



**TWENTY
YEARS
of the
CEYLON
COMMUNIST
PARTY**

By
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THE CEYLON COMMUNIST PARTY

ALTHOUGH the Ceylon Communist Party was officially formed only on 3 July 1943, its origins go back to the late 1920s when the working class movement of Ceylon had begun to enter the second stage of its development.

The earliest attempts to organise the workers in independent class organisations began during the first World War. The world-wide upheavals that followed the end of this war and the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917 gave these efforts a great stimulus.

The 1920s saw the rise of the trade union movement and many militant strike struggles led by the Ceylon Labour Union and, later, the All-Ceylon Trade Union Congress. During this period the workers learnt their identity as a separate class and the

need for organisation in the struggle against imperialist and capitalist exploitation.

Although the workers displayed great courage and militancy in these early struggles, the movement suffered from many weaknesses and defects in this initial stage. The struggles were sporadic and lacked a central purpose and direction. They were confined mainly to economic demands and the political aims of the working class were ignored. The movement was largely confined to Colombo, and the personal leadership of Mr. A. E. Goonesinha predominated over the need for stable and democratically-controlled class organisations.

It was only in 1928 that the first attempt was made to form a political party of the working class - the Ceylon Labour Party. The activities

of this party were, however, mostly devoted to winning the workers the right to vote, an aim that was realised with the establishment of universal adult franchise in 1931.

These early working class organisations began to disintegrate towards the end of the 1920s. In 1927, Mr. Goonesinha visited Great Britain and linked up with the labour traitors, Ramsay Mac Donald and J. H. Thomas. On his return to Ceylon, he reversed the earlier militancy of the working class movement. He began a process of betrayal which led him to split the working class movement by introducing racial chauvinism into it, and finally passed over to the side of the employers and open strike-breaking.

As a result, the workers were left virtually disarmed and defenceless during the economic crisis of the late 1920s and the early 1930s.

New Stage

The late 1920s, however, also saw the beginning of a new stage in working class history which lasted till 1940—the rise of a socialist movement in Ceylon.

At this time, Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe, who is now President of the Communist Party, returned to Ceylon after studying abroad, where he had come into contact with the international Communist movement. He began to in-

troduce the ideas of scientific socialism, of Marxism-Leninism, to Ceylon for the first time. As a result of his efforts, small socialist groups and study circles were formed.

Ceylon, at this moment, had begun to experience the disastrous effects of the great post-war world economic crisis of capitalism. The realities of the crisis exposed in their true colours both the social-reformist policies of Mr Goonesinha in the labour movement and the policies of the bourgeois leaders of the national movement like D. B. Jayatilleke and D. S. Senanayake, who advocated that Ceylon's path to eventual freedom and prosperity lay in collaboration with British imperialism.

The fact that only the socialist Soviet Union was free from economic crisis made a big impression on the working class and the radical intelligentsia. Their most advanced representatives began to look to socialism as the only solution to Ceylon's problems. This process was accelerated after adult franchise drew the masses into the political arena for the first time.

The political monopoly hitherto enjoyed by the bourgeoisie and the feudalists was breached for the first time in 1931, when Dr. Wickremasinghe was elected to the first State Council as a socialist candidate. Working within and outside the State Council,

he did much to popularise the ideas of socialism and communism and to link them with the concrete conditions of the workers and peasants of Ceylon. He demanded national independence, exposed national injustice, and advanced demands on behalf of the working people.

Dr. Wickremasinghe's activities helped to create a nucleus of support for communism. The early Communists took part actively in the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal movements of the day - the Suriya Mal campaign, the Youth Leagues, etc - and did notable work in the campaign to assist the victims of the malaria epidemic of 1934-5.

All these campaigns led to the formation of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party on 18 December 1935. The Communist groups took an active part in the work of forming this party.

Although the LSSP was based mainly on the radical petty-bourgeoisie, this party was the first to proclaim the aims of national independence and socialism. But it was not an ideologically consolidated or homogenous socialist party. It was a loose organisation that united different anti-imperialist trends from petty - bourgeois radicals to communists.

From 1935 to 1939, the pre-war LSSP conducted many anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggles and gained consider-

able prestige. It became the focal point of the anti-imperialist and progressive movements of the time. It sought to unite all anti-imperialist sections in Ceylon in the struggle for national independence and social advance and, externally, solidified with the Soviet Union, the anti-fascist struggles in Europe and the national liberation struggles of other colonial peoples.

