. Left parties must rearm themselves, build up a conscious cadre and join together in every concrete mass action against the Right. Any other compromise would destroy the credibility of the Left, and leave it weakened when the genuine mass upsurge occurs. United fronts are as real in specific actions as they are, in different circumstances, when governmental power becomes the issue. Right now, what is likely is mass action against creeping fascism. No sectarianism can be envisaged in such a situation. That, of course, would be suicidal for the Left, as the 1932 experience of Germany has amply proved.

The Coming International Crisis

The post-war boom in the international capitalist economy, despite periodic "recessions" continued until the early 70's. Capitalist economists were jubilant that Marx had at last been proved wrong. Never again would there be a crisis of the proportions of 1929-33. Between 1943 and 1973 capitalist world production increased three and a

half times at an average rate of 5% per year. In 1974, however, there was no growth. By the last quarter of 1974 the industrial output of all major imperialist countries was declining. The Gross National Product (GNP) of the United States fell by 2.2% from 1973. After 25 years of expansion the GNP in Japan fell by 3%.

At last, the inexorable laws of capitalism, predicted well over a century ago by Karl Marx, were catching up with the artificial factors that created the post-war boom. Leonard Silk, a former writer of the prestigious "Business Week" magazine, wrote thus in an article in the July 28, 1974 "New York Times Magazine" "Today the world economy is again threatened with breakdown and disintegration. Monetary disorder afflicts the entire non Communist World (our emphasis). Nations coming up against the interlocked threats of trade and payments deficits, inflation, energy shortages and unemployment are growing increasingly nationalistic in their policies. It was beggar-my-neighbour nationalism that brought on the debacle last time, for in the end nationalism turned demonic and aggressive in Germany and Japan....." Apart from commenting on the world economy, Silk obviously sees a parallel with the politico-economic situation that erupted in World War II. Could this be a factor governing Carter's current sabre-rattling.

"Business Week" of July 6, 1974 commented: "Plainly every country faces a time limit. Inflation must be brought under control fairly quickly or the very fabric of European society will begin to unravel. The signs of strain are most visible in Italy where still another government failure could bring the Communists closer to power than they have come in any Western European government. The worry in France is that workers and students will stage a repetition of their 1968 uprising."

"Business Week" assesses the very real possibility of revolutionary struggles erupting in the metropolitan centres of Europe itself, with all their attendant dangers to the future of the imperialist system.

The international economic crisis has developed from 1974 through a series of

short term zig-zags to almost unmanageable proportions in recent months. Inflation is rampant in almost every capitalist country without exception. Unemployment has reached a new high. For a period in the past, while the U. S. suffered frequent recessions, Europe and Japan sustained continued growth rates. To some extent these cushioned the down turns in the U.S. Today the malaise of inflation combined with economic stagnation (referred to as "stagflation") is affecting virtually the entire capitalist system. Here in lies the very real possibility of a world-wide depression (with the exception of the Socialist world). Monetary systems are toppling everywhere; gold prices are sky-rocketing. The Iranian Revolution dealt a severe economic and political blow to U. S. Imperialism. The capitalist world is teetering on the edge of disaster.

The Politics of Oil

Imperialism and its agents have taken great pains to "convince" the world that Arab Oil hikes have been at the bottom of the world's current inflationary travails.

Higher oil prices, in fact, did not originate in decisions made by OPEC nations, but in the changing conditions of international competition. "The energy crisis erupted before the October 1973 war. It reflects the long-term drive of the United States to raise world oil prices, and no matter how much they carp about high prices, the oil trusts have no intention of ever lowering oil prices to their pre - 1973 levels....."

".....it is the desire of the U. S. Oil giants to strengthen their hold on alternative sources - and in doing this, for one thing, to lessen their dependence on Middle East oil - that made higher oil prices a central objective of U. S. policy over a long period before the October War" (Roberts: "Capitalism in Crisis" Pathfinder Press, N. Y. 1975)

Three months before the October War Mining executive Carrol. L Wilson wrote in the July 1973 issue of "Foreign Affairs" urging higher oil prices....

"The simultaneous inflationary boom of the advanced capitalist countries in 1972-73

primed by deficit spending and massive credit expansion in all of the leading capitalist powers created an irresistible demand for oil at higher prices. In this context OPEC raised its prices. The oil-producing nations did not create the inflation they responded to it. ...Nor did Washington oppose the OPEC move..... Since the Western Oil companies control the oil industry 'down stream', that is, the piping, refining and marketing of petroleum they were able to pass on price rises to consumers, no doubt lifting prices even more in the process. And it is sometimes forgotten that raising of world prices allowed the oil industry to charge prices for domestically produced oil, which remains the major source of the oil consumed in the United States, the world's largest market for oil" (ibid).

Afghanistan

Revolutionary Iran has been pushed into second place in world rows by the events in Afghanistan. Had these events gone otherwise and the imperialists succeeded in their counter revolutionary pro-feudalist intervention in Afghanistan revolutionary Iran herself would have come under a new threat from her rear. That is one of the realities of the situation flowing from the events in Afghanistan.

The rebuff to imperialism in Afghanistan has other consequences pertinent to the world situation of imperialism; particularly for imperialism's position in the Middle East and South West Asia. A vital sector of imperialism's attempts to contain Soviet Power within the limits already reached historically lies in this region. The so-called defence arc of imperialism in this region - actually the containment arc in relation to the Soviet Union - stretching from Israel in the west and now Egypt through Saudi Arabia, Iran, including Pakistan, was vitally broken by the Iranian Revolution. Behind all the moves of the USA in relation to the seizure of her embassy in Teheran and the refusal to release the embassy personnel still held there by the revolutionary students until the Shah and his fortunes are returned to Iran is nothing other than a sustained effort to repair the breach and restore the containment arc-

an effort which must necessarily be aimed at the destruction of the Iranian revolution.

Now the arc stands threatened and damaged if not actually breached at another point or segment. As General Zia, Pakistan's military dictator has pointed out Afghanistan was a buffer state between Pakistan, ally of the USA and the Soviet Union. That buffer is no more. On the contrary the buffer now seems to Pakistan a spearhead aimed against her in the hands of the Soviet Union; for Soviet troops are probably already on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Khyber pass which is on that border is the traditional gateway through which historically invaders from Central Asia came to what was then India.

It is a dramatic change in West Asian power relations that the Iranian Revolution and the spread of Soviet power into Afghanistan has wrought. It is a change that encompasses also whole reaches of the Indian Ocean on the one side and Central Asia on the other. This fact is reflected in USA fleet concentrations in the Indian Ocean, in the announced USA decision to build up the Diego Garcia naval base to new levels and in the repeated new assurances to military dictator Zia that the USA will engage in a massive build-up of Pakistan's military strength. A similar strengthening has also been promised to Saudi Arabia. We may also bring into the picture the new approaches of the USA to greater rapprochement, including military rapprochement, with China. China, it is to be noted, has a common, though short, border with Afghanistan in Central Asia, and therefore, a direct interest in Afghan developments.

The military developments mentioned above are far more important and lasting than for instance, the non-fulfilment of the contracts to supply grain to the Soviet Union. Imperialism is girding its loins anew and the USA is seeking to recover her post-war role as the world's policeman - a role she lost in Vietnam. The USA's present moves suggest, however, not the recovery of the confidence she lost after Vietnam but a sense of frustration bordering on impotence. The Soviet Union has moved fast and confidently, presenting the

world with a **fait-accompli** before imperialism could make any serious counter-moves. The crisis in international relations is, however, not yet over. At the same time, and despite all military moves, it does not seem that the way out of the crisis will be sought in war. The reluctance of the USA's allies to come actively into the picture is a better pointer to reality than the belligerence of supporting journalists. In the meantime, Soviet troops stand guard at the Khyber Pass, across which even British Imperialism at the height of its power could not secure a firm base.

But what is it that has brought the Soviet Union into Afghanistan? Is it just a matter of power-play and a narrow concern for the Soviet Union's national interests? Or is there also something else? The answers to these questions are of profound practical interest to the world socialist movement and to all revolutionaries.

The Soviet Union's military presence in Afghanistan has certainly not flowed from power calculations and strategic considerations alone; although, of course, such calculations and considerations are necessarily involved in military moves of this order and nature. What other calculations were involved? It is necessary to look at other factors than we have mentioned above to get the answer to this question. We have to look at certain developments in Afghanistan itself.

Down the centuries, Afghanistan was a feudal monarchy. Back in 1975, the monarchy was overthrown by a military coup d'état. A further coup d'état in April, 1978, brought to power the People's Democratic Party which stood for and started carrying through radical social changes of which the principal was a take-over of the feudal landholdings with a view to freeing the feudal tenantry. Coming as the land reform did from above and not through a process of land seizures from below, coming, moreover, as the change did from a government and a party linked itself closely with the Soviet Union, the dispossessed great feudals were able to rouse the country-side against the government in the name of the defence of Islam from a Marxist onslaught. The Government

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N. M. PERERA - APOSTLE OF SOCIAL CHANGE

By COLVIN R. DE SILVA

It is generally accepted that N. M. left his imprint on a whole era of our politics - an era of profound changes in the history of our country. We shall note here the more important of these changes and the part that N. M. played in bringing them about.

The most profound of the changes of the 1931 - 1979 era was the passage of Sri Lanka from direct colonial subjection and rule to political independence. We are still working out the consequences of that change. N. M. left an imprint in that change in that he was a leader of the LSSP in the fight for independence. He was, moreover a principal sufferer in that struggle, going to jail, breaking jail and working illegally in the underground both in Sri Lanka and India.

A second and from some points of view even more profound change of the post 1931 era was the emergence of the masses as direct participators and constitutional arbiters in the political process in Sri Lanka. This was an outcome of the introduction in 1931 of the franchise for both sexes at the age of 21 years (extended to 18 years in 1958). N. M. was a pioneer in the task of taking politics to the common man and involving the common man in the political process. As a politician, N. M. was also a product of that mass process. He was a product and a leader of the political mass movement in Sri Lanka.

Allied to the second change mentioned above was a third, namely, the transformation of Sri Lanka from a colonial autocracy to a full blown bourgeois democracy of the parliamentary type. Sri Lanka came to the parliamentary system (1946-7) via the State Council system (1931-46). We have now changed over from that parliamentary system to a presidential system which has already in its functioning

shown that it has a gravely adverse impact on the system of bourgeois democracy which has been developed in Sri Lanka in the course of some thirty years. The year of introduction of the present constitution, 1978, marks the end of the era we are considering. N. M. was a product and an architect of that era. He was, among other things, a master of the parliamentary art.

It was also in the course of this era that Sri Lanka became a well-nigh fully literate country. This was achieved through the introduction and expansion of the free education system (1946). N. M. was a fighter for a free education system. He wrote a book on the subject while in a detention prison during the war.

In connection with the preceding point there should be mentioned the added fact that this was an era in which the national languages of Sri Lanka, namely Sinhala and Tamil, came into their own. They became not only the media of education, giving rise to a swabasha intelligentsia, but also media of public discussion and the means to a new national culture. The vital new turn these changes gave to Sri Lanka's social and economic development is perhaps not yet fully realized. N. M. went to the masses at meetings and the like in Sinhala long before the false heroes of "Sinhala only". He could speak in Tamil also. As is well known, he stood firmly for the rights of the Tamil Language, taking a political bearing in that connection. He was a pioneer of the swabasha struggle.

The period in which N. M. worked witnessed the rise and development of a powerful working class movement in Sri Lanka. With the growth and expansion in those years of an indigenous working class in addition to the immigrant workers on the plantations, that class also became

conscious of itself and articulate. The trade unions became a permanent and important feature of the socio-economic landscape. Working class political parties arose, developed and multiplied. The modern class struggle between the capitalist class and the working class came to the foreground of the political picture, occupying that foreground permanently and becoming in many ways the principal motor force of politics in Sri Lanka.

As is well known, N. M. stood and worked in the forefront and at the centre of this entire process. The part he played in making the working class of Sri Lanka conscious of itself and in organising it as a class in trade unions and in political organisations is indelibly inscribed in the public memory.

Finally, two other important changes may be mentioned, both in the field of the economy. N. M.'s political life time witnessed a change in the structure of the national economy of Sri Lanka, which is of great importance. It was the growth to dominance of what is now generally referred to as the public sector of Sri Lanka's economy. Incorporated in this process was the nationalisation process, which reached

its high point in the nationalisation of the plantations. The struggle for nationalisation comprised the whole of N. M.'s political life, it being part of the struggle both for national independence and for socialism - the two great objectives which governed N. M.'s political activities.

Last, but not the least, of the deep-going changes during the period in which N. M. lived his political life is the emergence of the rural population to recognised national importance. There is an actively propagated myth in Sri Lanka that the Marxist parties have neglected the problem of the peasantry. In so far as this concerns N. M. the Marxist leader of a Marxist party, this allegation is totally untrue. He represented a rural constituency. His political vision encompassed the problems of the nation in all its sectors. Anyone who reads his many speeches on rural problems, as recorded in Hansards, would realize how profound was his grasp of rural problems and how consistent and sustained was his struggle on rural issues.

It will be clear from the above how N. M. imprinted himself upon his time. It is a rich legacy that he has left to us.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION OF
THE SRI LANKA GOVERNMENT
PROMULGATED ON 31.8.1978

by

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12, Parakumba Place
Colombo 6.

THE BACKGROUND TO THE FORMATION OF THE LANKA SAMA SAMAJA PARTY

KUMARI JAYAWARDENA

The implantation of capitalism in a colonial economy led to important changes in both the class composition and in the political super structure of Ceylon. The new classes that emerged with the development of the plantation sector and the consequent urbanisation were the British and Ceylonese capitalists, the urban petty bourgeoisie and the working-class composed of plantation and urban labour. The rise of a Ceylonese bourgeoisie and the growth of wage labour relationships marked the beginning of the demands for democratic rights in Ceylon including trade union rights for the working-class. However, there was a gap of a hundred years between the introduction into the country of the plantation capitalism in the 1830's, and the rise of the labour movement on the plantations in the 1930's. The reason was that plantation labour recruited from South India, was not wage labour in a competitive market, but was semi-feudal in character. Payment of wages was partly in kind, and the workers, who had to buy their provisions from shops run by the estate, were further tied to the planter and the kangany by bonds such as indebtedness. Independent activity and organization among this group of semi-wage labour was thereby retarded.

