

INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSION BULLETIN

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EXCHANGE OF VIEWS

Between the SL/US and the RWP of Ceylon:

**—Letter to Samarakkody
by Robertson, 27 October 1973**

**—Letter to Robertson
by Samarakkody, 9 February 1974**

LETTER TO COMRADE SAMARAKKODY

New York
27 October 1973

Ceylon

Dear Comrade Samarakkody,

We received your long article, "Struggle for Trotskyism in Ceylon," earlier this week and have been studying it most attentively. Its handling for our public press is mainly a matter for the Workers Vanguard Editorial Board. As you noted, it would probably have to be printed in two or more parts in successive issues. It is also scheduled for formal consideration in two days by our Political Bureau in its aspect as an extensively worked out statement of concrete proletarian tactics in Ceylon by the Revolutionary Workers Party. Those comrades who have already had a chance to go over the document have found it a powerful application of revolutionary Marxism in the area that it centrally treats: concrete analysis and guidance of strategy and tactics in the political field in the contention between class struggle and class collaboration. It seems to us an able application of the line developed in the Communist International's Third and Fourth Congresses and in the founding resolution of the Fourth International. If we have a reservation, it is in the implicit treatment of revolutionary perspectives as situated simply within the national terrain of the Ceylonese socialist revolution.

The main purpose of this letter is to assist the discussions with you of our international tendency representative who will be visiting you shortly. And that purpose intersects our enthusiasm over your "Struggle for Trotskyism in Ceylon" since the Marxist solidity of your document indicates that your tendency displays a decisive counterposition in domestic class politics to Pabloism, that adaptationism toward alien tendencies and class forces in the context of one's own class struggle which led to such graphically catastrophic consequences for Ceylonese Trotskyism (because the unique political weight of the party in Ceylon permitted the Pabloist line to go to its logical conclusion).

Need for Programmatic Delineation

I don't know how familiar you are with the specific purpose of our tendency representative's visit to you. Let me recapitulate. As a result of our work in Germany we encountered a grouping in Austria of several young comrades, the outgrowth of a left split of the youth group of the Austrian United Secretariat section of a couple of years ago. Common work and common discussion over the past nine months have revealed and developed an essential programmatic communality between the Spartacist tendency and the OBL (Austrian Bolshevik-Leninists) as the group is known. As the outgrowth of the Austrian comrades' suggestion of a common statement to the erstwhile world Trotskyist movement in this time of great flux within it, we arrived at the following perspective, as formally decided on 30 July 1973 in PB #9: to seek to work up a general statement of revolutionary Marxist position employing the form used by Trotsky in the 1929-33 period to sort out from among the numerous Communist

oppositional currents the International Left Opposition. Namely, we intended to present a series of concrete political positions on recent and current specific issues and events so that, taken all together, the key programmatic elements could be posed defining the principled basis for splits and fusions within the movement. It was our intention to canvass those currents we thought to be close to us with the draft document, and from out of the ensuing discussion to issue a common jointly signed declaration of those shown by the discussion to be in principled agreement. But we attached one proviso. Such a declaration would have to have sufficient authority among the signatories so that it would not simply be dismissed. It seems to us obvious that an abortive formal declaration of international tendency would weaken, not strengthen, the desired development.

As we well know, the Spartacist tendency in the U.S. is still in essential national isolation. You are probably well aware of our attempt over the decade of our existence to employ all means at our disposal to break out of national isolation. In the past several years the organization in the U.S. has grown severalfold. And the tiny opening we had in New Zealand has evolved into a small but real and vigorous propaganda group in Australia. Our greatly increased human and material resources in the U.S. are being heavily deployed through the SL/U.S.'s international department to intersect the opportunities provided by the shattering of the International Committee and the deep faction fight in the United Secretariat. While the premature and artificial proclamation of our tendency as international in scope would not be as immediately fatal as the pursuit of federated combinations disguised in the manner of the U.Sec. and late IC, it would nonetheless be a deformation.

Indicative of our real weakness has been our present inability to carry out in their original form our intentions as sketched out above. One of our comrades produced a draft document which on consideration we believed to be a partial one, lacking in precision yet overlong. Another leading comrade produced virtually anew another draft and still felt defects remained. Upon consideration it appeared to us that we were trying to do too many not easily compatible things within the scope and style of a single document.

In addition to the central intention mentioned above, we wanted a document specifically aimed at the French OCI as part of our attempted intervention in their purported international discussion process; we felt a strong need to attack the pretensions of both wings of the U.Sec. fight--of Hansen, who fronts for the really wretched SWP, of Marxist orthodoxy, and of the IMG which until it suddenly collapsed into a call for a popular front in Britain (!) had been the most "revolutionary" element in the U.Sec. majority conglomeration. And finally, we wanted to single out for special attention points of evident or possible disagreement with tendencies or groups such as yourself who stand closest to us. And the whole process of drafting, discussion and adoption was to be completed in time for the (January 1974?) World Congress of the United Secretariat forces. Finally, a number of comrades were hoping that the declaration would also be suitable for general popular propaganda.

Perhaps the earlier Shachtman or Mandel or Joe Hansen, viewed simply as literary technicians, would have the capacity to put together a draft meeting all these requirements. But we don't, and this is a symptom of the weakness that as an international tendency we must struggle to overcome, not just deny. Thus our major programmatic documents of comparable seriousness (but generally of simpler purpose) have characteristically taken perhaps a year to write, many months of painstaking and intensive effort. Therefore we must pursue our intentions in a more roundabout and piecemeal fashion. And this letter is a part of that.

Questions on Ceylonese Trotskyist History

After reviewing available material on the history of the Ceylonese Trotskyist movement, I find that the review only adds depth and somewhat more precision to our opinion expressed in my letter to one Manickam of 6 January 1972, a copy of which was sent you:

"The main point of our concern with the youth uprising impinges on our principal historical criticism of the Ceylonese Trotskyist movement--that its deep strain of petty-bourgeois impulse found expression in a relatively privileged Ceylonese nationalism rather than in struggle to win the proletariat in Ceylon (and especially the Tamil plantation workers) as a staging area for proletarian revolution on the Indian subcontinent as a whole."

In attempting a critical review of the Ceylonese Trotskyist movement, I must keep to a certain level of abstraction, partly because some key elements are obscure but mainly because the Ceylonese milieu is manifestly so very different from that of the United States. For example one must assume that the Sinhalese/Tamil relationship and resulting chauvinist excrescences, while roughly comparable to black/white relations in the U.S. or to foreign labor in Europe, has its own specific characteristics within the limits of the obvious common economic elements. I assume that the striking conjuncture in what would appear to be the heroic period of Ceylonese Trotskyism, roughly 1942-47, is not an accident. In that period, with many leading elements of the Ceylonese movement working to build the Indian movement, the official resolutions of the Bolshevik Leninist Party of India (BLPI) show at least a strong formal commitment to the permanent revolution and therefore to revolutionary internationalism. Indeed it may have even been an organizational exaggeration of this internationalism to have affiliated the Ceylonese left Trotskyists as the "Ceylon Unit" of the BLPI (as opposed to perhaps a more usual South Asian Bureau directing the work of separate sections). This was a wartime period, of course, of illegality slamming the door to parliamentary appetites, and of tumultuous struggles as the grip of British imperialism began to slip. It is highly suggestive that this was also the interval of a lengthy if evidently not very politically clearcut split in Ceylonese Trotskyism, and that with the opening of a vista of "national independence" and parliamentarism a reunification took place. It would appear likely that this reunification was on at least implicitly a centrist basis. If this is so, one would already expect little help to the

revolutionary wing from the International Secretariat given poor contact over great distance, not much real authority possessed by the recently reconstituted IS, and presumably an IS itself already beginning to be motivated by centrist appetites soon to be revealed by the impermissible conciliation to Yugoslav Stalinism and the generalized Pabloist "war-revolution" entrism sui generis. Thus unlike the possible analagous situation in which Trotsky fought it out with the Nin leadership of the Spanish Opposition so that even if their capitulation in Spain to form the POUM (with all its disastrous consequences to the Spanish Revolution and in world history) could not be prevented at least the Trotskyist movement internationally was able to preserve its revolutionary integrity, learn lessons and draw lines of demarcation which are applicable to this day, a generation later in the current recrystallization of the rather sizable "Trotskyist" currents in Spain. What would seem to require explanation in the 1950 Ceylonese reunification is the internal incapacity of the left Trotskyists to resist it in favor of their previously overtly principled course. From that point on, operating within the limitations of a merely national perspective and with a focus on the parliamentary arena, the LSSP appears to have been on a downhill slide from tacit reformism (the 1953 Hartal notwithstanding) through increasingly overt class collaborationism to formal betrayal and finally participation in the butchery of the 1971 youth uprising. This history projects a striking parallelism to that of the German Social Democrats, allowing for a certain re-scrambling of sequence: a flawed unity between the Marxist left, the Eisenachers, the revisionist right, the Lasallians (witness Marx's concern over the Gotha Program), the heroic period during semi-legality under the Exceptional laws followed by fixation on the Reichstag and the explosive denouement on the 4th of August. This is a comparison of comparably significant forces. Two thousand SWP members in the United States have an infinitesimal social weight. One gathers that the LSSP had perhaps 500 members at the 1964 split. The difference is not particularly in the ratios of two thousand to two hundred million and five hundred to perhaps nine million. Rather the LSSP stood at the head of a section of the labor movement and was even at times the official parliamentary Opposition. The LSSP had something to sell out; the SWP has minimal market value to the bourgeoisie (although given the real character of the SWP's practice in American political life one must conclude that the SWP is actually no less rotten with opportunism today than the LSSP was in 1964).

Two questions emerge from this brief and somewhat impressionistic review of the history of the Ceylonese movement. One is historical: how genuinely revolutionary was the BLPI (Ceylon Unit)--i.e., was its formal Trotskyist orthodoxy based on consistent and assimilated programmatic outlook with a struggle to find reflection of this program in the work and composition of the party? Perhaps so--even with imperfections--if the ensuing reunification had come about as the result of big defeat, perhaps collapse, of a struggle to build a powerful adjacent movement in India. But it seems likely that the Ceylon Unit's formal correctness was based essentially on the radicalizing external circumstances imposed upon it.

The other question is not historical, but affects the perspectives of the world movement today: to what extent has that section

of the Ceylonese Trotskyist movement (evidently found nowhere else except in you personally and the RWP) which opposed the drift to the 1964 betrayal, split over it, and then unlike all the other splitters actually sought to transcend the "old" "good" LSSP, actually done so? That the RWP has done so to a degree is clear but this is a qualitative matter and dependent upon both clear formal program and living practice (and parenthetically the same question by which you must judge us). Certainly in the field of domestic class politics your split from the LSSP(R) and the evolution of the RSP (now RWP) appear fundamentally complete.

