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The origins of the new left in Sri Lanka.

Gamini Bandara. Keerawella

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LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ MICROFILMÉE TELLE QUE NOUS L'AVONS RECEUE
THE ORIGINS OF THE NEW LEFT
IN SRI LANKA

BY
GAMINI BANDARA KEERAWELLA

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of
History in Partial Fulfilment
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Windsor, Ontario, Canada
1982
DEDICATED
TO
MY PARENTS
ABSTRACT

The Origins of the New Left in Sri Lanka

by

Gamini Bandara Keerawella

The socioeconomic and political structure inherited by Sri Lanka at Independence in 1948, was superficially stable. However, there were inherent contradictions which were bound to be explosive in the future. The origins of the New Left can be seen in these social, political and economic contradictions which originated in the changes in the economic structure under the British rule in the 19th and 20th centuries.

As a consequence of structural changes in the economy, the traditional social order was disrupted and new social classes emerged. Most important of these, in terms of future political development, was the emergence of capitalist and working classes which gave birth to two distinct forms of political movements. Marxism came to the Island in 1930s as a political force and with the establishment of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, Marxist elements began the left movement in Sri Lanka.

The capitalist class in the United National Party gained the reins of political power at Independence and
III

maintained the political and economic structure inherited from their colonial masters. Their opposition was the divided Marxist Left. When Bandaranaike formed Sri Lanka Freedom Party in 1951 the forces who opposed the U.N.P. as well as the left gathered around the S.L.F.P.. After Bandaranaike's election victory in 1956 the new government made certain changes in economic, social and diplomatic spheres but did not alleviate the contradictions. After a brief period of uncertainty following the assassination of Bandaranaike, the S.L.F.P. again gained power in 1960 under the leadership of Mrs. Bandaranaike. In 1964 her government's stability was threatened by growing economic crisis and working class demands. In this situation the S.L.F.P. entered a coalition with the traditional left.

When the traditional left parties shared power with the governing parties their credibility as radicals eroded; they could no longer act as a buffer between radical forces and the parliamentary system. Their decision to share power with the governing parties marked the bankruptcy of their revolutionary posture. As a result, the L.S.S.P. divided over the coalition issue as did the C.P. over the Sino-Soviet dispute. The left splinter groups - the Revolutionary L.S.S.P. and the C.C.P. (Peking Wing) - represented radical left.

After 1965 several youth groups emerged from those two splinter parties and formed secret political organizations
IV
dedicated to the revolutionary capture of power. This new element has been identified as the New Left.

The historical and social origins of the New Left lay in the emergence of the petty bourgeoisie whose political activities can be seen in the late 19th and early 20th century religious revival and temperance movements. When the constitutional reform movement led by the pro-colonial capitalist class overshadowed the nationalist movement the petty bourgeoisie became an appendage to the political movements of capitalist classes.

After 1956 the petty bourgeoisie showed two tendencies. The older generation became a conservative political force; the younger generation, victimized by the growing socioeconomic crisis, drifted towards insurrectionary politics. The emergence of a generation which had no confidence or faith in the existing political and socioeconomic system and which was searching for collective solutions formed the leadership of the New Left in Sri Lanka.
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May I express my gratitude and thanks to Dr. L.L. Kulisek, my thesis supervisor. I greatly benefited from his wide knowledge of revolutionary movements in the Western World and also of Commonwealth history. I also wish to express my gratitude to Dr. J.K. O'Farrell and Professor M.L. Marasinghe for consenting to serve on my thesis committee and also for their comments and suggestions.

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Introduction

Since independence Sri Lanka has been held up as an example of a country where the western democratic system has taken firm root. A tradition of changing governments through free elections has been developed. The Marxist parties both in and out of government have been faithful adherents to the British Parliamentary traditions bequeathed with independence. However, the post-1965 period saw the steady emergence of clandestine revolutionary political groups. While disassociating themselves from the traditional left, these groups were involved in a fratricidal conflict which ultimately resulted in the triumph of Wijeweera and the formation of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna. The emergence of these underground revolutionary groups added a new element to Sri Lankan politics which has been identified as the New Left.

The political evolution of Sri Lanka has been subjected to detailed investigation by various scholars. Of specific importance to this study are works detailing the development of radical politics and the political left. Kumari Jayawardena

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and Neil Kuruppu\textsuperscript{3} have studied the origins and early history of working class politics to 1933, while the origin of the Sri Lankan left movement has been the concern of Jayawardena\textsuperscript{4} and G.J. Lerski.\textsuperscript{5} The development of Trotskyism to 1964 is found in Y.R. Amerasinghe's valuable study.\textsuperscript{6}

The 1971 uprising, an event of decisive socio-political implications for contemporary Sri Lanka, has also generated an impressive body of literature.\textsuperscript{7} On the whole, however, the socio-historical perspective of the insurrection has not received sufficient attention.\textsuperscript{8} Most studies isolate the insurrection


\textsuperscript{5} G.J. Lerski, Origins of Trotskyism in Ceylon (Stanford, 1968).


\textsuperscript{8} Arasaratnam's and Warnapala's articles can be treated as introductory monographs on the insurrection. They tried to examine the insurrection with bird's-eye view. Kearney's emphasis is on the problems of educational expansion and generational gap. Obeysekera examines the social background of the 'suspected insurgents' presenting valuable statistical data. However, he fails to differentiate the leadership from the membership. Wriggling and Jayawardena's study examines the youth protest and the 1971 uprising only in the context of contemporary social and political developments. Laksiri Fernando examines the factors leading to the uprising. As a political scientist, however, his emphasis is also on subjective factors. The only exception is Gamini Samarana-ike; he tries to locate the insurrection in broader historical development, particularly development of capitalism in Sri Lanka.
from the main historical processes of the country and treat it as an aberration. Their socio-historical perspective has not reached beyond immediate political events.