However, the growth of transport and urban workshops ancillary to the plantation economy, and the emergence of a nucleus of skilled and unskilled wage labour, resulted in an urban labour movement led by a section of the Ceylonese bourgeoisie. Urban wage labour, divorced from the traditional means of production in the village, found itself in a new form of employer-worker relationship in the towns. Being 'free' agents, selling their labour power on

the market, a section of the urban working-class sought to improve its position through organization and joint action. In addition, the emergence of a Ceylonese bourgeoisie - whose wealth was derived from coconut, rubber, timber, cinnamon, graphite, arrack rearing, cart contracting and urban property led to the growth in the demands for basic political rights in keeping with the economic power of the new class. During the fifty year period between 1880 and 1930 the workers agitation for trade union rights was linked with the movement for constitutional reforms. This struggle of the bourgeoisie and the urban workers for democratic rights can be divided into three phases.

The first phase between 1880 and 1920 was a period of religious revival and nationalism. The challenge to British rule came in an indirect form with the Buddhist and Hindu revival movements of the 1880's led by the Sinhalese and Tamil intelligentsia. This cultural self-assertion of the 'national' religions against the religion of the foreign rulers and their agents, the Christian missionaries, was a form of incipient nationalism. Significantly it was a Buddhist Tantraphist teacher (A. E. Buoljien), and other middle-class reformers associated with various protest movements, who started the first trade union in Ceylon in 1893, (the Ceylon Printers Union formed after a strike at Cave & Co.) In the period up to 1920, there were numerous strikes, the most important being the strikes of laundrymen (1896), carters (1906), railway workers (1912) and port and railway workers (1920). These strikes were led by the unorthodox radical fringe of the Ceylonese bourgeoisie which included Buddhist revivalists,

Theosophists, social reformers, temperance workers and the more politically conscious nationalists. These middle-class leaders were mainly paternalistic, advocating conciliation and moderation to the working class but nevertheless championing the workers' basic right to organise into trade unions. They were persons who were themselves involved in claiming their rights, which included the right of middle-class suffrage, political representation, racial equality and equal opportunity vis-a-vis British officialdom in Ceylon.

The twenties form the second phase of the movement for democratic rights. This was a period of militant trade union struggle which began in 1923, when the Ceylon Labour Union under the leadership of A. E. Goonesinha, organized a general strike in Colombo of 20,000 workers. It was followed by a wave of successful strikes, in the harbour in 1927, among taxi drivers and industrial workers in 1928, culminating in the violent tramway strike of 1929, during which police firing led to five deaths. The leadership of urban wage labour of the twenties came from the radical section of the Ceylon bourgeoisie, most notably the staunch nationalist A. E. Goonesinha who took the fight for democratic rights a stage further than the moderate reformers of the Ceylon National Congress. In a society where wage labour relationships existed alongside vestiges of feudalism, where there were class, caste, communal and religious divisions, and where the exploiting class was both foreign and local, the important political slogans of the period were freedom, equality and social reform. Goonesinha's Ceylon Labour Union and Ceylon Labour Party called for political independence, universal suffrage, political rights irrespective of race, religion or sex, the recognition of trade unions and the right to strike, and minimum wages, pensions and other social legislation for the working-class.

The ideology of the 'advanced' elements of the bourgeoisie of the pre-1920 phase had been Gladstonian Liberalism tinged with Buddhism, Theosophy and humanitarianism. The demands were essentially upper middle-class demands for moderate political reform, limited suffrage and equal rights. But during the twenties - a period of economic

boom, when the Ceylonese bourgeoisie increased in economic power, and urban wage labour expanded in size and acquired greater class consciousness - certain radical sections of the bourgeoisie and a section of the petty bourgeoisie came into prominence and were shrill in their agitation for political reforms and social changes. This was the 'Goonesinha era' with its ideology of Social Democracy. However during the severe economic depression of the early thirties the trade union and political movement led by A. E. Goonesinha collapsed and an era of radical agitation with a new leadership began. The aim of this article is to discuss the events leading to this phase in the struggle for democratic rights which commenced in the early thirties, and led to the formation in 1935 of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, the first Socialist political party in Ceylon.

THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION

The Socialism of the thirties in Ceylon resulted from the fusion of two political strands of the radical bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. First, was the group of locally educated Ceylonese nationalists who formed Youth Leagues in various parts of Ceylon, and led an anti-British political campaign; these young radicals were strongly influenced by militant Indian nationalism but were not Socialists. The second group provided the ideology. These were the Ceylonese students who had absorbed Socialist ideas abroad, and who, on returning to Ceylon, assumed the leadership of the Youth Leagues which they regarded as the most radical indigenous political group. In discussing the events leading to the formation of the L. S. S. P. in 1935, some comment on the contemporary international situation in relation to revolutionary movements is therefore necessary.

In the late twenties and early thirties Left forces in the world had suffered several setbacks including the defeat of the General Strike in Britain in 1926, the consolidation of Mussolini's Fascist rule in Italy, the defeat of the Communists in China in 1927, and the rise to power of Hitler in 1933. The emergence of a Left opposition in the Soviet Union which resulted in the expulsion from the country of Leon Trotsky in 1929, reflected the internal problems of the Commu-

nist movement. This was also a period when the Communist International had to face several important tactical issues concerning the threat of Fascism, the attitude to Social Democracy and the policy to be adopted towards the national bourgeoisie in colonial countries.

Between 1927 and 1935, there were important changes in the policy of the Communist International. In 1927 the Communists had formed the League against Imperialism to include "all political organizations, parties, trade unions and persons, fighting against capitalist imperialist domination." The League declared that its task was to mobilise "in a world-wide resistance to Imperialist offensive, all the revolutionary forces fighting for freedom and democracy in the oppressed colonial countries." The Executive Council of the League included many non-Communist nationalists like Nehru, Mohamed Hatta (from Indonesia) and Lamine Senghor (from French West Africa). But by 1931, the attitude of the League towards these nationalists had changed, and warnings were issued against "illusions spread by these nationalist reformists concerning the possibility of winning national independence without a revolutionary struggle". During this period Nehru, Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose were denounced as traitors and agents of imperialism.² But in 1935, in view of the "towering menace of Fascism to the working-class", the 7th Congress of the Communist International changed its line to that of a 'Peoples Front Against Fascism'. Communists were urged to act jointly with Social Democrats in the political field and with existing trade unions in industrial matters³.

Among the Ceylonese students who were in London there emerged for the first time, in the late twenties, a group which was influenced by Marxism, which became active in Left-wing politics and which was influenced by the critical issues which faced the Communist movement at the time.

THE SOCIALIST STUDENTS GROUP

Before the First World War, Ceylonese students who went to Universities in Britain were drawn from the families of large land owners and those in the liberal professions.

With the boom in all agricultural products and plantation crops in the twenties (especially coconut and rubber), a section of the newly prosperous rural middle-class was able to afford a foreign university education for its children. Whereas the earlier progression of rich students had been from a few select Christian schools in Colombo to Oxford and Cambridge, the new type of student of en went from provincial or Buddhist Theosophist schools to the London University.

In London, in the twenties, the Ceylon Students Association, became an important centre of political discussion among young Ceylonese. The Association was dominated by a group of Socialist students, who while active in the broad student organization, used to also meet separately to discuss questions of Socialism and the possibility of forming a Socialist Party in Ceylon. The group included Philip Gunawardena, Leslie Gonewardena, Calvin R. de Silva, N. M. Perera and Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe. Except for Leslie Gonewardena, none of them belonged to the Christianised elite, but came from the Sinhala speaking, rural landowning class. They were educated in Buddhist Theosophist or government schools and were from Buddhist families whose nationalism had been influenced by Anagarika Dharmapala's Buddhist nationalist crusade, and by the repression that followed the Riots of 1915.⁴

The two important political influences on this group of Socialist students were the Indian Nationalist movement and Marxism. The late twenties was a period when Indian nationalism was going through a militant phase; the Simon Commission on constitutional reforms had been boycotted by the Indian National Congress and within Congress, the Communists and Left-wing factions were becoming influential. In London, the Indian students, were active in nationalist agitation conducted principally through their student organization, the London M. J. S. Some members of the Ceylon Students Association (notably S. A. Wickremasinghe) worked closely with both the M. J. S. and the India League in London whose leading members were Krishna Menon, Fenner Brockway and the Rev. Sorenson. However, Philip Gunewardena opposed Krishna Menon's

policies, and he joined the Indian Communist students group in London. Philip was later joined by Leslie Goonewardene. While in America, Berlin and Paris, he worked with groups of Indian revolutionaries including M. N. Roy, the best known Indian Communist at that time.

Among both Indian and Ceylonese students at the time there was great disillusionment with the British Labour Party, which was regarded imperialist in colonial policy and reformist in home affairs. Hence, the revolutionary slogans of the Communist Party and the Left-wing of the Labour Party seemed to have greater relevance and appeal to many of the students from colonial countries. In addition, the fact that two of the leading members of the British Communist Party were Indian (R. Palme Dutt and S. Saklatvala) led to close contact between the Communist Party and the Indian and Ceylonese students.

In 1928, the Conference of the Communist-sponsored League against Imperialism which was held in London, attracted the attention of the colonial students. (Philip Gunewardena was on the Executive Council of the League from 1929-1931.) The policy of the League was one of condemnation of the Socialist Second International and the British Labour Party, which was accused of having "made common cause with the British Imperialists" by participating in the Simon Commission.⁵

Several of the Ceylonese students acquired a knowledge of Marxism through contact with Marxist intellectuals and with Socialist teachers at British and American Universities, and practical experience was obtained through membership in various Communist organizations, especially the British Communist Party. The Left Opposition views within the Communist movement influenced Philip Gunewardena who, on his way back to Ceylon contacted Trotskyist groups in France and Spain.

It is important to note to what extent the views of this group of Socialist Ceylonese students differed from the opinions of other political associations in Ceylon. This can be gauged from the stand they took on two vital issues, the question of political reforms and the role of the trade union

movement. At a time when the Donoughmore Reforms and A. E. Goonesinha's Labour Party were supported by the British Labour Party, the Socialist student group in London made known their opposition to the reforms and to the trade union policy of Goonesinha.

ATTITUDE TO REFORMS

One important area of disagreement concerned the role of the national bourgeoisie in Ceylon. After the publication of the recommendations of the Donoughmore Commission in 1928, the Ceylonese students in London held a series of weekly discussions at which Krishna Menon, S. Saklatvala and D. B. Jayatilaka were the main speakers. A critical examination of the proposed reforms was made, and reports of these discussions were published as a pamphlet in 1928 by S. A. Wickremasinghe and Krishna Menon. The students disagreed with the attitude of British Labour Party and A. E. Goonesinha to the national bourgeoisie. The British Labour Party regarded the Ceylon National Congress as a set of oligarchs, and Goonesinha's objections to the Ceylonese leaders were so strong that he said he was against more responsible government, unless the franchise was broadened. But the Ceylonese students in London adopted the prevalent Marxist line that the national bourgeoisie should be supported in the fight against foreign rule. They held that the indigenous oligarchy was preferable to a foreign one because the former "had the knowledge of the land and people, (were) of the same stock and tradition, and formed a wider oligarchy with the inherent possibility of ceasing to be one."

On the question of universal suffrage the students group argued that although it was desirable, its immediate significance was not to be overestimated because of the danger of a "large number of votes being at the mercy of those who have the economic power to manipulate them". The Donoughmore Commissioners were accused of "treating the problem in the old way, of looking at political and evolving economic issues", and of neglecting to report on labour conditions in Ceylon, which "would have at least served to draw the attention of the British Parliament, and greater

attention from the Government of Ceylon and the I.L.O." They alleged that this was deliberately omitted as the findings would have discredited the British administration and planter interests; in this connection, the Labour M. P. Dr. Drummond Shiels, who was a member of the Donoughmore Commission was blamed for shirking, a duty which "he owed to the labour world as a whole"⁶

ATTITUDE TO A. E. GOONESINHA.

The Ceylon student group in London opposed the policy and leadership of A. E. Goonesinha in the Ceylon Labour Union and the Ceylon Labour Party. It was essential for the students to take a stand on Goonesinha's position, because from 1922 until the years of the depression, the Labour Union had led the trade union struggles of Colombo workers, and the Ceylon Labour Party (formed in 1923) had been the most radical force on the political scene. The younger generation of nationalist Ceylonese supported A. E. Goonesinha in the fight for swaraj, universal suffrage, trade union rights and better pay. But dissatisfaction with Goonesinha grew especially after the Labour Union signed a Collective Agreement with the employers in 1929 under which the lightning strikes were renounced in return for recognition of the Union.

The first theoretical Marxist analysis of the role of Goonesinha and the labour movement of the twenties, was given by Philip Gunewardena in an article entitled *Whither Ceylon* written in 1931. Goonesinha was given credit for the militant battles he had fought on behalf of the workers, and was called "a man of tremendous initiative and daring." According to Philip Gunewardena the crucial strike in Ceylon, which marked the culmination of a period of offensive action by the workers, was the tramway strike and riot of 1929, during which the workers set fire to the Maradana Police station:

The workers rose to an extraordinary pitch of revolutionary energy, enthusiasm and sacrifice, to defend their class interests and smash the symbol of capitalist authority. (they) displayed rare initiative and ability to cope with a critical situation when parliamentarians were wasting their time in hair splitting arguments over constitutional authority.

The weakened nationalists shivered in their shoes and knelt at the altar of Imperialism begging it to save them from their class enemies. their class fear was more potent than their fear of foreign conquerors.

Gunewardena claimed that the strike weapon was "the manifestation of the class struggle at a fairly acute stage", and that during the tram strike, the workers "who (were) not interested in the law and order of a capitalist society" were able to "put out of commission the authority of the decadent capitalist society". Though the workers had neither preparation nor correct leadership, they were able to challenge "the armed forces of the mightiest empire the world has ever seen." In contrast to the militancy of the workers, Goonesinha was accused of failing to give the required revolutionary leadership during the strike and of displaying "a lamentable confusion." Goonesinha's praise of the British police officials and the cheers that he asked the workers to give the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce after the settlement of strike, were referred to as "tactical blunders" of the first magnitude.⁷

ATTACK ON THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY.

In the late twenties, the Communists and the Left-wing of the Labour Party in Britain were highly critical not only of the political leadership of the British Labour Party but also of the policy of the British trade union movement and especially of the Mond-Turner negotiations. These talks between Sir Alfred Mond, the Chairman of the large combine of I. C. I. (Imperial Chemical Industries) and Ben Turner, the Chairman of the British Trade Union Congress, were an attempt to obtain industrial peace through collaboration between employers and labour.

