



The Struggle for Trotskyism in Ceylon

by Edmund Samarakkody

The Editorial Board of *Spartacist* is proud to bring to our readers an important article making accessible to Trotskyists in the U.S. and internationally an analysis of the history and degeneration of the Trotskyist movement in Ceylon. This understanding is crucial for the rebirth of Trotskyism in Ceylon. The Ceylon experience has profound lessons for our movement, especially in the underdeveloped countries, in the struggle to build sections of an authentic Fourth International rooted in the working class.

The author, Edmund Samarakkody, is uniquely qualified to comment on this experience. A veteran Trotskyist militant and currently spokesman for the Revolutionary Workers Party of Ceylon, Comrade Samarakkody was a founding leader of the Ceylon section of the Fourth International. His early experience dates back to trade-union organizing for the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) in the years before World War II. During the war, Comrade Samarakkody, along with other central leaders of the LSSP, was interned by the British and, following his escape, was involved in coordinating the activities of the illegalized LSSP. He then joined other leaders of the LSSP in temporary emigration to India—a crucial internationalizing experience for the Ceylonese Trotskyists—until the end of the war.

Comrade Samarakkody's oppositional history began in 1957, when he and other left militants in the LSSP resisted the LSSP's accommodation to the bourgeois nationalist Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). Particularly crucial in understanding the degeneration of the international Trotskyist movement is the

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light cast by Comrade Samarakkody's article on the wretched role of the Pabloist International Secretariat (now United Secretariat) in acquiescing to the LSSP's accommodationist policy toward the SLFP until the U.Sec. revisionists were at last forced to disavow the LSSP when the LSSP entered the SLFP-led popular-front government of Mrs. Bandaranaike in 1964. As the article demonstrates, both the Pabloists of the U.Sec. and the Healyites (International Committee) must seek to ignore the real history of the LSSP before 1964 in order to conceal their own complicity, dictated by their pervasive opportunism.

After the 1964 debacle, the U.Sec. revisionists denounced the LSSP's entry into the government and backed the LSSP(Revolutionary), led by the trade-union bureaucrat Bala Tampoe, which split in opposition to the entry into the government. Within the LSSP(R) Comrade Samarakkody led a left opposition against the Tampoe leadership. After two years of struggle, Comrade Samarakkody and his supporters left the LSSP(R) following a Special Conference (18-19 April 1968) and constituted the Revolutionary Samasamaja Party (now Revolutionary Workers Party) of Ceylon.

As part of his continuing political battle against the revisionists, Comrade Samarakkody was instrumental in bringing to the atten-

tion of the world Trotskyist movement the fundamentally corrupt role of Bala Tampoe, through forcing a special Commission on Ceylon at the "Ninth World Congress" of the U.Sec. in April 1969. Following the U.Sec.'s suppression of the accusations against Tampoe and the findings of the U.Sec.'s own Commission, Comrade Samarakkody transmitted to us the actual reports of this Commission, which we published in *Spartacist* #21 (Fall 1972).

—The Editors

During a period of two decades up to 1964, it was the claim of the leaders of the "United Secretariat of the Fourth International"¹ that the LSSP² was the strongest Trotskyist mass party within the "world organisation." Undoubtedly, the LSSP was the working-class-based party with the widest mass base. It was in the leadership of a considerable sector of the trade-union movement and had strong support among sections of the peasantry and of the urban petty bourgeoisie. It had a reputation for intransigence in its opposition to capitalism-imperialism and for its incorruptible and militant leadership of the working class and toilers, and as a champion of the rights of the Tamil-speaking minority.³ In the words of Ernest Mandel, a leader of the United Secretariat, "Colvin R. de Silva and Leslie Gunawardena were brilliant Marxist thinkers who have written some of the best revolutionary

¹ The fake-Trotskyist "United Secretariat" was formed in 1963 as a result of the reunification of the Socialist Workers Party (U.S.) led by Farrell Dobbs with the "International Secretariat" (I.S.) of Michel Pablo, Ernest Mandel, Pierre Frank and Livio Maitan. The SWP had broken with the I.S. in 1953 in protest against Pablo's liquidation of the sections of the Fourth International into the dominant Stalinist and social-democratic parties. The "reunification" amounted to a non-aggression pact, sweeping under the rug issues which had divided ostensibly Trotskyist forces for a decade, and codified the SWP's capitulation to Pabloism by calling for support to bourgeois nationalists and peasant guerrillaists in the backward countries.

² The Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP—Ceylon Socialist Party) was founded in 1935 by a group of young, British-trained intellectuals. During its early years the LSSP was a loose mass organization committed to socialism but

with a basically reformist program. The Stalinist wing led by Pieter Keuneman was expelled in 1940 in the wake of the Hitler-Stalin pact and the Stalinists' flipflops in their attitudes toward the Second World War. The LSSP opposed the war, causing the British to jail its leaders.

³ A minority of southern Indian descent. One section of the Tamils has been on the island from early, pre-colonial, times. The great majority, who make up the bulk of Ceylonese plantation workers, were originally imported by the British in the middle and late 19th century to work on coffee and later tea estates. Tamils make up roughly 10 percent of Ceylon's population. However, in 1949 several hundred thousand Tamil plantation workers (who had had the right to vote since 1931) were disenfranchised. Since then discriminatory citizenship requirements have made the great majority of Tamils officially stateless, without legal rights in either Ceylon or India.

pamphlets in South East Asia....They undoubtedly assimilated the whole body of the basic Trotskyist concepts."⁴

However, it was the same party, the LSSP, with its reputation for revolutionary intransigence, and with its "brilliant Marxist thinkers," that ignominiously collapsed in June 1964, when, by a majority decision, it entered a coalition government with the SLFP,⁵ the party of the so-called national or liberal bourgeoisie, just when the bankruptcy of the policies of the Sirima Bandaranaike government was becoming manifest to the working class and toilers and when conditions were ripening for the development of mass struggle against the government and the capitalist class.

Not only did this reputed Trotskyist party join the ranks of the opportunists by this alliance with the bourgeoisie for the betrayal of the masses, but in 1971, it became directly responsible for the worst massacre of youth ever known in Ceylon or elsewhere—the police-army killings by shooting and torture of thousands of youth who rose in revolt against the capitalist coalition government. And, it is this party that today, together with the Stalinists, is sustaining a capitalist regime which is preparing the road, in the manner of the Allendes, for an open military dictatorship.

But why did this happen? How did this "Trotskyist" party collapse and join the ranks of Stalinist and social-democratic betrayers?

We shall let the same Ernest Mandel of the United Secretariat answer this question. Here is his explanation in his article published in the *International Socialist Review* in the fall of 1964. "It was never a secret to any member of the world Trotskyist movement, informed about the special problems of the Fourth International, that the section in Ceylon, the *Lanka Sama Samaja Party*, was an organisation to which the term 'Trotskyist' had to be applied with a series of specific reservations...." Mandel, it would appear, had never any doubts about the character of the LSSP. According to him "the group of Trotskyist intellectuals suddenly found themselves at the head of the largest working-class organisation in the country....

However, the party which they led could not really be called 'Bolshevik'."

Mandel's dilemma in characterisation of this party is understandable. For over two decades, the LSSP was the Ceylon unit of the International Secretariat (I.S.) and later United Secretariat (U.Sec.), which claimed to be the continuation of the organisation founded by Trotsky. Mandel and the leaders of the United Secretariat were called upon to explain how such a party as the LSSP could have remained a unit of an international organisation claiming to be Trotskyist! It was this question that Mandel has failed to answer. And his failure to face up to this question could well be the reason why he resorted to equivocation in regard to the character of this party.

In the view of Mandel, the LSSP had a hybrid character. "It was a party that combined left-socialist trade-union cadres, revolutionary workers who had gained class consciousness but not specifically revolutionary-Marxist education, and a few hundred genuine revolutionary-Marxist cadres...."

"In fact, while being formally a Trotskyist party, the LSSP functioned in several areas comparably to a left Social Democratic party in a relatively 'prosperous' semi-colonial country; *i.e.* it was the main electoral vehicle of the poor masses, it provided the main leadership of the trade unions."

If indeed "the LSSP functioned in several areas comparably to a left Social Democratic party," and if indeed it was functioning as "the main electoral vehicle of the poor masses," it was by no means difficult to understand how the leaders of this party accepted portfolios in a bourgeois government in 1964 and have continued along this road thereafter.

But if, as Mandel insists, this was a "defeat for Trotskyism in Ceylon" it is necessary to ascertain what precisely in his view led to this defeat. "The defeat suffered by Trotskyism in Ceylon," says Mandel, "is therefore essentially the story of how and why the Colvin R. de Silva and Leslie Gunawardena group ["Marxist"—E.S.] lost leadership of the party

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⁴ Ernest Germain, "Peoples Frontism in Ceylon: From Wavering to Capitulation," *International Socialist Review*, Fall 1964.

⁵ The Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) originated in 1951 when S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike split from the until-then dominant United National Party (UNP) amid widespread uneasiness

in the ruling class over the rampant corruption of the UNP government. Bandaranaike, former right-hand man of UNP leader D.S. Senanayake, combined a program of virulent Sinhalese chauvinism and Buddhist clericalism with timid land reform. His SLFP appealed particularly to the Sinhalese peasantry and rural intelligentsia.

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through their own weaknesses and inner contradictions...."

Mandel mentions these "weaknesses and inner contradictions"—the fatal flaw was that these key political leaders did not occupy themselves with full time party work—they remained part-time leaders... the leaders of the genuinely Trotskyist wing of the LSSP did not change their daily lives to accord with their revolutionary convictions.⁶

While the "weaknesses and inner contradictions of the leaders" were real, it is necessary for revolutionary Marxists to go beyond the personal qualities of the leaders of an ostensibly revolutionary party to ascertain why such a party betrayed the revolutionary movement and the masses. Mandel is completely wrong in stating that the weaknesses of the leaders were "essentially" the cause of the LSSP collapse. This is plain subjectivism.

Mandel's dilemma remains. He and the other leaders of the United Secretariat were not prepared to accept their share of responsibility for the collapse of the LSSP, which for two decades was accepted as a section of the International Secretariat, later United Secretariat.

The formal acceptance of the program can never be the test of a revolutionary Marxist party. That is of course a commonplace. On the other hand, what is basic to the Leninist concept of the party is the basing of the politics of the party on the revolutionary program and above all on activity in a revolutionary perspective.

And, in regard to the LSSP, there was not even a formal acceptance of a Trotskyist program, because in reality there was no program as such. What was termed the program, as late as 1950 (unity congress) was only a listing of "fundamental aims," a brief explanation of a transitional program, a list of transitional demands and the positions of the party on impe-

rialist war, defense of the Soviet Union, on Stalinist parties and popular-frontism.

A Marxist analysis of the socio-economic factors in the country, class forces and class relations, the character of the Ceylon revolution and the dynamics of the Ceylon revolution—all these issues had no place in this "program"! Documents on programmatic questions were never the heritage of the party. Nor could the leaders of the United Secretariat, the Mandels and Pierre Franks, point to any intervention on their part with the LSSP in this regard.

1942 Split

The existence, from the beginning, of a Marxist wing in this social-democratic type party was the real hope for this party. And indeed, the leaders of the [International] correctly looked to this group for the revolutionary orientation of this party.

And the opportunity came to this group and also to the leaders of the [International], when the first split took place in the LSSP between the Philip Gunawardena/N.M. Perera reformist section and the Leslie [Gunawardena]/Colvin [R. de Silva]/Bernard [Soysa] Marxist section in 1942.

It was the attempt on the part of the Marxist wing to re-organise the party programmatically and organisationally on Bolshevik lines that led to opposition from the Philip Gunawardena/N.M. Perera reformist wing and to the split of 1942. The expulsion of Philip Gunawardena and N.M. Perera from the International and the acceptance of the Bolshevik Samasamaja Party (BSP)⁷ as the Ceylon unit created favourable conditions for the building of the revolutionary party.

Although at the commencement the politics of the split were not altogether clear to the rank and file of the BSP, the further evolution of the N.M./Philip group brought into the open the different orientations. For instance, the N.M./Philip group gave proof of its deep-seated opportunism when the parliamentary fraction of their party refused to vote against the status of "independence" granted by the

⁶ Germain, *op. cit.*

⁷ The Bolshevik Samasamaja Party grew out of a 1942 factional polarization and split in the LSSP, which resulted in two groups both calling themselves "the LSSP" operating in Ceylon during the later years of the war. The more leftist group remained affiliated with the BLP(India) and after the war a BLPI letter of 8 October 1945 expelling the leaders

of the rightist group (N.M. Perera and Philip Gunawardena) formalized the split. Following an abortive attempt in late 1946 to reunify the two groups, the leftist group led by Leslie Goonewardene, Colin de Silva, Samarakkody, de Souza and others, which was the smaller group, changed its name to the BSP. However, on 4 June 1950 the two groups were reunified to form the LSSP, with a grouping around Philip Gunawardena splitting away to the right.

British in 1947. The BSP fraction however voted against this fake independence.⁸

On the other hand, during the seven years of its independent existence, the BSP took meaningful steps to raise the ideological level of the party, develop revolutionary cadre and direct trade-union and other mass activities in a revolutionary perspective.

Unification

However, this favourable development for Trotskyism in Ceylon received a setback when the BSP decided on unification with the reformist N.M. Perera/Philip Gunawardena group (LSSP), which had, during this period, only strengthened its reformism, both in its trade-union and parliamentary activities.

And what is more, the unification was effected without any discussion on the fundamental problems of the Ceylon revolution, strategy and tactics, on Stalinism, reformism and parliamentarism. It was the failure of the Marxist wing (BSP) that no document giving the correct orientation on these relevant issues was adopted at this unification. Only the "program" which we have already referred to was adopted. This "program" was so sketchy and only in outline, that the N.M. Perera wing had no difficulty in taking the party along their reformist course.

This unification, which proved disastrous for the future of Trotskyism in Ceylon, nevertheless received the approval of the leaders of the United Secretariat (then the International Secretariat). And what is more, it was their view that a policy of co-existence with the N.M. Perera reformist wing was correct for the Marxist group. In the view of Mandel, "the problem of overcoming the old divisions and of blocking anything that could precipitate a new split with N.M. Perera became an obsession among the key political leaders. *The policy was correct* in itself since *unification had taken place on a principled basis* and since the party's activities as a whole were proceeding in accordance with the general program of Trotskyism."⁹ [our emphasis—E.S.]

General Program of Trotskyism

The program of Trotskyism in Ceylon had to be linked to the problems of the Ceylon revolution.

As in all backward countries, Ceylon had (1950) and still continues to have uncompleted tasks of the democratic revolution. The "Soulbury Constitution," which was a deal between the Ceylonese bourgeoisie and the British imperialists, brought only fake independence. While there was political independence over a large area, yet there was room for imperialist interference and control, even politically. In any event, the economic dominance of British imperialism continued through the ownership and control by the British of the best tea and rubber plantations and the agency houses, which controlled the exports of all agricultural products and which also had a major share of the imports for the plantation sector. The operation of British and other foreign-owned banks, and the open-door policy for British and other imperialist investments reduced political freedom to a fiction.