Since current history has generally been written by political scientists and sociologists, these scholars model while neglecting the historical perspective. Their attention is mainly on the insurrection; the development of the New Left as a political phenomenon has been treated haphazardly. Thus, the crisis and decline of the traditional left, as well as the emergence and growth of the New Left are inadequately understood. From their origins to 1971, most New Left groups remained underground. Hence, those who concentrate upon Parliament and the traditional institutions of power failed to perceive the new political formations occurring at the grass roots level nor did they anticipate the 1971 uprising.

The narrow focus of research is partly the result of the paucity of studies pertaining to the problems of social change which have taken place in Sri Lanka since the early 19th century. Existing research on social evolution concentrates either on the problems of caste stratification or on the transformation and evolution of elites.\(^9\) There has been little investigation of the social modernization process at the rural level or of the problems arising from it. In this study I intend to examine the origins of the New Left from a broader historical perspective and to indicate the importance of the

rise of the rural petty bourgeoisie in the history of that movement.

This study draws upon original materials collected by the author. Sources needed for a comprehensive history of the New Left are scattered throughout contemporary political literature. Proceedings of the Criminal Justice Commission are not formally published but are available. The fratricidal conflict among New Left groups during the period 1964-71 has produced a bulk of materials such as leaflets, pamphlets and newspapers; but there has been no systematic attempt to collect and arrange them. The newspaper collection of the Archives of Colombo is limited mainly to registered newspapers. Those of the New Left during this period were not registered and have been omitted from the national collection. It is possible, however, to get these papers from individuals who were or are active in New Left politics; and for a period of time I have enjoyed close relations with some of the active members of the New Left political groups. The author has also drawn upon personal experiences as both participant and observer in the major events of the period.

The emergence of the New Left in Sri Lanka was part of a broader movement of international proportions. Together with the student and youth protest movements of the 1960s, it

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10 Judgement of the Criminal Justice Commission Inquiry No-1 was published in 1976. The proceedings of the C.J.C. were distributed among the suspects of the main inquiry. I should thank Anura Ranjith Kurukulasooriya for allowing me free access to the Documents of the C.J.C.
has generated a literature of its own. Much of this literature is analytical and involves model building. While adopting some of these analytical tools to better explain certain aspects of the origins of the New Left in Sri Lanka, the author's approach is basically historical. And though the New Left movement was an international phenomenon with many shared characteristics, the purpose of this study is to examine the origins of the New Left in the unique historical and social environment of Sri Lanka.

These studies can broadly be divided into three basic analytical categories: Structural-Functionalist, Social Psychological and Political-Economic.

The Structural-Functionalist perspective is based on an analytical framework developed by Talcott Parsons for the study of social systems (The social system (New York, 1951)). According to this analysis social upheavals occur in a situation called 'structural strain'. This structural strain occur when primary elements of the society became misintegrated at the situation when society is faced with a changing environment. Most elaborated expression of this perspective can be found in Charliers Johnson (Revolutionary Change (Boston, 1966)), and Neil Smelser (Theory of Collective Behaviour (New York, 1962)). In the social psychological approach attention is directed to the role of individuals values perceptions in the emergence of protest movements. This approach developed in two directions. First one, the relative deprivation theory, is developed by Ted Gurr (Why Men Rebel (New Jersey, 1970)), and Davis ('Towards a Theory of Revolutions', American Sociological Review, 27 (February, 1962), 519) Second direction is the authoritarian personality model which emphasis the role of deeper personality characteristics. Feuer, for eg., viewed the student protest movement in America as a result of generational conflict and unconscious desire of youths to challenge their fathers' dominance (The Conflict of Generations: The Character and Significance of Student Movement (New York, 1966)). In the direction of political-economic approach we can see four basic models; firstly, Dahrendorf's model of role conflict in authority structures (Class and Class Conflict in Industrial (Stanford, 1959)), Secondly, Kornhauser's model of mass-elite linkages (Politics of Mass Society (New York, 1957)), thirdly, Tilly's model of availability of resources for mobilization ("Does Modernization Breed Revolution?" Comparative Politics 5 (April, 1973), 425-447), and finally, neo-Marxist model of capitalist contradictions.
Chapter I

Colonial Background

I trust I shall be pardoned for making in this place a remark which has often pressed itself upon me. That the peculiar circumstances of Ceylon, both physical and moral, seem to point it out to the British Government as the fittest spot in our Eastern dominions in which to plant the germ of European civilization, whence we may not unreasonably hope that it will hereafter spread over the whole of those vast territories.¹

C.H. Cameron, 31st January 1832.

When Sri Lanka gained her independence after almost one and a half centuries of British rule on 4 February 1948, the socioeconomic and political structure inherited was superficially stable. Set against the catastrophic conditions under which most of the former British colonies approached Independence, especially in South and Southeast Asia, observers remarked that Sri Lanka obtained her independence under "auspicious conditions"² and that Sri Lanka in 1948 was an "oasis of stability, peace and order".³

Needless to say, however, at the time of Independence the impact of a long period of colonial domination was clearly evident. Since this colonial heritage and its contradictions influenced and determined the course of political development of modern Sri Lanka it is hardly possible to study contemporary political phenomena such as the emergence of the 'New Left' without paying sufficient attention to the colonial past.

Portuguese Rule

The first European political contact with the Island occurred in the sixteenth century. The Portuguese who were striving to possess the Asian trade by controlling Indian Oceanic trade routes were brought by the 'vagaries of wind and waves' in 1505. The lure of cinnamon and the strategic importance of the Island settled them there.