Problems of Building an International Movement

The intervention of both the United Secretariat and the Healy IC into Ceylon certainly facilitated an understanding of the political reality of these formations beyond their sometimes fine words. Applying the criteria you employ in your "Struggle for Trotskyism in Ceylon" to the practice of the French OCI and the American SWP in their native countries should lead you unambiguously to the same kinds of conclusions and characterizations that we draw. However, these are essentially negative conclusions about the present character of the erstwhile Trotskyist movement. We have little tested idea of what you believe should be the character of the Fourth International and the kind of steps and mode of organization in the struggle for the rebirth of the FI. Certainly we do not believe that you favor the Pabloist organizational highhandedness and manipulation, handmaiden of a liquidationist line. If Pabloite international manipulations have mainly been in the direction of promiscuous and destructive interventions into national sections, in Ceylon, as you have noted, the revisionism of the International Secretariat (later United Secretariat) has been at the other extreme--seeking to retain the nominal allegiance of the LSSP (and later the LSSP-R) by turning a blind eye to Ceylonese opportunism, i.e., by the failure to undertake political intervention mandated by principle. While this concrete experience by the Ceylonese movement would naturally lead you to reject that sort of crypto-federalism which, for example, J.P. Cannon revealed in the 1953 factional struggle, we do not know what operative conclusions you have drawn regarding international democratic centralism, in light of its abuse in the hands of those whose real program no longer justifies such an organizational form. And it is not easy to test this out between us in the period immediately ahead since even at the most optimistic, success in programmatically cohering a real tendency possessing the real and viable components in at least several states would lead to only the most primitive, if real, international democratic centralism as we envision it.

We do have recourse to examination of past experience. The International Left Opposition, later International Communist League, later Fourth International, in Trotsky's time suffered not only from a terrible dearth of material resources but from the objectively imposed problem of a decisive separation between an overwhelmingly politically dominant center of Leon Trotsky and his secretariat wherever they happened to be and the nominal organizational "center" in Paris, always weak even organizationally, and sometimes for any practical purpose non-existent, especially following the GPU's

evident murders of Klement and Sedov. The greatest amount of experience for our movement is of course to be found in the Communist International of the first four Congresses. The first and second Internationals, eclectic national conglomerations that they were, are mainly valuable, from the standpoint of our international self-organization, in the negative. Curiously enough the original League of Communists has more direct bearing on the problem of our international organization. Engels, writing I think about the early Second International, disparaged this initial, semi-clandestine, narrowly vanguardist forerunner as having been happily superseded by the international association of mass parties. But history was to show that the real embodiment on a mass basis of the League of Communists was to recur in the Communist International. The main contradiction militating against a genuine international collective has been either the effective subordination of the International to the massive national authority e.g. of the Russian Bolsheviks as a directing center or earlier the German Social Democrats as an authoritative model (so that the big political struggles within the workers movement tend to be fought out within the framework of only the dominant national section or party, with the balance of the world movement reduced to mere onlookers or at best auxiliaries), or else, at the other extreme, the lack of sufficient authority within the international movement so as to minimize fights and splits within the framework of fidelity to program.

All of our problems anticipated over the next period stem from being in the latter condition. We have several advantages over our forebears in the Marxist movement, however. We do not automatically stand on their shoulders inheriting their experience, but the struggle to assimilate it is open to us. And providing that the material means can be maintained, e.g., the vast technological advances of our time are available to us: the overseas telephone, jet aircraft and the Xerox machine. I think that the very improved technical functioning of the miserably centrist U.Sec. as revealed in the present international factional struggle is traceable to the new technical elements, so that they have been able to have large, frequent and representative IEC meetings. But these elements depend on a relatively great deal of money. The SL/U.S. is fortunately situated in this respect, at least during the present period of prosperity, because the North American industrial production workers have earnings such that if they are childless and communists a significant share of their income is available to the movement. We are aware of the extra responsibility toward the world movement which this places upon us. Of course the uneven financial capacity of the different sections of the world movement offers one more opportunity for abuse. In the early 1960's Healy's political banditry was evidenced when he promoted money out of our then common American tendency with Wohlforth, ostensibly for purposes in the world movement (a trip to Japan), but ended up using it in his domestic English operation. More serious is the political blackmail involved in the reported \$2500 a month subsidy which the SWP pays the U.Sec. The SWP currently employs its financial weight to undercut the struggle of more radical elements against it, to resist encroachments on its North American domain and to maintain the U.Sec. as the unprincipled, federated conglomeration it is.

Organizational Heritage of Pabloism

There is another consideration in the development of common international functioning which we did not envision at the outset of our tendency and only slowly, through concrete experience, came to glimpse its dimensions. We did not with our background in the then SWP anticipate the deep ravages that Pabloism had made in the moral fibre of at least the European movement. Based on our experiences with the SLL (Gerry Healy certainly appears to be one of the arch-practitioners in this school), the OCI and recent left splits from the U.Sec. in Germany and England (IKD, Spartacus-BL, RCL) we can say generally that at least in Europe not only the Pabloists but also those who were touched by Pabloism or have (partly) broken with it operate with a pervasive cynicism and an automatic assumption of disloyalty and intrigue on the part of all those whom they have contact with, so that formal political protestation is naturally taken to be a facade. This Pabloist heritage, fundamentally alien to revolutionary Marxism and degrading of proletarian consciousness, by its nature does not appear in written program and propaganda, which is why we had to experience it through direct contact and attempts at common work. It is of course not an independent factor but essentially a product of isolation from living working-class struggle, and is one of the organizational implements of liquidationism. But it has served to inhibit our work in Europe and deflect possible political convergences.

This pervasive organizational chicanery is only the smaller part of the necessity for serious Marxists not to be content with accepting from a distance an organization's written word about its political views and practice. The SLL's 1960 resolution "World Prospect for Socialism" was, in accordance with our political criteria, an outstandingly good document. We were in the early 1960's essentially innocent of the knowledge of the Healy group's long and checkered career, so that the element of political banditry there took us by surprise. In 1970 we momentarily entertained hopes about the English RCL grouplet on the basis of the fair words in their resolution on the history of the Fourth International written by Stephenson, but direct discussion and observation on the part of an SL delegation revealed that this was but a face shown to the outside world and that domestically the RCL entertained vast illusions about the class-inclusive character of the British Labour Party, seeing it not in essence as a social-democratic party but as a kind of semi-soviet whose reformist leadership could perhaps be displaced. At the time of our 1970 discussions we knew nothing about Karalasingham, and thus could not draw the profound conclusions about the RCL's own fundamental weakness toward reformism when the RCL disparaged Samarakkody in Ceylon, printed Karlo's material in their international bulletin and offered him up to us as a healthy element! One can learn. You will recall that about two years ago we received from M. Manickam in Ceylon a series of letters expressing total and enthusiastic agreement with the SL/U.S. and most urgently soliciting a reciprocal statement of political support. As you know we temporized until a comrade could visit Ceylon. The "Manickam group" proved to be at the best politically illusory. As you know regarding the IKD-KJO/Spartacus-BL split in Germany we took nothing on faith; nor have we with the tiny OBL whose leader spent some weeks in this

country observing, discussing and working with us, and we in turn have had German-speaking comrades in Vienna several times and only now have we begun to undertake joint work in Germany. We have of course also worked out and adopted an explicit joint statement of close programmatic parallelism as the formal basis for our common intervention in the German movement.

One aspect of our direct experience between groups leads us to place a considerable premium on dealing with comrades with long years in the movement and organizations with sustained political records. One must not seek to draw conclusions only from formal program combined with contact in the present moment. A long and verified history permitting the test of events is also invaluable. You possess this latter in abundance, which is one reason why we feel free to write you fully and with our guard down. As Rosmer noted in his book Moscow in Lenin's Time, a grave weakness of the Communist International in its first revolutionary years was the unavoidable reliance of so many of its sections upon new, untried elements who were incapable or worse, the twenty-one points and glowing enthusiasm to the contrary notwithstanding.

If we have acquired some limited experience, mainly negative, in attempting contact and work in the international movement toward the crystallization of a programmatic international tendency committed to struggle for the rebirth of the Fourth International, we must believe that we have by no means exhausted the experience of running into new kinds of unexpected problems and circumstances. This continuous struggle to reconquer what was the stock-in-trade of the early Communist International has marked every step of our way in almost every interrelated field; domestically toward the black question, the history of the communist women's movement and particularly in communist trade-union work, and the political issues of popular front, united front and labor party, we have had to overcome misconceptions and fill in hiatuses. Characteristically the confrontation has been produced by our program as a generality intersecting the necessity at specific times for concrete answers. To feel a present sense of completion would be to descend into sterile orthodoxy (Comrade Cannon's old "we have a finished program"), a harbinger of degeneration.

The Permanent Revolution in Ceylon

The perspective of a Ceylonese socialist revolution must necessarily have a very large international side. Comrade Cannon's "The Coming American Revolution"--even for the highly industrially developed and then enormously powerful U.S., occupying the bulk of a great continental land mass and without neighbors of significant military threat--with its exclusive preoccupation with the American revolution, virtually ignoring the international context, smacks of an impressionistic American exceptionalism. At another extreme, our New Zealand comrades have been virtually unable to imagine a socialist revolution--taken in isolation--for that distant island which is yet so heavily linked into the world market and only by historical happenstance politically separate from Australia.

Ceylon is a small semi-colonial country heavily dependent upon

producing commodities for the world market and closely adjacent to its giant neighboring Indian subcontinent, to which it is evidently linked by ethnic, cultural and linguistic ties not qualitatively more distant than those found in different regions of the subcontinent itself. Thus for Ceylon the second of the main guidelines of the permanent revolution acquires exceptional importance. If only the proletariat can consistently lead the peasantry and the urban poor in the struggle to achieve democratic demands inextricably passing over to socialist ones, and in the teeth of what must ultimately be the combined opposition of the imperialists, landlords and domestic capitalists--and noting that this revolution can therefore have no democratic "stage" separate from the struggle for proletarian socialist aims--then concretely for Ceylon the second condition (i.e., of international development) acquires exceptional and most immediate importance. The issue of the international extension of the Ceylonese socialist revolution is not only a question of its ultimate long-term economic viability but of its most immediate short-term politico-military existence. Moreover, while revolutions mature and are fought out within the framework of each existing state power, those objective conditions which would precipitate revolutionary crisis would in all likelihood exist, if with different tempo, elsewhere on the subcontinent. Given the special circumstances which sections of the Ceylonese masses enjoy relative to the subcontinent as a whole--the relative economic well-being and cultural level (literacy, political experience)--a general revolutionary crisis in the region could well be precipitated earlier and more fully in Ceylon, turning it into the staging area for a general subcontinental or South Asian proletarian revolution.

Thus it would seem that the question of the Tamil minority in Ceylon is of triple importance. First the immigrant-descended Tamil laborers on the plantations producing for the world market are the primary creators of value and are by that fact alone central to a proletarian revolutionary perspective, or as Lerski in his wretched book Origins of Trotskyism in Ceylon quotes you from a lecture in 1964 to the effect that the estate labor population must be the "epi-centre of Ceylon's revolution." Second, the struggle by the Leninist vanguard against Sinhalese chauvinism among the laboring masses of the dominant ethnic majority can be no less a pre-condition for successful revolution than the struggle against Great Russian chauvinism was for the Bolsheviks. Third, for the sake of the extension of the revolution, the laboring population of at least South India may well take the treatment of the Indian-derived Tamils as the key test as to the genuineness of Ceylonese revolutionary intentions.