Twenty-five years after the grant of so-called Independence and the adoption of a new constitution with republican status (1971), the socio-economic policies of Ceylon, over a large area, cannot be decided by a Ceylon Cabinet, but by the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the imperialists!

The revolutionary wing (BSP) which correctly denounced and rejected the Soulbury Constitution as "fake independence" while the N.M. Perera wing silently endorsed the bourgeois interpretations in that regard, failed to raise this question of the Soulbury Constitution with the N.M. Perera wing at the 1950 unification. Thus by implication the BSP endorsed the opportunism of the N.M. Perera wing.

This meant that the unified LSSP adopted, by implication, a view that the bourgeoisie of a backward country in the middle of the 20th century has been able to accomplish a basic task of the bourgeois democratic revo-

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⁸ The British government granted Ceylon a Constitution recommended by the Soulbury Commission in 1946 in order to placate demands for political independence following the war. This constitution retained an appointed Governor-General who retained control over foreign affairs, defense and minority rights. The constitution did not even provide dominion

status—"independence" within the Commonwealth—which was granted separately in 1948. Other agreements guaranteed the British continued use of military bases on Ceylon and other privileges.

⁹ Germain, *op. cit.*

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lution, i.e. the achievement of national liberation from imperialism. This meant that the LSSP was in conflict with the central thesis of the permanent revolution, that, having arrived belatedly, a congenitally weak bourgeoisie in a backward country is incapable of playing a leading role in the democratic revolution; that on the contrary, this bourgeoisie is counter-revolutionary; that the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution could be accomplished only by the proletariat (dictatorship of the proletariat) in alliance with the peasantry and in the teeth of the opposition of the native bourgeoisie—whether they be the compradors or the so-called national bourgeoisie.

The false and untenable assumption that the bourgeois democratic tasks had been accomplished by the Ceylonese bourgeoisie led the LSSP to virtually ignore thereafter—(a) the struggle for completing Ceylon's independence; (b) the struggle for minority rights of the 2 million Tamil-speaking people; (c) the struggle of the peasants for the land; and (d) the ending of the oppression and discrimination of the so-called depressed castes.

It was thus that the LSSP had no program to develop the anti-imperialist struggle although the party was opposed to imperialism. And it was thus that the LSSP had no program to develop the struggle of the peasants for land although the LSSP did demand land for the landless.

Although the LSSP supported the language and other rights of the Tamil minority and called for the acceptance of Tamil as an official language together with the Sinhala language, and also called for citizenship rights for the Tamil plantation workers, it did not have a strategy for implementing these demands.

It was thus that the LSSP failed to carry on a consistent struggle for the completion of Ceylon's independence, for the abolition of the

Soulbury Constitution. The party failed to raise the slogan of a Constituent Assembly.

The refusal of the LSSP to face the reality of the uncompleted democratic tasks gave the Ceylon bourgeoisie an unexpected opportunity to pose as the friends of the peasantry and to win over the petty-bourgeois masses generally, by putting on the mask of nationalism and talking the language of freedom fighters.

Enter Bandaranaike

S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, who broke with the UNP¹⁰ on the succession to D.S. Senanayake, was quick to take the opportunity. Raising the slogans of "Sinhalese language only" as the official language to replace English, "Give back the military bases," "Take over of foreign-owned estates," "End feudal relations in land," Bandaranaike was soon leading the mass movement, especially the peasants and lower middle class intelligentsia. From a leader of a small party of eight members in parliament, Bandaranaike found himself swept to power in 1956 (MEP—the 1st Bandaranaike Government).¹¹

Although Bandaranaike and his SLFP soon showed their state of bankruptcy in regard to (a) the anti-imperialist struggle; (b) winning of land to the peasants; and (c) the grant of minority rights and so-called economic development, this party (SLFP) of the so-called national bourgeoisie was able to keep itself at the centre of the political stage during a period of nearly 17 years up to the present due to the wrong policies of the LSSP in regard to the so-called national or liberal bourgeoisie.

The Ceylonese bourgeoisie had, right up to the war period, remained a plantation and mercantile bourgeoisie. Their interests more or less dove-tailed with imperialist interests; they functioned in the perspective of continued co-existence with imperialism. They were the classic compradors.

However, it was inevitable that capitalist development in Ceylon would, even late, take the road of industrialisation. This meant that a differentiation within the bourgeoisie would sooner or later lead to the emergence of the industrial-minded bourgeoisie. And it could

¹⁰ The United National Party (UNP) was established by the plutocrat D.S. Senanayake in June 1946 and took over the government from the British in the 1947 election. Senanayake had split from the Ceylon National Congress, a loose pro-independence, exclusively Sinhalese, bourgeois formation when the CNC admitted the Stalinists during World War II.

¹¹ The Mahajama Eksath Peramuna (MEP—People's United Front) was formed in February 1956 as a coalition of the SLFP with various religious and Sinhalese chauvinist groups and the "LSSP" of Philip Gunawardena. When the Bandaranaike government collapsed in 1958-59, the Gunawardena group took the name MEP for themselves in subsequent election campaigns.

have been expected that this new section of the bourgeoisie would be in a state of conflict with the older plantation bourgeoisie or their party, the UNP, which had control of state power.

It was the existence of this new sector of the bourgeoisie—the industrial-minded sector—that found its reflection in the split away of Bandaranaike from the UNP (1951). Further, it was precisely the significance of this differentiation within the bourgeoisie that the LSSP, which according to Mandel, "functioned in accordance with the general program of Trotskyism," failed to understand.

"National" or "Liberal" Bourgeoisie

The character and the role of the so-called national or liberal bourgeoisie in the backward countries was too well known, especially in the Trotskyist movement, by the time this differentiation took place in Ceylon. The tragedy of the Chinese revolution (1927), the triumph of Franco in Spain (1936-39), and the failure of the revolutionary movements in India and the other countries of Asia were basically linked to the failure of ostensible revolutionaries to understand the nature of the so-called national bourgeoisie, who seek to use the masses, not for struggle against imperialism but to win concessions from the imperialist masters.

The principal lesson derived from Marxist experience in this regard was that this sector of the bourgeoisie, while being capable of occasional but weak oppositional actions against imperialism, cannot, with any degree of consistency, develop any real confrontation with imperialism. In the context of the reality of the class struggle, the so-called national or liberal bourgeoisie must necessarily betray the struggle for national liberation and enter into treacherous compromises with imperialism. "The more to the East," said Trotsky, "the more treacherous were the bourgeoisie." That meant, the more belatedly they arrive, the more treacherous they are.

While revolutionary Marxists would give critical support to some oppositional actions of the so-called national bourgeoisie, they are unequivocally opposed to national bourgeois regimes; it remains their task to carry on a consistent and irreconcilable struggle to expose their real role of treachery to the national liberation struggle and to wrest the leadership of the national struggle from their hands.

The regimes of the so-called national or liberal bourgeoisie in Ceylon (SLFP, SLFP-LSSP,

SLFP-LSSP-CP) have brought about a belated but limited development of the manufacturing industries, not in conflict with imperialism, but jointly with foreign capitalists, whether in the public or private sector, undermining in this process the political independence of the country.

It is precisely this question of the so-called national or liberal bourgeoisie—the Bandaranaike question—that LSSP leaders failed to understand in the light of Marxist experience. In the result, the leadership followed empirically a zig zag policy, which inevitably led them into the coalition government with the SLFP in 1964.

The 1953 Hartal—A Semi-Insurrection

It was in this state of ideological confusion and uncertainty that the LSSP was confronted with the opportunity of leading the masses in Ceylon's first revolutionary mass struggle against the government and the capitalist class reaching to the level of a semi-insurrection.

With the end of the Korean boom and the fall in the prices of the main exports, tea and rubber, the capitalist UNP government decided to maintain the profit levels of the capitalist and vested interests by imposing drastic cuts on social services and by the increase in price of rationed rice. While the price of rice was raised from =/25 cents to =/70 cents [Ceylon currency] per measure, the government withdrew the free mid-day meal to school children and increased postal fares and train fares.

The LSSP took the lead in developing mass agitation on these issues. But even while the mass movement was visibly growing around these issues, the leaders of the LSSP, who had empirically moved into a struggle situation, failed to see the revolutionary possibilities in the situation. Their perspectives did not go beyond mass protest action against the actions and policies of the government.

In this context, the LSSP leaders were taken by surprise by the response of the masses to the one-day protest action that was decided upon.

Though acting empirically, the LSSP correctly applied the tactic of the united front. The Philip Gunawardena group (MEP), the Stalinists and even the Federal Party (bourgeois-led Tamil minority Party) were pushed into becoming the co-sponsors of the Hartal¹² action.

The withdrawal of work (strike action) of

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¹² A political mass strike.

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the workers supported by the closing of business and the stoppage of work by peasants and other self-employed people, all of whom resorted to direct action struggle by barricading roads, cutting down trees and telephone posts, stopping of buses and trains—all this turned into a real confrontation with the armed forces of the government. What occurred was a semi-insurrection in which the masses fought the police and the army with stones and clubs and whatever they found by way of weapons. Nine persons were killed by police shooting.

What the working class and the masses that were in the struggle looked forward to was not a mere one-day protest action and a return to work the following day. They were in readiness for a struggle to overthrow the hated UNP government. In fact, this direct action of the masses continued on the next day also. There were clear possibilities of this Hartal action being continued for several days thereafter. But the LSSP leadership, despite the unmistakable moods of the workers and other sections of the masses, decided to keep to their plan of a mere protest action and called off the Hartal and prevented the masses from continuing the struggle.

Dynamics of the Ceylon Revolution

What the LSSP leadership had failed to develop theoretically—the dynamics of the Ceylon revolution—the Hartal struggle showed in practice, even in outline. The following features were prominently silhouetted in the political scene:

1. Contrary to the misgivings of the LSSP leaders (which some of them developed into theories later), the Ceylonese masses were not so steeped in parliamentarism that they would first have to go through a long parliamentary period before they got on to the road of revolutionary struggle. The Hartal showed that, given a revolutionary leadership, the masses could soon shed their parliamentary illusions and enter the road of mass struggle leading to the revolution itself.

2. The masses did not divide the Ceylon revolution into two stages, (a) an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal stage and (b) an anti-capitalist stage. The democratic revolution and the socialist revolution were telescoped in a single struggle. The issues that brought the masses into revolutionary struggle were issues arising

out of imperialist capitalist oppression—increase of price of rice, train fares, postal fares, etc. The capitalist class had the need to save foreign exchange through a cut in the ration of rice and cutting down of social services for the maintaining of capitalist profit levels. The uncompleted democratic tasks, completing of independence, and the ending of minority and caste oppression could be accomplished only in the course of the socialist revolution.

Despite their so-called two-stage theory, the Stalinists found themselves taken along into an anti-capitalist struggle and an uprising against a capitalist government. Also, contrary to their so-called theory, they were shown in practice that the anti-UNP struggle could not be separated from the anti-capitalist struggle.

3. Again, contrary to the orientation of the Stalinists and later also of the LSSP, it was not the so-called progressive bourgeoisie or petty bourgeoisie that led the masses in this struggle, but the proletariat. Led by the LSSP, it was the working class that took the leading role in this struggle. The urban and rural petty bourgeoisie, the peasants and the students and youth all followed the leadership of the working class. The party of the so-called progressive bourgeoisie, the Bandaranaike-led SLFP, was not ready even to be one of the sponsors of the Hartal action.

4. The alliance of the proletariat and the peasantry, which is basic to the Ceylon revolution, was achieved in action. The struggle showed that it was not necessary for the proletariat to form a political alliance with a bourgeois or petty-bourgeois party in order to win the peasantry. The peasantry can be won to the side of the proletariat on the basis of support for their burning issues in opposition to the bourgeoisie.

The LSSP leadership failed to draw the lessons of this Hartal experience. It failed to theoretically evaluate the events of this semi-insurrection and relate them to the theory of the permanent revolution as it applied to Ceylon, a backward country. The LSSP leadership failed to realise that what was urgent and unpostponable was the raising of the ideological level of the party in the perspective of developing into a Bolshevik-type revolutionary combat party.

Politics of the International Secretariat

We have already noted that in the view of Mandel, in the post unification years (LSSP-

BSP), the LSSP's "activities as a whole were proceeding in accordance with the general program of Trotskyism."

Thus, in the view of the International Secretariat, there was no occasion for any serious intervention on its part in regard to the LSSP.

The truth in this regard was that, with the new turn of the I.S. in 1951 (3rd Congress) under the guidance of Pablo, there could not be, in their view, any problems for the LSSP in regard to ideological development or the building of a Bolshevik-type party.

According to the thesis of the 3rd Congress there was no need to build independent Trotskyist parties; what was necessary was to take the "quickest road to the masses" wherever they be, in the Stalinist or other reformist parties, for "the integrating" of the revolutionary Marxist cadre deeply into the so-called real movement of the masses.

The same thesis of the 3rd Congress left the door open for an interpretation that the Stalinist parties have transformed themselves from road-blocks to the proletarian revolution into parties that are capable of taking the revolutionary road.

It was against this liquidationist turn of the International that the SWP (United States)-led minority revolted and split in 1953. On the first news of the split the LSSP leadership leaned on the side of the minority and appeared to be willing to take up the struggle against Pabloist revisionism and liquidationism. But in the state of ideological confusion that reigned in the LSSP and its leadership, and in the context of the theoretical weakness of the International Committee (IC),¹³ the leaders of the LSSP wavered and jumped on to the bandwagon of the majority led by the Mandels, Pierre Franks and the Livios.

In reality, the liquidationist and revisionist line of Pablo, according to which there is no need to build independent Marxist parties, and according to which what was urgent was the "integration into the living movement of the masses"—all this dovetailed into the orientation of the LSSP leaders whose pre-occupation was developing mass activity—in the trade unions and in the electorates without revolutionary perspective.

1953 Split

On the other hand, the Pabloist pro-Stalinist

orientation found more than a responsive echo with the Henry Peiris-led faction which emerged in the party in the fall of 1952. A resolution of this faction, led by Henry Peiris, William Silva and T.B. Subasinghe, "declared that in the elections the party should have put forward the slogan of a 'Democratic Government which would have meant, at its lowest level, a Bandaranaike government, and at its highest level, a Government by a Sama Samaja majority'." It also took the position "that the party should enter into the closest possible agreement and co-operation with the CP and Philip group in the trade union and political fields" (*Short History of the LSSP*).

This was clearly the moment to investigate into the roots of reformism and Stalinism that had grown within the LSSP, to draw up a balance sheet of the efforts of the LSSP to move in a Trotskyist direction. In fact, all the basic questions of Trotskyism, the program, the application of the theory of the permanent revolution, the character of the Ceylon revolution, the role of the "national" bourgeoisie, questions of strategy and tactics, the Leninist concept of the party, were the issues that were involved in this factional struggle that burst into the open.

But the LSSP leadership conducted the fight against the reformists and Stalinists within the party by their own empirical methods and in an ad hoc manner, counterposing Trotskyist orthodoxy to the politics of the revisionists, very much in the manner of the SWP in 1953 when it opposed the line of the 3rd Congress. In the result, the factional struggle did not lead to the focusing of attention on the fundamental questions that were clearly posed before the entire party. Nor did the factional struggle help even to educate the membership of the party and to raise their ideological level, especially when the party was moving deeper into parliamentary politics, where Bandaranaike was soon to become the principal actor.