In the period before 1551 the Portuguese were only traders; however, by interfering with the fratricidal conflicts of divided native-rulers they were able to become a political force. As Cölvin R. de Silva observed:

Civil strife and internal dissensions gave them the opportunity of obtaining a permanent foothold in the Island; the control of the sea, the superiority of Western military equipment, the strength of the fortress of Colombo and the rivalries of warring kings enable them to consolidate their position.5

4 In 1505 there were three independent kingdoms on the Island - Kotte, Kanda Uda Rata and Yal Panam. After the palace revolution in 1521 Kotte was itself divided into three parts as Kotte, Seetawaka and Raigama. The Seetawaka rulers took an anti-Portuguese stand while Kotte sought their support.

5 Colvin R. de Silva, Ceylon Under the British Occupation; 1795-1833 (Colombo, 1953), I.
The puppet King of Kotte, Dharmapala, bequeathed his nominal kingdom to the Portuguese in his last will and died in 1597. As heirs designate of the King of Kotte, the Portuguese became rulers of a considerable portion of the coastal region of the Island. After 1597 the only barrier which the Portuguese experienced in their quest to turn the entire Island into a Portuguese colony, was the existence of the Kandyan Kingdom of the central highlands, known as the Kanda Uda Rata. The Portuguese, thereafter, made continuous but futile efforts to subjugate the Kandyan Kingdom. They ruled the maritime provinces until they were ousted in 1658 without ever succeeding in conquering the Kandyan Kingdom.

Since the Portuguese used the existing system to further their own ends, their activities did not result in structural changes in the traditional system. Their revenues were based on the traditional sources of land revenue, marala or death duty, royal monopolies of cinnamon, arecanut, pepper, precious stones, elephants and pearl fishing.

They had indeed preserved native institutions; but these had systematically been manipulated to serve their own ends. The indigenous administrative system was converted into an engine of oppression and misgovernment, of commercial profit and private gain. The memory of Portuguese persecution, maladministration, corruption and greed lingers in Ceylon to the present day.6

The Portuguese left their impact on Sri Lankan society in many ways, but their long term bequest was the Catholic Church. In their zeal for proselytization the Portuguese used

6 Colvin R. de Silva, Ceylon Under British, 4.
force as well as the more conventional techniques of preaching and teaching.

The Dutch Occupation

The Dutch entry into the Indian Ocean at the beginning of the seventeenth century opened a new page in the colonial history of Sri Lanka. Since Sri Lanka's lucrative cinnamon trade attracted the attention of the Dutch, they tried to cultivate friendly relations with the King of Kandy as early as 1602, but these efforts bore no fruits. However, in 1636, when their power was firmly entrenched at Batavia, the Dutch East India Company resumed negotiations with Rajasinghe II, King of Kandy. After somewhat protracted negotiations a treaty was concluded in which the company promised to assist the King in his war with the Portuguese in return for a monopoly over some major articles of trade and a repayment of the expenses incurred in the war.

By the joint efforts of the King and the Dutch Company, the Portuguese were expelled completely from the Island in 1658. Meantime, in the course of the war the King realized that the Dutch intention was not merely to expell the Portuguese but to replace them. The relationship of these two allies was strained by the end of their war against the Portuguese. The Dutch claimed that the King owed them large amounts of money and until paid they would occupy the captured area. So, the King 'gave pepper to get ginger'.

The Dutch East India Company ruled the maritime provinces until they were ousted by a similar British company.
in 1796. They maintained the native administrative structure which the Portuguese had inherited from the Sinhalese Kings with minor revisions. The economic policy of the Dutch Company was, by and large, based on mercantilism. Their revenue was based on monopolies; first of cinnamon and elephants, and later extended to articles of import and export. One of the important innovations of Dutch economic policy was the introduction of a plantation system. They encouraged cultivation of commercial crops. In the late eighteenth century they began cultivation of cinnamon on plantations and introduced coffee into the country.

Protestant Christianity entered the Island under the patronage of Dutch rule. The Dutch Reformed Church enjoyed the same privileges as had the Roman Catholic Church under Portuguese rule. As had the Portuguese, the Dutch used force and education as a means of proselytization. The school system inherited from the Portuguese was continued and developed. The most significant legacy of Dutch rule was their judicial administration. They introduced two types of tribunals; Raad Van Justice and Land Raads. In their judicial administration, at first they relied on the advice of the Sinhalese chiefs, but later they began to apply "the Roman Dutch Law to the Sinhalese inhabitants of the cities and coastal areas, thus effecting considerable changes in property relationships among these

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According to Colvin R. de Silva their revenue can be classified under four headings of Cinnamon, Merchandise, Farmed Revenue and Collected Revenue. See Colvin R. de Silva, Ceylon Under British, 11.
The British Advent and Company Rule

By the end of the eighteenth century the old colonial powers that had controlled the Indian Ocean were exhausted and new forces began to dominate the East. The expulsion of the Dutch from the maritime provinces in Sri Lanka by British forces was the eventual outcome of this shift of power in the Indian Ocean.

The immediate circumstance that led British forces to capture the Dutch possessions in 1796 can be explained only in the European political context. When the revolutionary government in France overran Holland in 1794 and set up the Batavian Republic, British refused to recognise it. At the same time William of Orange fled to England and instructed the Dutch Governor of Sri Lanka to accept British forces as protection against the French threat. As the Dutch Governor in Sri Lanka refused the Stadholder's order, the British took the initiative to prevent transfer of Dutch possessions to the French forces.