Communists like M. G. Mendis, U. Saranankara Thero, K. Ramanathan, W. Ariyaratne, D. P. Yasodis, A. Gunasekara, T. Duraisingam and others, some of whom are now dead, took a leading part in these early struggles. Mendis was co-secretary of the party and Ramanathan the editor of one of its newspapers. Duraisingam did pioneer work in introducing, distributing and popularising Marxist-Leninist literature.

Weaknesses

Despite the good work done by the pre-war LSSP, the party suffered from many weaknesses. It was largely confined to the radical intelligentsia. Although it organised a few trade unions and led some strikes, the party generally neglected the need to link socialism with the working class movement by building stable working class organisations and leading the day-to-day struggles against capitalist exploitation. Connections

with the peasantry and the rural masses were extremely limited. Its inadequate understanding of the concrete way in which the national movement was developing in Ceylon led to a sectarian attitude towards it. And the failure to organise proper Marxist-Leninist education allowed the outlook of the English-speaking petty-bourgeoisie to dominate many of its policies.

A struggle to correct some of these weaknesses began to mature inside the LSSP, with the Communists, in particular, demanding greater attention to the work of organising the working class and the masses. Matters came to a head towards the end of 1939, with the outbreak of the Second World War.

Internationally, this was a period of an intense and world-wide campaign against communism. Internally, repression had begun against the Left movement, particularly following the outbreak of a number of strikes on British-owned plantations. At this stage, under the influence of Trotskyism, certain leaders of the LSSP introduced a motion into the Executive Committee declaring 'that it has no faith in the 3rd International'.

The Communists demanded the withdrawal of this resolution, which they characterised as not only incorrect but also designed to split the party at a crucial moment. They fought hard to preserve the unity of

the party to struggle against imperialism and war. But the Executive Committee persisted in passing the resolution and five of its members who opposed it (Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe, M. G. Mendis, W. Ariyaratne, A. Gunasekera and K. Ramanathan) were expelled.

Over 70 members of the LSSP submitted an application to the Executive Committee, demanding the convening of a conference to consider these developments. On their behalf, A. Vaidialingam published an inner-party pamphlet entitled **Samasamajism and the Way Forward** on 11 May 1940. This pamphlet explained and supported the policies of the Third (Communist) International, analysed the reasons for the crisis in the LSSP, condemned the arbitrary introduction of the issue into the party at that stage, stressed the need for organisation and mass work among the workers, peasants and students, and appealed for the unity of the party to lead the struggles against imperialism.

The request was not heeded. Some of these 70 members were expelled, while others left the party. Thus, in 1940, the united Left movement that had developed in the previous decade was split through the introduction of anti-Communism.

The U.S.P.

Together with their supporters, the expelled Communists

set up headquarters at the Workers' Club, 81, Hultsdorf Street, Colombo. They sought not only to uphold Marxism - Leninism and proletarian internationalism but also to accomplish a task that the earlier LSSP had neglected - to organise the working class and unite it with socialism.

They began to build trade unions, organise Marxist study circles among the workers and issue newspapers and socialist publications. After a few months - in November, 1940 - they held a conference at Peliyagoda and formed the United Socialist Party, the precursor to the Ceylon Communist Party.

Among the comrades actively associated with the developments that led to the formation of the United Socialist Party were Dr. Wickremasinghe, Pieter Keuneman, M. G. Mendis, U. Saranankara Thero, A. Gunasekera, W. Ariyaratne, D. P. Yasodis, A. Vaidialingam, K. Ramathanan, T. Duraisingam, A. D. Charleshamy and others, including those now dead like P. Kandiah, Lionel Kulatunga and K. A. Siriratne. Pieter Keuneman was elected General Secretary of the USP.

The USP sought to carry forward the progressive traditions of the socialist movement of the 1930s and to develop them on the basis of Marxism-Leninism. In the two and a half years that it

existed, it accomplished much in this direction.

By 1941, it had helped to organise trade unions in 35 Colombo factories and unite them in the Ceylon Trade Union Federation, which was formed on 14 December 1941. It led several strikes, including the two harbour strikes of 1941. It established a press and issued regular weekly newspapers in Sinhala, Tamil and Malayalam. It also published a weekly newspaper in English directed at the students, known, first, as *Varsity News* and, later *Student News*. It published many pamphlets on international and domestic questions, circulated copies of the classics of Marxism-Leninism and organised study circles, lectures and public meetings. All these helped to win new recruits to communism.