Responsive Co-operation

Having failed to understand the role of the so-called national bourgeoisie, the LSSP leadership was at a loss to know how to deal with the Bandaranaike-led MEP government that
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¹³ The International Committee was formed by those sections of the Fourth International who broke from the Pabloist International Secretariat in 1953. The IC included the SWP

led by J.P. Cannon, the majority of the French section led by Bleibtreu-Lambert, and the British grouping led by G. Healy.

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was formed after the 1956 parliamentary elections.

Succumbing to the mass hysteria and enthusiasm at the election victory of the MEP to office, the LSSP announced its attitude to the new government as one of "responsive co-operation." It was of course necessary to note the popularity of the MEP government. It was undoubtedly imperative for the LSSP to take note of the prevailing mass sentiment and the mass moods in relation to the first Bandaranaike government, before the party decided on its tactics in the situation. But it was unpardonable for a party claiming to be revolutionary Marxist to resort to equivocal formulae, and echo mass illusions when it was imperative to categorically state party positions. And in this case, it was the question of correctly characterising the MEP government which was a bourgeois bonapartist government that was seeking to deceive the masses with nationalist and socialist phraseology. It was the duty of the LSSP to patiently explain to the masses regarding the truth about the character of this government. On the contrary, the LSSP chose the occasion to opportunistically go along with the masses, whilst keeping the door open for later criticism of the government when the mass moods underwent a change.

The Mandels, Pierre Franks and the Livios of the I.S. looked on from a distance. They never once in this regard expressed their views on the LSSP line on this question. Either it was the case of the I.S. approving the LSSP line in this regard, or the I.S. did not seek to interfere in the internal affairs of a section of the International on the basis of its real orientation, that the Revolutionary International is a sum of several national parties that function independently of the International centre!

However, it was the Bandaranaike MEP regime itself that gave the LSSP the opportunity to re-assess the character of this government. Before long, the bankruptcy of "Bandaranaike principles" became evident to a section of the masses. It was to conceal this bankruptcy that Bandaranaike resorted to communalism that led to the worst anti-Tamil riots in Ceylon (1956-1958). And what was particularly helpful to the LSSP was that the organised working class lost faith in the promises of Bandaranaike and moved into strike action to win their wage demands.

But the LSSP, as before, acted only empirically. In a tail-endist fashion, the LSSP supported the working-class strikes and adopted only a more critical attitude to Bandaranaike.

Although the LSSP correctly noted that the Bandaranaike government (MEP) was bonapartist in character, it failed to draw the conclusion that mass illusions in such a government cannot easily disappear, that the LSSP had to launch consistent struggle on many fronts on reformism and Stalinism to win the masses away from "Bandaranaike politics." On the other hand, the LSSP naively believed that, with the assassination of Bandaranaike, "Bandaranaike politics" had come to an end. The LSSP even believed that the road was now open for the party to ride to parliamentary power.

It was thus that the LSSP decided to throw all its forces in the 1960 elections (March) with the aim of winning a majority to form an LSSP government in parliament. And the International Secretariat, the Mandels and the Pierre Franks, looked on approvingly with hope that the LSSP would win a majority in this election.

But the SLFP, led by the widow of Bandaranaike, came out of the elections (March 1960), as the party with the largest number of seats, although it failed to win an overall majority to form the government. The LSSP was reduced from 12 to 10 seats and was thrown into a state of confusion.

But this outcome of the elections might well have been the opportunity for the party to review its election policy which contributed in a large way to increasing mass illusions in parliament and also to disorienting the party membership. In fact the decision of the party to bid for a parliamentary majority was evidence that the party had lost all revolutionary perspective and had accepted the reformist and Stalinist parliamentary or so-called peaceful road to socialism.

Nor did the Mandels and Pierre Franks of the International Secretariat intervene correctly even after the event, in this regard. The leaders of the I.S. could not realise that what was involved here was the disease of parliamentarism and reformism that had got a stranglehold on the party, and not a question of miscalculation or wrong evaluation. Here is a sample of their orientation in this regard—

"The starting point must be a frank self criticism of the errors in analysis and evaluation committed by the party prior to the 20th March elections, namely—

(a) It thought that the objective situation was

favourable to the victory of the revolutionary movement;
 (b) It supposed that the masses have already had enough experience with the SLFP and that as a result they might in their majority turn towards the LSSP."

(I.S. Document on Ceylon, October 1960)

In this context, it was no surprise that the leadership of the LSSP, which was now steeped in parliamentarism continued to look desperately for solutions within the same parliamentarist perspective. And it was thus that the next step was taken by the right-wing leader N.M. Perera who challenged all the basic positions of Trotskyism, pronounced that the proletariat in Ceylon was petty-bourgeois in outlook, that revolutionary mass struggle leading to the dictatorship of the proletariat was impossible and crudely proposed that the LSSP enter a coalition front with the SLFP "on an agreed program."

And as for the "brilliant Marxists" like Mandel, the Colvins and the Leslies, they were only a step behind N.M. Perera. In fact, it was Leslie Gunawardena that sought to give theoretical justification for the betrayal that Perera found no difficulty in proposing in the manner of the Social Democrats. Leslie Gunawardena, you see, was, in keeping with the traditions of the Trotskyist movement, against the popular front! But according to Leslie Gunawardena a popular front with an anti-capitalist program was in accordance with the program of Trotskyism! Thus Leslie Gunawardena was opposed to N.M. Perera's proposal to form a coalition government on an agreed minimum program. "This action" wrote Leslie "was light-minded and unworthy of a party that claims to employ the Marxist method!"

Four years later, in June 1964, these same "brilliant Marxists" led by this same Leslie had moved far and away from Leslie's own theory of 1960. They were opposed to the proposal of N.M. Perera not on the absence of an anti-capitalist program. Their difference with N.M. Perera was that they wanted a coalition government between the entire ULF¹⁴-LSSP-MEP, CP and the SLFP—They wanted a complete and proper popular front!

Opposition

Though late, left oppositional elements in the LSSP began to intervene. In 1957,

one year after Bandaranaike assumed office, the opposition to the policy of "responsive co-operation" manifested itself through a small group in the Central Committee. In its amendment to the political resolution of the Central Committee, this group (W. Dharmasena, Robert Gunawardena, Edmund [Samarakkody], Chandra Gunasekera) stated—

"When the MEP government came into power the masses were intoxicated with illusions regarding this government. Large sections of the masses close to the party expected the party to support the MEP government. In this situation, partly due to lack of clarity (of the party) regarding the MEP government, the party offered co-operation (responsive) to the government whilst directing the parliamentary group to sit in the opposition. As the party failed to characterise the MEP government as a capitalist government, the fact that the parliamentary group sat in the opposition did not signalise its fundamental opposition or of being against the government. Whatever was the intention of the party, in the eyes of the masses, the key to the understanding of the fundamental position of the party in relation to the government was the offer of co-operation (responsive) by the party. This offer of co-operation to the capitalist government was wrong. The party could have and should have offered support to the progressive measures of the government while stating categorically that the MEP government was a capitalist government. However, unpalatable and unacceptable it may have been to the masses, the party should have characterised this government as a capitalist government and thereafter proceeded to explain." (Amendment of Edmund-Robert group in the CC, 1957).

In the further efforts to combat parliamentarism and to take the party along the path of mass struggle the group insisted that "the aim of the party in relation to the MEP government is revolutionary overthrow of the government, i.e. by the method of the mass uprising. The masses are not ready now (today) for the overthrow of the government. But in view of the failure of the government to solve the pressing problems of the people, in view of the ever increasing dissension in the MEP, and the demoralisation of its own ranks, in view of the growing militancy of the working class, the situation can change very rapidly, and at any moment from now, the masses could well raise the slogan 'Down with the MEP government.' As a bridge between their present consciousness and the stage when they will be ready for the call for the overthrow of the Govern-

¹⁴ The United Left Front (ULF) was an electoral bloc in the 1963 elections of the LSSP, the Communist Party and Philip Gunawardena's MEP on a joint program of minimal reforms.

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ment, the party will adopt as a central agitational slogan 'We do not want the capitalist MEP government, we want a *workers and peasants government*'."

Undoubtedly this group failed to come to grips with the roots of reformism in the party. It only focused attention on some aspects of party policy. Nevertheless, the orientation of this group gave promise of possibilities for the growth of a real revolutionary tendency.

It was thus an opportune moment for the leaders of the I.S. to intervene on the side of the left oppositional elements that were definitively emerging. But there was no such intervention, for the reason that these leaders, the Mandels and the Pierre Franks, had no differences with the LSSP leadership in regard to their policy of "responsive co-operation" to the Bandaranaike government.

It was only when the LSSP leaders took the inevitable step from "responsive co-operation" to the call for support of an SLFP government that the leaders of the International Secretariat intervened with a document to register their opposition.

The leaders of the I.S. were in a dilemma. If the LSSP was right when it offered co-operation (responsive co-operation) to the first Bandaranaike government (MEP) how could the LSSP be wrong when it called for and supported the formation of an SLFP government in parliament?

The answer to this question is that the LSSP was completely wrong in offering co-operation (responsive) to the bourgeois MEP government of Bandaranaike in 1956. The LSSP was once again wrong in calling for support of the bourgeois SLFP in 1960.

But the leaders of the I.S. were not prepared to admit that it was their failure that they did not state categorically that the policy of "responsive co-operation" was wrong. It was thus that the Mandels and Pierre Franks found themselves on the defensive before the LSSP reformists in their attempt to explain what they really meant by "critical support" to the SLFP government. These leaders of the I.S. were guilty of a serious distortion of the Leninist-Trotskyist position in regard to the governments of the so-called national progressive bourgeoisie! And here is their orientation in that regard—"We do not forget that, in the case of colonial and semi-colonial countries, the revol-

utionary party can give its *critical support to governments with a non-proletarian leadership, be they petty-bourgeois or bourgeois*"! [our emphasis-E.S.](Document of the I.S. on Ceylon).

However, in the same breath, the document continued, "The support of a revolutionary party for a bourgeois or petty-bourgeois government cannot be other than critical, namely strictly conditional and limited. That means in practise that this support can be granted for progressive, effectively anti-capitalist or anti-imperialist measures, either planned or carried out, measures that must be defended against any manoeuvre or sabotage by the reactionary forces." But why this equivocation? A revolutionary Marxist party will not and cannot give even critical support to any bourgeois or petty-bourgeois government. If the Mandels and the Pierre Franks mean thereby critical support to only "progressive and anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist measures" then how do they talk of "giving critical support to governments with a non-proletarian leadership, be they petty-bourgeois or bourgeois"? They knew that what was involved here was the attitude of the revolutionary party to a bourgeois government in a colonial or semi-colonial country, and not to its attitude to certain measures of such a government. They know well that a revolutionary Marxist party could well give critical support to certain measures of bourgeois governments, even of military governments. But the attitude of a revolutionary Marxist party to a bourgeois government with even a "progressive" coloration can be nothing but irreconcilable opposition, although the manner of opposition to such a government will depend on the mass sentiment in relation to the government.

It is thus that support to a government, whether disguised as "responsive co-operation" or critical support, must be rejected as being in direct conflict with the fundamental programmatic position of the party.

But whatever were the weaknesses and equivocations of the International Secretariat, the reformist leadership of the LSSP had by their unequivocal call for support of an SLFP government in May 1960 exposed the hollowness of their claims to be a Trotskyist party. This meant that the task of revolutionary Marxists within the LSSP was to begin the struggle for a Trotskyist program and the organisation of a revolutionary tendency with or without the support of the International Secretariat.

However, the left oppositionists in the LSSP allowed themselves to be disarmed when the LSSP leadership empirically put on an oppositional stance in relation to the SLFP government, especially when sectors of the working class moved into strike action under the leadership of the LSSP. And, for its part, the International Secretariat even believed that an appeal to the party leadership from the World Congress would suffice to make these, now confirmed reformists, take a revolutionary road!

"The World Congress appeals to the Lanka Sama Samaja Party for a radical change in the political course in the direction indicated by the document of the leadership of the International."

"The Congress is confident that the next National Conference of the LSSP in whose political preparation the whole International must participate, will know how to adopt all the political and organisational decisions necessary to overcome the crisis which was revealed following on the results of the March 1960 election campaign." (Letter of 6th World Congress to LSSP)

Far from any effective participation of the International or any participation at all by the L.S. in any national conference of the LSSP "for a radical change in its political course," the Mandels and Pierre Franks were once again traversing the same parliamentarist road with the LSSP leadership, just when the working class had achieved, as never before, unity for struggle around 21 demands which could well develop into political struggle against the SLFP government and the capitalist class.

United Left Front

The Marxist tactic of the united front with Stalinist and reformist working-class parties and even bourgeois parties means nothing more than unity in action in concrete anti-imperialist or class-struggle situations. It can never mean a political alliance with such parties, which cannot have any other objective than the winning of reforms from the capitalists or the capitalist government.

The problem of the alternative government, alternative to the bourgeois government, is often posed before the revolutionary Marxists. But this question of an alternative government is linked to the dynamics of the revolution.

This means that revolutionary Marxists do not project a transitional reformist government prior to a workers government. But

this was precisely the orientation of the LSSP leaders who in their search for an alternative to a bourgeois government, proposed a government of the so-called "United Left Front" composed of the two working-class-based parties--the LSSP and CP--and the petty-bourgeois MEP (Philip Gunawardena) on an agreed program (July 1963).

The concluding paragraph of the preamble to this agreement, containing a "General Program" (maximum) and an immediate program, revealed the reformist and Stalinist character of this "Front".

"In accordance with the needs of this situation and in response to this mass urge, the Ceylon Communist Party, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party and the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna have agreed to form a United Left Front in order to mobilise and lead all anti-imperialist, anti-feudal and socialist forces in Ceylon in the fight to establish a government that will give effect to the following general program."

The "immediate" or the minimum part of this program, which was the real program of the Front, speaks for itself. The following are among the demands of the "immediate" or minimum program: (a) Bring down Prices! Let the State import and undertake the wholesale trade in all essential commodities. (b) End the wage freeze! Political and trade union rights for teachers and other employees of the Government... (c) Participation of workers in each work place in the management of state and nationalised undertakings. (d) Nationalise the 13 Foreign Banks!

Revolutionary Tendency

The minority in the Central Committee (14 members), that had for some time been moving in a revolutionary orientation, were categorically opposed to the so-called United Left Front.

The minority (which included Meryl [Fernando], Edmund [Samarakkody], Karlo [Karalasingham], [Bala] Tampoe, D.S. Mallawaratchi, S.A. Martinus, W. Dharmasena) was quick to see the reformist nature of this ULF which it correctly characterised as popular frontism!

"The situation which now faces the party is one in which it is clear that the MEP and the CP are not contemplating the type of United Front activity that will in fact provide a united left lead to the masses against the SLFP government and the forces of capitalist reaction.