At first the British East India Company thought their occupation was temporary. Therefore they did not establish a separate administrative machinery for Sri Lanka but ruled it as a part of the Madras Presidency. The sole objective of the British Company during this period was to collect what they had spent in the war with the Dutch Company as soon as possible. Hence, the ancient system of Rajakariya (service tenure) was

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8 S. Arasaratnam, Ceylon (Englewood Cliffs, 1964), 143.
abolished and Sinhalese mudaliyars were replaced by officers drawn from Madras. The ruthless methods utilised for collecting revenue by these officers (Amildars) who were alien to Sri Lanka, as well as premature and ill-conceived changes in old customs, resulted in a popular uprising against company rule in 1797. The result of this revolution was the abolition of the new system and British parliamentary intervention in matters of the Island. On 19 April 1798 Henry Dundas (Secretary of State) decided to separate Sri Lanka from the Indian system and the Governor, appointed by the crown, was vested with powers related to legislative, executive, judicial and military matters while revenue and control of trade remained as concerns of the Company.

Consolidation of British Power

As the war with France progressed, Whitehall decided to retain Sri Lankan territories permanently. Accordingly, the system of 'dual rule' was abolished and Sri Lanka by the peace of Amiens became a crown colony in 1802.

With the advent of the British the balance of power in the Island shifted decisively against the Kandyan Kingdom. They exchanged a more powerful neighbour for a weak one. In view of the fact that the British were in the process of building an empire on the Indian sub-continent, subjugation of the Kandyan Kingdom by this formidable imperial power became a matter of time. The first British attempt to subjugate the Kandyan Kingdom ended disastrously in 1803, but during the period following conditions within the Kandyan Kingdom developed in favour of British rule.
The rift between the King and the Kandyan nobility had widened and sharpened. As opposition of the Kandyan aristocracy to their king mounted, it became certain that the British would seek to exploit the situation in their own interest. Indeed, by the eve of the invasion of the Kandyan Kingdom, a British espionage network had developed relations with most of the high ranking nobility responsible for the administration of the Kingdom. Under these circumstances, in 1815, British forces moved swiftly and without resistance.

It was a repetition of an old and tragic tale. The Kandyans turned with a too facile readiness to the idea of bringing in the foreigner to settle their domestic differences. That pitcher went once too often to the well. The convenient arbitrator became the permanent master. The Kandyans accomplished their own political doom.⁹

The nature of the invasion and their relations with the Kandyan nobility led the British to sign the Kandyan Convention with the chiefs. In this Convention, the British promised to uphold many of the privileges Kandyan chiefs enjoyed before 1815 and also to maintain the Buddhist religion. Before long, Kandyans opened their eyes to the realities of foreign rule. Popular discontent with British rule resulted in an armed uprising under the leadership of the Kandyan nobility in 1817-1818. After three months of uncertainty, the British suppressed it ruthlessly. Some of the privileges of the Kandyan chiefs sanctioned by the Convention were repealed by the Proclamation of 1818. The 'last great convulsion of Sinhalese independence'⁹

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ended with the firm restoration of British rule.

The cession of the Kandyan Kingdom and the suppression of the uprising consolidated British power in Sri Lanka. The construction of roads soon after the uprising successfully broke the isolation and inaccessibility of the Kandyan highlands and further strengthened British power.

Raising the Colonial Structure

Hitherto, Sri Lanka was viewed in terms of its strategic value in relation to India; but the consolidation of the British as undisputed imperial power in India led Sri Lanka to be seen in relatively economic terms. As a part of the Second British Empire which was built in accordance with the needs of industrial capitalism, the transformation of the Sri Lankan economy to a primary agricultural unit of the British imperial economic order began in the early 1820's. Experimental plantations were started shortly after the suppression of the 1818 uprising.

The first well-integrated attempt to provide a superstructure for colonial development was undertaken by the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission in 1833. After a thorough investigation of the existing system, the Commission submitted a series of recommendations which extended to all aspects of the social, economic and political life of the country.10

10 For details of the recommendations of the Colebrooke-Cameron see, G.C. Mendis, Colebrooke-Cameron.
Rajakariya was abolished, the whole country was brought together and administered as a single unit of five provinces; executive and legislative councils were set up; and the judicial system was unified under the control of the supreme court.

Most historians attribute high importance to the Colebrooke-Cameron reforms, claiming that they were responsible for laying down the foundations for 'modern' Sri Lanka. Mendis maintains that the Colebrooke-Cameron reforms were "the dividing line between the past and present". In fact, he goes on to say, "(they) helped considerably a comparatively small Island with a medieval social and economic system to attain independence within twelve decades". In contrast to Mendis, Ludowyk denies that the political and economic structure of British rule was raised "through the legislative enactments which followed the acceptance of the majority of the recommendations of the Colebrooke-Cameron Report". According to Ludowyk, the actual raising of the structure was due to the running down of the economy of another part of the British Empire, when the West Indian interest in the House of Commons could no longer prevent the removal of tariffs specially favouring the producers of coffee in Jamaica and other Caribbean islands.

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colonial economic structure in Sri Lanka was the growth of industrial capitalism in Britain. The breakdown of the economy of the West Indies determined only which crop would dominate the colony.

After 1835 the central highlands of the Island were rapidly converted to large scale coffee plantations. "Even in its early stages it (coffee) maintained itself with some of the characteristics of an oriental despot. Everything in the Island came to be subordinated to its will". According to Tennent, the coffee mania was at its climax in 1845. The previous governor, and the council, the Military, the judges, the Clergy, and one half of the Civil Servants had penetrated the hills and became purchasers of Crown lands. The East India Company's officers crowded to Ceylon to invest their savings, and capitalists from England arrived by every packet.