But after the 1950 LSSP reunification we have seen virtually no recognition of these considerations so seemingly distant from day-to-day life in Ceylon but so crucial for a serious revolutionary perspective. Instead we note as the alternative consummated by the LSSP the succession of: a national horizon, a parliamentary focus, conciliation to "anti-imperialist" Sinhalese communalist chauvinism, class collaboration, overt betrayal, complicity in counter-revolutionary butchery. For revolutionists, a principled class-struggle domestic line would be an intolerable contradiction in the absence of an energetically pursued internationalist policy reflected internally

in the question of the Tamil plantation proletariat and the struggle against Sinhalese chauvinism, necessarily the prime cause of communalism.

"Progressive" and Class Criteria

It is not clear from "Struggle for Trotskyism in Ceylon" that the SL and the RWP precisely agree in understanding "a popular front," "a government of a reformist workers party or parties" and "a workers and peasants government." Furthermore in some of these cases tactical orientation within a principled framework would vary depending on whether the revolutionists had only a small propagandist existence or had themselves become a mass party. In our view, a popular front is but a contemporary expression of the old social-democratic coalitionism simply extended to include the Stalinists. The importance of the inclusion of even the most modest non-proletarian political formation ("left liberal" in the West, "anti-imperialist" in the East) is to act as a guarantor of the multi-class program of such a governmental combination and as an alibi by which the erstwhile "labor" or "socialist" or "communist" parties can explain to their own followers the refusal to follow their nominal programs. And such reformist leaders are correct, in their way. The contradiction implicit in such parties between subordination to the interests of the capitalist system and these parties' articulation of the interests of the working people is thereby suppressed. It is conceivable for example that if a Labour-Liberal coalition should become the government in Britain it might have a more radical program than the post-World War II Labour governments. But it would be a government formally as well as in content explicitly locked within the capitalist framework. Demands upon such a coalition to carry out its common electoral program could not be in the interests of the workers. And similarly for the German Free Democratic-SPD government, the Allende Popular Unity government, the left Radical-SP-CP Union of the Left electoral coalition in France. Where revolutionists and reformists are of comparable size, we would simply fight it out with the reformists, not excluding no-contest agreements along the way but in no case suggesting that a government of purely reformist workers parties would constitute a "workers government" or that there was any basis for a common parliamentary bloc with us. Should such reformists become the government, and also in a pre-election period if we are qualitatively weaker than they, as a tactic to expose and split the reformists (i.e., resolve the reformist parties into their counterposed class components) it would be in order to demand of the reformists that they carry out the working-class and socialist elements in their formal programs.

In the colonial world the struggle against imperialism reflects the felt oppression of the laboring masses as coming from outside the nation itself. Hence "national bourgeois" formations, including the very radical petty-bourgeois ones ranging over to the Russian Social-Revolutionaries or the Vietnamese National Liberation Front, can strive to play the kind of mass leadership role not seen in Western Europe since 1848. In this they simulate the present role there of the (trade-union, social-democratic, Stalinist) labor bureaucracies. But mass plebian or even proletarian base notwithstanding, such nationalist political formations are external to the working

class, unlike the labor bureaucracies which are the internalized mechanism of capitalist mass control. Concretely the difference is shown in that such parties as the SLFP or the Argentine Peronistas or the Bolivian MNR or the Palestine Liberation movement or the Algerian FLN or the Chinese KMT or the Pilsudski PPS could--and some have--turn savagely to attack their peasant/worker base, and continue existing and perhaps ruling unchanged. But the German Social Democrats or the British Labour Party or even the thrice wretched Canadian NDP can have no existence without the maintenance of their trade-union base. Communists might make specific, episodic, concrete fighting agreements in action with radical nationalist formations. For example if the nationalists denounced the British base at Trincomalee, the communists would in no case extend parliamentary support, however critical, for a nationalist-sponsored bill to negotiate the removal of the British colonial presence. But should militant nationalists seek to storm the base, a fighting agreement, in the context of our continuing relentless criticism, might be in order. Such tactics serve to expose the organic class incapacity of even the most left nationalists to be the ultimate champions of the masses' aspirations, and simultaneously serve to win over a section of subjectively revolutionary militants, if present, to the proletarian vanguard. But any entry into or making a political bloc, parliamentary or extraparliamentary, with a formation like the SLFP or the JVP would not be different in fundamental class subordination from undertaking the popular front or from projecting the Stalinists' 1920's version, the two class party.

As propaganda, the call for a workers and peasants government had better involve, as Julian Marchlewski (Karski) noted at the fourth Congress of the Communist International, nothing other than a popular agitational formulation for the dictatorship of the proletariat. And in any case, to reduce the slogan to the small change of parliamentary combinations can only conceal a reformist appetite.

This touches on a weakness in the Fourth Congress discussions, where many comrades tried to visualize with a false concreteness the achievement of a workers government implicitly within the framework of a level of struggle that had not definitively flowed outside the parliamentary framework. In particular, the comrades then discussed the example of Germany, which is most pertinent because in life, in a few years, in the face of the menace of the rising Nazi party under conditions of grave social crisis, when the issue of the workers government had to be faced in reality, Trotsky could only speak in terms of a KPD-SPD united front, and with the clear implication of its embodiment in the development of soviets. This is one of the crucial elements for even relatively concrete propagandizing for the workers government. For example, in the terribly unstable France of 1946, and with the bourgeoisie seeking to re-create the formal framework of government, to raise the call for a CP-SFIO-CGT government posed head-on the call to transcend the parliamentary framework, for how does the CGT--the great united mass labor union of the time--participate in a parliamentary government?

These abstract definitions and formulae of course can only be animated by a genuine revolutionary determination which is only revealed by the totality of program and in continuing practice,

especially at the most crucial junctures. In the U.S. both Hal Draper of the then ISL of Shachtman and more lately Joe Hansen of the SWP, both writing as centrist ideologues, managed to find (possibly independently of one another) the identical formulations from the Communist International's Fourth Congress and from the Transitional Program in order to justify the revisionist courses of their organizations. (They wrote respectively, Draper in Labor Action of October and November 1953, on the British Labour government as a "workers government" and, Hansen in his July 1960 document, on the Castro regime as a "workers government".) And this will always be the case regarding formulations which are designed to take account of the complexities of situations in order to facilitate the victory of the revolutionary vanguard. The LSSP at least since the June 1950 reunification must have been a morass of such literary abuse and deception, with the meanings of terms subtly shifted while the party was being prepared for the 1964 entry into the government. To have approached the Sri Lanka Freedom Party in November 1951 for a no-contest agreement on the grounds of that party's verbal radicalism was, from the standpoint of the permanent revolution and the concrete perspective of proletarian revolution on the island, already a crime. The key agitation of the SLFP was, of course, "Sinhala Only". From the standpoint of the Tamil plantation workers it is impossible to see the SLFP as the kind of "lesser evil" with which revolutionists would sign no-contest agreements in order to get a larger number of themselves, along with a larger number of the lesser evils, into the Parliament. The Healyites' hue and cry over the 1964 Ceylonese betrayal is a little late. When the LSSP announced "general support of the government" following the July 1960 elections which the SLFP won, this was already a definitive capitulation, identical in content to Stalin's March 1917 policy of conditional support to the Provisional Government "insofar as"

Recognition of the significance of the 1960 LSSP orientation to the Sri Lanka Freedom Party is not solely a matter of hindsight. The world movement, and the SWP in particular, knew it at the time, and as you doubtless know the SWP leadership took those minimal steps then to keep their skirts clean, but no more than that.

Something should be said about the April 1971 uprising of Sinhalese youth organized by the JVP. Mainly negative observations come to mind. That such an uprising, evidently conspiratorially prepared over a period of time, could come as an abrupt surprise to all sections of established Ceylonese political life would appear as an indictment of both the socially remote and artificial character of the parliamentary milieu and the fixation of all previously-established political elements upon it. The succession of post-British governments pursued policies of economic stagnation and dissipation of economic wealth through consumption subsidies to the masses, until the resulting squeeze led to a shift from bread to the circus of virulent anti-Tamil chauvinism. Thus it was left to an extremist and genuinely petty-bourgeois wing of Sinhalese popular frontism to attempt, however wrongheadedly and tragically, some real social change.

Notable too was the massive multinational foreign military aid and political intervention the Bandaranaike government invoked. This is not only a matter which shamefully exposes the claims of

the SLFP as defenders of national independence. (So the government claimed the JVP uprising was the work of foreign spies. Indeed! They were fortunate to throw out the North Korean diplomats in time, before North Korea too might have sent aid to the government. Otherwise what would they have been left with for the origins of the "foreign spies"--Guatemala?) It is also, and more sinisterly, a matter of real concern to proletarian revolutionists, foreshadowing what can be expected at certain junctures. And this intervention argues very strongly again for the urgency of the struggle to internationalize a Ceylonese socialist revolution.

Nationalism and the Class Line

We appear to have had some differences on the series of Arab-Israeli conflicts in the Near East, although all that the SL has to go on in this regard is your "A Critique of the United Secretariat Resolution on the Arab-Israel Conflict" as published by the SWP in an International Information Bulletin of April 1968. What is most important for a viable international Marxist movement is agreement on the criteria by which it seeks to judge events. We see the driving force for Israeli aggressiveness as essentially located within that state itself and expressed in its virulent Zionism--i.e., a nationalist drive not different in kind from that felt by the ruling circles in Cairo and Damascus. Thus the central aim of the Israelis is not to conquer Arabs in order to exploit them, but to acquire more Lebensraum for the Hebrew nation. Indeed the recent acquisition of a million Arabs, while profitable for some sections of the Israeli ruling class, poses a considerable contradiction to Israeli nationalism (the aim of a "Jewish homeland") and a threat to its perspectives. The Israelis are today a client state solely of the American imperialists, but not the sole Near Eastern client of the Americans (others include Jordan and Iran). Israeli aims have continued to be autonomous, as they were for example in 1956 when Israel blocked with the British and French colonialists over the Suez Crisis (in that conflict we gave military support to the Egyptians, of course). The Israelis could conceivably become simple puppets of the Americans, but that is not the case now, as can be clearly seen by the differences in relationship of the Golda Meir government vis-a-vis its own people and Washington as against, say, the Thieu regime in South Vietnam. Moreover the Americans, like the Russians, can count noses and have been very heavily arming the Iranian government, with an eye to the latter's "protection" of the main Near Eastern oil-producing areas on the Persian Gulf.