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These two parties are seeking instead, to secure the party's consent to putting forward an agreed governmental program before the masses in the name of the United Left Front for the purpose of canvassing support for the establishment of a popular front type of government in parliament. This parliamentary reformist perspective for united front activity must be rejected by the party....

"... The party must avoid any course of action which is likely to strengthen the illusions already created amongst the left minded masses that the road forward to socialism in Ceylon lies through the setting up of a United Left Front with the objective of establishing a coalition government in parliament, on the basis of any agreed program for that purpose."

(Resolution of the CC minority)

With the emergence of a revolutionary tendency led by 14 members of the Central Committee, the time was opportune to begin in an organised manner the struggle against parliamentarism and reformism and for orienting the party in a revolutionary direction. And this was clearly the moment for the International Secretariat to come down decisively on the side of the CC minority, for a joint struggle for the building of the revolutionary party.

It was thus that the CC minority looked forward hopefully for support from the Mandels and the Pierre Franks, especially when the International Secretariat had once again, in the fall of 1961, reminded the LSSP leaders that it was urgent for the party to be re-oriented on the lines suggested by the I.S. and endorsed by the Sixth World Congress. By its August (1961) resolution on Ceylon, the I.S. reiterated the following matters.

(a) "The impossibility of the conquest of power by the parliamentary way and the necessity for never forgetting that the smashing of the bourgeois apparatus and the creation by the masses in the course of a revolutionary process as a whole, of new organs of power, remain the condition for the victory of the proletariat and its revolutionary party";

(b) "The necessity of working to make possible a close alliance between the worker masses and the peasants and more particularly for the operation of the real junction with the Indian agricultural workers, who remain one of the motive forces of the revolution in Ceylon; the necessity to underline the principled attitude favourable to trade union unity."

(c) The International Secretariat even reminded the LSSP leadership that "up till now,

the conference of the LSSP, which should have discussed all these questions, has not been convoked and there is consequently no official stand of the party."

All this and the initial reactions of the International Secretariat to the parliamentarism that was reflected through the first draft of the ULF agreement gave promise of principled positions in this regard by the Mandels and the Pierre Franks, especially in the context of the categorical opposition of the CC minority (14 members out of 44).

But it was just when the CC minority looked to cooperation from the Mandels and Pierre Franks to continue their struggle against the LSSP reformists that they were abandoned by these leaders who took the side of the N.M. Pereras and Leslies when the latter signed the so-called agreement of the United Left Front which was nothing but a modest programme of reforms to fight the next parliamentary elections in the perspective of forming a joint government in parliament. The I.S. issued a public statement hailing the formation of the LSSP-MEP-CP "Left United Front."

Was the International Secretariat correct in supporting the United Left Front formed in August 1963? What was their justification in this regard? Were they acting in accordance with the general program of Trotskyism?

Workers and Peasants Government

The call of the Bolsheviks in 1917 for a government of the Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks and their readiness to designate such a government as a workers and peasants government has been the excuse for revisionists of the United Secretariat and of the Healyite variety to call for support of governments of reformist working-class parties and petty-bourgeois parties, which are nothing but governments for bourgeois reform. And this was precisely the orientation of the Mandels and the Pierre Franks, especially since the 3rd Congress (1951).

Here is for example the section of the resolution of the 3rd Congress in regard to the tactics concretely proposed for Chile:

"It [our section] will develop its propaganda for the slogan of the workers and peasants government which will eventually be concretised in this country as a government of parties claiming to represent the working class, notably the Communist Party and the Socialist Party." (This meant that the coalition government of Allende that was recently overthrown by the military coup was the con-

cretisation of the slogan workers and peasants government!)

And this was specifically the advice of the I.S. to the LSSP when these leaders intervened with the party in 1960 against their proposal to support an SLFP government in that year.

"It would be rather dangerous, however for the workers parties to restrict themselves to the framework of the parliamentary aims and not look for a new, effective contact with the masses, through vigorous, extra-parliamentary activity among the worker and peasant masses; and at an electoral policy which puts forward a radical program to be realised by the United Front of the parties which claim to be working class." [our emphasis—E.S.]

(I.S. Document on Ceylon, 18 May 1960)

But it is precisely against this reformist interpretation of the Bolshevik experience that Trotsky himself had warned.

Trotsky mentions the specific conditions under which the Bolsheviks put forward the slogan to the S.R.'s and the Mensheviks—"break with the bourgeoisie and take power." Here are these specific conditions:

1. It was a slogan put forward during a particular phase in the pre-revolutionary situation of 1917—the period from April to September 1917.

2. In this context "the Bolshevik party promised the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s, as the petty-bourgeois representatives of the workers and peasants, its revolutionary aid against the bourgeoisie..."

3. The Bolshevik party categorically refused either to enter the government of the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s or to carry political responsibility for it.

4. In the specific context in which this slogan was projected "If the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s had actually broken with the Cadets (liberals) and with foreign imperialism, then 'the workers' and peasants' government' created by them could only have hastened and facilitated the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat."¹⁵

The Transitional Programme (of the 4th International) left no room for any misunderstanding in regard to this slogan—"This formula, 'Workers and Peasants Government,' first appeared in the agitation of the Bolsheviks in 1917 and was definitely accepted after the October Insurrection. In the final instance it represented nothing more than the popular

designation for the already established dictatorship of the proletariat.

"...The slogan 'Workers and Farmers Government' is thus acceptable to us only in the sense that it had in 1917 with the Bolsheviks—i.e., as an anti-bourgeois and anti-capitalist slogan, but in no case in that democratic sense which later the epigones gave it, transforming it from a bridge to socialist revolution into the chief barrier upon its path."

The International Secretariat was completely wrong in regard to the so-called tactics of forming governments of working-class based parties and other petty-bourgeois parties which they proposed for the backward countries in 1951 (3rd Congress) and specifically to the LSSP in 1960 and when they gave their sanction to the United Left Front in August 1963. And it is this wrong policy that the U.Sec. as well as the Healyites continue to follow up to the present.

The Coalition Government

From the United Left Front (LSSP-MEP-CP Coalition) to an SLFP-LSSP coalition was but a step. And this happened in June 1964. Of course the Mandels and the Pierre Franks were frantically wringing their hands when N.M. Perera took the lead to make this proposal. And this time "Barkis was willing." The bourgeois SLFP government was in crisis and conditions were maturing for massive working-class action against the government at a time when its ranks were depleting. Sirima Bandaranaike needed a coalition with the strongest working-class based party. The SLFP leader readily agreed to form a coalition government with the LSSP which was ready to betray the working class and the toilers.

The revolutionary tendency categorically opposed coalition and denounced it as betrayal. However, even at this eleventh hour, the I.S. failed to establish direct contact with the revolutionary tendency led by the CC opposition of 14 members to jointly fight the reformists in this struggle. Instead, the I.S. sent a letter to the Secretary, Leslie Gunawardena, the contents of which were known to the minority and the party only on the day of the National Conference to decide on coalition.

Nor did the arrival of Pierre Frank, the U.Sec. representative, one day before the Conference, give any added strength to the revolutionary tendency that had through its own efforts organised for the final confrontation. And what is more, when the revolutionary tendency informed Pierre Frank that the coalitionists

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¹⁵ L.D. Trotsky, "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International (The Transitional Program)," 1938.

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were certain to win at conference and that the only course of action that appeared to the minority as correct was the split from the coalitionists on this issue, the representative of the I.S. had no views to offer. His only words were —"that is for you to decide." Thus, contrary to the claims of the I.S., its representative would not even associate himself with the decision of the revolutionary tendency to break with N.M. Perera, Colvin [R. de Silva] and Leslie [Gunawardena] when they took the road of open betrayal and when they struck a frontal blow at the World Trotskyist movement. Of course, later, the I.S. expelled the coalitionists from the International and recognised the LSSP(R) as its Ceylon section.

LSSP (R)

The task before the LSSP(R) was to draw up a full balance sheet of the whole of the LSSP experience and on the basis of these lessons to begin the building of the revolutionary party.

But, from the outset, the contradictions within itself made it impossible for the LSSP(R) to undertake any systematic efforts at party building. And the truth about the opposition that split from the LSSP in June 1964 was that there were four groups.

Karalasingham Group

A basic contradiction in the LSSP(R) arose from the Karalasingham group.

Within the left opposition in the LSSP prior to the split Karalasingham gave promise of playing an important role in the struggle against revisionism and for the building of the revolutionary party. Karalasingham intervened sharply against the coalition line of the LSSP leaders. In his pamphlet for the special conference, which later he included in his book on "Coalition Politics," Karalasingham effectively exposed the revisionism of the LSSP leaders especially by reference to Marxist theory and experience.

Significantly, however, from the outset Karalasingham stood categorically opposed to a split of the left oppositionists in the event of the acceptance of coalition by the party at special conference. Karalasingham did not clarify his perspectives for remaining within the LSSP in such a situation. And, on the other hand, he was vehemently opposed to any attempt to even form a faction when this was mooted

about by some of those in left-opposition long before the proposal of coalition was made by the N.M. Perera group. And undoubtedly, the failure to organize a faction by the revolutionary tendency on a platform, which would have brought out clearly the differences among the oppositionists, was the most serious mistake of those who sought to fight the revisionism of the LSSP leaders.

Despite his orientation in this regard, Karalasingham, though reluctantly, joined the left-oppositionists who organised themselves as the LSSP(R). Karalasingham did not reveal his perspectives in regard to his decision to be in the LSSP(R).

But it was not long before Karalasingham's motivation became manifest. In December 1964 the two party (LSSP-R) M.P.'s made a tactical mistake on the issue of the voting on the Throne Speech of the Coalition government.¹⁶ Voting against the government on this issue was not the mistake. The LSSP(R) CC had rightly taken a decision to vote against the Throne Speech. Their mistake was that they voted on the motion of the Independent (rightist) Member Dahanayake. As a result, the party was exposed to the attacks of the coalitionists, who alleged that the LSSP(R) M.P.'s joined the UNP and the rightists to defeat the government. That was the gravamen of the charge that could justifiably be leveled against them.

However, Karalasingham took the opportunity to launch an attack, not on the tactical question but on the question of the principal position of the party, that is the opposition to coalition politics. Without specifically stating so, Karalasingham developed his attack on the independent existence of the LSSP(R). His first move was to call for the defeat of the UNP in the election that was due (March 1965). He further proposed that the party call for support of Sirima Bandaranaike, SLFP leader, in her constituency. The next step was the organisation of a pro-coalitionist faction—the "Sakthi group"—which published a paper, which in direct opposition to the party line called for support publicly for a SLFP-LSSP government, to replace the UNP government that was elected in the March 1965 elections.

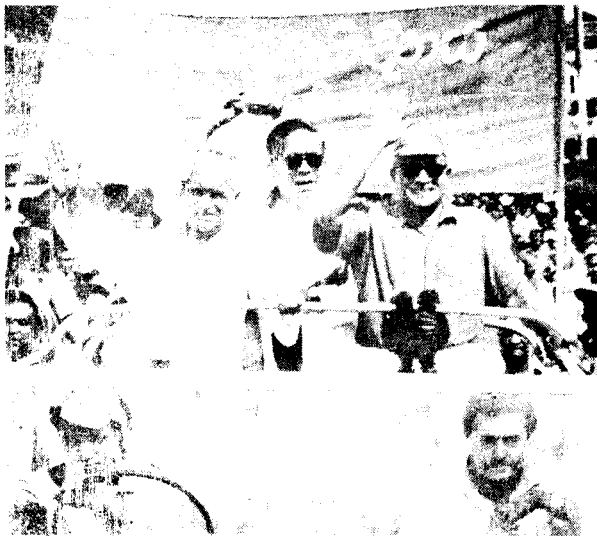
With the Healy group also supporting the Karalasingham-led "Sakthi" group, it was no

¹⁶ The Throne Speech, given by the prime minister, presents the government program at the beginning of a parliamentary term. The vote cast by a party on the Throne Speech is an important indication of that party's attitude toward the government.

easy task for the revolutionary tendency to fight successfully these revisionists, especially in the context of the U.Sec.'s calling for tolerance for this group. Mandel disagreed with the Provisional Committee of the LSSP(R) when it expelled two of the Karalasingham coalitionists who were responsible for the "Sakthi" paper and were not ready to admit that they had violated party discipline.

That Karalasingham's perspective when he participated in the organisation of the LSSP(R) was none other than the betrayal of the left-oppositionists to the LSSP coalitionists received confirmation in his virtual confessions in the introduction to his book "Senile Leftism—A reply to Edmund Samarakkody," which he produced as a passport to enter his "parental" party, the reformist LSSP. In a denunciation of the leaders of the LSSP(R) for their decision to split from the reformists, Karalasingham contended that "without reference to the process that was in motion within the LSSP, without regard to the consciousness and thinking of the advanced elements in the mass movement behind the LSSP and ignoring the deep divisions in their own ranks between the United Secretariat and the Healy caucus, they arbitrarily proclaimed themselves a new party." Thus Karalasingham's motivation for being one of the mid-wives of the "new party," was to strangle it at its birth!

While Karalasingham sought to say that the split in 1964 was too premature and that he had a perspective of fighting the coalitionists from within, his real orientation was revealed in the very next paragraph: "The political tendency to which the writer belongs has decided to re-join the parent organisation." So it was a case



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Philip Gunawardena, S.A. Wickremasinghe (CP) and N.M. Perera in 1963.

of the prodigal son returning to the parental home not to continue his feud with the parents but to ask their forgiveness for his own past sins and to remain a loyal member of the parental home!

Nor did Karalasingham fail to give the "mis-guided" or "senile leftists" of the LSSP(R) the benefit of his superior understanding of Leninism-Trotskyism: "Equally important political considerations have made this necessary." He then quotes from the *Sakthi* which he claimed as his factional paper...

"But between the regime of imperialism and the compradore bourgeoisie which exists today and the definite regime of the dictatorship of the working-class, it is likely that there would be a sequence of intermediate regimes initially reflecting the very backwardness, and subsequently in consequence of the growing political maturity of the masses, representative of the more advanced elements. Whatever be the manner of the down fall of the UNP government, so long as it is the result of the new mass uprising, it can be stated that its successor would be the government of the SLFP-LSSP coalition. The untimely defeat of the coalition, and that too at the hands of the class enemy of the working-class, has placed a coalition government of this type on the order of the day.

"But genuine revolutionaries, far from being dismayed by such a development—viz: that a SLFP-LSSP coalition should replace the UNP's national government, would do everything to facilitate its formation...."

"Therefore," concluded Karalasingham, "the place of all serious revolutionaries today is in the LSSP, so that in participating fully in the task ahead they could intervene energetically, when the inevitable class differentiation of the mass movement takes place."

Karalasingham thus unmasked himself. This is nothing else than the Stalinist "two-stage theory" with the projection of the transitional regimes of coalition with the so-called national or liberal bourgeoisie. With the tradition of LSSP opposition to this so-called theory of the Stalinists, the N.M.'s [Perera] and the Leslies [Gunawardena] and now Karalasingham could not give this designation to their "theory" and acknowledge Joseph Stalin as their "Marxist" mentor. But in any event now, the hollowness of Karalasingham's claims to Marxist theory, his audacity in invoking the authority of Lenin and Trotsky in his attempt to mask his reformism and his unbreakable links with coalition politics and revisionism, stood exposed.