The expansion of plantations generated a vast demand for land. Speculators were hoping to obtain land under the sponsorship of the colonial government. Land sales by the government increased rapidly; in 1836, 3920 acres were sold. From 1836 to 1841, 148,821 acres of land, most of which were described as crown property, had been sold at the upset price of five shillings an acre. As the demand increased it became necessary to change existing land ownership patterns in order to ensure land for expanding plantations. Land Ordinance No.12

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15 Ibid., 58.
enacted in 1840 "to prevent encroachment upon crown land" can be considered as a conscious effort to do so. As Patrick Peebles has shown, "the administration of crown land sales in these years is a sordid episode in British colonial history. The Civil Servants who sold the Land were themselves large speculators in coffee lands". For the emergence of a colonial plantation economy, another important factor was labour. The Sri Lankan peasants who were still not completely severed from semi-feudal economic relations did not readily accept new employment opportunities in the plantations mainly because the remunerations were not considered commensurate with the labour and the sacrifices involved. Under these circumstances, South Indians who were in dire economic need were brought in large numbers as plantation workers and kept in semi-slave status.

Coffee dominated the plantation economy for about forty years. In the early 1870s due to 'Hemleia Vastratrix' (leaf disease) coffee plantations collapsed completely, but in no time it was replaced by tea. The Kandyan highland practically

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18 According to this notorious Ordinance all the forest, waste, unoccupied or uncultivated lands were presumed to be the property of the crown until the contrary was proved and all chenas and other lands cultivated at interval (if situated in the Kandyan provinces) were deemed to belong to the crown, and not to any private person, except upon proof of a grant, together with satisfactory evidence as to its limits and boundaries.

became a single tea estate!

In the second half of the 19th century the plantation economy in Sri Lanka was firmly consolidated. After 1860, coconut was cultivated on plantations in the maritime provinces. In the last quarter of the 19th century, large scale rubber plantations were also begun. One of the striking factors regarding coconut and rubber plantations was that Sri Lankan entrepreneurs had a considerable share in their creation and management.

During the coffee period the form of plantation organization was private proprietorship by British capitalists. The rise of tea plantations was corollary to new economic developments in Britain; i.e. the growth of monopolies, the export of capital and the era of new imperialism. This development was reflected in the plantation sector by transforming ownership from private proprietorship to company ownership and to further expansion of investment.

At the same time, under the aegis of laissez-faire economics and free trade, a transformation of the country to a dependent consumer bloc of the imperial industrial metropole was begun. New consumption patterns developed. "Manufactured articles and consumer goods were imported and the lack of any tariff restrictions benefitted British industrial products and also thwarted the development of local enterprise". 20

There were various by-products of this colonial economic

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transformation. Urban units were developed as commercial, service and administrative centers with Colombo as chief entrepot. A well-knit system of transport connected scattered urban centers to Colombo and allowed the spread of English education. The government set educational standards and allowed Christian missionaries to manage the schools under a system of financial grants. Even when Buddhists and Hindus established their own schools as a part of their cultural reaction to Christian control of education, the system of values attached to education based on government requirements continued unchanged.

The Emergence of New Social Classes

The colonial economic transformation had a decisive impact on the traditional social composition of Sri Lanka. While some existing social classes underwent structural changes, entirely new classes hitherto unknown in social fabric emerged. Among others, the emergence of the new capitalist class, often referred to as the 'middle class', 'the bourgeoisie' or the 'national elites', and of the working class became important to future political development.

The introduction of colonial capitalist economic relations opened new avenues of economic and social advancement for some sections of Sri Lankan society. At first, establishment of a plantation sector provided employment for contractors, transport agents—especially those who provided carts to transport coffee from the highlands to Colombo—and traders. Those who accumulated capital by utilizing new entrepreneurial opportunities
began to invest in plantations and most profitably in the liquor industry, mining and the export of graphite. Some of the families who attained bourgeois status, economically as well as socially, were not of much importance in pre-British Sri Lanka, but the traditional elites - the mudaliyas in the maritime provinces and the Kandyan aristocracy - were not displaced. They also utilized their powers and traditional sources of wealth to take hold of new opportunities provided by this transformation.

Another important avenue which consolidated class status was English education. The hard-earned wealth of these pioneer entrepreneurs was invested in their children's education in the best schools in Sri Lanka and thereafter in British Universities, Ips of Court in London or British Medical Schools, where they became full-fledged Barristers and medical doctors.

and as Michael Roberts points out "the second and third generations employed their education to consolidate their economic and social position".²¹

By the end of the 19th century this capitalist class, acquiring a common consciousness, had become the most important social class in the colonial social structure; the manner in which this capitalist class sprang up, their intimate relationship with the colonial economy and their educational background determined its characteristics.

Parallel to the rise of indigenous capitalists and as a consequence of the structural changes that took place in the economic structure, wage labour emerged as an important social class. Though labour for plantations was recruited from South India, the growth of urban workshops and transportation ancillary to the plantation economy led to the emergence of a modern working class in Sri Lanka.

The Growth of Political Movements

The emergence and growth of these new social classes were very important as far as future political development was concerned. Two distinct forms of agitation for political and democratic rights emerged. "These were the movement for political reform associated with the development of nationalism, and the labour movement which encompassed strikes, workers' agitation and the formation of trade unions by the working class". 22

In the last three decades of the 19th century we can see the emergence of nationalism in the modern sense of the word. The challenge to British imperialism arose in an indirect form with the Buddhist and Hindu revival movements of the 1880s, led by Sinhalese and Tamil intelligentsia. "This cultural self-assertion of the indigenous religions against the religion of the foreign rulers and their agents was a form of incipient nationalism". 23 In the first two decades of the 20th century,

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23 Ibid., The Rise of the Labour Movement in Ceylon (Durham, 1972), 53-54.
coupled with the growth of temperance agitation, the political face of the religious revival movement became more and more apparent.