Influenced by the Communist line on these two questions, the Ceylonese student group criticised the close association between the British Labour Party and A. E. Goonesinha in both political and trade union matters. Labour personalities such as Ramsey MacDonald, Drummond Shiels and George Lansbury were said to have introduced Goonesinha "to the wonders of Fabian mysticism", and in the trade union sphere,

British union officials were said to have explained the nature of "Mondism" to Goonesinha, who after his visit to England in 1923, returned to Ceylon "a devout apostle of industrial peace and a class collaborator". The signing of the Collective Agreement in Ceylon in 1929, was also attributed to this influence. Philip Gnewardena alleged that soon after Goonesinha returned from England, the Chairman of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, S.P. Hayley "a high priest of industrial peace, hurriedly formed the Employers Federation to collaborate with the Trade Unions ... Hayley addressed the business community in the tones of a Hebrew prophet and an Agreement was signed to prevent lightning strikes." Gnewardena also claimed that Goonesinha's conciliatory attitude towards the Employers Federation was proof that very few leaders of the working class could escape the temptations of capitalist society. Goonesinha he said, having risen to power "on the shoulders of the workers, (was) looking round for an official position in the framework of Imperialism, and the Labour Government of England makes the temptations doubly attractive."

In order to counteract the influence of the British Labour Party, the young Socialists urged the Ceylon unions to maintain contacts abroad only with "genuine working-class organisations" and with the "revolutionary trade union movement" in India; warnings were made against attempts to ally the Ceylon labour movement to the I. L. O. and the Socialist Second International and trade union bureaucrats "of the English and American type" were denounced.⁸

The views of the Ceylonese Socialist students in London presented a new departure in ideology for the Ceylon political and labour movement. While these students remained abroad, their agitational activities were confined to student organisations and foreign nationalist or Communist groups. The impact of these ideas was felt in Ceylon between 1930 and 1933 when all the active members of the Ceylon student's group returned home. On their return they emphasized the need for a new political

party with a Socialist basis; this was formed in 1935, but until then the young Socialists joined radical Youth League movement which had already taken root in the country.

THE YOUTH LEAGUE MOVEMENT IN CEYLON.

Amongst the radical youth who had studied in Ceylon during the twenties, existing there was great dissatisfaction with the political organisations and the need for a new approach to political, social and economic issues was keenly felt. The Ceylon National Congress was regarded as a conservative organisation, dominated by the "old guard" leaders, who were against mass political action or any extension of the franchise. Some of the radicals - K. Natesa Aiyar, George and Susan Caldera and Valentine Perera - had joined Goonesinha's Labour Party hoping that his party would provide a vigorous and progressive alternative to the Congress, but many of them dropped out after conflicts with Goonesinha.

Attempts were made in the twenties to form a radical political party when S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike returned from Oxford. His views on economics and politics and his defiance of the older politicians, made him for a time the hope of the young Ceylonese. In 1926, the Progressive Nationalist Party, formed with Bandaranaike as its President, attracted many young nationalists and students. The aim of the party was full self-government for Ceylon, and by "fostering the spirit of nationalism" to widen the scope of political agitation which had "hitherto been the monopoly of a few". This attempt to unite the existing radical forces failed and Bandaranaike continued his political career in the Ceylon National Congress. The existing dissatisfaction with Goonesinha's one man leadership of the trade union movement resulted in efforts to break his control over labour. In 1927, Bandaranaike contested and defeated Goonesinha at a Municipal Council election.

There was a heightened interest in politics in Ceylon with the arrival of the Donoughmore Commissioners in 1927, when issues such as the degree of self-government for Ceylon and the extension of the franchise were hotly debated. The politically conscious youth, who had no faith in the Ceylon National Congress, or the Ceylon Labour Party, began to group themselves into Youth Leagues in order to protest against the new Constitution. The first Youth League was formed in Jaffna (led by Handy Perimpanayagam and C. Balasingham) and active Youth Leagues sprang up in Colombo and elsewhere. In 1931, the Youth Leagues came together to form Youth Congress which had Aelian Pereira, (a lawyer) as its President and Valentine Perera and George Caldera, (also lawyers and former members of the Labour Party) as Secretaries.

ANTI-IMPERIALISM.

An important source of inspiration of the Youth League movement came from the militant section of the Indian National movement. In India, by the late twenties, the Socialists had formed a group within the Indian National Congress, and in 1931 Left-wing members of Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, who were visiting Ceylon, addressed a meeting of the Youth Congress. Links with India were also maintained through personal contacts by some Youth League members who travelled to India frequently.

The political outlook of the Youth Leagues can be divided into two phases. The purely nationalist, anti-imperialist phase when the Leagues concentrated on agitating for political independence for Ceylon, and the second phase when the Socialist students who returned to Ceylon during the depression years gave the Youth Leagues a Socialist orientation and directed them to an interest in economic issues.

In the earlier phase, the activities of the Youth Leagues were dominated by political questions connected with the Donoughmore Constitution. In May, 1931, a resolution was moved by Stanley de Zoysa that the youth of Ceylon had completely lost faith

in British rule which was "fraught with incalculable detriment to the social economic, political and cultural life of the people" and that an intensive campaign be launched for the immediate attainment of Swaraj. At the Youth Congress in December, 1931, Valentine Perera called for "downright unadulterated independence", and stated that no halfway measures would be acceptable. The Donoughmore Constitution was also described as "a setback in the political history of Ceylon" and "a flagrant invasion of our cherished rights calculated to wound our national self-respect."¹⁰

The Youth Leagues also launched several boycott campaigns. Influenced by the methods of the Indian National movement, the Youth Leagues called for a boycott of the general elections (held in June 1931) as a protest against the new constitution. On election day, Youth League members demonstrated with placards near polling stations, urging people not to vote. The boycott was only successful in Jaffna, mainly because the Tamil population had their own special grievances against the constitution. There was also a campaign by the Youth Leagues to boycott foreign goods - especially rice, liquor, cloth and tobacco - and Ceylonese were urged to join the Swadeshi movement launched by the Youth Leagues to encourage local products. The Colombo South Youth League opened a Swadeshi Co-operative store which only sold local products. Terence de Zylva, one of the most active members of the Youth movement, declared that as Ceylon was "held in bondage by military force and repression", the only weapon the Ceylonese could use was the boycott of foreign goods and the fostering of national industries. Another boycott sponsored by the Youth Leagues was the King's birthday celebrations, on the ground that such occasions fostered a "lamentable form of slave mentality" and were bound to be regarded as a "willing acquiescence to be governed and controlled by Great Britain."¹¹

The Youth Leagues were also critical of the country's education system which according to Terence De Zylva, (the founder or Kolonnawa Vidyalaya) was "in the hands of Empire builders who had used it as a political weapon". At the Youth Congress

Sessions in 1931, C. C. Sabaratnam proposed and Terence de Zylva seconded a resolution that the existing system of education was injurious to Ceylon's "political, cultural and economic well being" and urged that a national system of education in swabasha be implemented.¹²

In the absence of a broad nationalist movement led by the national bourgeoisie, a small group of radicals in the Youth Leagues became the vanguard of the nationalist movement during this period.

ECONOMIC ISSUES AND SOCIALISM.

In 1931, Nehru, in addressing the Youth Congress, had emphasised the inadequacy of nationalism alone without an understanding of the working of capitalism. At that time Left-wing in the Congress Party believed that political independence would be of little value without revolutionary social changes; Nehru advised the Youth League members to consider how national freedom would affect the masses in the country and to try to understand the nature of Imperialism and capitalism. "How will you free the men, women and children of Ceylon? Freedom is worth striving for, but you must see how it affects the bottom dog in your country." At the same meeting Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya spoke of Gandhi's campaign of civil disobedience in 1930, and said that it was "not only Imperialist violence that Gandhi was up against, but also the violence of the capitalists who exploited the poor."¹³

As a result of the trade depression and the prevailing high rates of unemployment, economic problems were frequently highlighted by the Youth League movement. For example in January 1932, Terence de Zylva declared that the aim of Ceylon youth should include "freedom from the vulgar pride of wealth and the monopoly of the necessities of life by self-seeking capitalists", and he called on the youth to liberate the country "from alien domination and economic exploitation."¹⁴ In May, 1932, the monthly journal *Young Ceylon*, published by Youth League members, declared that its aims were complete independence, economic stability and national solvency. In 1932, the Colombo South Youth League issued a

pamphlet entitled *The Present Economic Crisis* which aimed at showing that political and economic freedom were "inextricably bound up in each other". This pamphlet referred to British economic interests in the country as "a constant drain of the country's wealth" and it condemned the system of Imperial Preference as "disastrous to the economic stability of the island". The Youth Leagues called for a more equitable distribution of wealth, to be obtained through "the re-organization of tariffs, taxation and finance." It is significant that in 1932, Socialism was not one of the slogans that was openly used, and the equal distribution of wealth was advocated through financial reform and not by means of revolutionary change in the social order. But it must be noted that a few of the Youth League members in Ceylon (notably Terence de Zylva and Susan Calder) had already shown interest in Socialist ideas.

However, by the latter half of 1932 and in 1933, there were significant changes in the politics of the Youth Leagues, when the Socialist students, who had studied abroad, returned to Ceylon and became leaders of the Youth League movement. For the first time in Ceylon Communism and the experiences of the U. S. S. R., received favourable comment. In September 1932, Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, who had joined the Colombo South Youth League, wrote an article in *Young Ceylon* proclaiming Communism as the new ideology to be followed. In the same journal, Robin Rutnam, another member of the Youth League (who had studied in Canada) argued that the need for economic planning was "the most significant lesson the outside world (was) learning from the great social experiment in Russia", and he forecast that the youth of Ceylon had a great opportunity to create "a new social order". The pages of the *Young Ceylon* from the latter half of 1932 onwards, contained references to Lenin.¹⁵

In the years preceeding the formation of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party the Youth League movement made its influence felt in several ways. The Youth Leagues, under new Socialist leadership, turned the Anti-Poppy Day campaign into a platform for anti-imperialist propaganda against the

British; during the Malaria epidemic of 1934, the Socialists played an active part in the relief of distress; in 1933 they led a strike and gained valuable experience in trade union agitation, and from 1931 to 1935, through their first representative in the State Council, the young Socialists entered the field of parliamentary politics.

THE SURIYA MAL MOVEMENT, 1931-1933.

One of the issues that brought the Youth League to the forefront of nationalist political activity was the Anti-Poppy Day campaign, which had its beginnings among a group of radical students in 1926, was carried on by the Ceylon ex-Servicemen's Association and the Youth Leagues in 1931, and was given a distinct militant anti-British appeal when the Colombo Central Youth League took over the movement in 1933.

Remembrance Day on November 11th used to be observed in the twenties with a great deal of fervour by government officials and the British residents. On that day, Poppies were sold by enthusiastic organizers and there was a re-affirming of faith in the Empire by means of military parades, church services and banquets held with great pomp and ceremony. The jingoistic annual Poppy Day displays caused resentment among some of the young Ceylonese nationalists who criticised Ceylon's contribution to the Poppy Fund which was one of the largest in the Empire.

In 1926, A. W. H. Abeyesundera, a law student complained in a letter to the press that though Ceylon was a poor country, vast sums of money, disproportionate to her revenue, were being sent out of the country in the form of Poppy Day collections, and that only an insignificant portion of that money went towards helping Ceylonese ex-servicemen. This letter aroused the interest of a group of young Ceylonese who called themselves the Cosmopolitan Crew (Harry Gunewardena, James Rutnam, D.N. W. de Silva, C. Panambalam, Valentine Pereira who in 1926, organized a public meeting and demonstration to protest against Poppy Day. These young men

were nationalists some of whom had been associated with A. E. Goonesinha's labour activities, and were to become active members of the Youth Leagues.

In 1931, a more positive step against the Poppy Day collection was taken when the Ceylon ex-Servicemen's Association whose President, Aclian Pereira, was also the President of the Youth Congress and an ex-serviceman himself, launched a rival fund called after a local flower, 'the Suriya Mal', in order to collect money for Ceylonese ex-soldiers and for local charities. Pereira said that there were many Ceylonese servicemen who were disabled, destitute and in urgent need of help; "there is an idea" he wrote, "that it is dirty and mean to sell the Suriya flower on Armistice Day", but he explained that this particular day was chosen as it had special significance to all servicemen.¹⁶ The Youth Leagues took up the Suriya Mal campaign with great enthusiasm and made the occasion into an anti British demonstration

The sale of the rival flower on Poppy Day, 1931, created a great interest in Colombo and other towns. There were brisk sales especially in the working-class areas of Colombo where there were more Suriya flowers than poppies, and it was reported that pedestrians in Colombo "showed preference for the Suriya Mal, but most cars had poppies". The leading Christian schools of Colombo refused to let the Suriya Mal sellers enter their premises, and some British business firms warned their employees against wearing a Suriya flower to work.¹⁷

The Ceylon ex-Servicemen's Association which had sponsored the Suriya Mal was alarmed by the political character of the campaign and by the opposition that it aroused, and in 1932, the Association decided to discontinue the movement. This was the opportunity for the Socialists and in 1933, the Colombo Central Youth League took over the Suriya Mal campaign and elected a Committee for this purpose whose president was Mrs. S. A. Wickremasinghe (nee Doreen Young), the Principal of Ananda Balika Vidyalaya. This Committee included many of the Socialists who had come back

to Ceylon from abroad, and also the most radical members of the Youth Leagues. The movement also attracted many other nationalists including S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike who was in charge of the Suriya Mil funds and Wilmot Perera, at whose school (Sri Palee in Horana), the Suriya Mil annual meetings were held. It should also be mentioned that several young persons were drawn into political activity through participation in the Suriya Mil movement. The money collected was used for the education of a child of a 'depressed' community and for the publication of literature. The Ananda Balika Principal's house became the headquarters of the movement and each year hundreds of yellow Suriya flowers were made by the enthusiastic staff, who included Helen de Alwis, Eva de Mel, Violet Gamage, Lillian Bandaranayake and Winifred Silva.

The Suriya Mil, which had originated as a campaign for ex-Servicemen, dropped any reference to Ceylon disabled soldiers and took on an open political and anti-British character. This led to a great deal of anger and resentment on the part of the authorities, the British residents in Ceylon, and certain newspapers. The new organisers of the Suriya Mil were accused of a "lack of decent sensibility", and the campaign was called a "crude political move utterly in bad taste."¹⁸

Several new political slogans were introduced into the Suriya Mil campaign by the Youth Leagues. In 1933, Leslie Goonewardena wrote, "we have yet to be shown that Britain fought for us during the war or that she has disinterestedly done anything for us in peace. the purchase of the Poppy in Ceylon is only too often an expression of blind admiration for the mighty British Empire." Terence de Zylva declared that the movement was "definitely anti-war" and that they should prevent money going out of the country "to help the British Empire to wage wars for the purpose of partitioning the world". For the first time a Socialist slogan was used in the campaign when de Zylva in 1933, ended an article on "Suriya or Poppy" with an appeal to "Unite in this battle to establish a Socialist, Democratic Ceylon."¹⁹

TRADE UNION ACTIVITY

In the years before the founding of the L. S. S. P. the Youth Leagues also gained experience of trade union agitation when they took over the leadership of a strike at the Wellawatte Spinning and Weaving Mills in 1933. This was a turning point in the working class history of Ceylon because the the Labour Union led by A. E. Goonesinha, which had abandoned its radical policy after the onset of the depression, was effectively challenged in the trade union field by the militant elements of the Youth Leagues.