But even this complete unmasking of himself by Karalasingham did not prevent the Mandels and Franks from inviting him to par-

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ticipate in the 9th World Congress in 1968, several months after he had been re-admitted to the reformist LSSP!

Tampoe Group

The CMU¹⁷ leader Tampoe showed no interest in the building of a revolutionary leadership. His main preoccupation was the building of himself as a trade-union leader whilst talking "revolution." What Tampoe wanted was to use the LSSP(R) to give himself a coloration as a revolutionary trade-union leader. And in his trade union he was the boss who maintained excellent relations with the employers, mainly the imperialist agency houses, while staging "token strikes" with the usual demonstrations and public meetings, at which Tampoe was invariably the only speaker.

Trotskyists in Ceylon could not hope to take even the first steps in the task of building the revolutionary leadership without, among other matters, effecting a sharp break with the trade-union reformist politics which was a heritage from the LSSP. In fact Tampoe's break with the LSSP was to free himself for closer relations with the employers and with all bourgeois governments including the UNP for concessions for workers in the CMU.

And it was Tampoe's rightist trade-union politics that led him to oppose, in the Provisional Committee of the LSSP(R), the proposal to develop the struggle against the UNP government on the concrete issues of the declaration of state of emergency (1966) and the police shooting, the victimization of workers for the strike (communal) led by the coalitionists, the cut in the rice ration in the latter part of the year followed by the devaluation of the rupee at the dictates of the IMF.

Tampoe even supported the declaration of the state of emergency (January 1966) in a letter he sent to Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake. Tampoe opposed joint (united-front) action with other trade unions against the UNP

government on the issue of the victimization of the workers after the January 8 (1966) strike.

However, the Tampoe group maintained friendly relations with both the Karlo [Karalasingham] coalitionist group and with the Healyites. Healy's special envoy, Mike Banda, paid several visits to Ceylon in his attempt to win over Tampoe to Healy. The SLL press gave Tampoe headline publicity for his two-hour token strikes which he called out on chosen occasions.

The break away of Karlo coalitionists from the LSSP(R) found the revolutionary tendency (Meryl [Fernando], D.S. Mallawaratchi, [Tulsiri] Andrade, Edmund [Samarakody]) opposed by the Tampoe-Healyite alliance. Their common objective was to oust the revolutionary tendency from its position of leadership within the LSSP(R). And with regard to the Healyites, disruption of the LSSP(R) and not the building of a revolutionary party, was their chief preoccupation.

Despite the efforts of the unprincipled Tampoe-Healyite combination to disrupt the LSSP(R) there was a real possibility for the revolutionary tendency to win against these opportunists and rightists, but for the part played by Mandel and the leaders of the United Secretariat.

As previously, Mandel followed his policy of conciliationism, at first with the Karlo coalitionists, and thereafter with the rightist trade-union leader Tampoe whose 30,000 strong CMU and token strikes and demonstrations could provide occasional headline news of "Trotskyist militant struggles in Ceylon" in the journals of the United Secretariat.

It was thus that Mandel and the leaders of the United Secretariat closed their eyes to the politics of the split in 1968 of the RSP (now RWP)¹⁸ from the Tampoe-led LSSP(R) and adopted the Tampoe group as the Ceylon section of the United Secretariat, despite the fact that a commission appointed at the open sessions of the 9th World Congress unanimously condemned the politics of Tampoe.¹⁹ Here are some relevant extracts of this report:

"The Commission felt that some of the actions

¹⁷The Ceylon Mercantile Union (CMU) is a medium-sized union of government employees, white collar workers and miscellaneous other office employees. Led by Bala Tampoe of the LSSP(R), it was one of the few important unions standing outside the federations led by the by-now thoroughly reformist LSSP and pro-Moscow and pro-Peking Stalinists.

¹⁸The Revolutionary Samasamaja Party (RSP), which at a convention in late 1972 changed its name to the Revolutionary Workers Party (RWP).

¹⁹For further information on the attempted cover-up of the Tampoe scandal by the U.Sec. see "The Case of Bala Tampoe" in *Spartacist* No. 21, Fall 1972.

and policies of Com. Bala [Tampoe] and the LSSP(R) brought to our notice by Com. Edmund, and not denied by Com. Bala, could have seriously damaged the reputation of Com. Bala as a revolutionary leader, compromised the Fourth International in Ceylon and have been exploited by all the enemies of our movement....

"The evidence placed before the Commission tends to support the conclusion that the policies followed by Com. Bala, especially in his dual role as CMU Secretary and as LSSP(R) Secretary were gravely compromising to the 4th International. The Commission was not in a position to get a clear enough picture of the policies of Com. Bala in the concrete circumstances of Ceylon and the LSSP(R) to propose that this section be disaffiliated by the World Congress. But we strongly feel the need for the further investigation of this matter."

Despite this devastating condemnation of Tampoe and his politics unanimously by its own Commission, the 9th World Congress, which was manipulated throughout by the bureaucratic leaders—the Mandels, Franks and the Livios—accepted Tampoe's group as the Ceylon Section and decided to file the report of the Ceylon Commission! Incidentally, for alleged security reasons, the leaders of the United Secretariat decided to abruptly end the Conference allowing only a half hour (!) to the discussion of the Ceylon question.

It was clearly not possible for the Mandels, Pierre Franks, the Livios and the Hansens to reconcile their acceptance of the Tampoe group as their Ceylon section with their claim to be Leninists-Trotskyists. And that is why they used one "Vitarne" as their tool to "dispose of" the question by merely denying that there was any Commission at all on the Ceylon question at the 9th Congress. For, if there was no Commission there could not be a report to talk about! But it is relevant in this regard to ask why the leadership of the U.Sec. (Mandel, Pierre Frank, Livio and Hansen) allowed a person who was not a member of the Fourth International, a mere observer and an outsider, who

had been invited among several such persons to this Congress, to report on the truth of what took place at the 9th World Congress in regard to the Ceylon question and the Tampoe group. We are certain that this question will remain unanswered by the leaders of the United Secretariat.

Tampoe Group Since 1969

The orientation of the United Secretariat as manifested in the documents and decisions of the 9th Congress, and Tampoe's real aims left no future for the Tampoe group to develop as a viable political formation whether linked to the right-opportunist wing led by the Hansens and Novacks or the ultra-left opportunist wing led by the Livios, Mandels and Franks of the U.Sec.

The question has been and remains—"who is using whom?" Is it the case that the Mandel wing of the U.Sec. is using Tampoe to further their aims—i.e. to have a large trade union in Ceylon, through whose boss Tampoe, to get the United Secretariat an appearance of a strong base, though in reality without substance; or is it that Tampoe is using the Mandels, Franks and Livios to further his own interests as a trade-union boss-type leader?

The reality is that there is no political party or even a group that functions independently as the LSSP(R). The LSSP(R) has no political activity to its credit ever since the RSP split in 1969. It has long ago ceased to publish even an occasional newspaper.

With the rise of the JVP²⁰ youth movement Tampoe, apparently with the approval of the Mandels, sought to opportunistically associate with Rohana Wijeweera²¹ and other leaders who were visibly growing in popularity. In order to win a place for himself at a time when this movement did not give any indications of preparing any confrontation with the coalition government, Tampoe rushed to befriend them in the courts during the first days of police action

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²⁰ The Janatha Vikmuthi Peramuna (JVP—Peoples Liberation Front), a Guevarist organization of student and peasant youth, led a large-scale youth revolt in the Sinhalese rural areas in the spring of 1971 which was directed against the coalition government of the SLFP, LSSP and CP (Moscow). In a remarkable demonstration of counterrevolutionary solidarity, the government was aided by the U.S., Britain, the USSR, India, Pakistan and Egypt, while China gave its explicit political endorsement of the bloody repression of the uprising!

²¹ Wijeweera is a former member of the pro-

Moscow CP who had begun organizing the JVP in 1966, building a large following among university students and unemployed graduates. His own politics were essentially "insurrectionary Stalinism" of the Guevarist type. As Comrade Samarakkody noted in "Politics of Deceit," "... the JVP had completely discounted the plantation workers (largely of Indian Tamil origin) and that it did not have any position on the burning question of the Tamil minority—their language and other rights. ... Sinhalese chauvinism was clearly evident in their politics."

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against them. Tampoe even went so far as to give a certificate to Wijeweera that he was no communalist and that he was a true Marxist, when he knew well that ex-Stalinist Rohana Wijeweera was consciously seeking to win over the Sinhalese petty bourgeois through his talk of the need to fight so-called Indian expansionism.

However, when the police were hot on the trails of the JVP, Tampoe judiciously moved away from the JVP and took a vow of silence during the period. And when the murderous campaign of the government against the youth was on, during which thousands were killed by shooting or torture, Tampoe had lost his voice. While within the first week of this campaign against the youth the RSP (now RWP) unequivocally condemned the actions of the government, demanded the end to killings and torture, and also invited the trade unions including the CMU to communicate their views in this regard, Tampoe continued to remain silent.

However, when it appeared quite safe, Tampoe very late in the day appealed to the Prime Minister that "it would be an act of inhumanity for you to order a concerted military offensive by the armed services against the insurgents," etc.

And, as it happens in periods of crisis, it was not easy for Tampoe to indulge even in tilting at wind-mills especially under emergency conditions. It was thus that Tampoe did not move a finger during the 100-day strike of the bank clerks, led by the Bank Employees Union, whose leader was Oscar Perera, a member of the LSSP(R). Tampoe failed to take the initiative to get trade-union action in support of this strike. He only reluctantly participated in a joint trade-union meeting organised on the initiative of the RSP (now RWP) leader Tulsiri Andrade of the Central Bank Union. He thereafter washed his hands of this strike and silently watched this strike being smashed by the coalition government supported especially by the LSSP!

Healy Group

Having kept aloof from the politics of the LSSP from the time of the 1953 split of the International, the leader of the so-called International Committee and of the SLL, Gerry Healy, parachuted himself into the Ceylon scene in June 1964. Having arrived in the same plane with Pierre Frank a day before the LSSP con-

ference, Healy, who had a few followers in the LSSP opposition, sought to gate-crash into the conference hall of the LSSP. Of course, he was not permitted to enter.

What Healy's politics were in relation to the issues at the conference was unknown. Nor did he seek to place his views before the LSSP membership through documentation prior to the conference. Instead, what he sought to do was to take the left opposition into the fold of the International Committee by disruption.

It was this same line of disruption that his followers—Prins Rajasooriya (now with Tampoe), Sydney Wanasinghe (now with the LSSP coalitionists), Wilfred Perera and R.S. Baghavan pursued. It was thus that the Healy group gave full co-operation to the Karlo coalitionists to fight the revolutionary tendency. In fact, a section of the Healy group actively participated in the organisation of the Karlo faction, "the Sakthi group," which in their factional paper publicly called for the support of a coalition government.

Nor were the Healyites strange bed-fellows with the Karlo coalitionists. While denouncing the Mandels and the Franks for the betrayal of the LSSP leaders, and while also denouncing the [Edmund] Samarakkody-Meryl Fernando group for advocating united-front action to include the coalition trade unions against the victimisation by the UNP government, the local Healyite "theoretician" Wilfred Perera was in fact pursuing coalition politics.

Here is a sample of Wilfred Perera's theory which he put out in 1967 during the UNP regime.

"We should propose to the rank and file of the left parties [referring to LSSP and CP] and of the trade-unions under their control to bring pressure on the Left party leaders to demand—

"1. a revision of the Joint Program [coalition program] so as to include working-class demands and socialist measures [:], and that the demands should be formulated by a united front of the trade-unions. And we should make our own proposal regarding the demands;

"2. a more equitable apportionment of the parliamentary seats for the next election, say on a 50-50 basis as between the SLFP and the left parties.

"The first demand will show how far Mrs. Bandaranaike is prepared to go towards socialism, and at the same time expose the impotence of the left fakers to push her leftwards. The second will show how sincere Mrs. Bandaranaike is when she says she needs the co-operation of the working-class to defeat the UNP-led coalition."

Advocating coalition politics could not be more

explicit than this!

In this "theory" Wilfred Perera left the road open to a link up with Tampoe whose syndicalism he correctly denounced in an earlier part of the same document.

It was the contention of the Healy "theoretician" that they supported the resolution of the Tampoe group (1967 Conference) as against the Samarakkody group in order to "save" the party from the pro-coalition line of the latter! That was Wilfred Perera's justification for supporting the syndicalism of Tampoe, which he explained as the meaning of his (Tampoe's) line of "unification of the working-class under its own independent class banner": "We see here," wrote Wilfred Perera, "the illusions fostered by a blind faith in trade-union militancy without political perspectives and, a lack of understanding of the political issues involved."

But here is a sample of Wilfred Perera's own syndicalism cum coalition politics in this same document:

"The left fakers say they can achieve socialism by parliamentary means. Let them prove it by breaking their ties with the SLFP which are hindering them and make a bid for governmental power on their own and on a working-class program which the trade-unions will jointly formulate. In place of the coalition program we will propose a trade-union joint program" [!].

Healy Group Since the Split

Having helped the Tampoe rightists to defeat the revolutionary tendency at the 1968 (April) Conference, which led to the split away of the latter tendency and the formation of the RSP (now RWP), the Healy group found its task in the LSSP(R) was over. Without any explanation for their conduct the Healyites led by Wilfred Perera broke away from Tampoe, whom they had helped to install as leader of the LSSP(R).

Claiming that the mantle of Trotskyism had fallen on them, the Healyites announced their separate organisation, the Revolutionary Socialist League.

From the outset however, the policies and practice of this league were at variance and in conflict with the program of Trotskyism. Whilst their reputed leader Healy, of the so-called International Committee, continues to rightly castigate the Mandels and the Pierre Franks for their responsibility for the LSSP debacle, the RSL (the Ceylon Unit of this Healyite IC) called for and supported the SLFP-LSSP-CP coalition in the elections of May 1970, the outcome of which was the present SLFP-led coalition government.

The Healyites were thus consistent with their policy within the LSSP(R), when they compacted with the Karalasingham-led coalitionists, who in their factional paper "Sakthi" called for support of the SLFP-LSSP-CP coalition. However, the RSL suddenly somersaulted. About two months after the coalition government was formed (May 1970), when sections of the masses that supported these parties were expressing their disappointment at the policies of the government, the Healy group announced that they had made a mistake when they supported the coalition at the elections.

The new line of the Healyites, which they claimed was in accordance with Leninism-Trotskyism, is their call to the LSSP and CP to break away from the coalition and form a government. Of course, they had with them the history book of the Russian revolution. Apparently, with confidence, they referred to the Bolshevik experience in 1917, when in the special conditions and in the context of a revolutionary situation, Lenin called upon the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries to break with the bourgeoisie and take the power.

But in the hands of the Healyites it was a complete misapplication of the Bolshevik tactic. The concretisation of the slogan "workers and farmers government" through a government of the LSSP and CP is a farcical concept apart from the disorientation that such a slogan must lead to. There is no revolutionary or pre-revolutionary situation in Ceylon. It is not possible today to attempt a concretisation of the slogan workers and peasants government, that is, to indicate which organisation of the working class and toilers could constitute the new power or government.