As the new capitalist class began to demand a share in the colonial administration, the constitutional reform movement began.\textsuperscript{24} One of the striking characteristics of the constitutional reform movement was its visible separation from the religious revival movement. From its inception, the constitutional reform movement was dominated by the ultra-conservative, pro-colonial element of a capitalist class. Their political agitation was limited to a series of petitions and to representations to Whitehall entreating it to grant them greater representation in the colonial legislative assembly. They strongly opposed technique of agitation that would bring the masses into politics. They accepted the inevitability of British rule and did not challenge its legitimacy. In fact they maintained an organic relationship with the colonial economy. One of the prominent leaders of the constitutional reform movement, Sir James Peiris, addressing a meeting of the Ceylon Social Reform Society on 14 January 1908 admitted as much: \textsuperscript{25}

\begin{quote}
I do not think a distinction can be made between the members of this society and those people who are spoken (of) as the planters. Most of us are planters... The interest of the Ceylonese planters are identical with those
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{24} In 1882 the Ceylon Agricultural Association was formed in order to safeguard the interests of Ceylonese planters. It was converted into the Ceylon National Association in 1888 when there was a vacancy for the Sinhalese seat in the Legislative Council. It took care not to associate with the temperance agitation, but agitated for the abolition of the grain taxes.
of the European planters. 25

The constitutional reform movement paved the way for the establishment of the Ceylon National Congress (C.N.C.) in 1919 and it has been the political organ of the Sri Lankan capitalist class ever since. Credit for the creation of the C.N.C. must go to Ponnambalum Arunachalam, a moderate nationalist. The establishment of the Ceylon National Congress did not bring immediate success to the constitutional reform movement, however. Within a short period of time the emergence of a rift between the Sinhalese and Tamil leaders and among the Sinhalese leaders themselves thwarted its strength. "Indeed, by 1924-25, the Ceylon National Congress was reduced to its hard Low-country Sinhalese core of activists". 26

Whereas the emergence of a colonial capitalist class gave birth to the constitutional reform movement, the growth of working class generated the labour movement.

The consolidation and further development of the colonial mode of production and the accompanying growth of wage labour relationships strengthened the working class numerically in the second half of the 19th century. The first offsprings of the working class movement go back to the last decade of the

19th century. In its first phase between 1880 and 1915, the working class movement was closely related to the religious revival movement. During this period the working class was not mature enough to form its own organization without the help of 'outsiders'. Help came from the "rebellious members of the professional classes who not only resented the political apathy of the conservatives, but also held them responsible for the submissiveness of the rest of the population". A.E. Buultjens, a Buddhist Theosophist, formed the first trade union in Sri Lanka, the Ceylon Printers Union, after a strike of printers at Cave & Company in 1893. From this point we can see the gradual growth of unorganized, spontaneous strikes as well as organized ones. The strikes of laundrymen (1896), carters (1906) and railway workers (1912) reflect the growth of class consciousness among the working class. As Kumari Jayawardena explains:

These strikes were led by the unorthodox fringe of the Ceylonese bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie which included Buddhist revivalists, Theosophists, social reformers, temperance workers, and the more politically conscious nationalists who first gave the urban workers an element of trade union and class consciousness. These leaders were often paternalistic, advocating conciliation and moderation to the working-class, but nevertheless championing the workers' basic right to form trade unions. 29

After about 1920, the second period of worker's agitation began. In this period the labour movement became more

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27 Kumari Jayawardena, Rise of Labour, 89.
organized and militant. Further, the link between politics and religion loosened. While George E. de Silva, Victor Corea, C.H.Z. Fernando and others were active in the trade union field, A.E. Goonesinghe dominated the period. In 1923 the Ceylon Labour Union (C.L.U.) under the able leadership of Goonesinghe organized a general strike of 20,000 workers in Colombo which initiated an unending series of strikes on the Island. Strikes among labour workers (1927), taxi drivers and industrial workers (1928), and tramway workers (1929) reflected the militancy of the labour movement during this period. In the course of the violent tramway strike in 1929 police firing led to five deaths; strikers set fire to the Maradana police station in retaliation. In 1928 the Ceylon Labour Party (C.L.P.) was organized under Goonesinghe’s leadership.

Most leaders of the established constitutional reform movement expressed anger towards the militant trade union movement. James Peiris and D.B. Jayatilake even went to the Colonial Office to condemn strikes and to denounce Goonesinghe. They opposed the idea of negotiations with or recognition of Goonesinghe even after British employers had accepted him.  

After 1929 the militant labour movement led by Goonesinghe collapsed. In the period of catastrophic depression, 1929-33, Goonesinghe’s labour movement faced decisive strike defeats at Lake House (1929), the Times of Ceylon (1930) and Cally Face Hotel (1933). Under these circumstances, the Labour Union

29 Ibid., Rise of Labour, 367.
signed a collective agreement with the Employer's Federation marking the beginning of Goonesinghe's conciliatory policy.

The Origins of the Left Movement

Marxism came to the Island as a political force in the early 1930s. The introduction of Socialist political movements drastically changed the existing monotype political scene. In order to understand the circumstances under which the Sri Lankan Left movement emerged, a brief analysis of some characteristics of the political sphere is necessary.

In the first place, the nature of the colonial mode of production did not generate an independent national industrial or mercantile capitalist class, which would rouse some serious contradictions with the British interest. The Sri Lankan capitalist class who dominated the constitutional reform movement was essentially a large land owning class which originated in the womb of the colonial structure. By about 1930 they were able to resolve their minor contradictions with the British interests and demarcated each others' economic fields. "The British planters were exclusively on the tea plantations, whereas the local bourgeoisie had their own spheres of influence - coconut, cinnamon, graphite and traditional agriculture".30 After the 1924 and 1931 constitutional reforms, they could obtain a share in political power within the broad colonial structure without any mass-based activity or violent struggle. It was a self-contented class. As a result they not only enthusiastically accepted

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the Ministries offered to them in the new legislature, but also restrained their demands to Dominion Status.