The Indian-owned Wellawatte Spinning and Weaving Mills (established in 1890) was the largest textile mill in Ceylon employing 1,400 skilled and semi-skilled workers. In 1923, 1926 and 1929, under Goonesinha's leadership there had been strikes at the mills. In February, 1933, as a result of the economic depression and the increased competition of Japanese textiles on the market, the management announced a reduction in wages. This led to a strike of the entire labour force, instigated, according to the management, by "veteran ringleaders" among the workers. The strikers sent a petition to the Minister of Labour and appealed to Goonesinha to intervene on their behalf. To the surprise of the workers, Goonesinha advised them to return to work on the grounds that striking without giving the required notice was a breach of the Collective Agreement between the union and the Employers Federation, and also because the Labour Union membership of the majority of the strikers had lapsed.

The strikers then appealed for support to a lawyer (H. Sri Nissanka, a Youth League member) who lived opposite the Mills; he advised them to put their case to Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, who had recently returned from Britain. De Silva and other members of the Colombo South Youth League took up the question, and on February 23rd, at a mass meeting of the workers, the Wellawatte Mill Workers Union was formed with de Silva as President and two active Youth League members (Vernon Gunasekera and J. W. Senanayake) as Secretaries. Philip Gunawardena, N. M. Perera, S. A. Wickrema

singhe, Robert Gunawardena, Susan Caldera and several militant workers including Appahmy, Kuttan and Ramiah helped in organizing the strikers, spoke at mass meetings, collected funds and distributed relief.

During the strike-which lasted two months-A. E. Goonesinha's aim was to prevent recognition being given by either employers or government to the new Union. The Manager of the Mills refused to open negotiations with the newly formed Wellawatte Workers' Union, and said that he was only prepared to accept Goonesinha as the accredited representative of the workers. Goonesinha denounced the Youth League as a political organization which was misleading the workers for the "sinister purpose" of disrupting organized labour. In tolerating the "scandalous interference" of the Youth League in the strike, Goonesinha said the Controller of Labour was, "encouraging anarchism." The new Union leaders were also accused by Goonesinha of having "imbibed fantastic ideas from Russia and America" and of seeking to introduce "aggressive methods into the life of the labourers in Ceylon."²⁰

The strike at the Mills was aggravated by the introduction of communal issues into the dispute. Because of the composition of the Mill workers, of whom two-thirds were Malayalis and one-third Sinhalese, Goonesinha was able to stir up anti-Malayali feeling at a time when communal racial tensions were strong in Colombo due to the extensive unemployment during the depression. The Secretary of the new Union condemned "the mischievous, irresponsible activities of Mr. Goonesinha who through a campaign of vilification, insults and abuse of a highly inflammatory character, is striving to raise interracial animosity in this dispute."²¹ Because the majority of the strikers were Malayalis, the attempt by Goonesinha to introduce Sinhalese "blacklegs" into the mills increased the tension. Harbour workers were sent in lorries to the Mills by Goonesinha, who claimed that the purpose was to afford protection to the strikers who were willing to go back to work. The police stated that Goonesinha "by deliberately importing rowdies" had provoked clashes between

Malayalis and Sinhalese, and had brought about a "most serious state of affairs."²²

In view of the increase of communal tension, the Minister of Labour informed the Governor that "the disturbances which (had) already arisen and the risks of racial clashes (were) too substantial to be set aside."²³ The government therefore decided to intervene and appointed a Commission for the settlement of the dispute under the Industrial Disputes Ordinance of 1931.

This was the first occasion when the provisions of the Ordinance were used in the conciliation of a trade dispute. The Commission in its Report reprimanded the workers for striking without first trying to negotiate with the management, and Goonesinha's efforts to persuade the men to return to work were described as reasonable. The Commission agreed that the Mills needed financial relief and that "wages should make a contribution of some substance towards this relief" but they recommended a maximum reduction of wages by 12%, which would be covered by the fall in the cost of living during the depression. The demands for a reduction in the hours of work from 60 to 54 a week was turned down as impracticable, as mills in India were also working a 60 hour week. The Commission also stated that the financial difficulties of the time made it impossible for them to recommend the other improved amenities that the workers demanded.²⁴

The report was welcomed by Goonesinha and a meeting of the Ceylon Labour Union was organised to celebrate the occasion, at which Goonesinha gave an account of all the concessions he had obtained for the workers in the past years. In contrast, Colvin R. de Silva the President of the Wellawatte Workers Union said that unlike Goonesinha, the workers did not greet the report with a "hallelujah chorus" as it was neither "fair, just, nor reasonable". On the question of wages he said, "We cannot accept the principle that wages should invariably vary with the cost of living. This is based on the utterly unwarrantable assumption that the prevailing wage rates are just."²⁵

The government was concerned at the appearance of a new militant trade union

to challenge Goonesinha's Labour Union, which at this date had become acceptable to both the government and the employers. The Controller of Labour reported that the Manager of the Mills was "in a very embarrassing position for we do not seem to be dealing with a trade union, but a political body."²⁶

THE MALARIA EPIDEMIC - 1934.

In common with the labour leaders of previous decades, the leaders of the labour movement of the thirties were also involved in relief activity among the masses which brought them into direct contact with the problems of poverty and disease. The malaria epidemic came after two seasons of severe drought and failure of crops, and according to an official report "found ready victims among a population already debilitated by lack of food owing to the economic depression. The official estimate was that in the area of Ceylon affected by the epidemic, where the population was 3 million (out of the island's total of 5 1/2 million) there were 1 1/2 million cases of malaria by April 1935, and over 100,000 deaths between September 1934 and December 1935."²⁷

The severity of the epidemic caused conditions of famine in some districts of Ceylon, and government and private organizations were active in organizing relief of distress in the worst stricken areas. The government appointed a Commissioner for Relief, voted half a million rupees to deal with the epidemic, and opened a Malaria Relief Fund to which a lakh was subscribed. The money was used for distributing food, clothing and medicine, and organizing relief work. Volunteers from various organizations helped in collecting supplies and making house to house visits distributing medicine and food.

In the Kegalle district the Suriya Mal movement was very active in providing relief. A dispensary was opened and Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe, Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, Harry, Pailip and Robert Gunawardena, Dr. N. M. Perera, Robin Rutnam, Dr. Mary Rutnam, Selina Pieris and some teachers of Ananda Balika, worked in the area for many months. The house of Borahugoda Ralahamy (Pailip Gunawardena's

father) was the center for the Suriya Mal workers in that area. The Commissioner of Relief in his report stated that "intelligent and systematic voluntary workers were the most efficient" and made mention of "the admirable service" rendered by the Suriya Mal workers.²⁸

The devastation caused by the Malaria epidemic was blamed by the Youth League and the Suriya Mal workers on the apathy of the administration. The epidemic which was referred to as one of the "greatest national disasters," was held to be "the direct result of the callousness and indifference of the State." The Legislature was accused of a total neglect of the peasantry during the critical years of depression, drought and epidemic, and the Ceylon National Congress was criticised for failing to put forward a policy "for the regeneration of the villages and the improvement of the peasantry". The leader of the State Council, D. B. Jayatilaka, who was reported to have said that the malaria epidemic was due to the past sins of the people, came under fierce attack by the Young Socialists. He was accused of ignoring "the political implications of the malaria epidemic" by "playing on the credulity of the ignorant and the superstitious", and of using the taxpayers money to celebrate the Royal Jubilee in 1935, "while the country was being reduced to a graveyard."²⁹ Colvin R. de Silva alleged that while thousands were dying of hunger and malaria, "the so-called national leaders had been entertaining Royal Dances, celebrating Royal Jubilees, hunting for knighthoods, relieving the rich of their responsibility by repealing estate duty, and lightening the taxes paid by foreign exploiters."³⁰ The Ceylon Labour Party was also blamed by the Youth Leagues for failing in its "special responsibility" of rousing public opinion "to a consciousness of the needs of the poor and working classes". The enthusiasm of the Party, it was stated, had been exhausted by "the craze for political heroics" and it was "more concerned with exploiting the labourer than improving his condition."³¹

The Young Ceylon described the work of the Suriya Mal movement during the epidemic as a remarkable effort by educated young men and women who had given a new meaning to the idea of relief. In a report

made by the Suriya Mal Malaria Relief Committee, the political importance of the work was emphasised. The Report stated that "the medical and material aid we rendered was nothing compared to the moral value of the contact" between peasants and the Suriya Mal workers:

Not until now did we really begin to understand and appreciate the full implications of a crude feudalism, and the nature and extent of the oppression, misery, want and moral degradation that could prevail within such a system... our sympathetic treatment of the villager as our equal was a revelation to him, accustomed as he was to be bossed, abused, and treated like a dog by his so-called social superiors.

The young Socialists, who launched the attack on the Ceylon National Congress and the Ceylon Labour Party for their failure to tackle the urgent problem of economic and social reform, became more than ever aware of the need in the country for a Socialist political party.

AGITATION THROUGH THE STATE COUNCIL

In the years preceding the formation of the L. S. S. P. the Socialists also had their first experience of parliamentary politics. Although a section of the Youth League movement had been against contesting the elections, another group believed that the State Council would be a valuable forum for agitation and propaganda, with the added advantage of parliamentary immunity. From 1931 until 1936, Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe who had been active in the Suriya Mal campaign, Malaria relief work and in the Wellawatte strike, was the Member of the State Council for Morawaka. In the State Council Wickremasinghe kept up a vigorous attack on the British colonial government and on the political and economic policy of Ceylonese Board of Ministers, and used every occasion to highlight the problems facing the masses during these years of economic depression. He criticised the medical and social service facilities and made an important dissenting report on the Commission on child servants. He opposed wasteful expenditure on Royal visits and on the occasion of the King's Jubilee in 1935, he moved an amendment to the message of loyalty which stated, "The condition of the masses has not improved one bit within the 25 years of your Majesty's

reign... they are subjected to disabilities, harsh legislation and exploitation... and the fruits of this negligence and criminal indifference of Your Majesty's advisers has been garnered in the shape of poverty, disease and starvation,"³³ During the malaria epidemic, Wickremasinghe constantly exposed the inadequacy of the relief services and claimed that the lesson of the epidemic was "the need for political emancipation."³⁴

In the State Council, Wickremasinghe also led the campaign of opposition to the Trade Union Act of 1935. The Ceylon government had tried to pass repressive legislation to control trade unions in 1929, but this had been rejected by Lord Passfield (Sidney Webb), the Secretary of State in the 1929 Labour government, and only the non-controversial Ordinance to govern trade disputes was passed in 1931. By 1935 however, when Ceylon was beginning to recover from the after effects of the depression and renewed labour activity was therefore a possibility, the first Ordinance to regulate trade unions was adopted by the legislature.

The main provisions of the Trade Union Ordinance of 1935 were the compulsory registration of all trade unions, regulations concerning 'contracting in' by members with respect to the political fund of a trade union, and provision that not more than half the officials of a trade union could be 'outsiders'. The Youth Leagues claimed that the government was trying to crush the trade union movement, and in the State Council, S. A. Wickremasinghe as a member of the Standing Committee to discuss the Ordinance, made a dissenting rider in which he stated.

The Bill is designed to restrict the legitimate activities of workers to form trade unions, but does not provide any protection against victimisation by the employers in a country where there is no legislation for insurance against unemployment, sickness, old age, maternity, accidents and any other form of social insurance, it is very unwise to introduce legislation to restrict the formation and activities of voluntary associations.³⁵

THE FORMATION OF THE L. S. S. P.

The activities of the Youth League movement in the years before 1935 had consisted of Socialist inspired, anti-British,

anti-feudal campaigns for obtaining democratic rights. The nationalist agitation of the Youth Leagues and the Suriya Mal movement expressed the radical middle class hostility to British rule. Through the relief work done during the Malaria campaign, the social requirements of the rural masses and the feudal oppression that existed in the villages were highlighted. During the severe economic depression when A. E. Goonesinha had abandoned militant trade unionism, the Youth Leagues led the struggle for trade union rights and workers' demands. In addition they used the State Council as a place from which all these political and economic problems could be aired.

The need for a separate political party to carry on broad political and trade union agitation was felt, and on December 18th, 1935, the most active members of the Youth Leagues founded the Lanka Sama Samaja Party.³⁶ The new party issued a manifesto which was intended to be a broad programme of twenty two "immediate demands for day to day agitation and struggle." The manifesto claimed that aims of the party were the abolition of social and economic inequality and oppression arising from differences of class, caste, race, creed or sex and the socialisation of the means of production distribution and exchange. However, measures involving socialisation were not included in any of the twenty two demands which enumerated the legislative measures needed to ameliorate economic and social conditions in Ceylon.

On behalf of urban workers the manifesto called for minimum wages, unemployment insurance and relief, an eight hour day, factory legislation, slum clearance, cheaper housing and the abolition of compulsory registration for trade unions. Relief for the peasantry was urged in the form of free pasture lands, seed paddy free of interest and the abolition of irrigation rates and forest laws relating to the removal of brushwood. In the interests of children, demands were made for free school books, free meals, free milk and the abolition of child labour. On economic questions the manifesto advocated higher income tax, estate duty, the abolition of Imperial preference on the Japanese quota and the

abolition of indirect taxation which affected goods consumed by the poor. The manifesto also recommended the use of swabasha in the lower courts, police stations, government departments.³⁷

This was a programme of minimum demands intended to popularise the new party among a wide section of the population. None of the demands called for revolutionary change, and the party at its formation did not intend to establish itself as a Marxist party. Even organisationally the party was not a tightly knit revolutionary party with a restricted membership. The L. S. S. P. membership was open to anyone who affirmed that he was a Socialist and agreed with the aims of the party.

The decision - 18 years after the October Revolution - to form the L. S. S. P. as a broad-based radical party instead of a strictly Marxist party was influenced by the absence in Ceylon of a militant nationalist movement led by the national bourgeoisie. The need of the day was felt to be the establishment of a party which could include radical nationalists and Socialists and which could give a Socialist direction to the struggle for political freedom and democratic rights.³⁸

FOOTNOTES

I am very grateful to Mr. Hector Abhayawardena, Mr. Philip Gunewardena, Mr. James T. Rutnam, Mrs Doreen Wickremasinghe and Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe for their helpful comments on this article.