On the contrary, the consciousness of the masses is at a stage when they are only seriously dissatisfied and disappointed with the coalition government. Of course sections of these masses are moving into opposition against the government without any perspectives yet of any struggle against this government. The working class, whose living standards are being systematically attacked by the coalition government, has not yet launched any large-scale trade-union action against the policies of this government. In fact, in the absence of a revolutionary party, with influence among the working class, it is possible that the masses including sections of the working class could well move in a rightist direction.

What is imperative today is to help the working class and toilers to understand that the blows struck against their living standards

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are the result of the treacherous politics of coalition—i.e. of the LSSP and CP betrayers. Those claiming to be Trotskyists cannot conceive of helping to create further illusions that the way forward is a labour government of the LSSP-CP which must necessarily be reformist in character. But this is just what the Healyite slogan does.

And, in regard to this slogan, it is necessary once more to state what Trotsky himself categorically stated—"The slogan 'workers and farmers government' is thus acceptable to us only in the sense that it had in 1917 with the Bolsheviks, i.e., as an anti-bourgeois and anti-capitalist slogan, but in no case in that 'democratic' sense which later the epigones gave it, transforming it from a bridge to socialist revolution into the chief barrier upon its path."

Struggle for Trotskyism Today

Having participated in the left opposition (1962) as consistent oppositionists to the coalition and reformist politics of the LSSP leaders who betrayed the party, having continued the struggle against the Karalasingham coalitionists in the LSSP(R), having successfully faced the combined opposition of the Healyites and Tampoe, who was supported by the Pabloist United Secretariat, the revolutionary tendency that separated from these centrists, and which re-grouped itself as the Revolutionary Samasamaja Party, is today reorganised as the Revolutionary Workers Party.

During the first two years the revolutionary tendency had the task of drawing up a proper balance sheet of the experience of the LSSP and the LSSP(R) and to cleanse itself of the hangovers of Pabloism, which substituted empiricism and pragmatism for dialectical materialism and which abandoned the task of building the revolutionary party to the participation and "integration" in the so-called living movement of the masses, leading the Pabloites to parliamentarism and syndicalism. The Revolutionary Workers Party cannot but reject the politics of both wings of the United Secretariat—the ultra-left opportunist mixture of Mandel, Livio, Frank, as well as the opportunist group of Hansen-Novack.

While seeking to participate with its co-thinkers in the unpostponable task of regrouping of the Trotskyists in other countries in the perspective of contributing to the re-

building of the revolutionary International, the Revolutionary Workers Party is bending its energies to the construction of the Trotskyist party in Ceylon on the firm foundations of the Transitional Program of the Fourth International and the relevant programmatic documents that remain the heritage of the Leninist-Trotskyist movement.

Present Situation

Objective conditions today are more favourable than ever before for the development of mass struggle for the overthrow of capitalist class rule in Ceylon and for the establishment of socialism.

World capitalism has entered into a new period of decline, reflected for a long time now in economic recessions in advanced capitalist countries, leading to fierce inter-imperialist rivalry, which has driven the capitalist class in each country to impose severe burdens on the workers and the wage earners in these countries.

For nearly a decade now the organised working class in these advanced countries has been engaged in wage struggles to defend their living standards. The French working class showed in their now famous struggle (1968) the revolutionary potentialities of the proletariat in these advanced capitalist countries.

An aspect of this new phase of decline of capitalism on a world scale is that Ceylon and other backward countries are more intensely exploited by imperialism in numerous ways. The economies in these countries, ruled invariably by the bonapartist "national" bourgeois regimes, face deepening crises, manifested by unbalanced budgets and serious lack of foreign exchange to pay for necessary imports, leading to increased burdens on the workers and toilers. The masses in these countries, despite the betrayals of the Stalinists, reformists and centrists, must sooner or later move on to the road of struggle.

Three years of the SLFP-LSSP-CP coalition government have brought unprecedented suffering to the working class and all the toilers. While extending the state sector without any real encroachment on the private capitalists, while appearing to strike blows at the capitalists and imperialists, the government is desperately seeking to maintain the profit levels of these very same capitalists and imperialists, at the dictates of the IMF.

In this perspective, this government adopted a policy of severe restriction of consumer imports and has even totally banned the imports of a large number of essential food imports,

which has led to serious inflation. Also, at the dictates of the IMF, the government is implementing a virtual wage freeze. And since the April youth armed struggle, a state of emergency continues and strikes are virtually banned. The repressive apparatus of the State has been strengthened in an unprecedented manner.

The reality today, especially with the newest blows struck at the masses by further cuts in rationed rice, flour and sugar, and also by further increase of the price of these and numerous other commodities, is that the government is facing increasing unpopularity. This means, that from now on, sections of the masses who supported and identified themselves with the government will inevitably move away from the coalition parties and the government. There is now a real possibility of developing mass opposition leading to mass action against the measures of the government and the government itself.

On the other hand, the rightist forces led by the UNP are even now growing as a result of the policies of the government, which have in an unprecedented way impoverished the masses and increased their misery.

Up to now the working class has been held down from pressing their demands in the perspective of trade-union action, principally by the LSSP and CP—the partners in coalition, on the pretext of the need for the workers to sacrifice and produce more for "Socialism."

While "sacrifice" was the key note of the LSSP propaganda, the CP (pro-Moscow) led by the [S.A.] Wickremasinghe wing had adopted, from the outset, more opportunistically, a critical stance in relation to the policies of the government which affected adversely the living standards of the workers and toilers.

With the severity of the government's measures against the masses, the CP(M) became more "critical" and called upon the government not to increase the burdens of the masses, but instead, to strike at the imperialists and to move on to more nationalisations.

The motivation of the CP(M), Wickremasinghe wing, was not to weaken the coalition but to gather the coalition masses around itself as the most "progressive" and "dynamic" force in the coalition. However, unexpectedly for the Wickremasinghe-led CP, despite its

expressions of continued loyalty, the coalition partners, SLFP and LSSP, in furtherance of the rightward course of their government, have shown them the door. This wing of the CP(M) has been expelled from the coalition government.

In response to the pressures of the rank and file of their trade unions, the bureaucratic leaders of the LSSP and the Keneuman wing of the CP(M) have sought to give themselves the appearance of being in readiness to lead the workers in struggle to defend their living standards. They have recently presented through the coalition trade union centre (JCTU) twenty-eight (28) demands to the employers and their own government.

The fraudulent nature of the moves of the LSSP trade-union leaders as well as both wings of the Stalinists (CP [Moscow]) already stands exposed by their defense of the coalition government in regard to the latest measures (October 1st cuts in rationed rice, flour and sugar with increase of prices). Far from seeking to mobilise the workers for struggle, they are vying with each other in calling upon the workers for further sacrifices in a so-called national food crisis.

In the plantation sector the two largest trade unions are the CWC (Ceylon Workers Congress—led by Thondaman) and CDC (Ceylon Democratic Congress—led by Aziz, allied to coalition). As an extreme right wing trade-union leader, who has affiliation with the U.S.-oriented ICFTU,²² Thondaman has been threatening to launch trade-union action to win the monthly wage demand for the plantation workers. However, Thondaman and some lesser union leaders allied to him have already abandoned all talk of strike action at the appeal of the Minister of Labour.

With regard to Tampoe, his usual fake fighting has been displayed now quite for some time. With the assistance of his centrist friends of the United Secretariat Tampoe obtained publicity in their journals for a "One-Day Hunger Strike" of workers in protest at the actions and policies of the government. In fact, during all this time, workers in a number of work places belonging to other non-coalition unions came out on strike despite the possibilities of government action against them. It was thus a

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²² The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), formed in December 1949 under the sponsorship of U.S. American Federation of Labor leaders, was a CIA-backed international center for anti-communist unions. The CIO immediately entered it, accept-

ing CIA funds in the process. Many of the ICFTU unions had earlier been part of the Stalinist-dominated World Federation of Trade Unions and their split was one of the first steps of the "Cold War" launched by U.S. imperialism.

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false picture which Tampoe sought to paint, that where no one dared to call strikes under emergency conditions, he at least called a "Hunger Strike" of workers against the government! In fact, the journals of the United Secretariat had referred to a "Hunger Strike" of one million workers! But this so-called one-day hunger strike was farcical.

The response from vested interests was especially interesting. In its editorial comments of the *Ceylon Daily News* which congratulated Tampoe on this one-day non-violent "Hunger Strike," called upon him to continue longer this strike as Finance Minister N.M. Perera himself would readily approve in view of the worsening food situation in the country!

And Tampoe's reaction to the talk of presenting "twenty-eight demands" of the coalition unions was to call his usual "short leave" strike (2-hour strike) for a mass rally of the CMU at which he was the only speaker, and at which he called upon Ceylon's working class to abandon the coalition and other trade-union leaders and adopt the banner of the CMU!

Tampoe's political line in the present context is the same treacherous line of "Left Unity" that the LSSP and CP peddled before they finally adopted coalition with the SLFP. Tampoe has issued a call to "Re-Build the Left Movement" when what is imperative is to consistently and uncompromisingly expose the "Leftism" of the LSSP, of both wings of the CP(M), of the groups of the CP(Peking) and all other "left" fakers. It is the task of the revolutionary vanguard to expose the fraudulent politics of Tampoe which he continues in the name of Trotskyism.

The revolutionary vanguard has the task of exposing both the fraud of the CP(M) Wickremasinghe wing which continues to peddle coalition class-collaborationist politics and also the rightist course which the SLFP and LSSP are pursuing to please the vested interests, local and foreign.

It is necessary more especially to warn the working class that the coalition government is now moving, not to woo the working class, but to suppress and destroy the trade-union movement and all the organisations of the working class, which could well pave the way for a fully fledged military police regime.

It is clear that in the present state of the trade-union leadership, both of the pro-government coalition unions and of the so-called independent unions, the task of mobili-

sing the workers for united struggle against the government and the capitalist class is far from easy. Nevertheless, this remains the burning question for the working class today. This means it is the task of the revolutionary vanguard to begin now the struggle against the latest measures of the government and for other pressing demands of the workers and toilers including demands of a transitional character, in the teeth of the opposition of the bureaucratic trade-union leaders—of the coalition as well as of the so-called independent unions, including the Tampoe-led CMU.

In fact, in recent times anti-bureaucratic tendencies have appeared in many trade unions both pro-government and in others. In certain unions the anti-bureaucratic oppositions have succeeded in ousting the conservative and bureaucratic leaderships in such unions. This process could well grow.

The revolutionary vanguard, while taking active steps to root itself within the working class will fight for a program of demands which will include trade-union demands and also demands of a transitional character, e.g., nationalisation without compensation of the whole of the plantations, of manufacturing industries, workers control in all nationalised undertakings. It will also include demands for the withdrawal of the state of emergency and for the release of all political prisoners. In this regard the tradition of reformists and centrists has been to merely list transitional demands without seeking to develop any struggle around these demands.

It is in this perspective that the Revolutionary Workers Party is seeking today to intervene in the Ceylon situation. And it is not the futile and divisive policy of building new trade unions that is needed, but a policy of giving revolutionary perspective and bringing revolutionary politics to the advanced elements in the existing trade unions, by the building of political caucuses in them; that is the task.

This intervention by the Revolutionary Workers Party is necessarily limited by its present forces and resources. But it is to the extent that the Revolutionary Workers Party succeeds in intervening in the living working class and mass movement in a revolutionary perspective, and to the extent that it succeeds in carrying on an uncompromising and consistent struggle against Stalinism, Maoism and all forms of reformism and revisionism, whether of the United Secretariat variety or of the Healy variety, that it will be able to engage with success in the struggle for Trotskyism, for the building of the revolutionary leadership, i.e. the revolutionary party, in Ceylon. ■

USec Covers Up Tampoe Scandal

In the 19 March 1973 issue of *Intercontinental Press* (Vol. 11, No. 10) there appeared an article entitled "Ceylon and the Healy School of Falsification" by Jaya Vithana. It purports to be a defense against alleged slanders against Bala Tampoe (head of the Ceylon section of the "United Secretariat of the Fourth International") emanating from the Healyite press, i.e., a series of articles in the Socialist Labour League's *Workers Press* partially reprinted in the *Bulletin* of the U.S. Workers League. The Vithana article is a typical piece of revisionist obscurantism in which is concealed one giant lie: a denial of the legitimacy of documents of the *United Secretariat itself* which were reprinted originally in *Spartacist* No. 21. As usual, the unprincipled organizational conduct of the Healyites provided the U.Sec Pabloists a convenient way to get themselves off the hook—almost.

Tampoe Unmasked by Spartacist

A bit of history is in order. Last year the Spartacist League drew the attention of the international working-class movement to the United Secretariat's shameless cover-up of a series of accusations brought against Bala Tampoe by its own supporters at the U.Sec.'s "Ninth World Congress" held in April 1969. In *Spartacist* No. 21 we published a majority report ("Ceylon Commission Report") and a minority report ("Indian Delegate's Report") from the Ceylon Commission of the "World Congress" as well as extracts from the official "World Congress" minutes which verified the fact of the Ceylon Commission while totally suppressing its content. These documents were made available to us by Edmund Samarakkody, a veteran Ceylonese socialist militant now associated with the RWP of Ceylon, at whose insistence the Ceylon Commission was convened. Comrade Samarakkody was at that time a member of the outgoing International Executive Committee of the U.Sec. We also published Comrade Samarakkody's letter to us authenticating the documents and explaining the events surrounding the Ceylon Commission at the "World Congress."

It is not surprising that the publication of these documents initiated a world-wide furor. The two reports came to somewhat different conclusions, but only over the question of what to do about Tampoe in the face of specific allegations whose reliability the Commission did not at any point call into question: Tampoe's acceptance of a trip to the U.S. in 1967 financed by the Asia Foundation; Tampoe's private

interview in Washington with McNamara; Tampoe's attendance at small social gatherings of imperialist diplomats; Tampoe's conduct as head of the Ceylon Mercantile Union.

The "World Congress" agreed on a series of recommendations which reaffirmed Tampoe's LSSP(R) as the Ceylon section but also called for the constituting of an investigative body as well as for the termination of Tampoe's dual function as head of both the CMU and the LSSP(R). (We have no information as to whether the former was ever carried out, but the latter certainly was not.) In our view, however, what made the Tampoe scandal important was not merely the unmasking of a politically corrupt individual posing as a Trotskyist, but the full complicity of the U.Sec., which published only the evasive recommendations of the Commission while suppressing the uncontested facts, as contained in the reports upon which the recommendations were based.