The one legitimate national aspiration which figures in the Near East situation found an independent expression at only one point: in 1970 Jordan's King Hussein in sharp military conflict smashed what might have been an independent Palestinian national liberationary formation. We of course were most urgently for the military victory of the Palestinian rebels in Jordan, as their struggle was the only one since the first Israeli victory in 1948 which gave promise of beginning to break the reactionary Near Eastern deadlock. Before 1970 the erstwhile and competing fairly radical-sounding petty-bourgeois Palestinian organizations had not trans-

cended the status of tools of the competing Iraqi, Syrian and Egyptian regimes. Since then they have been much less. If Marxists give military support to a side in a war, we are in favor of the outcome of the victory of that side. We can draw no other conclusion than that in the 1967 and 1973 wars, an Arab states' victory would have led to (1) a reversal of the terms of oppression, this time aimed against the Israeli population, and (2) an ensuing sharp struggle, possibly military, between Egypt and Syria to see whose "Palestine" it would be. Only the proletariat in power in one or more of the neighboring Arab states would have, in the most elementary sense, the capacity to conduct a progressive war against the Israeli Zionist state.

The point has sometimes been made by the revisionists of the SWP that all other considerations are immaterial because Israel is a settler colony and therefore presumably richly deserves the same fate, for example, as the million Europeans that used to be in Algeria and that presumably should be visited upon the three million Europeans of South Africa. This is but irrelevant demagoguery. At one point or another, all peoples are settlers and colonists. Race wars and forced population transfers are invariably a reactionary and, as the Bihari Moslems can testify, generally a socially tragic solution.

The SL is strongly committed to its positions over the 1956, 1967 and 1973 clashes. We see the latter two as similar in kind not to Japanese imperialism's struggle to conquer China in the 1930's, but of the same kind as the succession of Indian-Pakistani clashes. We are less firmly assured of our prevailing position on the 1948-49 Palestinian events. It is all very well and true to argue that the Zionist manipulation leading to the arrival of a million Jews into Palestine to join a comparable number already there at the end of the second World War should not have taken place. But they were driven out of their homes in Europe and the Zionists wilfully assisted Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt in foreclosing other alternatives. It seems to us that involved in the initial conflict was the right of that Hebrew nation to exist. Under its nationalist (Zionist) leadership it of course gave the most reactionary possible twist to that right. The Palestinian Arab masses were betrayed on all sides. Only with the realization of a proletarian revolutionary perspective for the Arab East is national "justice" for both Arabs and Jews in Palestine conceivable. This position leads to prior opposition to the U.N.-voted partition, in favor of a bi-national state; then, faced with the fact of partition and the assault of the reactionary foreign Arab armies, to military support, and following their repulse, a necessity to struggle to the point of civil war by proletarian forces against the Zionist expansionist follow-up of the Arab defeat--i.e., a policy analogous to that of Marx in the Franco-Prussian War.

It should also not be forgotten that the 1948-49 events were instigated by the withdrawing British, who deliberately carried out the same kind of policy of divide and hopefully continue to rule from a distance that they carried out in the Indian subcontinent, and for what it's worth, that the key Arab military force at the time was not a force expressing even the chauvinist aspirations of an adjacent bourgeois-nationalist state but the royalist Arab Legion, pride of the British and led by General Glubb Pasha.

Perspectives

Finally, for your information we would like to discuss briefly some of the main domestic perspectives of the SL, and in more detail our present international activity.

The membership of the SL and its programmatic and democratic-centralist youth affiliate, the RCY, drifts upward toward three hundred now, with a notable continuing evidently heavily homogenized growth through regroupment from Maoist, revisionist and left-social-democratic origins, as well as direct recruitment. We are confronted by two urgent tasks. Our main struggle over the next period must be to develop additional links with the masses through the instrumentality of developing and testing in struggle communist fractions in plants and industries, on college campuses and elsewhere. (It must be kept in mind that at least for the white and youthful sections of the working people, there is a very large overlap and shift in role of the ten million or so college students, their predominantly petty-bourgeois character notwithstanding, with the youth employed as industrial workers--a situation strikingly different from the rigidly separated European university and working-class youth.) A reversal has begun to take place in America. The rebellious student movement of the 1960's is gone--without the mass of students reconciling to the status quo. While insurgent militancy among the workers has not significantly broken through at any point, a pronounced molecular process is taking place (despite the manifest shamelessness and felt menace of the Nixon government, the cynical post-Vietnam War mood and the grinding inflation, the last two years have even witnessed a subsidence in effective strikes thanks to the trade-union bureaucracy). However, the steadily growing receptivity for example of the workers to the overtly communist press, taken together with the developing objective conditions, indicates that this situation is in for a very sharp reversal, and one which will have major impact on other sections of society, tending to pull the younger generation of blacks out of mock-nationalist apathy and to pull behind it a section of the students. The other thing that we must do in order to acquire the necessary rudiments toward becoming a revolutionary party in this country is the winning over and development as communist cadres of qualitatively more than the small number of young black militants presently in the SL/RCY, as well as undertaking a similar successful effort among the by no means insignificant Spanish-speaking population in the U.S. We seem to have the essential prerequisites for these tasks. Our cadres, while much too newly fledged (tripling our size in three years), appear homogeneous and dedicated and are acquiring competence. Our material resources, barring a sharp economic downturn leading to major unemployment in our ranks, are adequate. The bi-weekly Workers Vanguard appears to have been essentially stabilized at its frequency and our struggle to increase its modest circulation base (8000 an issue) meets with success. As for its political content, we can only agree with a long-time former opponent who told us recently that he likes WV "not so much because it's the best Marxist paper in the country but because it's the only one!"

In our work as the SL/U.S. we are goaded by the recognition that--with our numbers which are both modest yet large on the scale of most

Trotskyist national groupings and with the challenge that the U.S. affords--history will not forgive us if we default.

The main present activities of our international department are the following. Keeping in mind that Paris is overwhelmingly the center of ostensible world Trotskyism--with perhaps fifteen thousand comrades organized into the Ligue Communiste, the Lutte Ouvriere group and the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste, together with their auxiliaries--we have developed a permanent station of several comrades in Paris to circulate, for informational and propaganda purposes, our Spartacist-francais. We have painfully pursued for some years the effort to draw the extremely resistant and equivocal OCI into formal discussions with us. They are centrists, the best of the not very good French organizations. From the unevenness of their political responses, they appear to have unresolved internal contradictions, and considering that they possess the most numerous and experienced cadre anywhere in the world claiming to be Trotskyist, we cannot simply dismiss them. However, with the publication in Spartacist-francais #4 of our 15 January 1973 letter to the OCI's international agency, the OCRFI, it appears that our relations with the OCI may be coming to a head. After evading for ten months replying to our request for admission to their international discussion process, the OCI now feels the pressure of our criticism in Paris itself. Especially given the OCI's latest efforts to flirt with the SWP (!) we are not sanguine as to the outcome, but we do not prejudge the question in view of the conflicting tensions within the OCI.

We have written above of the little fraternal Austrian group. Our projected joint work with them for Germany takes place under objectively hopeful conditions. The splits to the left of several hundred young comrades from the German Pabloists having led to groupings following every conceivable wrong road, we now can present our views in the context of considerable organizational disappointment and disintegration tending to make the German comrades receptive to considering our views. The Israeli "Vanguard" group appears to have fractured three ways. We gather that its founding leader has stayed with the OCI; a majority of its members have gone over to Healy; and several appear to be coming our way.

All other SL/U.S. international work is on a lesser level. We have extensive contact with London organizations but no obvious prospects for winning tendency supporters. We are poking around in India but under severe imposed restrictions. We know something of the Swedish movement; many Japanese comrades read our press but the situation there is deeply obscure to us; we have as much contact in Latin America as the miserable repression permits. We also have a certain amount of contact with nationals from several thoroughly authoritarian countries. We are developing a readership for our paper in Canada.

Our fraternal Australian section is of course another matter entirely. There are a dozen aggressive SL comrades there who have very recently sent forces from Melbourne to Sydney, their new center. Their activity is essentially self-sustained and has already begun to have an impact upon the Australian radical movement nationally.

However, we are left with only contact in New Zealand.

Our intention guiding this international work, which absorbs a large amount of the attention of leading cadres, is most immediately to develop and test apparent programmatic agreement internationally, a sufficiently lengthy and difficult process. With the best subjective good will and revolutionary integrity on the part of the organizations involved, there is still nothing easy or automatic in arriving at the mutual assurance that words say what they mean and the speakers mean what they say. If this were not so, the codification for a bona fide international Trotskyist tendency assimilating the experience of the movement since the death of Trotsky could perhaps be reduced to a single sheet of paper containing, for example, the programmatic points agreed to by the SL/U.S. and the ÖBL as the condition for our common work in Germany, together with the statement of principle of international organization which we abortively hammered out with Healy, much to his discomfort, in October 1965 in Montreal.

The struggle for the rebirth of the Fourth International means the construction of viable national sections of a democratic centralist international tendency. As Trotsky stressed in the foreign Introduction to Permanent Revolution, national sections of a living international party cannot be constructed from afar as the replication of some "leading section," but must have an organic development within the context of their own class struggle. National sections select their own leadership and must retain flexibility in the application of communist tactics to their own national terrain. The development of the international authority of the tendency entails the dialectical interaction of principled leadership based on the authentic Trotskyist program and the development of the authority of the national sections within the class struggles of their own countries. Moreover the interaction is not frozen--the formal authority of international leadership cannot outrun its real, evolving capacity.

If we are successful over the next period, our work must be consummated by an international conference of leading comrades. A conference which, if real and fruitful (and hopefully the first of many, held not too infrequently) would among other things lead to the conversion of the Spartacist magazine into an organ of the international tendency with an editorial board international in scope. Along the way this process gives us the chance to intervene most effectively into the political life of revisionist organizations and to most effectively achieve international impact for such significant work as we undertake in domestic class struggles. It will have to be out of the intersection of the upheaval of the masses and the regroupment of the revolutionary Marxists internationally that the Trotskyist Fourth International will be reborn.

In closing this long letter to you, Comrade Samarakkody, its purpose, together with that of our young international representative who we hope will shortly be discussing with you, is to pose and seek in a preliminary way to resolve the question of whether or not there is the principled basis and practical possibility of our coming together to commonly carry out this struggle for the Fourth International. We have a deep and abiding respect for your long decades

as a Trotskyist leader in South Asia and above all for your struggle to extricate an authentic revolutionary Marxist movement from the morass that was the LSSP. We must believe that you have at your fingertips experience and insight of which we are but dimly aware. This is the significance we attach to the comment and suggestion in your letter to us of 21 September 1972 that our article "...'Genesis of Pabloism' brings out important aspects of the degeneration of the 4th International. It should be followed up. I think we should aim at a full balance sheet of the 4th International movement. This involves considerable research. I have myself done some work in this regard. Only I do not think I have all the material." Our article represented the maximum of our present understanding and capacity, yet we believe it to be only partial, but in ways which are not obvious to us. Because we have so little continuity with the struggle of our political forebears, we are particularly made aware of its vital importance in the forging of a renewed world revolutionary party. If we feel a threat to the collaboration with you which is so powerfully indicated, it lies in the following comparison. When the Third International was conclusively finished as a revolutionary force and Trotsky set about to build a Fourth, there were a number of outstanding Communist leaders who emerged uncorrupted from the Stalinized Comintern. Sneevliet, Rosmer, Chen Tu-hsiu, Andres Nin (Christian Rakovsky was a special case) come to mind. But even in concert with a great leader of the stature of L.D. Trotsky (and history has permitted no Trotskys among us today), these comrades were unable to find the road to, or unable to persist in, the highest level of communist struggle under the new and sharply altered conditions. They fell away. But Trotsky himself, Peng, Cannon, and others, did mount a renewed struggle. Today it falls to you to do the same by transcending the thirty years of Ceylonese "Trotskyism" (and on the island itself, to fashion the RWP as an instrument of real Bolshevism). If you do so, you will be for world Trotskyism, as well, an invaluable link assisting and guiding the young generation of Trotskyist revolutionaries. And the whole preceding experience of the Ceylonese movement will not have been in vain.