The USP carried on these activities amidst great difficulties. Its press and offices were constantly raided by the Police, many of its publications confiscated and its comrades placed under Police surveillance. Its public meetings were often broken up by armed hooligans and its comrades injured. Several of its leading comrades like Dr. Wickremasinghe, U. Saranankara Thero, D. P. Yasodis and others were arrested and later sentenced to long terms of imprison-

ment for anti-imperialist activities. And in March, 1942, eighteen months after its formation, the USP was declared illegal by the colonial bureaucracy under the Defence Regulations.

The banning of the USP did not, however, stop its activities. Combining illegal with legal work, it continued to operate on a number of fronts and steadily built up its positions.

C. P. Established

By this time, the USP had performed its function of laying the basis for the formation of a Marxist-Leninist party in Ceylon. It had also established contacts with other socialist groups such as the Ceylon Socialist Party, whose members merged with the USP. Accordingly, under conditions of illegality, a clandestine conference was held in a house at Cotta Road, Borella, Colombo, on July 2-3 1943, and a decision taken to dissolve the USP and set up the Ceylon Communist Party.

While continuing its work among the masses the new party also concentrated on building its organisation. Its day-to-day work was led by a committee of 5 members, with Pieter Keuneman as the secretary. As membership was small, general body meetings were summoned from

time to time to decide important questions. The first annual general meeting, held on July 2, 1944, adopted the constitution of the Party, based on democratic centralism and the new type of party that Lenin taught the workers to build.

This meeting also declared that the long-term aim of the party was to establish a socialist and, eventually, a communist society in Ceylon, while its immediate aim was to carry through the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal stage of the Ceylonese revolution, establish national independence and democracy and build a united national front for the purpose. It supported the struggle against fascism led by the Soviet Union and proclaimed its adherence to Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism.

Following this meeting, the Communist Party intensified its work among the masses. In 1943, the Communists had joined the Ceylon National Congress as individual members, following the decision of the 25th Annual Sessions of the Congress to demand national independence for Ceylon and of its 26th sessions to admit Communists as members - decisions which made Mr. D S. Senanayake quit the Congress. They worked within the Congress and persuaded it to decide on 8 July,

1944, to join the boycott of the Soulbury Commission.

At the same time, the Communist Party launched its own independent campaign for the summoning of an All-Parties Conference to forge a united demand for independence and a free constitution in the face of the British Government's so-called "Reforms Offer" of 1943 and the decision to appoint the Soulbury Commission. Beginning with a big rally in the Colombo Town Hall, a large number of meetings and demonstrations were organised throughout the country in support of this campaign.

The party also continued to build its base among the workers. Through its leadership in the CTUF, it began to win important demands for the workers. The special 'Freedom City' sessions of the CTUF, at Price Park, Colombo, in January, 1945, helped to consolidate and expand the work among the trade unions, popularise the slogans of the Party among the workers, and mobilise them for the freedom struggle. The CP also led peasant struggles at Arakawila and other places, popularised the socialist achievements of the USSR and the role it was then playing in liberating mankind from the threat of fascism and started its weekly newspaper in English, **Forward**, in addition to its three other newspapers which had been

published since 1940-**Jana-sakthi** (Sinhala and Tamil) and **Navasakthi** (Malayalam).

First Congress

From 6 to 8 April, 1945, the First Congress of the Communist Party was held at the BTS Hall, Colombo. It was attended by 109 delegates, 31 of whom were full-time workers, 34 factory workers and 7 women. P. Ramamurthi attended the Congress as a fraternal delegate from the Communist Party of India and fraternal messages were received from the Communist Parties of Great Britain, Australia and USA, which were the limit of the Party's contacts with fraternal parties at that time.

The Congress discussed and endorsed a report of the Central Committee, presented by Pieter Keuneman. It adopted four main resolutions on National Unity, Working Class Unity, Freedom and Post-War Economic Development, and Party Organisation. It elected a Central Committee of 12, with U. Saranankara Thero as President, A. Vaidialingam and P. Kumarasiri as Vice-Presidents, Pieter Keuneman as General Secretary and W. Ariyaratne as Treasurer. Dr. Wickremasinghe replaced U. Saranankara Thero as President a few months later.

In order to implement the decisions of its First Congress the Communist Party launched

a nation-wide campaign under the central slogan, 'Independence, More Jobs and a Living Wage'. Several rallies and demonstrations were held throughout the country during the course of 1945, opposing the Soulbury Commission and demanding Ceylon's right to independence and to frame its own, free constitution. The Communist Party's proposals for post-war economic development were popularised through meetings, pamphlets and other publications. The Party sought to organise the ex-servicemen and the unemployed in the fight against retrenchment and led popular campaigns to stop profiteering and have essential goods distributed properly.