Healyites Muddy the Waters

Almost immediately upon publication of these documents in *Spartacist*, the political bandits of the Healy tendency rushed forward to try to claim the Tampoe scandal as their own "scoop." The Ceylon Commission reports and the extracts from the "World Congress" minutes filled the pages of *Workers Press*, along with sundry additional charges against Tampoe. The response of the U.Sec. and its American ally, the Socialist Workers Party, was predictable. Making full use of the Healyites' world-wide and well-deserved reputation for irresponsible slander and physical gangsterism, these revisionist cynics—well aware of the authenticity of the documents as well as of the fact that they had been first revealed in *Spartacist*, a publication well known for its scrupulous honesty and accuracy—sought to pass off their own "World Congress" reports as just another Healyite slander (see "Healyites Smear Bala Tampoe," *Intercontinental* (continued next page)

SPARTACIST

(Fourth Internationalist)

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... Tampoe Scandal

Press, 20 November 1972). Faced with such a challenge, the Healyites were compelled to acknowledge the source of the material, trumpeting about Samarakkody's credentials and even once or twice mentioning *Spartacist*. But Healy had already played into the hands of the U.Sec., allowing the real evidence against Tampoe to be dismissed as coming from a tarnished source rather than from suppressed documents of Tampoe's collaborators, the U.Sec. itself.

Having once been given a handle, the Pabloists are understandably unwilling to let go. Their final smoke-screen, the Vithana article—which is apparently intended as the definitive response—devoted eight pages in *Intercontinental Press* to an all-out barrage. Vithana replied at length to various charges against the Ceylonese Pabloists emanating from the Healyites themselves (we must note in passing that there is no response at all to our accusations against Tampoe's conduct following the "World Congress" which were published in *Spartacist*, based on materials of the Ceylonese RWP, as part of an introduction to the U.Sec. documents) and he exposes, quite possibly accurately, the unprincipled conduct of the Ceylon Healyites. But concealed beneath all this is the essence of the U.Sec.'s response to the publication of the Ceylon Commission documents—a flat denial of their authenticity.

And the attempted bluff falls flat on its face. For

Vithana attempts to disprove too much.

Aware that the copies of the original Ceylon Commission reports were collected back from the participants, and thus that the only written proof they ever existed is the copies made by Comrade Samarakkody for his own use, Vithana begins by slandering Comrade Samarakkody and declaring these reports a fabrication:

"What is the 'evidence' against comrades Bala and others? It goes as follows: (i) Reports alleged to have been made by a 'commission' of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International... The first of these lies the Healyites borrowed from the Spartacists of the USA, who recently published a series of allegations against Comrade Bala Tampoe. They were made by Mr. Edmund Samarakkody...."

We must point out here Vithana's sleight-of-hand in attributing the "allegations" against Tampoe only to Samarakkody, whereas in fact his central accusations were verified and repeated in the reports of the Ceylon Commission published in *Spartacist*. Thus, in his impassioned denials of various "allegations" against Tampoe, Vithana waxes indignant about "slanders" by Comrade Samarakkody and the Spartacist League, but neglects to mention that these "slanders" were in fact the findings of *the U.Sec.'s own Commission!* It was the Ceylon Commission Report, reprinted in *Spartacist*, which said:

"The Commission felt that some of the actions and policies of Comrade Bala and the LSSP(R) brought to our attention by Comrade Edmund and not denied by Comrade Bala could have seriously damaged the repu-

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No. 9

July 1969

Contents
MINUTES OF THE THIRD CONGRESS SINCE REUNIFICATION
(Ninth World Congress)
April 1969

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SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

leave the Congress without having fixed their monthly dues.
3. All bilateral financial arrangements for specific purposes can only be made with agreement of the IEC, so that the IEC can start drafting the budget.

Discussion on Financial report: Robble, Kent, Livio, Andrea.

Livio reported that the Argentine Commission had not been able to meet.

Discussion: Juan.

Motion by Pedro: That the Argentine Commission meet now.

Motion carried.

II. REPORT FROM THE CEYLON COMMISSION BY PIA.

Motions from Ceylon Commission:

1. That the leading bodies of the International be instructed to appoint a small investigating committee along the lines mentioned above. This committee will submit a report of its findings and its recommendations for action to the next meeting of the IEC.
2. That the IEC act with all possible speed on the recommendations of this committee with the full powers of a World Congress, including the power to disaffiliate the LSSP(R) as the Ceylon section of the Fourth International if it feels this is the proper action.
3. That until the IEC decides otherwise, the LSSP(R) remain the Ceylonese section of the Fourth International, and thus should be given all possible assistance in its work by all bodies of the International.
4. That the double function of Comrade Bala as secretary of both the CMU and the section be terminated as rapidly as possible.
5. The RSP would not be recognized as the Ceylon section even were there not already a recognized section in Ceylon. The unacceptable methods by which this tendency carried through its factional fight before and after the split dictate a very reserved attitude on this question. We appeal to the RSP to prove its proclaimed loyalty to the Fourth International by renouncing at once the pretensions of being the recognized section, by retracting the above-mentioned unacceptable further attacks upon Comrade Bala, by renouncing upon the LSSP(R) and its leadership, and by ceasing to prepare the eventual regrouping of the Trotskyist forces of Ceylon in a united section.

Motion by PIA: That Bala and Edmund be given each one-half hour to explain their positions.

Motion carried.

Discussion on Ceylon Commission report: Edmund, Bala, Pierre.

Motion by Pierre: That the only question to be discussed now is the recognition of the Ceylon section.

Discussion.

Motion carried.

Continuation of discussion on Ceylon Commission report: Walter, Abel.

Motion by Abel: That the International Executive Committee investigate the allegations made by the World Congress from Ceylon and that the incoming IEC have the power to disaffiliate the Ceylon section pending the results of the investigation.

Continuation of discussion on Ceylon Commission report: Livio, Walter, Abel, Guilan, Pierre.

Summary of Ceylon Commission report by PIA.

Session adjourned for lunch.

Session reconvened.

Chairman: Gormley

III. CONTINUED REPORT FROM THE ARGENTINE COMMISSION BY LIVIO.

MINORITY REPORT FROM THE ARGENTINE COMMISSION BY JUAN.

Motions by Juan:

1. That the World Congress recognize that the forces associated with Luis hold a majority in the Argentine section of the Fourth International.
2. That as an exceptional, temporary measure taken in view of the special circumstances, the minority be permitted to have its own public journal.
3. That both sides are to refrain from any public attacks on each other.
4. That the World Congress urge both sides to do everything possible to heal the split.

Discussion on the Argentine Commission reports: Livio, Capa, Luis, Walter.

Motion by Walter: To change the last sentence of point No. 30 of the statutes of the Fourth International in the following way: Where a section exists, the International will in no case recognize any other formation as a 'sympathizing group' except with the approval of that section.

tation of Comrade Bala as a revolutionary leader... In this context, we refer especially to the following examples:—(a) A series of incidents which together constitute compromisingly close relations between Comrade Bala and the Ceylonese embassies or missions of the imperialist countries..." (our emphasis)

It was the Indian Delegate's Report which said:

"Although Comrade Bala maintains that he had kept the United Secretariat and SWP informed about his trip, some of his activities in Washington like his interview with McNamara have not been fully explained."

It was the Ceylon Commission Report which, referring to "the subordination of the policies of the LSSP(R) to the union [Tampoe's CMU]," stated categorically that:

"...in none of these instances is there any evidence that the party took what the Commission considered a policy consistent with revolutionary Marxism."

Let Vithana and his U.Sec. colleagues try to squirm out of that with protestations about Spartacist League "slanders"!

Giant Bluff Fails

Short of taking decisive and immediate action to oust Tampoe as a renegade and an individual demonstrated unfit to be a leader of even the revisionist U.Sec.—a course the U.Sec. rejected when it suppressed the content of the reports themselves—the only alternative remaining for these fake-Trotskyists was to invoke the deservedly foul reputation of the Healyites, sling mud wildly at Samarakkody and the Spartacist League and deny everything. This was the thankless task which fell to Vithana. Accordingly, he writes: "Was there such a report as Healy and his friends claim? In fact Mr. Samarakkody claims that there are two such reports, a minority and a majority report. In fact the USFI appointed no such commission. Nor is there such a report or reports." (our emphasis)

Vithana has overreached himself. Had he confined himself to the one enormous lie that there were not reports, the issue might have to be judged—as many issues must be judged in real political life—solely on the basis of political logic and the reputation and record of the contending parties. Were this the case,

we would have to point out again such corroborating evidence as the fact that the operational conclusions of the majority report as published in *Spartacist* are identical to the five recommendations of the Ceylon Commission as published in the "World Congress" official minutes. We would have to ask whether it is likely that the "World Congress" would have recommended that Tampoe terminate either his role as head of the Ceylon Mercantile Union or his leadership of the LSSP(R) unless some gross political irregularities at least on this point had been demonstrated to the satisfaction of all Commission participants. We would have to point to the whole pattern of conduct of the U.Sec. and its predecessor body in Ceylon. And we would still be entirely justified in demanding that professed Trotskyists take a stand on the basis of the available evidence and denounce any who would hide their political complicity behind know-nothingism and the cynical bourgeois aphorism that "the truth is always somewhere in between."

But, caught up in the technique of the big lie, Vithana has gone one step further, thereby reducing his credibility below zero: *he has denied that the Ceylon Commission ever took place!* But in his eagerness to bury the Tampoe scandal once and for all, Vithana has run smack up against the "World Congress" minutes themselves, which reported the constitution of a Ceylon Commission, noted a verbal report from the Commission and a discussion and reprinted a five-part motion! (The relevant extracts from the minutes were reprinted in *Spartacist* No. 21). In fact, these minutes are available to any SWP member possessing a back file of SWP internal bulletins, (see *SWP International Information Bulletin* No. 9, July 1969) and presumably to members of other organizations associated with or affiliated to the U.Sec. Thus, like Tampoe—exposed by the reports of his own "World Congress"—Vithana stands condemned as a liar by the official minutes of his own organization!

We can only echo Vithana's sentiments that "History has strange ways of unmasking slanderers and liars in the working-class movement"! ■

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... Letter to OCRFI

(continued from page 32)

elaborated on this conception over the German crisis of 1929-33 and also in his discussions with SWP leaders in 1940 regarding an approach by the SWP to the Communist Party U.S.A.

The united front is *nothing more* than a means, a tactic, by which the revolutionary party, i.e. its program and authority, can in times of crisis mobilize and then win over masses (at that time supporters of other parties) by means of concrete demands for common action made to the reformist organizations. Any other interpretation must base itself on a supposed latent revolutionary vanguard capacity within the reformist or Stalinist parties themselves—a central proposition of Pabloism.

The aim of the united front must be to embed the revolutionary program in the masses. In the same way, in the highest expression of the united front, the soviets, the condition for their conquest of power is the ascendancy of the revolutionary program. Any form of fetishism toward the mere form of united fronts or soviets (or for that matter toward trade unions or factory committees) means abdicating as revolutionists, because at bottom it is the dissolution of the vanguard party into the class through the substitution of such forms (and other politics!) for the role of the revolutionary party. This is not Leninism but at best a variant of Luxemburgism. One of Lenin's greatest achievements in counterposing the revolutionary vanguard to the reformists was to transcend the Kautskyian conception of "the party of the whole class." To place emphasis upon some mass form at the expense of the vanguard party would be to smuggle back in the Kautskyian conception.

When erstwhile revolutionary forces are qualitatively weak in comparison to mass reformist or Stalinist parties it is, in ordinary circumstances, equally illusory either to make direct "united front" appeals to the large formations or to advocate combinations among such large forces (when Trotsky called for the united front between the SPD and KPD he believed that the latter still had a revolutionary potential).

Certainly the tactics appropriate to a full-fledged revolutionary party cannot be mechanically assigned to a grouping qualitatively lacking the capacity to struggle to take the leadership of the class. However, the differences in functioning are in the opposite direction from those projected by the OCI. To the extent that the revolutionary tendency must function as a propaganda league, the more it must stress the presentation of its full program. As Trotsky noted, in the first instance Bolshevism is built upon granite foundations, and maneuvers can only be carried out in a principled fashion upon that foundation. The united front of the working class, of course, is the maneuver on the grand scale.

(2) *Bolivian POR*: We do not believe that the POR's participation in the emigre Revolutionary Anti-Imperialist Front (FRA) fell from the skies. We agree with the OCI and the OCRFI resolution that the FRA—created following the coup of the rightist general Banzer, incorporating elements of the "national bourgeoisie" including General Torres—is a popular front and not the continuation of the Popular Assembly, which may

have possessed the essential formal prerequisites to be a proletarian soviet pole in opposition to the earlier regime of the leftist general Torres. It appears to us that in the period of the Torres regime the best that can be said of the POR is that it subordinated the development of the vanguard party to that of the Popular Assembly, i.e. subordinated the revolutionary program to an ill-defined and vacillating collection of left nationalist and Stalinist political prejudices. Given the default of revolutionists, the Popular Assembly necessarily concretely possessed a core of Menshevik acquiescence to the "national bourgeoisie." For further elaboration, see *Workers Vanguard* No. 3. In our estimation the POR's earlier policy, which the OCRFI resolution emphatically supports, is an embodiment of the erroneous conception of a "strategic united front" and demonstrates the resulting subordination of the vanguard organization to the mass organization, in this case to the Popular Assembly.

Prolonged periods of repression there have severely limited our knowledge of or contact with the Bolivian POR, but it appears to us on the basis of available evidence that the organization has played a characteristically centrist role at least as far back as the revolutionary upheaval in 1952.

(3) *Stalinism*: We note that in the past the OCI has tended to equate the struggle against imperialism with the struggle against Stalinism, e.g. the slogans advanced at the 1971 Essen Conference. The general Political Resolution submitted by the OCI and adopted by the OCRFI takes this equation one step further when it denies the "double nature" of the Stalinist bureaucracy, writing of it simply as "the organism of the bourgeoisie

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within the working-class movement." Perhaps the OCI has been led to this false formulation through a simplistic linear extension of the true and valuable insight that the class struggles of the workers cut across the "Iron Curtain."

To us, and we believe to Trotsky, the Stalinist bureaucracy has a *contradictory* character. Thus in 1939 it conciliated Hitler and undermined the defense of the Soviet Union. But beginning in 1941 it fought (badly!) against the Hitlerite invasion. Thus our wartime policy was one of revolutionary defensism toward the Soviet Union, i.e., to fight against the imperialist invader and to overthrow the bureaucracy through political revolution, with by no means the least aim being to remove the terrible bureaucratic impediment in that fight. In the Indochinese war the role of the Hanoi bureaucracy, and our attitude toward it and the tasks of the Vietnamese proletariat, are essentially the same.

In the SWP's 1953 factional struggle, the Cannon-Dobbs majority sought to defend itself against the Cochran-Clarke Pabloist minority by putting forth a position (similar to that of the OCRFI), that the Stalinist bureaucracy is "counter-revolutionary through and through and to the core." Since this was a possibility truly applicable only to capitalist restorationist elements, in their most extreme form either fascist or CIA agents, the SWP majority was compelled to commit a host of political blunders in attempting to defend its formulation; and in fact this position, along with Cannon's advocacy of federated internationalism, represented departures from Trotskyism which helped undermine the revolutionary fibre of the SWP.