In the labour movement we can see a similar situation. The Ceylon Labour Union which led the militant trade union struggle in the 1920s abandoned them in 1930s. By this time Goonesinghe not only advocated racism against workers of Indian origin but also assisted employers in breaking strikes. There was a real need for a political movement which could give leadership to both the anti-imperialist struggle and working class movement. As Kumari Jayawardena vividly points out:

The Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) which was formed in 1935, assumed this dual role. In the absence of a nationalist movement led by a strong bourgeoisie (as existed in India), it had to take over the nationalist struggle. In the absence of a party or labour movement to fight capitalism in the urban areas and the plantations, and to fight the vestiges of feudalism in the countryside, it had to also assume a socialist role. The new party thus took over the task of leading the political and trade union struggle for political reforms and democratic rights. 31

However, the emergence of a left movement in more subjective terms, was due to the return of some youthful members of the emerging rural and petty bourgeoisie, who had gone to the West to pursue higher education and had come under the influence of Marxism.

In the 19th century those who went to the West for higher education were the children of large land owners and of the capitalist class who had studied in Christian schools in

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31 Ibid., 200-1.
Colombo. After the economic boom of agricultural products, especially rubber and coconut in the first two decades of the 20th century, newly prosperous rural and petty bourgeoisie were able to send their children to the West for higher education. This new generation received Western education from Buddhist English Schools in Sri Lanka and went to the less expensive London University.

In the 1920s the Ceylon Students’ Association in London was dominated by this new generation of students: This group included Philip Goonewardena, Leslie Goonewardena, Colvin R. de Silva, N.M. Perera and S.A. Wickramasinghe. In England they came under the influence of Marxism and a left element of the Indian Nationalist Movement. As Kumari Jayawardena points out, they acquired a theoretical knowledge of Marxism through contact with Marxist intellectuals and with Socialist teachers at British and American Universities as well as practical experience through membership in various Communist organizations, especially the British Communist Party.

Some nationalist youths who had studied in Sri Lanka during the 1920s also felt dissatisfied with the existing political organizations. They rejected the conservative policy of the Ceylon National Congress which opposed mass participation in politics. Some of them such as K. Natesa Aiyar, George Caldera, James P. Ratnam, Susan de Silva and Valentine Perera at first supported Goonesinghe and the Labour Party.

Ibid., 204.
Disenchanted with Goonesinghe, these radical nationalists attempted to form a political party when Bandaranaike returned from Oxford. In 1926 the Progressive National Party was formed with Bandaranaike as President. The attempt to unite the radical element failed when Bandaranaike refused to depart from the politics of the C.N.C. and was unable to provide leadership. In these circumstances, the politically conscious youths who had no faith in either the C.N.C. or the C.L.P. established youth leagues to protest existing political organizations and especially the Donoughmore constitution. The first Youth League was organized in Jaffna under the leadership of Handy Perinpanayagam and C. Balasingham. In 1931 the youth leagues were amalgamated and formed the Youth Congress with Aelian Perera as president and Valantine Pererà and George Caldera as secretaries. The Youth League Congress (Y.L.C.) took a radical stand on many political issues of the time. They maintained close relations with the militant section of the Indian National Movement. Jawaharlal Nehru and Kamaladevi Chattopadya visited Sri Lanka and addressed meetings of the Youth League in 1931. Even before Marxist students of the Ceylon Students Association in London had returned to the Island some members of the Youth League such as Terence de Zylva and Susan de Silva had shown a strong interest in socialist ideas.

When the Western educated socialist students returned to Sri Lanka they joined the Youth League movement, gave impetus to it and within a short period of time dominated it. The Suriyamal Campaign and the Malaria eradication movement provided
the young socialists who were active in the Youth Leagues with a stepping stone for entry into the arena of national politics.

From its beginning the Youth League was very critical of Sri Lanka's contribution to the Poppy fund. In 1931, Aelian Pereira, president of the Youth Congress as well as of the Ceylon Ex-servicemen's Association, launched a rival fund named after a local flower, Suriya in order to collect money for local charities. The Youth League Movement took this opportunity to organize and demonstrate anti-British feelings. The Ex-servicemen's Association, alarmed by the political character of the Suriyamal campaign, decided to discontinue it. After that, the Colombo Central Youth League under the leadership of the Socialist youths took over the Suriyamal Movement.

The popularity of these youths was closely related to the Malaria eradication campaign. In 1934-35 an unprecedented Malaria epidemic spread across a large part of the Island. As many as 125,330 died. The Youth League severely criticised leaders of the Ceylon National Congress who possessed power under new constitution, claiming that "while thousands were dying of hunger and Malaria, the so-called national leaders had been entertaining Royal dukes, celebrating Royal Jubilies, hunting for knighthoods".

The Suriyamal Movement under the leadership of the socialist youths was very active in providing relief in Malaria

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33 On Armistice day (November 11), British residents with the collaboration of the government collected funds for British Veterans by selling the Poppy Flowers.

34 Ceylon Independent, 23 December 1935.
affected areas. Dr. S.A. Wickramasinghe, Colvin R. de Silva, Harry, Philip and Robert Goonewardena N.M. Perera, Robin Ratnam, Dr. Mary Ratnam, and Selina Perera worked in these areas for months, building up a base of support.

The socialist youths also entered the trade union field. In 1932 a trade union was formed at the Wallawatte spinning and Weaving Mills under the presidency of Colvin R. de Silva.