On 4 September, 1945, the CP and the CTUF jointly led a demonstration of over 25,000 workers and unemployed to the State Council to demand that urgent problems of the people should be solved. The demonstration was beaten up by the Police. In answer, a half-day protest general strike was called, which paralysed Colombo. The victimisation of three leaders of the Municipal Tramway Union, who joined the protest strike, led to the first post-war general strike of Colombo's workers, when 30,000 downed tools in response to the call of the CP and CTUF. The strike, which lasted from 18 to 26 September, was a complete success.

Independence Struggle

The Central Committee of the Communist Party, which met on September 16, reviewed the new situation that had developed where a reactionary Board of Ministers, led by Mr. D. S. Senanayake, and an unrepresentative State Council were likely to accept a constitution imposed by the British Government on the recommendations of the Soulbury Commission. It called for an immediate general election and for the intensification of mass and working class struggles.

The CP and the CTUF led a number of working class struggles in this period, the most important of which was the strike of 6,000 workers in the Port of Colombo which broke out on 24 April 1946 and lasted for 26 days. This strike was one of the bitterest of the class battles of this period. A demonstration led by the CP was baton-charged by the Police and 62 persons injured. Several leading Communists, including M. G. Mendis and D. N. Nadunge, were arrested and later imprisoned.

In order to develop its struggle in all fields, the party also paid greater attention in this period to elections. It nominated 10 candidates for the general elections to the Colombo Municipal Council and polled one-third of the

votes cast in the wards it contested. It later nominated Dr Wickremasinghe as its candidate at a by-election to the Morawaka constituency of the State Council and secured his return with a majority of nearly 25,000 votes. One of Dr. Wickremasinghe's first acts was to table a motion setting out the CP's demands for independence, the withdrawal of British bases and troops and the right of Ceylon to frame its own constitution. The 5th annual sessions of the CTUF, which met at the end of 1946, urged unity of the working class and trade unions to secure greater representation for labour in the next Parliament.

In May, 1947, a fresh round of strike struggles broke out culminating in the general strike of that year. The CP and the CTUF gave the lead in this struggle, bringing out the Municipal workers on May 16, the engineering workers on May 19 and the tea and rubber packing workers on May 22. On May 30, the clerical and minor employees of the Government service joined the strike, following the interdiction of the union leaders for holding a rally at Galle Face. On June 3, government daily-paid workers followed suit and on June 4, the entire work-force in the Port of Colombo downed tools.

By this time, a Joint Action Central Strike Committee had

been established in which Communists and Samasamajists worked together for the first time since 1940.

On June 5, the Police fired on a demonstration at Kollonawa, killing Kandasamy. Nearly a lakh of people marched in his funeral procession the next day, turning it into a demonstration of mass opposition to the colonial bureaucracy and the Board of Ministers. The armed forces were also affected and, on June 7, a mutiny broke out at the RASC camp at Kirillapone. A rally of the CP and CTUF on June 10 to condemn the repression and support the strikers was attended by 65,000 people.

The general strike was, however, finally defeated and had to be called off on June 19. But it nevertheless played a decisive part in the struggle for independence. The British Government and the Senanayake leadership learnt from the 1947 strike that they could no longer rule in the old way.

Unity Call

The May-June strike was followed by the dissolution of the State Council on 4 July, 1947. Elections to a new Parliament—the first general election for 12 years—were called for early September. The Communist Party made repeated efforts to unite the Left and progressive forces so that they may put forward a

single list of candidates on the basis of an agreed programme. But a conference it called for this purpose on July 8 had to disperse without success.

As a result, the Left and progressive forces faced the 1947 general elections divided, while Mr. Senanayake was able to unite all capitalist and feudal political groupings in the United National Party.

Despite this, the UNP did not win an absolute majority. The Left emerged as the leading opposition force, with the CP itself winning five seats. In this unstable situation, the Communist Party appealed for a united initiative by the Left to rally other anti-UNP forces for an alternative government thereby preventing Mr. Senanayake from forming a government and stabilising the position of the UNP. But the 'Yamuna Conference' summoned for this purpose broke down and Mr. Senanayake and the UNP had the day.

In order to consolidate its rule and defend its agreements with imperialism, the UNP Government struck at the working class, the trade unions and the Left parties. Leaders of the public service unions which joined the May-June general strike were victimised and these unions gagged and divided by a series of repressive laws and regulations. The Public Security Ordinance was strengthened and Section 13

(3) (f) of the Soulbury Constitution, which had been introduced to disqualify Dr. Wickremasinghe from standing for election, was used to disqualify Philip Gunawardena as well. Several lakhs of plantation workers were later deprived of the right to vote which they had hitherto enjoyed.