Also in this connection we note the OCI's analysis of Cuba in *La Verité* No. 557, July 1972. The OCI's refusal to draw the conclusion from its analysis—which until that point parallels our own—that Cuba, qualitatively, is a deformed workers state indicates the potential departure from the Leninist theory of the state in favor of a linear, bourgeois conception as of a thermometer which simply and gradually passes from "bourgeois state" to "workers state" by small increments without a qualitative change. Such a methodology is a cornerstone of Pabloism. According to this conception, presumably the reverse process from "workers" to "bourgeois" state by small incremental shifts could be comparably possible. Trotsky correctly denounced this latter idea as "unwinding the film of reformism in reverse." We note however that the OCI appears inconsistent on the characterization of the Cuban state; "The Tasks of Rebuilding the Fourth International" (in *La Correspondance Internationale*, June 1972, page 20) calls for the "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, of workers' conquests in Eastern Europe, of the revolutionary war in Vietnam...."

(4) *On the Youth*: We note that the relation of the OCI to the Alliance des Jeunes pour le Socialisme is unprecedented in the history of Leninist practice and, in fact, represents a catering to petty-bourgeois dual vanguardist sentiment in the student milieu. We also oppose the subsidiary concept of a non-Trotskyist "Revolutionary Youth International" put forward at the Essen Conference in July 1971. The revolutionary youth movement must be programmatically subordinate and formally organizationally linked to the vanguard party, which encompasses the historic experience of the proletariat. Unless this is the case, student and

youth militants can never transcend petty-bourgeois radicalism which at crucial times the proletarian vanguard will find counterposed to itself.

(5) *Violence and the Class Line*: We strongly oppose the OCI's stated willingness to use the bourgeois state apparatus—the courts—to mediate disputes in the working-class movement. In addition, the SL/U.S. is unalterably opposed to the use of physical force to suppress the views of other working-class tendencies where that is the central issue, such as the OCI's forcible prevention of the distribution of leaflets by the IKD at the July 1971 Essen Conference. We are not pacifists, and fully recognize the right of self-defense by ourselves or anyone else in the socialist and labor movements to protect meetings and demonstrations from physical assault and to protect individual militants from terroristic attack. Taken all together, our view flows from the proposition that the greatest free play of ideas within the workers movement strengthens the position of revolutionists and enhances the possibility for united class action. Conversely, it is the reformists and Stalinists—the labor lieutenants of capital—who most characteristically employ violence and victimization within the movement.

(6) *International Committee*: The OCRFI resolution, "On the Tasks of the Reconstruction of the Fourth International," states that, starting in 1966, the SLL "started down the same path which the SWP had previously taken." But further on, the resolution deplors the "explosion of the IC caused by the SLL," on the grounds that this latest split "aggravates the dispersion" which began in 1952. We consider that organizational forms should correspond to political realities. We strongly opposed the break by the SLL ("IC") with us in 1962 because of its apparently mainly organizational character. Only after the very sharp rupture at the 1966 London Conference, and especially in the several years following when the SLL piled up a series of major political differences with us, were we able

(continued next page)

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... Letter to OCRFI

to appreciate that the SLL's desire in 1962 to make a rapprochement to the SWP then (to which we were willing to acquiesce but not agree with) was an expression of a fundamental political difference.

The SLL's break with us in 1962 was, however, part of a real struggle within the American group. The 1971 SLL-OCI break seems to have been but a separation of bloc partners without visible repercussions within either group—hence without struggle however unclear.

At bottom, differing estimations of the split in the IC may reflect the linguistically slight but nonetheless real differences between the OCI's "For the Reconstruction of the Fourth International" and the SL's "For the Rebirth of the Fourth International." Our slogan implies that a very fundamental process must be gone through; that it is not possible simply to fit together existing bits and pieces, perhaps with a little chipping here or there, in order to put the edifice together again.

Since the SL/U.S. has itself already had a ten-year history with the IC, we cannot simply approach the OCRFI discussions as if the previous experience between main elements in the OCRFI who had been part of the former IC and ourselves did not exist. Therefore we must review that past experience since it conditions our approach to the OCRFI.

Our views on the development of the IC since 1966 are set forth initially in *Spartacist* No. 6 (June-July 1966) on the London 1966 Conference and our expulsion; in the article on the Healy-Wohlforth current in *Spartacist* No. 17-18 (August-September 1970); in *Spartacist* No. 20 (April-May 1971) which is a summary of political and organizational developments since 1966; and in *Workers Vanguard* No. 3 (December 1971) on the SLL-OCI split. As you will note from these materials, from the time we first became aware of it at the London Conference, we protested the absence of democratic centralism in the IC.

We believe that one of the necessary tests of genuine revolutionists is the demonstrated capacity to even ruthlessly undertake self-criticism. The "International Committee" dominated by the SWP from 1954 to 1963 and by the SLL from 1963 to 1971 was always partly fictitious and partly a formalization of blocs of convenience by essentially national organizations. This demands explanation by those who would not simply repeat their previous experience. It is not enough to pass over the last eighteen years with the promise that from now on things will be done differently.

We were definitively expelled from the Healyite international conglomeration in 1966 at the very time the OCRFI pinpoints as the beginning of the SLL's downhill slide. We believe there is a relationship. Evidently as part of the OCI's attempt to remain in a common bloc with the SLL, and perhaps in part through ignorance of our real positions, the OCI has over the years projected upon the SL/U.S. a series of positions. Not only do we not hold, nor have we ever held, these views, but most of them are the exact opposite of our views. For example, the OCI asserted that we believe in the "family of Trotskyism" even

though at the 1966 London Conference our delegation was struck by the aptness of an OCI speaker's statement "there is no family of Trotskyism" and our speaker specifically quoted that observation approvingly, as was reported in *Spartacist* No. 6 and many times since. In the "Statement by the OCI" of 1967 on the IC, reference is repeatedly made to a "VO-Robertson bloc" and the general conclusion drawn that "the struggle against Robertson is fully identified with the struggle against Pabloism. His positions join those of the SWP and the United Secretariat where they are not those of Pablo." The OCI in similar terms apologized to the SLL for the invitation of an SL/U.S. observer to the Essen Conference.

The SL/U.S. was aware from 1962 on that the OCI tendency was not to be equated with the SLL, and after our expulsion from the London Conference we continued to note the difference (for example in *Spartacist* No. 17-18, in discussing Healy's attempted rapprochement with the United Secretariat, we wrote of the Healy-Banda group "and their politically far superior but internationally quiescent French allies, the Lambert group." We also knew through private sources that at least since 1967 the Wohlforth group internally had been conducting a vigorous campaign to discredit the OCI.

Our characterization of the OCI as politically superior to the SLL was based on a series of political positions which the OCI held in common with us in counterposition to the views of the SLL. Recent OCI polemics against the SLL (e.g. *La Verité* No. 556) note the OCI's objection to several key SLL positions which we had also opposed: the SLL's willful use of "dialectics" as a mystification to hide political questions; the SLL's chronic tailending of Stalinism in Vietnam; the SLL's enthusing over the Chinese "Red Guards"; the SLL's notion of a classless "Arab Revolution"; the SLL's unprincipled approach to the United Secretariat-SWP in 1970. We also considered of importance the OCI's objection to the SLL position that Pabloist revisionism had not organizationally destroyed the Fourth International. The OCI's position on this question appears to correspond to the view we have consistently held and upon which we spoke insistently at the 1966 London Conference.

Moreover, we have always taken a very serious attitude toward the OCI, not because of its numbers but because of its experienced senior cadres and its continuity in the world movement. We have centered in this letter on the presumed differences between us and the OCI, but the strengths of the OCI have reflected themselves as well, in specific political positions, some of which we have learned from, such as the OCI's insistence on the basic class unity across the whole of Europe, the "Iron Curtain" notwithstanding. Other positions as noted above we have developed in an independent but parallel fashion. Above all, we respect the OCI for its adamant attempt to give life to its internationalism.

That is why we patiently waited when no other option was open to us vis-a-vis the OCI, and when we had the opportunity we have persistently sought discussion. It was especially with the OCI in mind that in the concluding portion of our final statement upon being expelled from the London Conference in 1966 we stated,

"If the comrades go ahead to exclude us from this conference, we ask only what we have asked before—study our documents, including our present draft on U.S. work before you now, and our work over the next months and years. We will do the same, and a unification of the proper Trotskyist forces will be achieved, despite this tragic setback."

Recently, in the document "The Tasks of Rebuilding the Fourth International" (which the introduction to the English edition states is "central to [the] international discussion"), the OCI characterized the SL from the 1966 Conference as "centrist" or "centrist-sectarian." Thus, rather than following our documents and our ongoing work as we asked in 1966, the OCI has simply continued to echo the SLL's avalanche of falsehood aimed at our political obliteration. In the light of the above points, this would seem an appropriate time for the OCI and with it the OCRFI to undertake a thorough examination of the SL's politics.

We do not expect, and would have no confidence in, a simple reversal of appraisal of the SL/U.S. by the OCI. Estimations of the SL/U.S. by the groups comprising the OCRFI should be guided by two considerations. One is the questions of general political and programmatic character such as we have gone into above. We naturally believe that we are correct about these; but because our views have taken shape within the American Trotskyist framework (and during a period of enforced national isolation) we must allow that they may be partial, and in ways which we cannot presently know. As the main Political Report to our recent National Conference stated: "The SL/U.S. urgently requires disciplined subordination to an international leadership not subject to the deforming pressures of our particular national situation." (see *Workers Vanguard* No. 15, January 1973) It was in this spirit that we published our article "Genesis of Pabloism" (*Spartacist* No. 21, Fall 1972) which contained substantially the sum total of our present understanding of Pabloism.

The other question, subordinate but within the framework of essential programmatic agreement very important and perhaps contributory to that programmatic agreement is the question of comrades internationally understanding the concrete reality of the socialist movement in the U.S. in the context of the evolved American labor movement and the specific configuration of class relations in this country. There is a striking lack of correspondence between the existing divisions within the ostensibly Marxist movements in Europe and America so that any effort to superimpose groups in Europe on "similar" groups in the U.S. is inappropriate. The six-months' stay by Comrade Sharpe in France was extremely helpful in bringing this point home to us. It would be extremely clarifying for example if a representative of the OCI could come to this country for an extended stay to examine, for example, not only the SL/U.S. in its concrete work, but also currents such as the "Vanguard Newsletter" of Turner-Fender, which has stood apparently closest formally to the OCI; the International Socialists, who mainly look to *Lutte Ouvrière* as their closest friends in France, but who contain sympathizers of the OCI among them; and the other tendencies

within the American radical movement. Moreover, the trade unions as they have evolved here should be examined in the union offices and on picket lines. More broadly, characteristic college campuses and the reality of the National Student Association should be investigated.

We take our commitment as internationalists seriously as a condition for our very survival as Marxian revolutionists, and by this we mean neither diplomatic non-aggression pacts with groups in other countries nor the Healyite fashion of exporting subservient mini-SLLs. As one of the results of what is for us precipitous growth domestically, we are acquiring the resources—human and material—to undertake for the first time on a sustained basis our international obligations.

It is in the context of our need for a disciplined International and our firm commitment to fight to bring about the programmatic agreement which forms the only basis for such an International, that we wish to participate in the discussion opened by the OCRFI.

We are enclosing copies of all our documents referred to in this letter. Should we be accepted into the discussion organized by the OCRFI, in order to familiarize comrades internationally with our views, we would like to submit three documents initially to the discussion: (1) this letter, (2) our delegation's remarks to the 1966 London Conference, (3) our Statement of Principles.

Fraternally,

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Spartacist League/U.S.

cc. Spartacist League/Australia-New Zealand

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Letter to the OCRFI and the OCI

15 January 1973

Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the
Fourth International; and
Organisation Communiste Internationaliste

Dear Comrades,

At the Third National Conference of the Spartacist League/U.S. we held a major discussion on the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International (OCRFI), based on our translations from the October 1972 issue of *La Correspondance Internationale* containing the basic documents and discussion from your international conference of July 1972. We were also guided by the reports of our comrades Sharpe and Foster of their discussions last summer with comrade DeM. of the OCI.

We give serious attention to the OCRFI because we note that some of the steps that it has undertaken go in the direction of resolving the impasse which has existed between the SL/U.S. and the International Committee (IC) since November 1962, and the acute hostility between us after the April 1966 IC Conference in London. We are in agreement with the stated goal of the OCRFI to fight on the program of the Fourth International to reconstruct a democratic-centralist world party, and to pursue this aim at present through a regulated political discussion in an international discussion bulletin culminating in an international conference. We note that toward this end your July conference did indeed represent a break with the federated bloc practice of the former IC and was indeed marked by a real and vigorous discussion such as was absent from the Third Conference of the IC in London in 1966. Thus it appears to us that on the face of it the OCRFI does possess one of the essential qualities necessary for the struggle to verify the authentic Trotskyist program and to measure by that program the political practice, in its development, of national groups participating in the discussion. Therefore the SL/U.S. has come to the conclusion that it is part of our duty as internationalists to seek to participate in this discussion.

We note that we fully meet the formal requirement for admission to participation in your discussion process as stated in the resolution, "On the Tasks of the Reconstruction of the Fourth International," i.e., we "state [our] will to fight on the program of the Fourth International to reconstruct the leading center, which [we] agree does not yet exist." (see our 1963 resolution, "Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International," and later documents) We are unable to request more than simple admission to the discussion, rather than admission to the Organizing Committee of the discussion, because of our programmatic differences, unclarity about or simple unfamiliarity with views held by members of the Organizing Committee. Since the Organizing Committee also intends to work toward the construction of national sections of the Fourth Inter-

national, we can hardly participate in such activities given this programmatic ambiguity.

In our view, the preliminary purpose of a discussion such as that envisaged by the OCRFI must be to crystallize a series of decisive specific programmatic demands analogous to the concrete points defining revolutionary Marxist principle set forth by Trotsky in the 1929-33 period as the basis for rallying forces from the scattered and politically diverse milieu of oppositional communists.

Therefore we should like to list some of the issues which appear to us to pose differences or central ambiguities between our views and those expressed by the OCRFI or which have been advanced by the OCI. The importance that we attach to these points is that if unresolved they threaten the crystallization of a bona fide and disciplined Trotskyist world movement and center. Therefore from our present understanding these are topics which merit particular discussion.

(1) *United Front*: We differ with the conception of the "strategic united front" as practiced by the OCI and as set forth in "For the Reconstruction of the Fourth International" (especially Section IX, "Fight for Power, Class United Front, Revolutionary Parties") in *La Verité* No. 545, October 1969 and in the general political resolution of the OCRFI. In terms of the OCI's work in France, our position has been elaborated in *Workers Vanguard* No. 11, September 1972. We believe that we share with the first four Congresses of the Communist International the view that the united front is essentially a tactic used by revolutionists "to set the base against the top" under those exceptional conditions and decisive opportunities in which the course of proletarian political life has flowed outside its normal channels. Comrade Trotsky heavily

(continued on page 28)

Demandez:

SPARTACIST EDITION
FRANÇAISE

No. 1: -Le Comité Internationale éclate
-Bolivie: débâcle centrisme

No. 2: -Du SWP au Trotskysme
-Déchéance et chute des Black Panthers

No. 3: -Front populaire et soutien critique
-Rapport de la délégation Spartaciste
à la Conférence de Londres (1966)

No. 4: -Lettre au Comité d'organisation pour la
reconstruction de la IVe Internationale
et à l'OCI
-Vers la scission dans le Secrétariat Unifié

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