Comradely,

James Robertson,
For the Political Bureau, SL/U.S.

P.S. We are sending you with this letter or shortly under separate cover all of the specific documents referred to herein which you may not yet have.

cc: representative to Ceylon,
SL/Australia-New Zealand,
OBL
SL/U.S.-Paris office.

encl.: SWP PC minutes of 1960 on Ceylon;
SL/U.S.-OBL Agreement for Common Work in Germany;
SL/U.S. Montreal agreement with Healy;
preliminary partial drafts of projected international tendency
declaration;
Spartacist-francais #4.

LETTER FROM SAMARAKKODY

Mount Lavinia.
9th February 1974.

Comrade James Robertson,
Spartacist League,
United States.

Dear Comrade,

This is regarding your letter of 27th October and the accompanying drafts (marked rejected).

Your decision to arrange Comrade [David S.]'s visit was very welcome. We discussed many matters including the Arab-Israel question on which we had a fuller discussion.

To turn to issues raised in your letter and also in the two drafts, we shall only summarise our positions. It is possible that such a treatment of the question could well suffer from lack of clarity. But we could always follow up with necessary clarifications later.

I INTERNATIONAL TENDENCY:

The answer to the question "whether or not there is the principled basis and practical possibility of our coming together to commonly carry out this struggle for the 4th International" is very categorically 'Yes.' We agree with the SL that it is necessary to begin right now to take concrete steps towards the formation of the International Revolutionary tendency. We could also generally agree to the proposal "to present a series of concrete political positions on recent and current specific issues and events"; with a view to reaching agreement between our two organisations and any co-thinkers as a first step in this regard.

A "common jointly signed declaration of those shown by discussion to be in principled agreement" will of course be a necessary step. But this will be at the appropriate stage. And as you appear to appreciate, we cannot have a situation in which the signatories to a document proceed to tear it up within a short time. This means that questions should be discussed as fully as possible. We cannot conceive of even a nucleus of an International functioning on the basis of agreeing to disagree on fundamental issues. Of course disagreements on technical questions may well continue within the nucleus.

II As the SL is already committed to seeking entry into the OCRFI conference we feel it would be useful to let you know our impressions in that regard.

It cannot be wrong on principle to enter into discussions with those who claim to be Trotskyists. On the contrary, it is necessary today to seek opportunities to win such people to what we believe to be Trotskyism. It would however be imperative to state frankly and with clarity our differences in regard to their orientations. Con-

cretely, in regard to the OCRFI conference, it would be necessary to insist that we should have freedom to raise our differences on the various issues we think relevant to the basic aim of the conference.

In your motion on the OCRFI adopted at the 3rd National Conference of SL/U.S. of November 1972 you state "we fully meet the formal requirements for participation in the continuing discussion i.e. we 'state (our) will to fight on the programme of the FI to reconstruct the leading centre, which (we) agree does not as yet exist'." In this regard we do not have any material on which to make a judgment on whether the formal requirements for participation make it possible for the SL to seek participation. We have only the "Foreword" to the International Document of the OCRFI according to which they invite all the organisations, groups and militants who accept the framework of the discussion declared by the pre-conference to take part in its preparations. Perhaps you are aware of "the framework of the discussion" already decided on by them. In any event it is imperative that there should not be any misunderstanding as to the scope of the conference and the SL's right to raise relevant issues.

We find that the SL has raised many questions on important issues (your letter to OCRFI). On the specific questions you have raised with them, we could generally agree. But it appears to us that on some important issues SL's differences are not fully brought out -- e.g. the politics of the POR (Bolivia). Again it is our impression that some formulations of SL in regard to OCI politics are insufficient and could well compromise the politics of the SL/U.S.:

(a) "We give serious attention to the OCRFI because we note that some of the steps it has undertaken go in the direction of resolving the impasse which has existed between the SL/U.S. and the IC since November 1962" (our emphasis).

(b) That the politics of the OCI is "politically far superior to the politics of the Healy-Banda group" (our emphasis).

From what we have understood, the differences between the SL/U.S. and the IC since November 1966 relate to fundamental Trotskyist questions and therefore are of a far-reaching nature. There is no evidence that the OCI has broken with Healyite sectarianism-cum-opportunism. The OCI now says it had important political differences with the Healy-Banda group. By their failure to raise such differences while they were in the IC the OCI helped Healy to maintain the fraud of the International Committee of the 4th International, and obstructed the reconstruction of the 4th International.

In regard to the very concept of the International the OCI position appears to remain what it was. The OCI has not broken with the IC in its rejection of centralism as a vital aspect of the organisational principle of democratic centralism. They appear to have agreed to disagree on basic questions but yet to pose as the new centre for the rebuilding of the 4th International.

"The Trotskyist organisations that will participate at this second session do not hope for the impossible, for the immediate solution of all the problems. They will attempt clearly to show the character and content of the period of the imminence of the revolution, the fundamental tendencies and currents of the world labour movement. They will try to make it so that the vanguard, the workers and youth learn about and become conscious of these struggles in discussing their essential aspects, so as to verify them through their own experience in struggle. It is thus that we, the OCI, do not pretend and never have pretended to meddle in the internal affairs of the POR of Bolivia. We long ago condemned the hyper-centralism of the International Secretariat of the 1950's which had the pretension of dictating its methods of struggle to all its sections without any serious political basis nor organisational means (if with any real knowledge at all). We understand that only the POR is competent to determine its methods of struggle taking into account the particular and local circumstances--as we are in France..." (our emphasis).

Incidentally, is this not a pointer to the "framework of the discussion" decided on by the OCI and its co-thinkers?

It would appear that in the genuine desire of the SL/U.S. to intervene by participation in the OCRFI conference, without at the same time being conscious of the far-reaching differences between the SL and OCI, it has overlooked the danger of a possible compromising of its own politics. In this regard, the favourable references to the OCI in the article (WV) "French Stalinists Call Token General Strike" despite being balanced by other critical comments have helped to give a better political image to the OCI than to other centrist currents. Are we not creating obstacles in our task of exposing the wrong policies of those who claim to be Trotskyists?

We do not think it necessary to undertake here a full evaluation of the OCRFI documents. The SL has already raised several issues in that regard. In our view the following specific matters call for discussion with them.

In the Pabloist style, with an impressionism not unsimilar to what the Pabloites displayed in the 3rd Congress, the OCRFI political document has started with the picture of the crisis of imperialism and that of the Kremlin bureaucracy which has brought imperialism and the Kremlin bureaucracy to a breaking point, and with the imminence of the outbreak of revolutionary explosions in the face of which both imperialism and the Kremlin bureaucracy have been made to appear helpless.

With the imminence of revolutionary explosions, similar to Healy's own orientation after the breakdown of the Bretton-Woods agreement followed by a continuing monetary crisis, the OCRFI appears to have discovered a speedy way out for the proletariat. "All fractions of the proletariat, all layers, professions and groups must be trained in the revolutionary movement." Everything else gives way to a task of overriding importance -- "The need of mobilising the class as a whole in spite of its heterogeneity in the struggle for power lies at the heart of the transitional program." The OCRFI

clearly projects the concept of the development of revolutionary consciousness within the proletariat as an inevitable consequence of the unity of the working class. It is thus that, in place of the tactic of the "united front" which is called for under specific circumstances of the class struggle, the OCRFI has a strategy called "workers united front." The "workers united front" is not merely a slogan but "the strategic axis of the policy of the Trotskyist organisation." In their view "the present phase of the class struggle puts more than ever on the order of the day the struggle of class against class." Your second draft has correctly stated "the theory of the 'strategic united front' put forward by the OCI-POR is at bottom a dissolution of the vanguard into the class along the lines of the Kautskyian conception of the 'party of the whole class'." (our emphasis).

The OCI is obsessed with the concept of the imminence of the struggle for power by the proletariat. Undoubtedly, the proletariat has entered the epoch of the struggle for power. But the question of the proletariat being in a state of readiness for the struggle for power is another question. The reality today, in this regard, is that social-democratic, Stalinist and Pabloist politics are the greatest roadblock to the working class taking the road of the struggle for power. Undoubtedly the lack of unity in the working class in a struggle perspective remains a problem in regard to the proletarian revolution. But this question of achieving unity of the working class cannot be realised in isolation and apart from the principal struggle for revolutionary perspective. Thus while the united front is a necessary tactic for a revolutionary party at a given stage, it is not a panacea or a strategy, but once again only a tactic.

BOLIVIA:

In Bolivia the OCI ally, the POR, proceeded from a wrong concept of the united front and ended up with practising "popular frontism" in the Popular Assembly during the Torres military regime. The OCRFI has endorsed the reformism by the POR in its political resolution.

"The organisations present state first of all their total agreement with the policy carried out by the POR in the course of the Bolivian revolution of 1970-71." (our emphasis)

As this statement is in the nature of a declaration of principles it is imperative to categorically dissociate ourselves from the position taken by all the organisations of the OCRFI in regard to the policies of the POR in the course of the Bolivian revolution of 1970-71. But when the need was to sharply differentiate ourselves from the wrong position adopted by the OCRFI and OCI, the SL letter has sought to note the points of agreement with them. "We agree with the OCI and 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" etc., etc. Thereafter the letter (SL) of course registers its disagreement in regard to the OCI and OCRFI position in regard to the policies of the POR

in the Assembly. It would thus appear that the point of agreement is more important than the points of disagreement. On the contrary, when the OCI and OCRFI were hopelessly wrong in regard to their full endorsement of the POR policies in regard to the Assembly their view that the FRA is a popular front could be of no importance. Again the formulation of the criticism of the OCI and OCRFI is so conciliatory that the gravity of the charge against the POR, of their sellout to Torres and the "national bourgeoisie," appears to be transformed into a minor fault of subordinating "the development of the vanguard party" etc.

We have no doubt that SL's position in regard to the policies of the POR in the relevant period is correct. It is no different from our position in that regard. Obviously, it is the general desire of the SL to participate in the OCRFI conference that has led the SL to adopt the formulations regarding which we have offered our critical comments.

STALINISM:

We note you have correctly raised with them their rejection of the Trotskyist characterisation of the Stalinist bureaucracy, i.e. their rejection of the concept of the "dual nature" etc. There is another question in this regard which we think has to be raised with the OCRFI. It is not clear whether they accept the USSR, China, Yugoslavia, North Korea and North Vietnam as workers states. It is necessary to seek clarification in this regard. In their view these are "countries where capital has been expropriated and where parasitic and counterrevolutionary bureaucracy has usurped" etc. They nowhere use the term "degenerated" or "deformed workers states."