At the same time, the UNP sought to deceive and confuse the people. It negotiated fresh agreements with the British Government which it palmed off as complete independence even though the military and economic power of British imperialism in Ceylon remained intact.

The failure of the 1947 strike, the formation of the UNP government, the repression against the trade unions and the Left, and the confusion generated by the new 'independence' agreements created demoralisation and defeatism in certain sections of the Left movement who began to argue openly that the movement was in a period of retreat, where only limited, defensive actions were possible.

The Second Congress of the Communist Party, which met at the Saiva Mangayar Kalagam Hall, Wellawatte from 1 to 3 January, 1948, rejected these defeatist theories. Its Political Resolution, which soberly analysed past developments and stressed the essential instability of the

UNP government's position, emphasised the need for 'joint Left action' and trade union unity to unite the Left and progressive forces in all-round political struggles with the aim of establishing an alternative government to ensure complete freedom, democracy and social progress. It adopted a minimum programme, which it proposed to other Left forces as a basis on which Left - progressive unity could be established.

In line with these decisions, the CP addressed several proposals to the LSSP and BLPI (the former LSSP had divided into these two parties during the war) for joint action on a number of issues. While united action was established with the BLPI on certain ad hoc issues, it was not possible to reach agreement for broad based joint action of the Left movement as a whole.

Sectarian Errors

The Communist Party itself was not free from confusions and mistakes at this stage. It had corrected within a few months and publicly admitted the right-opportunist mistake it made early in 1947 when it wrongly assessed the recently - formed UNP. But following the Second Congress's repudiation of the defeatist theory of a 'period of retreat', a left-sectarian tendency began to develop in the party.

The adherents of this tendency distorted the decisions

of the 2nd Congress. They grossly overestimated both the degree of the UNP Government's instability and the objective possibilities for direct revolutionary struggle of the masses at the moment. On the basis of subjective assessments that the working class upsurge of 1946-7 was still in full flood and that a revolutionary situation was fast maturing, they advocated adventurist policies and tactics that ran far ahead of the level of developments.

The Left-sectarian tendency gained the upper hand at the 3rd Congress of the Party which met at Atureliya in September, 1948. This tendency did great damage to the Party and the trade union movement in the two years that followed. Ultra-left slogans and isolated, adventurist actions replaced the need for the broad mobilisation of the masses and led to the weakening of the trade unions, particularly in the plantations. The left-sectarians also promoted factional struggles within the Party and removed several comrades who opposed this sectarian line from leading positions.

Despite these internal troubles, the CP also had certain achievements in this period. One of the most outstanding was the starting, in 1949, of a daily newspaper in Sinhala called **Communist** which lasted for over a year, thanks to the self-sacrifice and devotion of

the Party comrades. The Party also scored successes in local government elections in Colombo and elsewhere.

In 1949, however, resistance to the ruling Left-sectarian policies, whose leading advocate was Harry Abeygoonewardene (then General Secretary) began to develop in the Party. This struggle was led by Dr. Wickremasinghe, with the support of other members of the Central Committee, in particular M. G. Mendis, N. Sanmugathasan, Pieter Keuneman, Premalal Kumarasiri and H. G. S. Ratnaweera. The old guard of working class comrades who helped to found the Party, led by W. Ariyaratne, D. P. Yasodis, S. A. Podisinho and others, also performed an invaluable service by exposing and resisting the left-sectarians.

Turning Point

The 4th Party Congress, held at Matara in September, 1950, routed the Left sectarians. This Congress was a turning point in the history of the Communist Party. Its political thesis stressed that the "independence" arrangements of 1948 had not completed the tasks of the anti-imperialist, democratic stage of the Ceylonese revolution. In order to do so, it called on the Party to work for a united democratic front led by the working class and based on a stable worker-peasant alliance, but which

would also include petty-bourgeois and patriotic national bourgeois sections.

The Congress also set up a special Commission to re-register Party members and take action against those who had engaged in factional activities. A new Central Committee, with Dr. Wickremasinghe as General Secretary, was elected.

After the 4th Congress, the Communist Party began to re-organise the Party and the trade unions and repair the damage done in the period when left-sectarianism had held sway. It launched a number of campaigns to expose the UNP government's increasing subservience to Anglo-American imperialism, the fiction of its claim that the short-lived "Korean war boom" meant permanent prosperity, and the reality of the growing economic crisis and the political crisis of the UNP government itself.