1. The term 'plantation capitalism' has been expressly used because there is a view that plantations were not a completely capitalist mode of production.
2. Resolutions of the General Council. December 1927, and of the Executive Committee, 1931 of the League Against Imperialism. (Emphasis added)
3. In 1935 the Comintern declared that Communist parties had to "reach agreements with the organisations of the toilers of various political trends for joint action on a factory, local district, national and international scale". (Resolutions of the 7th World Congress of the Comintern 1935. At this time the importance of joint trade union activity was stressed by George Dimitrov when he said,

- "We must base our tactics not on the behaviour of individual leaders of the Amsterdam unions no matter what difficulties their behaviour may cause in the class struggle, but on the question of where the masses are to be found and make question of struggle for trade union unity the central issue." (George Dimitrov, *The Working Classes Against Fascism*. Emphasis added.)
4. **Philip Gunewardena** (born in 1900) was a son of Boralugoda Ralahamy who had been sentenced to death and reprieved by the British during the 1915 Riots. After this episode Gunewardena was taken from a Christian school, (Prince of Wales College, Moratuwa) and sent to Ananda College. The Principal at the time was a Theosophist, Fritz Kunz, of Wisconsin University, who was a liberal and sympathetic to Indian nationalism. Gunewardena also joined Wisconsin University where there were several Marxist teachers including Scott Nearing & John Commons.
 - Leslie Goonewardena** — (born in 1909) whose father was a doctor in Panadura, came from a landowning Westernised family. He went to St. Thomas' College and to a public school in Wales. He did the B. Sc. (Economics) degree at the London School of Economics and qualified as a Barrister. While in London, Goonewardena was very active in Left-wing political groups.
 - N. M. Perera** — (born in 1905) was from a middle class family and was educated at Ananda College. He did a Ph.D. on the Weimar Republic at the London School of Economics and later obtained a D. Sc. for a thesis on Parliamentary Procedure. He was influenced by Professor Harold Laski.
 - Colvin R. de Silva** — (born in 1907) was from a rural middle class family. He was educated first at St. Johns Panadura and later at Royal College. He did a degree and Ph. D at London University and was called to the Bar. His thesis was on British rule in Ceylon in the period before 1833. In 1927, de Silva was the Secretary of the Ceylon Students Association. He visited the Soviet Union in 1931.
 - S. A. Wickremasinghe** — (born in 1901) was from a landowning family in South Ceylon. He was educated at Mahinda College (Galle) where the Principal was F. L. Woodward a Liberal and a Theosophist and the Vice-Principal, F. Gordon Pearce, was a member of the British Independent Labour Party. During the 1915 Riots, Wickremasinghe who was a schoolboy witnessed acts of repression by British troops. Wickremasinghe qualified as a doctor in Ceylon and went to Britain in 1926. In London he was president of the Ceylon Students Association in 1927.
 5. Resolution of the General Council of the League against Imperialism 1927.
 6. **Study of the Report on the Constitution**. Ceylon Students Association, London 1928 .
 7. Philip Gunewardena, **Whither Ceylon?** (The Searchlight, 9 November 1931)
 8. *ibid.*
 9. *Ceylon Independent*, 6 September 1926 .
 10. *The Morning Leader*, 18 May and 29 December 1931. The Youth League and (after 1935) the L. S. S. P. leaders retained their contacts with India. S. A. Wickremasinghe on his way back from Britain in 1928 spent two months in India, where he attended the sessions of the Indian Trade Union Congress . He revisited India frequently. He was in Benares when the news arrived of Gandhi's arrest during the Salt March in 1931 and he rendered medical aid to the injured after the police fired on the demonstrators. He also visited Gandhi in jail and spent some time at Santiniketan where he met Tagore in 1933. In 1936 Philip Gunewardena attended the Indian Trade Union Congress sessions in Bombay, and in 1937, Colvin R. de Silva, N. M. Perera and Philip Gunewardena attended the sessions of the Indian National Congress .
 11. *The Searchlight*, 13 February 1932 and *Morning Leader* 26 May 1931.
 13. *Morning Leader*, 24 December 1931
 13. *Morning Leader*, 18 May 1931
 14. *The Searchlight*, 27 January 1922. 'Our Duty' by Terence de Zylva.
 15. *Young Ceylon*, September 1932. 'The Need for a Planned National Life' by Robin Rutnam. In the same issue there was a review of *The Speeches of Lenin* in which Lenin was referred to as "the greatest moral force in the proletarian revolution." In *Young Ceylon*, October 1932, there was a review of Lenin's 'Socialism and War' which wrote of the alert, resourceful and clear mind of Lenin."
 16. *Times of Ceylon*, 10 November 1931
 17. *Morning Leader*, 10 November 1931 and the *Ceylon Independent*, 11 November 1931. (Letter to the Editor.)
 18. *Ceylon Independent*, 11 November 1933.. Editorial.
 19. See *Young Ceylon*, October 1933 for Leslie Goonewardena's article and *The Searchlight*, 18 October 1933 for the article by Terence de Zylva.
 20. *Ceylon Labour Department*. File T. 15 letter of 15 March 1935; and *Ceylon Daily News*, 2 May 1933.

21. Ceylon Daily News, 22 March 1933. Letter to the Editor
22. Ceylon Labour Department File T. 6. Police Report 21 March 1933
23. Ceylon Labour Department File T. 15. Letter of 23 March 1933.
24. *ibid.* Report of April 1933.
25. Ceylon Daily News 25 May 1933.
26. File T. 15 op. cit letter of 14 March 1933.
27. Sessional Paper 5 of 1936 p. 17.
28. *ibid.* Report of F. C. Gimson. The Report of the Assistant Government Agent, Kegalle, also referred to "the most useful work of the Suriya Mal Society" in Kegalle and especially to one of its members, Robin Rutnam, who "made excellent arrangements for the distribution of relief and performed very useful service in a locality which was particularly badly stricken." *ibid.*
29. Young Ceylon, December 1934, Article on 'The Epidemic,' and June 1934, Malaria and Politics' by Vernon Gunasekera.
30. Ceylon Independent 23 December 1935.
31. Young Ceylon, December 1934.
32. Young Ceylon, September 1935.
33. Ceylon Daily News, 8 May 1935.
34. State Council of Ceylon, Hansard p. 34. Debate of January 15, 1935.
35. Labour Department File T. 1, Part II.
36. The founder members of the L. S. S. P. included C. Balasingham, George Caldera, Susan Caldera B. J. Fernando, Philip Gunewardena, Robert Gunewardena, Leslie Goonewardena, Vernon Gunasekera, Corbett Jayawardena, Jack Kotelawala, M. G. Mendis, Roy de Mel, N. M. Perera, Selina Perera, Robin Rutnam, J. W. Senanayake, Colvin R. de Silva, S.A. Wickrema singhe, Doreen Wickremasinghe, Terence de Zylva and Stanley de Zoysa.
37. Young Ceylon, February 1936.
38. It appears that the decision to form the L. S. S. P. as a broad party had no connection with the Communist International 'United Front' policy of the time. However, after the party was formed the inner group of Marxists (Philip Gunewardena, Robert Gunewardena, Leslie Goonewardena, N. M. Perera and Colvin R. de Silva) who were influenced by Left Opposition ideas, began to take control of the party. Under their influence by the late thirties the L. S. S. P. had made a revolutionary impact in the plantation sector, and by 1940, the party emerged as a Trotskyist party. Philip Gunewardena states that the Communist International made several attempts to influence the L. S. S. P. and sent British and German emissaries to Ceylon in the thirties for this purpose.

(Continued from Page 8)

fought back, but was itself convulsed with internal feuding between the PDP factions. The PDP leaders, Tarakki, who had come to power in the April 1978 coup, was himself overthrown by means of a coup d'état which brought Tarakki's colleague, Amin, to power, leading a rival faction to Tarakki's in the PDP. Amin decimated his rivals and sought to consolidate himself by violent measures against his opponents. But in the meantime the insurrection against the regime spread and even reached the vicinity of Afghanistan's capital, Kabul. Amin's regime seemed doomed.

The insurrection had gained strength from imperialism's intervention in the situation, chiefly through Pakistan. There were in Pakistan's border, 450,000 refugees, of whom, the chief were the ousted land-owning feudalists and their supporters. The imperialists armed them, trained them and paid them, sending them into Afghanistan to organise and lead an insurrection which now, backed as it was by imperialism, threatened the overthrow of the Amin regime and the restoration of feudal power in Afghanistan.

It was in this situation that Amin himself was killed in a coup d'état, while the Soviet Union intervened militarily, bringing to power Babak Karmal, who had been Vice Premier in the time of Tarakki and who had fled to the Czechoslovakia under Amin. It is in defence of the Government of Babak Karmal, thus installed in power, that the Soviet troops are in action today, against the imperialist-feudalist organized insurrection in Afghanistan. They are in action in the name of the Karmal Government, but they are of course, under the control of the Soviet Union

It is plainly necessary to take into consideration the above facts, especially the reactionary nature of the imperialist-organised insurrection, if one is to take a correct attitude and stand in relation to the demand that Soviet Union do withdraw its troops from Afghanistan immediately. To support that demand today is to support the imperialists in their continued efforts

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MANIFESTO OF THE LANKA SAMA SAMAJA PARTY

(This is the Manifesto adopted by the Lanka Sama Samaja Party when it was founded on 18th December, 1935. Some of the founder members are mentioned in footnote 36 of the article "The Background to the Formation of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party" written by Dr. Kumari Jayawardena, which appears in this issue.)

After a hundred and forty years of British rule the people of Ceylon are faced with poverty amidst all the material prerequisites of prosperity, and with disease and recurring epidemics despite the researches of modern medical science. We are still attempting to maintain life with primitive and unproductive methods of agriculture in an age characterized by its fruitful application of science to agriculture. Illiteracy and ignorance are widespread with us though ever fresh fields of knowledge are being conquered by modern thought. Indeed the majority of our people are condemned to work and die in poverty, squalor, ignorance and disease while a small minority enjoy the comforts, privileges, leisure and opportunities which their disparate wealth affords them.

There were those that believed that some radical improvement in the condition of the people would result from the acquisition of some semblance of political power by the Ceylonese. Particularly was it hoped that the pressure of popular opinion functioning through a full adult franchise would operate to that end. The result has belied the hope.

Four-and-a-half years have now lapsed since a State Council was elected on a universal franchise. Limited as are the powers of the State Council under the Donoughmore Constitution, our accepted national leaders have not lacked the opportunity of influencing policy in the interests of our people. Instead the apathy of these leaders in the

face of political crises, their co-operation in imposing hardship and injustice on the people, together with their pronounced antipathy to measures of social amelioration and even to political struggle, prove conclusively their readiness to subordinate the national interest to personal ascendancy.

The representatives of popular emancipation have become the agents of class domination. While blow after blow has been struck at the standard of living of the poor by taxation of necessary foodstuffs etc., by Imperial preferences, Japanese Quotas etc; while the army of unemployed, has mounted to stupendous proportions uncalculated and unprovided for while over 90,000 have in a few months died of hunger and preventable malaria, reducing the countryside to a graveyard, our national leaders have been entertaining Royal Dukes and celebrating Royal jubilees at public expense, hunting for knighthoods and other 'honours' indulging in the most open forms of family bandyism and impudent jobberies relieving the rich of their responsibilities by repealing the estate duty and lightening the taxes paid by foreign exploiters.

It is no wonder therefore that 70% of our people are existing on the verge of starvation. There is scarcely a wage earner who has not to support many unemployed relatives - yet the Government has neither provided real relief nor even ascertained the number requiring such relief. Half the children of school-going age have neither the opportunity nor the means to go to school. Our figures of infant and maternal mortality are better only than those of India. Preventable disease annually takes a shocking toll of lives. The average span of life in Ceylon when not disturbed by epidemics, has not been officially estimated but is in the neighbourhood of 27 years as

compared with 53 years of average life per person born in England.

In short, the history of the last few years demonstrates that there is no real advantage to the toiling masses in merely choosing every four years which members of the oppressing class should repress them in council.

NEVER WERE THE NATIONAL LEADERS OF OUR COUNTRY MORE SATISFIED WITH THEMSELVES AND WITH THE ADMINISTRATION THAN NOW; AND NEVER WERE THE CONDITIONS OF POVERTY, UNEMPLOYMENT AND DISEASE AMONG OUR PEOPLE MORE DESPERATE THAN TODAY!

This self-satisfaction derives from the absence of a genuine opposition basing itself on a coherent body of economic and political principles. Nothing more clearly demonstrates the urgent need for an organized political party formulating openly and boldly the needs of our people.

It is not enough however merely to voice the felt demands of our people: it is the *role* of a Party to base the struggle for them on a body of coherent principles, and it is the function of true leadership to take the road to their attainment.

All the world over there is today a fundamental conflict between two sets of principles, which may form the basis of Government policy- they are the principles of disintegrating capitalism and those of advancing socialism. Recent history has amply memonstrated the inability of capitalism to ensure a decent existence to the large majority of humankind. In every country there is an increasing body of informed opinion which has become inalienably convinced that Socialism provides the only practicable alternative to capitalism. What is more it is now being increasingly realized that Socialism alone can give the universal opportunity of a full life.

That there is a growing volume of Socialist opinion in Ceylon has been apparent for some time. It will therefore be no cause

for surprise that those elements have now coalesced into the Lanka Sama Samaja Party.

The primary aim of the I.S.S. P. is the establishment of the Socialist Society in Ceylon. The essential economic basis of such a society is Socialized production, distribution and exchange of commodities. Through socialization alone can the popular needs be fulfilled.

The struggle for socialization will inevitably bring to the surface the reality of foreign domination. The fight for popular rights involves a fight against the dominant power. The dominant power in our social system is held by the capitalist class, the predominant section of which are the British exploiters.

Behind the British capitalists stand the forces of British Imperialism. The greatest barrier to the establishment of Socialism in Ceylon is therefore the existence of Imperialist rule. Accordingly, for us the assault on Capitalism necessitates the assault on Imperialism by the struggle for full National Independence.

The only elements in our society which can whole-heartedly and effectively carry on the struggle against Imperialism are the toiling masses. They cannot emancipate themselves without emancipating all society from the tyrannies, superstitions and prejudices of class, race, caste, creed and sex which keep society divided and enslaved.

Thus the need of the hour in our country is for a common front, of all elements striving for emancipation, with the battle-front of socialism which alone can lead society to victory. The victory of socialism means the political supremacy of the toiling masses, and there with the abolition of every form of exploitation by the constitutional use of the new State Power.