III CEYLON REVOLUTION:

We could generally agree with your comments and views on questions of the history of Ceylonese Trotskyism. We think some clarification may be useful on some matters while noting some differences.

It would be correct to say that a Ceylon revolution could not be viable by itself and that therefore organic links with the Indian proletarian revolution are paramount. The RWP is categorical in regard to the important role the Indian plantation workers will play in the Ceylon revolution, and their active participation in the Ceylon revolutionary movement from the present moment, could be especially helpful to forge the links with the revolutionary movement in the subcontinent of India. In this regard, it is hardly necessary to point out that a genuine proletarian revolutionary movement in India cannot fail to realise the need to establish links with a proletarian revolutionary uprising in Ceylon even if there were not present in Ceylon the Indian plantation workers.

The question that you appear to pose is whether it is not fundamental that there should be a unified movement, an India-Ceylon revolutionary movement.

In this regard it may be noted that the old BLPI program stated

that the Ceylon revolution in "all its stages" must be a part of the Indian revolution. However, before we examine this question and relate it to the dynamics of the Ceylon revolution it is necessary to dispose of the question of whether the decision of the LSSP leaders to participate in the building of the Indian revolutionary movement was a manifestation of or even a formal commitment to internationalism.

Prior to 1947, the state power in regard to India, Burma, Ceylon and other colonies in Southeast Asia was in the hands of British imperialism. Thus, in reality, there were no several states but one state. In that context, the overthrow of the British Raj (state power) did not appear feasible for Ceylon except through common struggle with at least India, if not Burma and the countries of Southeast Asia. And more than at any other time, it was during wartime that the Indian national movement appeared to be a real force. With the outbreak of the "Quit-India" movement the possibilities of victory to the national liberation movement in India appeared real. It was in this context that the LSSP leaders went over to India. In reality it was the anti-imperialist struggle that attracted them and led them to form the BLPI in 1943, their orientation being more anti-imperialist than anti-capitalist. Thus, it was their nationalism rather than their internationalism that was the motivation for seeking to build the Indian movement, with the Ceylon LSSP playing an auxiliary role.

CEYLON AND THE PERMANENT REVOLUTION:

The BLPI position that the "Ceylon revolution in all its stages" must be a part of the Indian revolution, and your view that "the issue of the international extension of the Ceylonese socialist revolution is not only a question of its ultimate long-term economic viability but of its most immediate short-term politico-military existence" appear to be different ways of posing the same question.

The international aspect of the theory of the permanent revolution applies to all countries, backward (small or large) as well as developed countries. Let us recall Trotsky -- "The international character of the socialist revolution, which constitutes the third aspect of the theory of the permanent revolution, flows from the present state of the economy and social structure of humanity. Internationalism is no abstract principle but the theoretical and political reflection of the character of world economy, of the world development of productive forces and the world scale of the class struggle." In this regard the suggestion that the proletariat supported by the peasantry of a small country cannot by its own forces unaided by the masses of a larger country overthrow capitalist class rule and seize state power appears to give a new dimension to proletarian internationalism. This view could have far-reaching implications not only for revolutionary Marxists in Ceylon but those of all other small countries -- e.g. countries of Latin America -- Bolivia, Chile, etc. Could our rejection of the theory of socialism in a single country lead us anywhere near an orientation of the impossibility of the proletariat in a single country overthrowing capitalist class rule? We do not think that the SL could have such a position.

But this appears to us an implication of the question you have raised in regard to the Ceylon revolution.

1950 LSSP REUNIFICATION:

"The internal incapacity of the left Trotskyists to resist" the unprincipled reunification is not difficult to explain. The "left Trotskyists" were a tendency moving in a revolutionary direction. Nevertheless they had only inadequately raised themselves theoretically and continued to be affected by parliamentarism. And, in this context, it was clearly the task of the International Secretariat to intervene with the BSP in this regard. However, not only was there no such intervention on the part of the I.S. but, on the other hand, the I.S. gave its approval to what took place. This was indeed a manifestation of the centrist character of the I.S.

IV POPULAR FRONT GOVERNMENTS OF REFORMIST WORKERS PARTIES AND WORKERS AND PEASANTS GOVERNMENTS:

"Popular Front" or Peoples Front governments are those constituted of parties representing the working class and parties representing the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties. The classic Leninist-Trotskyist term is "coalition governments" (e.g. Russian coalition government, 1917). The essence of such governments is the alliance between the ruling bourgeois class and the working class. Such governments are governments of crisis. They arise only when the bourgeois class rule is in danger and when the bourgeoisie takes the risk of bringing the reformist leaders of the working class to function as their ally, giving them ministerial positions in their governments as a means of buying off the coming revolution. They are two-class governments. It is precisely this class alliance and class collaboration that the Stalinists and their reformist friends seek to mask through the use of the term "Peoples Front" instead of "coalition governments."

In the case of coalition governments in backward countries, where instability of bourgeois class rule is chronic, there are possibilities of mass mobilisation and mass uprising despite the class collaboration practised by the compromisers. Given a revolutionary leadership it is possible that the radicalising mass movement could be wrested from the hands of the reformist coalitionists for the revolutionary seizure of power by the working class supported by the peasants (October 1917, and negatively proved in Indonesia and Chile).

In this regard we considered your view: "The contradiction implicit in such parties between subordination to the interests of the capitalist system and these parties' articulation of the interests of the working class is thereby suppressed."

More light is thrown on the SL position in the article on the French elections in WV No. 17. Arguing for a policy of not making any distinction between the reformist workers parties and bourgeois parties that are in a coalition it states --

"The difference does not exist. Normally, reformist workers parties, such as the Socialist Party and the Communist Party, have a dual character. Namely, on the one hand, they function as the political representatives of the working class while on the other, they represent the political interests of the bourgeoisie. This dual character is closely tied to the nature of their leadership, based on a petty-bourgeois stratum of the labor bureaucrats, the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class. However, when the CP or SP enter into an election bloc with a section of the bourgeoisie, this duality is suppressed formally and in practice because the reformist parties then campaign and promise to govern on a common platform within the purely capitalist limits set by their overtly liberal-bourgeois allies. Thus, in this situation there is no basis for the Leninist tactic of critical support to social-democratic and Stalinist parties" (our emphasis).

But this view of the nature of working-class-based parties in a coalition government appears to be in conflict with the Leninist-Trotskyist position.

The tactical line of the Bolshevik Party in regard to the coalition government (1917) was based on the recognition that the dual nature of reformist parties is not suppressed when they are in coalition with bourgeois parties. In reality, in regard to coalition governments, the fundamental contradiction of capitalism -- the contradiction between capital and labour -- is within the very executive committee of the ruling class -- in the government. This, in fact, is the very essence of a coalition government. The contradiction within the reformist working-class parties in coalition is only an aspect of this basic contradiction.

Concretely, the tactical line of the Bolshevik Party was oriented to drive a wedge between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The Bolshevik slogan "Down with the 10 Capitalist Ministers" arose from the recognition of the contradiction within the then Provisional Government and within the Social Revolutionary and Menshevik parties. It is because Lenin and Trotsky recognised this two-fold contradiction within the coalition that from April to July 1917, in the prevailing revolutionary situation, they demanded that the Mensheviks and the SR's break with the liberal bourgeoisie and take the power into their own hands. This tactic was directed "to hastening and facilitating the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat." If the contradiction between working-class interests and capitalist interests had been suppressed in the reformist parties in the coalition government such a tactic would have had no meaning.

Trotsky directly addressed himself to this question in 1931 in regard to the Spanish revolution. "There must be a clear political slogan, corresponding to the character of the present stage of the Spanish revolution. The results of the elections make that slogan absolutely clear: the workers must break the coalition with the bourgeoisie or force the socialists to take power." This tactical line has only one meaning -- that in the Spanish context it would have been correct for the revolutionary Marxists to pursue a policy

of driving a wedge between the working-class party and the bourgeoisie in the coalition.

Trotsky's advice to the Spanish proletariat (1931) is on the basis of the recognition of the contradiction between the Socialist Party leaders (Largo Caballero) and the workers.

"Let us consider for a moment the way in which the Spanish workers en masse should view the present situation. Their leaders, the Socialists, have power. This increases the demands and tenacity of the workers. Every striker will not only have no fear of the government but will also expect help from it. The communists must direct the thoughts of the workers precisely along those lines: 'Demand everything of the government since your leaders are in it'...." "Under the slogan of democracy and end to the coalition between the Socialists and the bourgeoisie, we drive a wedge between the workers and the Socialists and prepare the next stage of the revolution" (our emphasis).

It is precisely this need to drive a wedge between the reformist working-class parties and the bourgeois parties in the coalition, as a step in driving a further wedge between the workers and their reformist leaders, that poses the question of a correct tactic in the parliamentary elections. It is our view that in the 1969 French elections revolutionary Marxists should have stated categorically their opposition to the CP-Socialist-Radical Party coalition but nevertheless called for a vote for the CP and Socialist Party but not the candidates of the bourgeois Radical Party. This tactic must be patiently explained to the workers.

The SL has contended that the "duality" of a reformist workers party is suppressed formally [and] in practise because the reformist parties in a coalition campaign "promise to govern on a common platform within the purely capitalist limits set by their overtly liberal-bourgeois allies" (our emphasis).

The criterion for deciding whether the contradiction within a reformist workers party remains or not appears to be whether or not such a party or parties promise to govern on a platform within purely capitalist limits. But is it not the case that all reformist parties always function within purely capitalist limits whatever they claim for themselves as "socialists"?

And what about social-democratic parties like the British Labour Party which has had governmental power many times? The British Labour Party functioned as the executive committee of the British imperialist ruling class. The British Labour Party as well as all social-democratic parties in advanced countries has never claimed that their socialism would break the framework of capitalism. Thus, if the dual character of a reformist working-class party is suppressed when it enters into a coalition government with the bourgeoisie, then surely this change must overtake the British Labour Party when it functions as the executive committee of British imperialism. We cannot see any rational basis for making a distinction in regard to this issue between a reformist working-class party of a backward

country in coalition with the bourgeoisie, and a social-democratic party in an advanced country functioning as the government in charge of the capitalist-imperialist economy on behalf of British imperialist power.

MOBILISING THE MASSES:

Revolutionary Marxists (even a small group) have the need to intervene in the mass movement. Concretely, the need for such an intervention during a coalition regime or during the regime of a Labour Party government, means that revolutionary Marxists will raise demands of a transitional character, while even other reformist demands arising from the needs of the situation could well become relevant. While reformists and centrists will seek to use even transitional demands in the perspective of keeping the mass movement within the limits of the capitalist framework, it is the task of revolutionary Marxists to use even the old "minimal" demands in a revolutionary perspective. We do not ask coalition regimes or Labour Party regimes to implement their "Common Programs" or "Election Manifestos." But some demands made to such governments by revolutionary Marxists may well be found in such "Common Programs" or "Manifestos."