The resignation of Mr. Bandaranaike and his supporters from the UNP in July, 1951, confirmed the analysis of the 4th Congress that the unity of the Ceylonese bourgeoisie within the UNP would soon disintegrate and its comprador and national wings take separate paths. When Mr. Bandaranaike and his supporters formed the SLFP with a number of anti-imperialist aims in its programme, the Communist Party welcomed this development and declared its readiness to co-operate

with the SLFP too in the struggle against imperialism and the UNP. It warned, however, that the national bourgeois character and "middle path" outlook of this party would produce vacillations and instability,

During this period, the Communist Party also stepped up its efforts to unite the Left movement. On 15 April, 1951, it concluded a programmatic agreement with the VLSSP (now called MEP), led by Philip Gunawardena. This was the first practical step towards uniting the Left movement since the split of 1940. The CP also began an island-wide campaign to draw the LSSP into this agreement.

In March, 1952, following Mr. D. S. Senanayake's death, Parliament was dissolved and fresh elections called for May. On 8 to 9 March, 1952, a Special National Conference of the Communist Party was held in Colombo, with an open session at the Colombo Town Hall on March 9. The report of the Central Committee, delivered by Pieter Keuneman, reviewed the work of the Party since the 4th Congress, and proposed an agreement between the anti-UNP parties to contest the general elections unitedly or, failing this, a 'no-contest' agreement. Following this conference, the CP re-established the post of President of the Party, which had been abolished at the Third Congress. Dr. Wickremasinghe

was elected President and Pieter Keuneman General Secretary.

1953 Hartal

The CP's efforts to forge agreement between the anti-UNP parties for the elections, however, failed, and the UNP won a resounding victory. The victory was, nevertheless, short-lived. Unable to solve the problems of the deepening economic crisis within the framework of its general policy of collaboration with the imperialist vested interests, the UNP government first increased the price of sugar, reduced the rice ration and, finally, in 1953, withdrew the rice subsidy altogether and imposed other burdens on the people.

The CP and CTUF took the initiative to propose united action of all anti-UNP parties and the trade unions to fight back these attacks on the masses. This initiative resulted in the formation of a joint committee which conducted the grand Hartal of 13 August 1953, that rocked the foundations of the UNP government and forced Mr. Dudley Senanayake to resign from the post of its Prime Minister.

Communists played a leading part in the Hartal, several being arrested and detained. The Party's press was sealed, its newspapers proscribed, its comrades beaten and its offices continuously raided in the 'emergency' that followed. The Party, however, fought

back. In Parliament, Pieter Keuneman and other Communist MP's exposed the real meaning of the UNP's repression, justified the Hartal and succeeded in stopping both the attempt to illegalise the Communist Party and to frame it up with a forged document manufactured by the UNP and the Police.

The disaster that Left disunity had produced in the 1952 election and the success that such unity achieved in the 1953 Hartal gave a great impetus to the Party's campaign for Left Unity. In October, 1953, one-third of the members of the LSSP quit that party after a unity resolution they had sponsored failed. A vast majority of them, led by K. P. Silva, V. A. Samarawickreme, Stanley Tillekeratne, L. W. Panditha, N. L. Perera, W. Punyasena and others, joined the Communist Party a few months later.

Kotelawala Regime

The CP entered a difficult period after Sir John Kotelawala became the UNP Prime Minister in 1953. Anti-Communism was the official order of the day. In his first broadcast as Prime Minister, Sir John vowed to stamp out the Communist Party which, he said later, was the only party he really feared. A number of official restrictions and penalties were imposed on the Party, ranging from the banning and confiscation of socialist literature to deporta-

tions. K. Ramanathan, a founder member and editor of one of the Party's newspapers, was refused permission to return to Ceylon.

The CP met these attacks with courage. "You can't destroy our Party", Pieter Keuneman told Sir John to his face in Parliament, "without destroying the working class as well. Our party will still be here long after you have passed out of the political scene like Hitler, Mussolini and others of your ilk who tried to destroy Communism".

Inside and outside Parliament, the CP kept up a ceaseless fight against the Kotelawala Government's attempts to use anti-Communism to destroy the working class and progressive movement and drag Ceylon into SEATO. It fought for diplomatic and trade relations with the socialist countries and spearheaded the struggle that led to the signing of the Ceylon-China Trade Pact. It demanded the removal of British bases and troops from Ceylon, an independent foreign policy and the nationalisation of foreign vested interests. It led many working class struggles, the most notable of which was the bitterly-fought South-Western Bus strike of 1955 where W. S. de Silva and other comrades were sent to jail.