It will be the role of the L.S.S.P. to prepare the toiling masses for the exercise of this power and for a consciousness of their historic mission for which already they are being provided, both with the opportunity and with the power, by the economic condition of their very existence.

The FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVE of the L. S. S. P. is the establishment of a Socialist Society. This necessarily means.

1. THE SOCIALIZATION OF THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION DISTRIBUTION AND EXCHANGE OF COMMODITIES.
2. THE ATTAINMENT OF NATIONAL INDEPENDANCE
3. THE ABOLITION OF ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INEQUALITY AND OPPRESSION ARISING FROM DIFFERENCES OF CLASS, RACE, CASTE, CREED AND SEX.

The L.S.S.P. formulates the foollowing immediate demands on behalf of the toiling masses.

1. Abolition of domestic or industrial exploitation of child labour.
2. Free supply of school books to children in primary schools.
3. Free meals and milk to all children in primary schools.
4. Free pasture lands in every rural district.
5. Supply of seed paddy free of interest to cultivators.
6. Permanent abolition of irrigation rates.
7. Abolition of the assignability of Tea and Rubber Coupons.
8. Abolition of Forest Laws relating to removal of brushwood and the transport of timber.
9. Establishment of unemployment insurance for all workers.
10. Provision of work or maintenance for all in need.
11. Establishment of a Minimum Wage so that all workers may maintain a decent level of life.
12. Establishment of an 8 hour day for all workers.
13. Abolition of the compulsory registration of Trade Unions.
14. Factory legislation to ensure decent working conditions.
15. Introduction of a Rent Restriction Act.
16. Clearance of slums & provision of better & cheaper housing for workers.

17. Use of vernaculars in the lower Courts of Law and in entries and recorded statements at Police Stations; and the extension of this use to all government departments.
18. Introduction of a scheme of National Health Insurance paying;
 - i. Sick benefits
 - ii. Old age benefits
 - iii. Maternity benefits.
19. Steeper graduation of Income Tax on the higher incomes
20. Re-imposition of Estate Duty on estates of Rs. 25,000/- and over.
21. Abolition of Imperial Preference and the Japanese Quota.
22. Progressive abolition of all indirect taxation.

THE RISE OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT IN CEYLON

by

Kumari Jayawardena

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APRIL 1971 - A VAIN AND INGLORIOUS ADVENTURE

by N. M. PERERA

(This article on the 1971 April insurrection was written by Lt. Col. N. M. Perera, shortly after the event, when he was the Minister of Finance in the United Front Government elected in May 1970)

Already in 1965 or 1966, rumours reached the leadership of the L.S.S.P. of clandestine classes and lectures being held in various parts of the country. Particular mention was made of the classes held in the Kotte area. Party comrades were asked to obtain as much detailed information about the speakers and the contents of the speeches made. It would appear that most of the speakers were either masked men or spoke from behind screens. Most of those who attended these classes were young men in their teens. The organisers of these classes seem to have adopted all the modern techniques of propaganda by creating a mysterious atmosphere so typical of the mumbo-jumbo of African witchcraft men. They do, however, excite and intrigue the minds of impressionable young men. They help purvey a sense of seriousness and a sense of participation, in something deep and mysterious.

The Party no doubt made some note about these carryings-on. In the customary way, party members would have scorned these artificial propaganda aids and generally belittled the effect of these talks. Consequently, they paid little attention to these scattered classes held in various parts of the country. The Party never for a moment assumed that they will catch on. It could not believe that any serious person could be bamboozled by the mystery that they wove round their classes.

From the information that was then available, a Marxist class analysis formed the basis of these classes and lectures. By and large, they followed the pattern so familiar to our Party members and Youth Leaguers. There was a general analysis of capitalist society and its failure to solve the problems of the present day world. In addition, our informers reported that these classes provided a vicious attack on Left Party leaders. Character assassination was the vicious part of the main theme. On the instructions thus imparted the necessity for the violent overthrow of the existing Government was urged over and over again. There was no constructive alternative placed before listeners. There was a vagueness when it came to specific proposals to re-fashion the new society. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Party as a whole or most of its members refused to take these rumours seriously. It is not so much that the Party members did not accept the existence of these classes, but that they refused to gauge the extent of the permeation of these classes. They refused to believe that the people of this country would be so naive as to be carried away by such shallow reasoning.

Our Party must confess that we have shown a gross incapacity in our intelligence reports. We have shown an inability to understand the frame of mind of young people and their susceptibility to the allurements of new ideas, couched in assimilable language in a conducive atmosphere. We have failed to grasp the degree to which the young minds have been swayed by the tawdry show and the flippant indifference of capitalist society. We have failed to realise the frustration of half

educated young men and women especially of the rural areas for whom the future was one long unfulfilled hope. In a matter of few years, thousands and thousands of young men and women have been drawn like moths to a huge fire. And yet as a political party, we were ignorant of the depth and extent of these ramifications. We had a foretaste of this at the first opening of parliament in June 1970 in Independence Square when thousands of indisciplined men and women overwhelmed that solemn occasion and reduced it to a farce. Yet, we refused to heed, the growing impatience with the old order and the paraphernalia that accompanied old ceremonies.

If our Intelligence Reports were poor, those of the Police were pitifully hopeless. They had no clue about the activities of the J.V.P. and of the other organisations allied to this movement. Such reports as were available from the Police were based on prejudice rather than on objective observations. They followed the time worn pattern of condemning everything that was red. They showed that the Police high-ups were concerned to defend their class alignments and, therefore, Police Reports were tendentious and designed to sling mud at the Left Parties of the Coalition. Prior to the Elections, however, there were two Reports handed over to the Head of the last Government, who understandably enough, pigeon-holed and paid no heed to the warnings contained therein. Today when we read them, they disclose a remarkable perspicacity and insight into the organisation and activities of these insurgents. A very objective analysis of the politics of the component parts of this movement is brought out in these two Reports. There are 3 main streams in this movement.

According to these Reports, the Wijeweera trend commanded the smallest contingent. The biggest contingent was led by one Sarath Tairanagama under the aegis of Mrs. Thaja Gunawardene. The third trend was led by Mohideen and a number of other unknown figures. The smallest group was Wijeweera's the One Day Revolution Group, and after the elections this became the largest of the three groups. It set the pace for the other 2 trends. They

became like competing trade union rivals each trying to show that it was more militant than the others, and draw in the biggest following in the process. Strangely enough, the Police seems to have dived up with these Reports. What they dished out subsequent to these Reports is worse than dish water.

Either the Police had no clue as to what was going on in the country. Or even if they did know, they were wary of conveying the information to the Government.

The occasional public meetings of the so-called Janatha Vinukthi Peramuna did perhaps lull the public and the police into believing that this was purely a legitimate political Party carrying out normal political propaganda against the Government. This may have helped to conceal the wide network of underground activities that the J. V. P. conducted in various parts of the country. Undoubtedly, we must pay a tribute to the manner in which this organisation kept these activities secret until their plans were almost mature.

This successful underground organisation brings out two factors. First of all, the efficiency with which the underground work had been conducted. It shows the ability to mobilise competent local leaders who were capable of carrying out the instructions issued from the centre. The whole movement is highly decentralised. Each unit had a specified task. The unit as such had no contact with or knowledge of the other units similarly engaged in specified tasks. Each was a self-sufficient unit allotted a definite task. To judge by subsequent results each one of them carried out its tasks fairly efficiently though with varying degrees of success due to multifarious other circumstances.

The second factor which is noteworthy in this connection is the remarkable loyalty that the movement evoked in its members.

The loyalty involves faith in the justness of the cause which the members espoused. Justness must be convinced justness. Any vagueness cannot evoke steadfast loyalty. A romantic vision of a future cannot sustain

lasting loyalty. The events after the 5th of April have shown that the members of the J. V. P. have displayed a dedicated loyalty which can only be born of a firm conviction that the policy and programme of the J. V. P. are both real and realisable. Young men and women would not lightly sacrifice their lives for a cause that was hopeless. They could burn with an animated desire to achieve the goal of a new society. They would not chase after a mere chimera for the pleasure of enlivening a dull life.

It behoves us, therefore, to examine the policy and programme of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna. From the insurgents themselves, we have statements which refer to the 5 lessons that they have been taught. It is possible that the leaders had something more. They may have had other and more profound considerations for the moral regeneration and the material re-construction of Ceylon, but that which evoked the unquestioning loyalty of the thousands of young men and women were apparently these 5 lessons which were drilled into them. Clearly, if the contents of these 5 lessons were not such as to convince the followers that they provide a rational solution to the problems they were facing they would not have moved into action with the devotion that they showed from the 5th of April onwards in various parts of the Country.

On the 14th July, 1970, Wijeweera spoke at length to an audience of University students under the auspices of the Socialist Society of the Vidyodaya University. I have read his speech carefully, and looked in vain for any positive economic programme or economic policy. Apart from being a rambling attack on left leaders and left Parties in general and the present Government and its failure to carry out changes that the J. V. P. had in mind, there is no constructive thought on which the future of this country can hang. It is significant that its reference to the U. N. P. and its activities are few and far between, and that its animosity is concentrated on the Left Parties. One cannot build a country by the mere denigration of the Communist Party or the L. S. S. P. It is only fair to the followers of the J.V. P. for us to assume that their minds were impregnated by more

solid considerations than a mere diatribe on the Left Parties.

We must, therefore, construct the policy and programme of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna from the casual answers provided by captured insurgents or from the notes set down in exercise books which have been taken over from fleeing or captured J. V. P. followers. From what we can gather, the first lesson dealt with the economy of the country. There is an undisguised opposition to the dependence on foreign markets. Tea and Rubber Estates have been the bone of this country. Our hill tops have been denuded, their top soil eroded and the country has been dependent on foreign markets for its existence. What is worse it has led to the large-scale influx of Indian labour into this country leading to Indian expansionism. The answer to this economic debacle and misfortune is to uproot all tea and rubber lands and plant in their place paddy and other subsidiary food crops. We shall then have a self-sufficient economy.

To any thinking person, this thesis must prompt a few questions. A small country like Ceylon cannot obviously produce all the innumerable goods that we use and consume. What big countries like Soviet Russia, United States of America, China and even India can achieve along the lines of autarchy no one in his senses will say Ceylon can achieve. We import buses and vans, lorries, oil, tyres and tubes, chemicals, fertilisers, machinery of various types for industries, various industrial raw material and thousands of other articles used by people as necessary goods for maintaining the standard of living to which we have been accustomed. We do not think there is any one person in this country who does not use some imported article which is essential for his normal existence. If we import articles that are produced abroad, we have to pay for this in gold or by exporting articles that other countries buy. Of gold, we have none. So we must fall back upon articles that we can export and which other people wish to buy. If we destroy all the crops that can earn the foreign exchange with which we can buy articles necessary for our consumption, then we must be prepared to do without these

articles. We must gradually work towards the bullock cart age. We must do without all the amenities of modern life. We must go back to virtual primitive existence. It is not at all clear whether the followers of the J. V. P. have worked out the logic of the repudiation of the export-import economy. Whether the so-called leaders believe this or not it is immaterial. What is material, is how much the followers have swallowed this thesis of uprooting tea and rubber lands. From some of the answers elicited from some insurgents, it would appear that they have reconciled themselves to a decade of hardships. All people of this country would have to tighten their belts and lead a very poor, monotonous, and miserable life for ten long years. At the end of which everything will be bright and cheerful. Prosperity will suddenly dawn on this country. How this blissful state will suddenly dawn, no one has been able to enlighten us. Wijeweera himself had not deigned to vouchsafe an answer. It is very doubtful whether the overwhelming majority of the people of this country will accept this economics of poverty. If they do not endorse this policy they will be forced to fall in line. There is no doubt in the minds of the Vimukthi members that they would dragoon the people to accept this new economic policy whether they like it or not. Clearly, therefore, this would be an imposed line of action. The people would be regimented to carry it out. What is envisaged here is a dictatorship of the J. V. P.

What surprises us and what is beyond our comprehension is the readiness with which under-graduates, graduates, teachers and lecturers have accepted and adopted this policy. Surely, these men are capable of thinking. One begins to wonder 'whither education'. These are some of the bright lads of our country. If they show such ineptitude and incapacity to think, about the consequences of the policies that they are advocating, is it not time for us to remould our educational system. There is something deep and fundamentally wrong in the whole educational set-up that we have been able to breed such shallow minds. We have produced young men and women who are no better than herds of cattle that

can be stamped into an economic abyss. If our higher educational institutions like Universities can produce only men of such low calibre, a radical re-organisation is urgent.

If the basic economic idea is so fatally weak, how can we explain the mesmerised loyalty that the JVP evoked in their followers. People do not rush to immolate themselves for a future of poverty. There is something pathetic in the readiness of these young people to sacrifice their lives. We have seen slogans chalked up on rocks, on hill tops, on walls "Motherland or death". In the setting of Ceylon, this is a meaningless slogan.

This was a slogan that animated the people of Cuba when it was fighting against the cruel dictatorial regime of Batista and American Imperialism. We have no foreign Army of occupation. We have a free democracy. In May, 1970, the people willingly and with enthusiasm voted down the representatives of the capitalist class in Ceylon and enthroned in their place Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike and the United Front Coalition with a programme clearly setting out the steps to be taken in the first years of its rule. A slogan that is appropriate to a subject country like South Vietnam cannot have any meaning in Ceylon. Yet by writing and mouthing these slogans in narrot-like fashion, the J. V. P. discloses a capacity for imitation which has had disastrous consequences for its followers.

From the evidence forthcoming from the followers of the J. V. P. who were taken into Custody no questions were permitted in these classes. Every member was to accept as the tried and tested truth pronouncements made at these classes. However wild, bizarre or incongruous these assertions, they form the final word. Any attempt to question would be treated as disloyalty to the movement and the J. V. P. A questioning member would be treated as a doubting Thomas and presumably expelled from the ranks. Pointed questions were asked from these insurgents why they did not stop to question the absurdity of uprooting the wealth-producing tea and rubber lands. Invariably, the answer was we were satisfied if the movement says so.

The movement, therefore, became the repository of the conscience of the members of the J. V. P. They were content to surrender their capacity to think to the movement. This blind obedience conveys a child like simplicity. We have returned to the middle ages when faith alone mattered and thinking was a sin.

It is said that one of the assertions of the JVP teachers is the uselessness of learning. Education was wasteful. It created inertia. It sapped the will to act. One must confess there is some consistency in this. Education can be fatal to blind obedience. Therefore, burn books and libraries. This is a terrific indictment of over 25 years of free education in this country. The pearl of great price deserves a better reward.