Our demands would depend on the needs of the concrete situation and the state of the mass movement. In this regard we may again recall Trotsky's advice to the Spanish masses in 1931, "Demand everything of the government since your leaders are in it'.... Under the slogan of democracy and of an end to the coalition between the Socialists and the bourgeoisie, we drive a wedge between the workers and the Socialists and prepare the next stage of the revolution."

"WORKERS AND PEASANTS GOVERNMENT":

From your observations on this question it is not clear whether there are any important differences in this regard. We would however offer some clarifications on the issue in regard to our orientation.

As a propaganda slogan, this slogan of "Workers and Peasants Government" could well remain a central political slogan for revolutionary parties and groups in the present period.

It is on the question of concretising this slogan that the Trotskyist movement in the past and ostensible Trotskyists today have slipped into reformism. As you correctly point out "to reduce the slogan to the small change of parliamentary combinations can only conceal a reformist appetite." And this is precisely what took place at the 3rd Congress. The resolution of this Congress on Latin America has expressly endorsed the reducing of this slogan to a tactic of achieving a parliamentary combination between the revolutionary Marxist parties and petty-bourgeois and "national bourgeois" parties and working-class-based reformist parties.

BOLIVIA:

"... If in the course of these mass mobilisations, our section

proves to be in a position to share influence over the revolutionary masses, with the MNR it will advance the slogan of a 'Workers and Peasants Government' of the two parties on the basis, however, of the same program, a government based on committees of workers, peasants, and revolutionary elements of the urban petty-bourgeoisie."

CHILE:

"It [revolutionary party] will develop its propoganda for the slogan of the "Workers and Peasants Government" which will eventually be concretised in this country as a government of the parties claiming to represent the working class, notably the Communist Party and the Popular Socialist Party."

More recently (1963), the LSSP in Ceylon arrived at a concretisation of the slogan "Workers and Peasants Government" in the so-called "United Left Front" of the LSSP, MEP (Philip) and CP. This reformist parliamentarist combination was but a step to the LSSP-SLFP coalition government of 1964. The revolutionary tendency at the time proposed that this front should include the two large Plantation Unions -- CWC (Thondaman) and DWC (Aziz). Nevertheless the "United Left Front" would not have changed its character as a parliamentarist reformist combination to function within the framework of capitalism.

And since the 1970 coalition government (SLFP-LSSP-CP) was formed the Healyites (who supported the coalition at the elections) have for a considerable time now been calling upon the LSSP and CP to break with the coalition and form a government. (Just now they appear to have restricted their slogan only to a call to these parties to break from the coalition.)

In our orientation, the slogan "Workers and Peasants Government" which the Bolsheviks concretised in the slogan "All Power to the Soviets," meaning thereby, in the concrete situation, the formation of a government of Social-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks who were in a majority in the Soviets, was a tactic in the given situation. It will be seen that this slogan "All Power to the Soviets" was put forward by the Bolsheviks from February to 4th July 1917. In his article "On Slogans" Lenin castigated those who sought to repeat this slogan even after it had become out of date: "... On February 27, all classes found themselves united against the monarchy. After July 4, the counterrevolutionary bourgeoisie, working hand in glove with the monarchists and the Black Hundreds, secured the support of the petty-bourgeois Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, partly by intimidating them, and handed over real state power to the Cavaignacs, the military gang, who are shooting insubordinate soldiers at the front and smashing the Bolsheviks in Petrograd."

"The slogan calling for transfer of state power to the Soviets would now sound quixotic or mocking...." (our emphasis)

This meant that the call of the Bolsheviks to the SR's and Mensheviks to take power was correct only for a specified period during the pre-revolutionary or revolutionary situation after Feb-

ruary (1917). And incidentally, prior to February 1917 the Bolshevik Party never called for a government of SR's and Mensheviks.

The conclusion therefore is that the concretising of the slogan "Workers and Peasants Government" could arise only during a pre-revolutionary or revolutionary situation. And accordingly the choice of the parties that could come into such a government would depend on the concrete conditions of the revolutionary struggle and what part such parties played in the struggle.

However, it does not follow that this would necessarily be a tactic to be applied in every pre-revolutionary or revolutionary situation in all countries. For example, Trotsky did not call upon the Socialists and the Anarchists to form a government in February 1936 after the Popular Front won the elections although the situation was clearly pre-revolutionary.

The working class is not called upon to answer the question as to what is the "realisable alternative government" today -- alternative to the existing bourgeois government. But this is exactly the manner in which reformists pose the question. Here is how Leslie Gunawardena of the LSSP posed the question: "...the development and even the survival of the party as a national party depend on the party giving a positive answer to the question of governmental power when the question is posed at the time of the elections." Leslie Gunawardena argued that because the masses were not prepared (March 1960) to give power to the Samasamaja (LSSP) government, that what was realisable at the time was an SLFP government -- "the realisable alternative" to the UNP government. This very crudely is the "theory of the lesser evil." But this indeed is the logic of this so-called realisable alternative.

But the proletariat has no need to go in search of this "realisable alternative government" to the bourgeois government of the day. The proletariat must accept the reality that the setting up of its own government -- i.e. "Workers and Peasants Government" or "Workers Government," i.e. the dictatorship of the proletariat -- will not necessarily coincide with the moment when the bourgeoisie decides to ascertain which members of their ruling class should continue the oppression of the workers and toilers in their parliament (election time). Revolutionary Marxists will tell the truth to the proletariat and the rest of the toilers -- that the only alternative to any bourgeois government for them is the "Workers and Peasants Government" or the "Workers Government" (dictatorship of the proletariat) which cannot be pulled out like a rabbit from a hat. It is necessary to face the reality that the struggle for such a government is linked to the struggle to break the influence of the reformists and centrists over the workers and toilers. The workers must break from the leadership of the betrayers and come onto the road of revolution. The survival of the revolutionary party at any given time cannot depend on their ability to deceive the masses. That indeed is the way of survival of reformists.

V ARAB-ISRAEL QUESTION:

Our differences centre around the issue of the nature of the

State of Israel. In our view, Israel is an imperialist outpost in the heart of the oil-rich Arab Middle East, created by imperialism and the forces of world Zionism, which since the first decades of the 20th century is an arm of imperialism, for imperialist aggression against the Arab people.

The SL position appears to stem from the view that the State of Israel is the culmination of the movement of the Jewish people for Lebensraum for the Hebrew nation.

We have to view phenomena not statically and in isolation, but as changing entities, and in their varied relations with other phenomena -- i.e. dialectically. Thus, among revolutionary Marxists as well as between ourselves and centrists and others, it is a question of Marxist method. Our criterion by which we seek to judge events is made up of the vital elements of method. The more correct view, judgment or assessment of events is that which corresponds more to method. And it is by no means easy to achieve that degree of conformity to method, to arrive at correct judgment.

The SL's characterisation of Israel is, at best, insufficient as it fails to take into account the varied factors that gave rise to it and the real interests that it serves.

"We see the driving force for Israeli aggressiveness as essentially located within that state itself and expressed in its virulent Zionism -- i.e., a nationalist drive not different in kind from that felt by the ruling circles in Cairo and Damascus. Thus the central aim of the Israelis is not to conquer Arabs in order to exploit them, but to acquire more Lebensraum for the Hebrew nation" (your letter).

Undoubtedly, especially since the first decade of the 20th century, there was the question of the self-determination of the Hebrew people. As Marxists we are categorical on the right of the Jewish people to enter and settle in any country, whether it is Palestine, U.S., UK, Soviet Union, China. It is necessary to support and uphold this right today even as there was such a duty to do so in the past.

This view has to be of course qualified by the needs of workers states to control immigration and emigration in the interests of security. Also, this could not apply in the case of large-scale organised immigration affecting adversely the rights of self-determination of other peoples.

The state of Israel that came into existence in 1948, on a unilateral declaration and the expulsion of the Palestinian Arabs by force of arms, is not the realisation of self-determination for the Hebrew nation but the realisation of a Zionist-imperialist scheme in Palestine for aggression against the Arab peoples of the Middle East. The self-determination of the Hebrew nation has yet to be realised. Thus it is necessary to consider the Jewish people of Palestine (Israel) apart from their Zionist overlords who are pliant tools of imperialism.

The Israeli war of 1948 against the Palestinian Arabs and the Arab states was of course not planned and desired by imperialism but only the logical outcome of working out of the design of setting up Israel as an imperialist enclave in Palestine. This design can be traced to the original plan of imperialism: "the secret Sykes-Picot Treaty (1916) between Britain, France and tsarist Russia, a treaty which was made public only by the Bolsheviki after the October Revolution. This treaty gave Lebanon and Syria to France, while Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq went to the British" (WV No.33).

If the 1948 war was the logical outcome of the implementation of the Zionist imperialist plan to set up the Zionist State of Israel, then it could not be a national liberation war of the Jewish people for self-determination. On the other hand, any suggestion (Y. Rad, WV No.35) that the 1948 war on the side of Israel was "anti-imperialist" (British imperialism) at any stage has to be rejected. To say that a minor clash with the British forces, when the Israeli armies crossed the international border into Egyptian territory (7 January 1949), gave this war an anti-imperialist character is to lose all sense of balance and evaluation in regard to events. Perhaps at the time of the conflict British imperialism encouraged the Arab states to resist the Israeli forces with the aim of winning allies for Britain among these states.

The final judgment of Y. Rad in the article referred to that "there is only one name for this war -- imperialist war" borders on irrationality. Rad's suggestion is that this Arab-Israel war of 1948 was an imperialist war on the part of all the bourgeoisies that took part in the war, against the Arab and Jewish masses!

However, between his flights of fancy in regard to his judgments on the 1948 war, Y. Rad has occasional moments of rationality. Y. Rad had at his disposal hard facts from which he could have discovered where the hand of imperialism was in this war.

"Counterposed to the Palestinian guerrillas and their traitorous leadership, the Zionist guerrillas possessed an army of about 70,000-80,000 men, armed with new weapons which included, according to Ben Gurion's version: 10,000 rifles, 900 submachine guns, 180 heavy machine guns, 672 light mortars and 96 medium mortars....

"This army had experience that had been acquired at the time of the suppression of the 'Arab revolt' and at the time of the second imperialist war. Most of its commanders were simply former British army officers" (our emphasis).

It baffles the understanding as to how Rad has the ability to run away from or reject his correct conclusions which he has made in regard to the character of the war on the Israeli side in 1948. He asks the question whether "National Liberation" for the Jewish people means to free oneself from decaying British imperialism in order to become a stooge of American imperialism. Y. Rad becomes more categorical as he becomes more convinced of his conclusions: "Zionism and Stalinism can define this war as a war of national liberation. We have a different definition for this filthy war: Zion-

ism fought to establish itself, by means of the pillage and expulsion of the Palestinian people, as the strong power on which the imperialists could count as one of the central pillars of the new imperialist order" (our emphasis). That this view of the role of Zionism is not accidental for Rad is proved by his pursuing this orientation throughout this article. "Zionism, however, enjoyed primacy in the imperialist order. It was not only a tool against the masses but also an instrument of pressure of the American bourgeoisie on the Arab bourgeoisie. Every time the Arab bourgeoisie demanded more than the American bourgeoisie was prepared to give -- the whip of Zionism fell upon them" (our emphasis). Thus for Y. Rad Israel is U.S. imperialism's whipping boy -- to whip the Arab people -- the masses including the Arab bourgeoisie.