The 5th Congress of the Communist Party, which met in Grandpass in 1955, sum-

med up these experiences and chalked out a strategy for even wider mobilisation of the masses against the Kotelawala Government.

The Party, however, made some mistakes during this period. In particular, it failed to assess properly the campaign to make Sinhala the official language, distinguish clearly between its progressive and reactionary aspects and lead the campaign on progressive lines. As a result, the Party found itself temporarily isolated, the CP-VLSSP United Front broke up and the initiative passed out of the hands of the Left. Thus the Party could not capitalise properly on the successful fight it had waged against the UNP government and its imperialist allies.

New Government

The mass upsurge of the 1956 general election swept the UNP out of power. A government led by Mr. Bandaranaike was returned on the basis of a programme that included many anti-imperialist demands. The CP won 3 seats.

A special feature of this election was the return of P. Kandiah as MP for Point Pedro, defeating both the Federal Party and the Tamil Congress. Thus the CP, which first broke the political monopoly of the bourgeoisie in the Sinhalese areas when Dr. Wickremasinghe was elected in 1931, was also the first

to break this monopoly among the Tamils.

Following this election, the CP fought to ensure that the progressive aims for which the people had voted were implemented. It supported all efforts of the Government in this direction, while opposing not only the obstructions of the Government's Right-wing but also all measures directed against the working people or disruptive of national unity. This fight helped to bring about the withdrawal of British troops and bases, the opening of relations with the socialist countries, a progressive foreign policy and various measures of nationalisation and rural reform.

During the racial riots of 1956 and 1958, the CP worked hard to maintain communal harmony and expose the reactionary forces responsible for instigating these riots. In the trade union field, many improvements in the workers' wages and standards of living were won and many struggles took place, the most notable being the great strike of 1958 which led to private sector workers winning the government rate of cost-of-living allowance.

In this period, the Communist Party also sponsored and succeeded in bringing into being a number of democratic changes such as the vote at 18 years of age, the reform of the electoral and labour laws and changes in the rent laws in favour of

tenants. It paid great attention to problems of economic development, and its proposals in the spheres of nationalisation, economic planning, industrialisation, irrigation, agriculture and land policy broke new ground.

Reactionary Moves

In mid-1959, after the Right-wing had provoked a Cabinet crisis and expelled progressive Ministers, the CP withdrew the conditional support it had given the Bandaranaike government. It publicly warned Mr. Bandaranaike that he would be the next victim of the very reactionaries he sought to appease. In September, 1959, Mr. Bandaranaike was assassinated.

The imperialists and the local reactionaries calculated that, with Mr. Bandaranaike out of the way, the road was clear for them to re-establish their power. But they calculated without the people and the Left, and especially without the Communist Party. Their attempts to consolidate behind the government of Mr. W. Dahanayake failed, thanks to the unremitting exposure of their aims by the Left - an exposure in which the Communist Party played a notable part. This provoked a revolt against Mr. Dahanayake and the Right-wingers within the SLFP itself.

In the general elections of March, 1960, which posed sharply the issue whether the progressive advance begun

in 1956 would continue or whether reaction would return to power, the Communist Party once again sought to unite all parties opposed to the UNP and Mr. Dahanayake's newly-formed LPP. These attempts failed and Mr. Dudley Senanayake was able to form a minority UNP government which was, however, defeated in its first vote in Parliament.

The experiences of the March elections had, however, convinced other parties of the correctness of the unity policy for which the CP had fought so long and so hard. An electoral agreement was concluded between the SLFP, the LSSP and the CP. As a result, the UNP was defeated and Mrs. Bandaranaike's present SLFP government was returned to power.

Period Of Struggle

The Sixth Party Congress, held at 91, Cotta Road, Colombo, in December, 1960, summarised the experience that the Party had gained in the sharp and complicated struggles between reaction and progress that had taken place since 1956. Its Political Thesis, which was adopted unanimously, analysed the new and favourable conditions that had been created for further initiatives to unite the Left and the anti-imperialist, democratic forces to complete the unfinished tasks of the anti-imperialist stage of the Ceylonese revolution and lay

the basis for further advance in the direction of socialism. The Appeal issued by the 6th Congress to the people of Ceylon warned that a period of sharp struggles between the forces of progress and reaction lay ahead.

The Communist Party has played an active, leading and honourable part in the many struggles against reaction since the 6th Congress - the schools take-over, the many fights against the Anglo-American oil monopolies, the struggles against the UNP's 'break the law' campaign and the Federal Party's attempt to set up a separatist administration.