From the records available, the second lesson dealt with the subject of Indian expansionism. It would appear that the Sinhalese must fight the tendency of India to expand in to Ceylon and other neighbours. She will utilise the Indians in the Estates as her fifth column to overrun this island of ours. Therefore, this theory of uprooting tea and rubber is closely linked up with the struggle against India and her expansionist policy. All Indian estate labour and indeed all Indians would be driven out of Ceylon. It is not clear how this is to be done. Presumably, they will be asked to quit voluntarily. If they do not do so, they will be bodily bundled out. Since we are an island, we will have to put them in ships and sail them across the ocean. Who will provide the ships? It is not quite clear. If India is not willing to accept them, one would presume that they will be dumped into the sea and allowed to drown themselves.

It would be clear to even the meanest intellect that a small country like ours cannot behave like a great imperialist power such as Britain, France or the United States. We cannot practise genocide and expect both India and the rest of the world to sit idly by unconcerned with lakhs of people being drowned in the sea. We will invite reprisals from our powerful neighbour and the rest of the world will applaud its action as one of mercy. In the end, we will be inviting expansionism instead of fighting expansionism. Then we will be politically

submerged by India before we can look around us.

What is this bogey of Indian expansionism? Is there such a thing? It is true China's international political propaganda in order to justify her border incursions manufactured this catchy slogan. The rights and wrongs of China's behaviour are not at issue here and now. What is the justification for the J. V. P. to mouth such slogans in the light of our recent experience. Have we become the victims of an Indian expansionist movement in recent years. On the contrary why is the JVP silent about the Sirima-Shastri Pact which provides for the repatriation of 525,000 persons of Indian origin who are at the moment, resident in Ceylon. That Pact far from creating a expansionism of the Indian population in Ceylon would see a steady depletion of 35,000 annually. More than half the present population in Ceylon will return to India to settle down. Our firm commitment to absorb is restricted to 3 lakhs. The balance 1 1/2 lakhs would be the subject of further negotiation so that the theory of expansionism does not bear a moment's examination. It is true Mr. Dudley Senanayake the previous Prime Minister succumbed to cajoling and threats of Mr. Thondaman and his Indian Congress and failed to implement the pact. On the other hand, the present Government has already started sending out a few thousands. The target is likely to be reached early next year.

From the two lessons that the insurgents are supposed to have imbibed we cannot but conclude that those arguments can hardly evoke the kind of devotion that leads to a sacrifice of the lives of followers. As we have seen, they do not bear a moment's examination. They are shallow, stupid, impractical and bordering on the nonsensical. It is difficult to believe that any person in his senses could have laid down his life for a cause based on such false notions and misguided concepts. Yet, the stark fact is that hundreds of young men and women were prepared to immolate themselves for a cause which they knew to be hopeless. What then is the explanation of this foolhardy conduct? The other 3 lessons are negative lessons. So far as as we can gather they are directed

at an exposure of the failure of the existing political Parties and the Governments formed by them to solve the problems of the masses of this country. This is the 3rd lesson. The fourth and the fifth lessons deal with the art of bomb making, how to store them, dispose them and endeavour to teach the military tactics involved in using them. Let us examine these also and endeavour to understand whether the total effect of these lessons was sufficient to evoke the kind of high devotion that was forthcoming in the insurgent activity of April.

The criticism of various Governments from 1943 onwards is not without justification. Parliament has been moving slowly and clumsily. Governments have generally forgotten the promises made during election time. Election manifestoes have been more honoured in the breach than in the observance. Two problems stand out in high relief as the great failures of all Governments in this country. These are the problems of unemployment and cost of living. Both are not easy problems to solve, but there had been no indications of an attempt to solve them by those who assumed the responsibility for their solutions.

These are criticisms that the L.S.S.P. has made ever since 1935. We have forcefully focussed the attention of the masses in this country on the woeful failure of every capitalist Government to tackle any one of the vital matters which affect the poor people of this country. It is true we have made some progress, but they have been so slow and spasmodic that the people are inclined to belittle them and push them aside as irrelevant. When we look back to the period prior to 1935 and the years that follow right up to the 2nd world war and its termination, we who have lived through those dark days can appreciate the difference between now and then. We remember that politically this country was a British colony in which the Europeans had a special place and special privileges.

This was a time when the Governor could rule as he liked. The Government Agents were petty kings holding down the people with the help of the feudal lords called Rate Mahattayas. This was a time when the planters in the Estate areas virtually

ruled these areas as so many petty kings. Very often, the Governor carried out the behests of the Planters' Association. Their attempt to deport Mr. Bracegirdle demonstrated the extent of power that planters wielded in the governments of the country. The Headmen system virtually held people in thralldom. The language of the people was the subject of ridicule. The politicians took pride in their ability to speak in the English language. Indeed, politics was the privilege of the elite of the country. Ordinary folk only watched and applauded or cursed and wept. Politics was something outside them and alien to them. This was the political milieu in which we operated.

Economically, the plight of the country could be imagined by the devastation that took place in the Malaria epidemic of 1934-1935. Lakhs of people died virtually like flies. The great depression of 1929-1930 had reduced the stamina of the people to a very low level and the countryside saw whole families destroyed by the ravages of that epidemic. The stark poverty of all those except the white rulers and the middle class beggared description. The workers in the town or country were brimful of joy at the idea of a job which carried the privilege of working for 10 or more hours with no overtime, with no workmen's compensation, with no paid holidays, no sick leave, no maternity benefits and no pension or provident fund. The very word 'trade union' was synonymous with Communist revolution. Any worker who joined a trade union ran the risk of instant dismissal. It is true that Mr. Goonesinha had formed some unions but they were manageable unions by the employer with the help of Mr. Goonesinha himself. The position was even worse in the plantation areas where the Estate workers were virtually slaves in the make shift arrangements called lines. In the villages, consolidation of big land holdings went on with the protection of the Headmen, the Police and the Courts. Since most villagers in the Kandyan areas possessed no title deeds to their land, the Rate Mahattayas dispossessed and disposed of the land to the big companies. And the unskilled wage was about 50 to 60 cents a day. It is from these dismal surroundings that the LSSP began.

We have, therefore, travelled a long way from the colonial past of the 1930's. Undoubtedly, we have still a long way to go. Much has been achieved, but much remains to be done. It would therefore, be wrong as the J. V. P. tried to do to paint a picture of an enslaved Ceylon under the iron heel of a Batista as in Cuba prior to the revolution in that country. There are many short comings. These are not shortcomings due to a lack of political independence. These are shortcomings brought about by two factors. First of all, the defects and failures of our own people from the highest to the lowest and secondly the limitations imposed by our colonial heritage. Our inability or our incapacity or our tardiness in breaking the economic nexus that binds us to our colonial past. We continue to be an import-export economy. The export of 3 products provides our life line. We still import all our essential commodities. Most of the commanding heights of the economy are still in the hands of foreigners. We are yet the victims of foreign Shipping Conferences. Due to the short-sightedness of our own people, we have failed to utilise to the full the opportunities offered by our political independence. We have failed to move at an accelerated pace towards the establishment of socialism which would have ended the domination of both foreign and local capital. The extent to which we have been remiss in the past could be gauged by the fact that until 1972 we continued to operate a Constitution that has been imposed upon us by the ruling British Parliament.

What is true of the period prior to May 1970 is surely not equally applicable to the new era that dawned on the 31st of May 1970. On that day, with the overwhelming support of the democratic will of the people, a new Government came into existence. It is the first Government that came into being pledged to lead the people towards the goal of socialism. This was achieved by the exercise of the vote. The people accepted the peaceful transformation of society. They accepted with the full knowledge of what the Manifesto solemnly promised. This Government accepted the same solemnity and embodied the pledges so deliberately given in the first Address by the Governor General to Parliament. Would it be unfair to say that here at least was a

Government moving with decisive steps towards the overthrow of capitalist vested interests?

The J. V. P. might well be critical of the slow progress that has yet been made. It might urge that once power was given the Government should have established the dictatorship of the proletariat and brushed aside all forms of democratic procedure. Parliament might have been scrapped and Soviets established with full power to the working element. An immediate radical transformation of society should have been effected. This was easier said than done. There are two flaws in this line of reasoning. First of all, let it be emphasized and repeated over and over again that elections of 1970 gave the power in the first instance to a radical petty bourgeois Party led by a non-revolutionary Mrs. Bandaranaike. The revolutionary Parties of the Left were only minor partners in this United Front. Any attempt by the revolutionary elements to overthrow the democratic process and instal a revolutionary Government would have been doomed to failure as the JVP failed. Neither the Armed Forces nor the Police would have backed such a revolutionary movement. The masses themselves even though led by the more militant trade unions would not have given that full support which would have ensured victory for such an insurrection. The overwhelming mass of the people had not shed their illusions.

Admittedly, a revolutionary Party must lead. It cannot tail behind the people, but it cannot also run too far ahead of the people. The subjective wishes of the leaders cannot be substituted for the objective conditions of the people. Lenin has in unmistakable language set out the conditions which are a pre-requisite for a successful revolution. First of all, the ruling class should be so demoralised and weakened as to be unable to maintain its power. Secondly there should not be an alternative class or section of class ready and willing to assume power and continue to hold power. Thirdly, there must be a working class Party with a leadership that has won the confidence of the masses as a whole. In Ceylon, even if we assume that the United National Party has been so demoralised after May, 1970

that it no longer had the capacity to continue its rule, there was still the Sri Lanka Freedom Party to provide the alternative leadership and command the allegiance of the vast mass of people both urban and rural. It could have governed even without the assistance of the two Left Parties. There were no signs of any incapacity or inability to wield power on the part of the leadership of the S.L.F.P. In this situation, the existence of the LSSP leadership that commanded the confidence of the working class in particular and the masses in general was not sufficient to create a pre-revolutionary situation that would lead to a successful revolution.

It is difficult to believe that the leadership of the insurrectionary movement was unaware of these basic tenets of Marx and Lenin. These leaders show some understanding of the methods of organisation of a revolutionary Party. The need for secrecy, the strict imposition of obedience, the diffusion of centres of operations and the anonymity of leadership. All these are part of the methodology of a revolutionary organisation. Can these leaders, therefore, be said to have been ignorant of the stages involved in a revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist class? Is it ignorance or deliberate folly? Or what is more dastardly the willing victims of a diabolical plot to restore the defeated capitalist clique.

We are strengthened in this conclusion by the strategy of violence that the J. V. P. has practised. It has worked on the obsolete and exploded theory of Blanquism or on the concept of a putsch. They seem to have worked on the naive belief that the capture of a few out post Police Stations would enable them to mobilise the masses of people behind it. It is true people generally worship power and the masses are likely to rally behind those that form the stronger authority in the country. The masses of people are not so easy to fool. They worship power in an ultimate sense. It is

the tested strength that they will obey. When confronted with the superior fighting potential of the Army if the JVP merely retreats and runs away that would not redound to the credit of the so-called revolutionary forces. Far from rallying round the J.V.P., people are likely to resist their advance and are likely to cripple their movement. At the first opportunity they are likely to be betrayed to the authorities. And this is precisely what happened to the insurrectionary effort of the J. V. P. which commenced on the 4th and 5th April, 1971. On the first onslaught, the insurgents were driven off from Moneragala. Though they inflicted some casualties on a small Police Force that manned Stations, they were unable to capture the Station, and were forced to retreat with a number of wounded of their people. On the 5th and on the few succeeding days they were able to capture half a dozen small police Stations as a result of the overwhelming numbers they were able to mobilise. The biggest successes were at Warakapola, Nochchiyagama, Maho, Hanwella, Deniyaya and Elpitiya. The Government took the precaution to evacuate the lightly manned small out post Police stations in various parts of the country and concentrate on strengthening the bigger and more centrally situated Police Stations. Although the insurgents made various attempts to storm the bigger Stations they never succeeded in getting anywhere near them. By the time adequate arms and ammunition had been distributed to these distant Police Stations, they found that they were powerless to stand up to superior firing capacity of these Stations. After the first few days of imagined glory and hallucinations of victory, it was one long glorious retreat from every where. Hit and run methods were employed in places like Kegalle, Aranayake, Bulathkohupitiya and Undugoda areas. More concentrated firing and obstructions were resorted to in areas like Deniyaya, Kurunegala-Dambulla Road, the Anuradhapura district and in the

(Continued on Page 43)

JANATHA VIMUKTHI PERAMUNA

What is it? Where is it going?

by VICTOR IVAN PODI ATHULA

1. Desertion of the JVP by Old-timers

The attraction that the contemporary Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna has for the youth derives largely from the revolt of April 1971. It is because of this revolt that the JVP has a reputation for militancy. The broad masses do not approve of the revolt. But they feel a respect and sympathy for it. Whatever be the rights and wrongs of the revolt, they look upon the young people concerned as those who were prepared even to lay down their lives for their objectives.

Though this may be the manner in which the people regard this question, there is another aspect to it which the people do not see or know. Since, right or wrong, it is not disputed that these young people were prepared to lay down their lives for their objectives, they were deserving of respect. But the present JVP, though it functions under the very name of the body that organised the revolt, is not today a movement of the estimable people who risked their lives in that struggle.

Special reasons can be adduced for this.

The twelve member Political Bureau was the highest body in the JVP organization, which led the April revolt. That this Political Bureau was not democratically elected, and that its members were nominated by Wijeweera at his sole discretion, are not relevant for us at this moment. What is relevant is, who were the members of that Political Bureau and how many of them remain within the present JVP.

The following were the 12 members of the Political Bureau:

1. Nandasiri Wijeweera alias Rohana Wijeweera
2. Wijesena G. Vithana alias Sanath
3. W. T. Karunaratne alias Income Tax Karu
4. Nimalasiri Jayasinghe alias Loku Athula
5. Anura Kurukulasooriya alias Ranjith
6. Sunanda Deshapriya Alias Asoka
7. Somasiri Kumanayake
8. T. D. Silva
9. J. P. P. Dhanapala
10. J. Uyangoda alias Mr U
11. W. T. Cecil Chandra
12. Lakshman Maduwage

Of these twelve, Sanath (No 2) is not alive, and of the rest only Wijeweera is in the present JVP.