What is more, in the concluding paragraphs of his article Y. Rad shows that he has understood the real character of the State of Israel. "By supporting the Zionists the Soviet Union not only helped Zionism become an imperialist fortress against the masses of the Middle East, but also to become the strongest anti-Soviet base in the area" (our emphasis). It is passing strange that Y. Rad is unable to draw the conclusion that what the Arab masses including the feudalists and bourgeoisie were seeking in 1948 to demolish was the "imperialist fortress" Israel, and that it was on their side an anti-imperialist struggle.

Thus, the SL view of "the driving force for Israeli aggressiveness as essentially located within the state itself to acquire more Lebensraum for the Hebrew nation" could be correct only if we disregard the forces of Zionism and imperialism that used the slogan of Lebensraum for the Hebrew nation in furtherance of their imperialist plans -- that is to disregard the real nature of the State of Israel. We have to make a distinction between principal factors and auxiliary factors. Is this not a paramount principle of Marxist method?

SL's characterisation of the State of Israel, in our view, contains contradictions and elements of uncertainty.

"Israel, and particularly its ruling class, represents the transplanting to the Near East of a relatively advanced European capitalist order. Its society is comparatively stable, with a strong middle class. However, Israel lacks the industrial and economic resources to support such an order. This combination gives Israeli capitalism its aggressive, vulnerable and sometimes independent character" (Spartacist, March-April 1968).

Is it not relevant to inquire how this unusual phenomenon of a "relatively advanced European capitalist order" has been transplanted in a sea of backwardness in the Middle East, where feudal kings still reign? The agrarian revolution and other democratic rights have still to be accomplished in all these countries of the Arab East, while in this State of Israel there are no such unresolved bourgeois-democratic tasks. And if "Israel lacks the industrial resources to support such an order," what is the explanation for this unique social phenomenon? And when a state which has only flowers

and fruits as its chief export products maintains a "relatively advanced capitalist order" without any serious economic and social problems, without balance of payments problems, problems of increasing debts, etc., it only means that imperialism maintains this state not on economic development and exploitation but as an armed encampment.

The SL has found itself in a contradiction in finding explanations for Israel's "aggressive, vulnerable and sometimes independent character." According to SL the "totally vulnerable capitalism [of Arab states] necessitates a degree of verbal independence from the imperialist powers which the more aggressively capitalist [but less vulnerable] State of Israel finds unnecessary and undesirable." But should it not be the other way about -- that is, that the totally vulnerable and backward capitalist Arab states should show less independence from imperialism than the less vulnerable and more advanced State of Israel?

But what is the degree of independence that Israel has shown in regard to imperialism during its 26 years of existence? Was it the 1948 war? We have already pointed out the absurdity of suggesting that this war was at any stage an anti-imperialist war on the side of Israel. The unexpected episode of a border clash between the Israeli forces and the British, when the former crossed the Egyptian border, could not change the character of this war. In this regard Y. Rad (WV No.35) gives some valuable information in regard to the clash of the Israeli forces with the Egyptian-British forces: "the battle for the Southern Negev [1949] illustrates the nature of the opposition of Zionism to British imperialism. By the end of the war, the British bourgeoisie realized that its estimate of the Zionist contribution to the making of the new imperialist order had been mistaken, so it gave Zionism the Southern Negev including Eilat, an important strategic port to the Indian Ocean."

The action of Israel in its military collaboration with the UK-France imperialist aggression against Egypt calls for explanation. It is an extraordinary course of conduct for a very small country of less than 2 million people to get on the side of imperialist giants in military operations against Egypt when, at the time, Egypt had given no cause for Israel's action. And moreover, Israel was ready to identify itself with what was unqualified and naked imperialist aggression by UK-French imperialism against Egypt and that in the year 1956, not in the 18th or early 19th century. The explanation in this regard was that Israel was an imperialist outpost. When UK-French imperialism launched aggression in this region against an Arab country it was able to use this imperialist fortress for its purposes.

It is true that U.S. imperialism frowned on the 1956 action of the British and French, but not because U.S. imperialism was on the Arab side. This was due to inter-imperialist rivalry.

There is no evidence that the 1967 six-day war in which Egypt was inflicted a severe and smashing defeat was on the orders of U.S. imperialism. But it was a fact that U.S. imperialism was actively taking steps to alter the balance of military forces in its favour as

against the military forces of the USSR. To achieve this end, U.S. imperialism poured its armaments including the most modern war planes into Israel, apart from sending other ancillary war equipment worth millions of dollars. The six-day war achieved this U.S. imperialist purpose.

With regard to October (1973) war, that hostilities would break out about the time between Israel and the Arab states could not have been unknown to the U.S. In any event its subsequent conduct did not show that U.S. imperialism disapproved of the Israeli action. On the contrary, the sending of fresh war equipment including airlifting of them proved that there was complete accord between Israel and the U.S. on this issue. Furthermore, the so-called peace negotiations resulting in the recent settlement in which U.S. imperialism played the dominating role on the side of Israel showed that the Israelis-U.S. were acting together in that regard.

The SL statement of 1968 (Spartacist) at a moment acknowledged that Israel is a tool and outpost of imperialism and rejects it in the same breath.

"Israel functions as a tool and outpost of Western imperialism in the Near East -- except in cases when the Israelis' own vital interests cut across those of the great imperialist powers or when the latter are not themselves united. Thus Israel is best characterized, not as a puppet of imperialism, but as a weak ally which acts in conjunction with imperialism for its own interests."

It is useful to examine whether there have been such cases when Israel's "own vital interests cut across those of the great imperialist powers." Was it the 1948 war? We have already examined the question. Far from any vital interests of Israel cutting across those of the great imperialist powers, they dovetailed the interests of imperialism. The 1948 war, we have explained, was the logical working out of imperialist plans -- we also noted how British imperialism rewarded Israel by allowing Israel to win by aggression the Southern Negev and Eilat, a seaport opening to the Indian Ocean, despite the border incident with it.

In 1956, the great imperialist powers were not in agreement in regard to the war of that year. U.S. imperialism, due to inter-imperialist rivalry, disapproved of U.S.-UK-Israel military action against Egypt. But this was not a case of Israel acting independently against the interests of imperialism. On the contrary, it participated in imperialist aggression against Egypt.

Neither in the 1967 nor the 1973 (October) war did the vital interests of Israel cut across that of the imperialists. On the contrary, it dovetailed the vital interests of U.S. imperialism.

Thus, the exceptional cases or situations envisaged by the SL have been hypothetical situations which have never materialised. We have then to conclude simply that Israel is a tool or outpost of imperialism. More precisely, Israel is a U.S. imperialist outpost which it uses and hopes to use when the occasion arises. But it is

an outpost consciously maintained by U.S. imperialism.

And in this regard if the Golda Meirs have independence in regard to matters of internal administration, it only means that U.S. imperialism has no need to interfere with the internal administration of Israel today. But if they behave like Thieu of South Vietnam, U.S. imperialism will not look on. Today the internal administration of Israel is efficient enough.

ARAB CLIENT STATES:

The history of imperialist aggression and colonisation provides numerous cases of client states of imperialism, through which the latter carried on aggression and maintained their colonialist powers. Feudo-capitalist rulers of such states have been found to function as agencies of imperialism in the Middle East -- even now Jordan and Iran. In 1956, the anti-working-class and anti-democratic regime of Nasser which had up to that time collaborated with British imperialism answered with open military action against Britain and France when it was attacked by the latter, consequent to the nationalisation of the Suez Canal.

In the October war even the puppet King of Jordan acted together with the UAR and Syria against U.S.-backed Israel. And, whatever were the real motives of the oil boycott, it assumed the character of an anti-imperialist (U.S.) confrontation.

The reason why imperialism has not been able to convert Arab states (Jordan -- Iran) into imperialist outposts as in the case of Israel is that there is a struggle against imperialism in all colonial and semi-colonial countries. While all the countries of the Arab Middle East have formal political independence, severe imperialist exploitation continues in most of these countries. Especially in the oil-rich areas the imperialist oil companies have extracted enormous profits. They need to continue such exploitation. Nixon's threat to use force against the Arab countries operating the oil boycott was proof that the struggle to end imperialist pressure in those countries is real. These backward countries of the Middle East cannot move out of their state of economic stagnation without eliminating imperialism from their countries and from this region. The Arab masses, the so-called national bourgeoisie and even the Arab feudal kings are adversely and directly affected by imperialism.

It is precisely this conflict between the people of the Arab states and imperialism that manifests itself from time to time with anti-imperialist actions and confrontations between the feudo-capitalist rulers and imperialism in the Arab states.

On the other hand in regard to Israel there is no question of any conflict with imperialism in this state, except in the sense that the working class of Israel has an interest in the struggle against imperialist oppression. There are no issues on which the anti-imperialist struggle is posed for the people of Israel. This unique situation of a country at the very centre of a region in which imperialism has maintained its exploitative system being free

of imperialist exploitation has only one explanation -- that is because Israel functions as an outpost of imperialism.

Thus the Arab struggle against Israel is the struggle against U.S.-led imperialist forces in the Middle East.

As revolutionary Marxists we support the struggle of the Arab people against Israeli-U.S. imperialism, whatever may be the character of the leadership. Revolutionary Marxists and the proletariat in the Arab states do not give political support of any form to the existing Arab regimes. But revolutionary Marxists support this struggle by their own methods.

From the outset the revolutionary Marxists and the proletariat in the Arab states will be categorically opposed to Arab chauvinism and "holy war" to exterminate the Jewish people. On the contrary, we will from the outset call for the right of self-determination of the Jewish people while we stand for the smashing of the imperialist outpost -- the Zionist State of Israel.

Our method of intervention in the anti-imperialist struggle is the method of the class struggle. Victory in this struggle is possible only on the basis of the mobilisation of the Jewish masses in Israel as well as the Arab masses. Such a mobilisation means concretely in the Arab states the struggle to win the land to the peasants from the feudalists and the struggle against minority oppression, the struggle against all forms of authoritarianism for democratic rights -- the right to independently organise militias, etc. It is in this process that the revolutionary Marxists will seek to wrest the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle from the hands of the treacherous feudo-capitalist rulers in the Arab countries. The right of the self-determination of the Jewish masses will be from the outset integrated into the program of struggles of the proletariat in the Arab countries to end the feudo-capitalist rule in this region.

It thus follows that in Israel the policy of the revolutionary Marxists in regard to the war is revolutionary defeatism. But in the Arab states the policy will be support of the war against Israeli-U.S. imperialism in defence of the Arab people.

We believe that we have dealt with the matters raised in your letter and the other drafts. It is possible that there are some omissions by inadvertance. If we hear from you in that regard we could follow up. This would apply to further clarifications that may be necessary on the issues dealt with by us.

Further to our now common position that we should draw up a list of "political positions on recent and current specific issues and events" we shall proceed to draw up in the first instance a list of the issues which appear to us as relevant.

Yours fraternally,

Edmund Samarakkody