The CP was the first to warn and alert the people against the attempted coup d'état of January, 1962, and joined fully in the fight to expose and bring to book the reactionary forces responsible for it. It led campaigns against the US Peace Corps and other attempts at neo-colonialist penetration of Ceylon and fought for the democratisation of the armed forces, the Police, the administration and the diplomatic service.

The sustained campaigns of the CP also succeeded in getting the Steel Factory and other industrial projects with aid from the socialist countries started in this period. It played a leading part in the fight to end the dry fish monopoly, to nationalise life insurance and start the Peoples' Bank. Its 'People's

Budget' campaign in 1962 broke new ground in mobilising the people for solving the economic crisis.

In this period, the Party's work in building friendship with the socialist countries and mobilising mass support for the anti-imperialist struggles of other peoples expanded considerably. It took the initiative and played a leading part in organising the great mass rallies and demonstrations in support of the struggles of the peoples of Cuba, Congo, Algeria, South Vietnam and other countries.

At the same time, the CP has opposed and fought back attempts by the SLFP government to capitulate to the pressures and the threats of foreign and local vested interests and seek to solve the economic crisis at the expense of the people. It fought the attempts to cut the rice ration and take away coupons from the peasants. It helped to organise the major united working class struggles of this period, including the one-day protest strike of January, 1962, where nearly a million workers demonstrated their opposition to the use of the armed forces and the Police to break strikes.

Left Unity In Sight

The Communist Party celebrates its 20th anniversary on 3 July 1963 in the midst of a sustained and successful campaign for

one of its major immediate objectives - the creation of a united front of the Left parties on the basis of a common minimum programme. It is a source of satisfaction to the Communist Party, which was born out of the split in the Left movement in 1940, that its 20th anniversary is celebrated in conditions when the unity of the Left movement is being established once again.

The current fight for a United Front of the Left parties started after the meeting of the CP's Central Committee in August, 1962, which appealed publicly for the CP, LSSP and MEP to unite on the basis of a common programme, rally other progressive forces behind this programme and thus provide the real leadership which the SLFP government has failed to give the anti-imperialist and progressive movement.

A favourable political climate for such unity was created in the course of 1962, in united actions against the ration - cut and in the local government elections at the end of the year. This process was carried further in the great island-wide campaign of the three Left parties in defence of Ceylon's sovereignty and self-respect in the face of the threats of the US Government and the oil companies. The massive May Day rally and demonstration called by the 3 Left parties this year

demonstrated beyond doubt how powerful a force is now being created.

The 20-years' struggle of the Communist Party has been of great service to the masses of Ceylon. Many social benefits that the workers and people enjoy to-day were won in struggles pioneered by the Communist Party. Many of the slogans it first raised have now become the common slogans of the widest mass of the progressive movement.

It was the CP that fought and drove treacherous and social-reformist leaders like Mr Goonesinha out of the political and trade union movements of the working class. The powerful and militant trade union movement of to-day owes much to the pioneer work of the CP and the CTUF during and after the Second World War.

The wide popularity and authority that socialism enjoys in Ceylon to-day is in great measure due to the work of the CP, which consistently popularised the achievements of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries and has done more than anyone else in spreading the scientific teachings of Marxism-Leninism in Ceylon, including the organisation of workers' education and the publishing of Marxist-Leninist classics and other socialist writings in the national languages. In this and in other ways, it has also contributed to the develop-

ment of the Sinhala language, enriching it with many new words.

In all its work, the Communist Party has always sought to hold high the banner of proletarian internationalism and has educated not only its members but also the workers and the people in this spirit. It has fought back slanders and calumnies of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries and of the international communist movement. It has always emphasised the identity and solidarity of progressive forces of Ceylon with the three great streams bringing about the revolutionary transformation of the world in our epoch: the fight for peace, the anti-colonial struggle and the fight for socialism and communism.

In the course of the last 20 years - and especially since 1956 - the Communist Party

has extended and strengthened its relations with its fraternal Communist and Workers' Parties throughout the world. Its delegations have attended Congresses of other fraternal parties and learnt much from them and from exchanges of views. The Communist Party was proud to take part in the great international meetings of Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow in 1957 and 1960 whose historic declarations and statements creatively developed Marxism-Leninism in our epoch.

As a true child of the working class of Ceylon and a member of the great international family of Communism, the Communist Party celebrates its 20th anniversary with pride in what it has achieved and determined to fulfil in the future all the obligations of the proud name it bears.



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