Now let us take a look at the second line of leadership, second only to the Political Bureau. The list is as follows:-

1. H. Milton (District Secretary, Colombo North)
2. Wasantha Kanakarathne (District Secretary, Colombo South)
3. Osmund Silva (District Secretary, Colombo Central)
4. Nimal Maharage (District Secretary, Kotte)
5. Sarath Wijesinghe (District Secretary, Kegalle)
6. J. Samarathunga (District Secretary, Kurunegala)

7. J. H. Premasiri (District Secretary, Kandy Road)
8. Nissanka Wijewardena (District Secretary, Amparai)
9. W. H. Jayasinghe alias Anura (District Secretary, Anuradhapura)
10. Susil Liyanage (District Secretary, Polonnaruwa)
11. Susil Wickrema (District Secretary, Matara)
12. Francis Abeywickrema alias Pantis Aiyya (District Secretary, Hambantota)
13. I. D. Siripala alias Jagath (District Secretary, Galle)
14. Nayanananda Wijekulatilake (District Secretary, Kalutara)
15. Anura Kurukulasooriya alias Ranjith (District Secretary, Kandy)
16. Sunanda Deshapriya alias Asoka (District Secretary, Badulla)
17. Victor Ivan alias Podi Athula (Secretary, Trade Union Section)
18. S.V.A. Piyathilake (Secretary, Students Section)
19. Premasiri Siriwardena (District Secretary Nuwara Eliya)
16. J. P. P. Dhanapala
16. Sunil Ratnasiri de Silva
17. Viraj Fernando
18. M. M. Wijepala de silva
19. Nihal Ananda Perera
20. S. D. Bandaranaike
21. Osmund de Silva
22. J. P. P. Dhanapala
23. Lakshman Maduwage
24. Susil Siriwardena
25. Mahinda Wijesekera
26. Kelly Senanayake
27. Themis Silva alias Batapola Athula
28. Alenson Subasinghe
29. Lakshman Chandrasena alias Kalu Lucky
30. Lakshman Munasinghe alias Podi Lucky
31. Merril Jayasiri
32. N. Premaratne alias Chukky
33. Wijesena G. Withana alias Sanath
34. Susil Wickrema
35. Sarath Wijesinghe
36. H. Milton
37. W. T. Karunaratne
38. Hewabatage Premapala
39. Nayanananda Wijekulathilake
40. D. P. Wimalaguna
41. J. E. P. Jayakody

Of these nineteen, H. Milton, Sarath Wijesinghe and Susil Wickrema are now dead. The rest are alive, but none of them is in the present JVP or has any connection with Wijeweera.

Let us take the accused in the main case into account. The list in order is as follows.

1. S. V. A. Piyathilake
2. Lionel Bopage alias Laiya
3. J. Uyangoda alias Mr U
4. Anura Kurukulasooriya alias Ranjith
5. Sunanda Deshapriya alias Asoka
6. Nimalasiri Jayasinghe alias Loku Athula
7. Victor Ivan alias Podi Athula
8. Nimal Maharage
9. Somasiri Kumanayake
10. Wasantha Kanakarathne
11. D. A. Gunasekera
12. T. D. Silva
13. Nandasiri Wijeweera alias Rohana
14. W. T. Cecil Chandra alias Piyasiri
15. R. A. Kularatne Banda alias Piyasiri

Of these forty one all but four, viz Wijesena G. Withana, Susil Wickrema, Sarath Wijesinghe and H. Milton are alive today. But only two of them, Lionel Bopage and Rohana Wijeweera are in the present JVP. Kelly Senanayake was a prominent leader of the JVP after 1977, but even he has left the organization recently.

Besides this, what is the position of the ordinary rank and file members? Of the approximately 15,000 members the JVP had in April 1971 not even 5 % remain with the present JVP.

One of the principal reasons for the sympathy of people for the JVP lies in the qualities of boldness, militancy and dedication. But the people do not know that the persons who displayed those qualities in that struggle are no longer with the present JVP. The present

JVP also speaks very highly of the boldness and dedication displayed by the youth in the revolt. They only do not mention that those who displayed these qualities are no longer with them.

2. The reasons that led the old guard to leave the JVP and how this process took place

Why did the old guard abandon the JVP which they had built with their sweat and blood? Before answering this question it is important to find out why sections of the youth were attracted to the JVP. This is an aspect that has received considerable attention already. The reasons given by most persons are similar. poverty, unemployment, disparities in educational opportunities, caste oppression, disappointed hopes are some of the reasons they adduce. All these reasons are correct. But there is more to the question. Granted that the youth were infuriated for those reasons, why did they rally round Wijeweera? Most people (including Marxists) see it as a special ability which Wijeweera had (and has) that the leaders of other political parties do not possess. But this is not the truth. The reason is not that Wijeweera was more able than the leaders of other political parties, but that he was the political leader who was most representative of this movement. This social force that gathered around him, consisted of young people whose education was limited to Sinhala, who had racialist and castist attitudes and a Sinhala Buddhist outlook. The political leader who most responded to those views, attitudes and aspirations was Wijeweera. That is the reason why the prime of his youthful following rallied round him. The next question that arises is that, if Wijeweera is the political leader who best represented this social force, how is it that after some time he was to be rejected by the same social force. In other words, why did the social force that rallied round him, then move away from him.

There cannot be any dispute that the 1971 April revolt was the culmination of a process of activity planned over a long time by Wijeweera and the youth movement that had gathered around him. Even if the insurrection was badly defeated Wijeweera and his followers had no means

of knowing it before hand. Wijeweera and his followers were quite confident of victory in their revolt. But contrary to their expectations it was severely defeated. As a result of this defeat all their hopes and expectations collapsed to the ground. A large number died in struggle without getting any opportunity to learn any lessons from this experience. Those who escaped death were arrested and confined to prisons.

Lessons that people take years to learn in a period of comparative calm are learnt in days and hours in a period of crisis. The life that the prisoners who took part in the revolt led in prison, constituted the telescoping of an era into a short space of time. Their very defeat compelled them to examine the causes for the defeat. Though they called themselves Marxists previously, they did not possess a knowledge of Marxism. Even those who were keen on reading Marxist books, did not have an opportunity to do so, due to pressure of work. But when they were in prison, they had ample opportunity to read books and they also developed a keen interest in reading. Their thinking which was at an elementary level due to scanty reading was completely transformed. They began to study their facts seriously. As they studied in depth they understood the inherent errors in their past politics. They realised that the solutions to youth problems could not be found by the youth alone, and that it was sheer folly to attempt to set up a Socialist paradise through a surprise attack reminiscent of a cavalry charge. On the intellectual level, in proportion to this new transformation, their identification with Wijeweera and Wijeweera's identification with them, also was completely shattered. Wijeweera ceased to be a leader acceptable to them. The abandonment of the JVP by the old guard is a direct result of this intellectual transformation.

3. The resurrection of the JVP without the old Guard

The present JVP is a movement that has divorced itself from those who contributed to the building up of the earlier movement, and those who participated in the 1971 revolt. Even without the participation of the old guard, the present JVP has become the strongest youth movement of the country. How did this happen?

After the 1971 April revolt, the JVP re-entered the political arena only after the last government lifted the emergency immediately prior to the 1977 General Election. But, by that time the JVP had ceased to be a movement that had the support of the youth who were involved in the revolt. Out of the old guard only Wijeweera and a few others were left in the movement. But they still had the old name board of the JVP in their hands. In the 1977 General Election the JVP had carefully selected four seats to contest. But all four candidates were able to get a total of only 3,441 votes. Their average vote per seat was 860 votes. All the expansion that took place was after the 1977 General Election.

The UNP won a massive electoral victory in the General Election of 1977. The Criminal Justice Commission Act of 21st October 1971 was repealed and the prisoners of the 1971 revolt who had been convicted under the Act and those who had been convicted of Exchange Control offences were set free.

By this time a certain sympathy, respect and curiosity towards the prisoners who had been incarcerated for nearly seven years had been built up among the broad masses. The masses desired to get to know these prisoners and listen to them. But only Wijeweera and Lionel Bopage came before the people on public platforms. The two of them, therefore, became the central personalities that attracted the sympathy, respect and curiosity that prevailed at the time. Thousands were drawn to the public meetings all over the country in which these two participated. They listened to them with a curiosity full of sympathy and respect. But the masses had no clear perception of the roles of the Wijeweeras and Bopages. Those who listened to them did not know that both Wijeweera and Bopage had been contemptuously rejected by thousands of their followers and associates. The Old Guard that had left them were not organised at that time. If they had organised themselves and launched on activity that was critical of these two individuals and their movement, the situation may have been greatly different.

Nevertheless, these two people and the movement they led under the prestigious old banner have failed to make any considerable impact on the adult masses belonging to the left in the country. But they have succeeded in strongly influencing young people and children as yet lacking in political understanding. Today the backbone of this movement is provided by young boys and girls who infuriated by poverty, unemployment, educational inequalities, caste oppression and frustrated hopes have had fancies tickled by the April 1971 revolt.

4. Falsifying history deliberately and for selfish advantage

In place of genuine revolutionaries distinguished by honesty, self-sacrifice and penetrating foresight, a gang of scoundrels making baseness, cowardice and self-seeking into a way of life have become the heroes of the younger generation. The so-called JVP which they lead now plays a Thermidorean role nullifying the political gains of the April revolt.

These so called heroes hate nothing so much as their past and their colleagues of the past. Unlike Stalin, Wijeweera failed to capture state power. Had he captured state power his first task would have been to brutally murder thousands of youth who were associated with him, in order to erase everything that recalls the past. Even though he has a lust for state power, he has not yet been able to achieve this ambition. Under these circumstances all that he has been able to do is to attempt to reduce to falsehood and insignificance every memento of the past, that is likely to embarrass him. In this respect, the ghosts that haunt him most are his contemporaries, or else earliest colleagues who have now abandoned him. All of them have not yet become vocal. But some of them speak out their minds. He has a very clear understanding of the grave threat to his position that this constitutes. In order to get out of this difficult situation he maligns all of his contemporaries as traitors, spies and police agents. "So and so is a traitor, a police agent. There fore do not listen to him", he tells the people.

Even though such accusations are new to his politically immature followers and the

common people, they are very familiar to the Leftists who have an understanding of the International Revolutionary movement. Similar accusations were made by Stalin at the Moscow Trials in order to exterminate the foremost leaders of the October Revolution. Now Wjeweera stages before us a new version of this old and infamous play of Stalin. But a Kruschew will emerge from their own midst, however belatedly, to expose the entire truth.

5. The character of the present JVP

Like the old JVP, the present JVP is also a political movement of the Youth. The majority of its political followers are youth who are not in a position to come to serious political decisions. Even though they have a burning hatred of the prevailing social system, they do not have a clear understanding of the present social system or the new social system that should replace it. They call themselves Marxists. But they do not have a clear understanding of Marxism or Marxist organizational methods. They consider what is fed to them by the leaders of the JVP as the truth, and that the whole of the universal truth is contained within this. Wjeweera has poisoned their minds against his collaborators in the 1971 revolt and the older Left parties. This poison has gone so deep that they consider them as worse enemies than their former foes. These young people do not require deep philosophy, debates and discussions or democratic organizational methods. They consider them to be valueless and meaningless things. The only thing they desire is action. They have voluntarily reduced themselves to the level of a flock of sheep meekly following their cunning shepherd - Wjeweera. The important question is where is this shepherd leading the flock that trails after him. Do even those who extend a hand of friendship to them have any idea of this?

The JVP is a strange kind of political party. It is a political party without a constitution. It has never held a conference. All power is concentrated in the hands of one or two individuals. All publications are in the hands of Lionel Bopage, Wjeweera enjoys the sole right of deciding policy and has become the Party Constitution itself. In the making of party policy no pressure is

experienced from below. Its organizational structure is under dictatorial control, devoid of any semblance of democracy. Is the internal structure of this strange "peramuna" a prototype of the future society it intends to construct?

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to restore the feudal regime in Afghanistan in the interests of containment of Soviet Power. The task surely is to advance the revolutionary process in Afghanistan and to stabilise the regime on a popular base. That is the touch-stone by which we shall determine our attitude and stand in relation to developments in Afghanistan.

There are current many speculations about the future intentions of the Soviet Union in the area and on the question of the basis on which Soviet - Afghan relations will ultimately be established. It is unnecessary to enter into such speculative questions here. The question requiring answer today concerns the demand that the Soviet Union do withdraw her troops immediately from Afghanistan. Revolutionary Socialists can not associate themselves with that demand.

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Uragaha-Elpitiya area. But these were all dying embers of a meaningless putsch.

Scattered and sporadic hit and run incidents took place through the end of May, 1971. The remnants of the insurgents who were left after thousands had surrendered retreated to the thick jungles. They were chased by various units of the Army and were eventually killed or forced to surrender. By June, the mid summer night's dream was over. In the process, nearly 2,000 young and promising men and women had been killed. Many thousands more had been maimed and wounded. The Army and the Police also suffered over 200 killed and wounded. Apart from the loss of human beings, the material loss to the country could roughly be estimated at about Rs. 200 million. It was as vain and as inglorious an adventure. Whatever disgrace the revolutionary movement not only of Ceylon but also the world suffered, it was a meaningless slaughter of men and a criminal waste of material resources that led the country nowhere.

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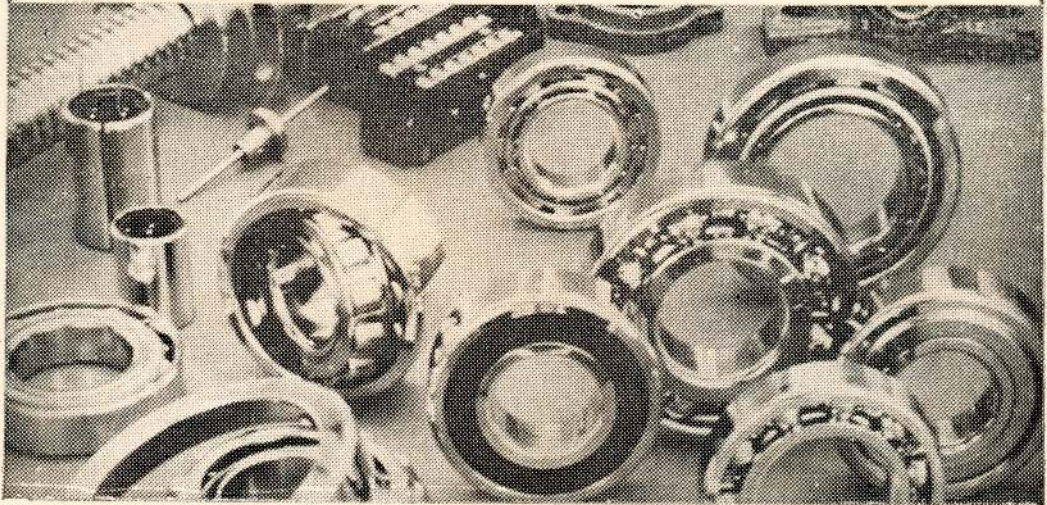
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