By 1935 socialist elements keenly felt the need for a formal political party. Eventually, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (L.S.S.P.) was formed in December. The immediate reason for its formation was the forthcoming election for representatives to the State Council. From its inception the L.S.S.P. reflected the contradiction of its objectives. At the same time it had to fulfill the needs of both nationalist and working class movements. The future of the left movement depended on how they solved this contradiction. In this situation the new party emerged not strictly as a revolutionary party but as a social reformist party. The party manifesto did not greatly differ from its election manifesto, and anyone could obtain a membership in the party on payment of 25 cts. By about 1937, there were signs that the party was becoming more tightly organized.

The history of the left movement was one of consistent vacillation and constant disintegration. The first crack in the L.S.S.P. occurred when the International Communist Movement was torn apart by the Trotsky - Stalin conflict. The majority of
the L.S.S.P. leaders had been influenced by the views of the 'Left Opposition' when they were in Europe. Nevertheless, a section comprised of S.A. Wickramasinghe, M.G. Mendis, and Rev. Saranankara approved the stand of the Third International and supported Stalin. In 1939 those who supported Stalin and the Soviet union were expelled from the L.S.S.P.; they then formed the United Socialist Party which in 1943 became the Communist Party of Ceylon (C.C.P.).

March Toward The Independence

After 1924 a new stage had begun in the history of constitutional reforms. For the first time the British authorities decided to share power with representatives of the 'propertied' class on a formal basis. In retrospect, it marked the first stage of the transfer of power. The Donoughmore Commission arrived in 1929. They recommended abolition of the Legislative and Executive Councils and the creation of a State Council having both functions. Most radical of the recommendations was the introduction of universal suffrage, a step opposed by the Ceylon National Congress.

The introduction of universal suffrage did not alter the political scene radically nor did it threaten the hegemony of the conservative leadership of the C.N.C. because their strength was mainly based on rural constituencies whose voters were under the mercies of big land owners and the bourgeoisie. The new State Council was dominated by the conservative leadership of the C.N.C. who accepted the constitution and ministries, hoping within a short period of time to gain full-fledged
parliamentary cabinet government.

Since Sir Baron Jayatilaka relinquished his leadership of the State Council in 1942, the final phase in the transfer of power began under the leadership of D.S. Senanayake. K.M. de Silva clearly points out the objectives and attitudes of D.S. Senanayake as:

In insisting that Dominion Status should remain the prime object of policy, and that this should be attained in association with rather than in opposition to the British, he placed himself in direct opposition to the view adopted by the Ceylon National Congress in 1942 (in response to the younger policy makers who were becoming increasingly influential within it) that independence rather than Dominion Status should be the goal of Sri Lanka's development.35

In May 1943 the Colonial Office outline its proposals for the reform of the constitution of Sri Lanka. They were far short of the new Congress goal of independence. Despite the murmurs of protest from the younger members of the Congress, the Board of Ministers under the leadership of D.S. Senanayake accepted this offer and drafted a constitution on the basis of the 1943 declaration. In July 1944 the Secretary of State announced that a commission headed by Lord Soulbury was to be sent to Sri Lanka to examine the draft constitution. When it was learned that minority groups would be given an opportunity to express their views, the Board of Ministers threaten to boycott the commission. In 1945 the Soulbury Commission, after a

brief investigation presented its report endorsing the main principles of the Ministers' Draft constitution, with only a few modifications. In November, the State Council accepted the White Paper on constitutional reform based on the Soulbury report and on 18 June 1947 the Colonial Office announced the grant of "fully responsible status within the British Commonwealth of Nations". In December 1947 British Parliament passed the Ceylon Independence Act and with the consent of the new Senanayake government which retained power in the 1947 elections 4 February 1948 was established as the day for official transfer of power.

With the transfer of power in 1948 Sri Lanka was bequeathed a Westminster model of cabinet government which was the goal of the Ceylon National Congress. With negotiations to transfer power in progress, a new party, the United National Party (U.N.P.) was formed under the leadership of D.S. Senanayake. As almost all the leaders of the C.N.C had joined the U.N.P., it was indeed little more than a new name for the former C.N.C. However, in the election of 1947, the U.N.P. was able to achieve only a marginal success. Utilizing factional rivalries among the left parties, the U.N.P. managed to form a government. The opposition was constituted by the left parties who had divided into three groups by this time: the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (L.S.S.P.), Bolshevik Leninist Party (B.L.P.) and the Communist Party (C.P).
Chapter II

Political Developments Since Independence

"His Majesty's government award" of full responsible status to Sri Lanka neither marked a radical breakthrough in the political structure nor provided a new beginning with higher aspirations. It was so not because the "means adopted for the attainment of independence under D.S. Senanayake's leadership were not as robust or dramatic as they might have been" but because a thoroughly Anglicized handful of urban and capitalist elites obtained political power after Independence and made no attempt to change the colonial economic and political structure. The people looked at the independence settlement with apathy as if it were a private business deal between the upper level of the Sri Lankan capitalist class and the British authorities. The masses who had no role to play were as alienated from their new masters as from the old British rulers with whom they had shared power even before independence. Huntington describes the nature of this group as follows:

After independence the new government was dominated by a small, upper-middle and upper class, thoroughly Anglicized, urban elite whose political vehicle was the UNP. Its

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members were, as one observer remarked, like 'the former colonial rulers in everything but the colour of their skins'. This group was overwhelmingly urban, although Ceylon was 70 per cent rural. It was largely Christian, although 91 per cent of the Ceylonese were not and 64 per cent were Buddhist. Its language was English, which 92 per cent of the population could neither read nor write. In short, it was drawn from and represented a minority of less than 10 per cent of the population.

At the time this group who were controlling the U.N.P. were taking the reins of power in 'independent' Ceylon, the social economic and political arrangements appeared to be stable. There was no civil war or large scale political dislocations such as those experienced in the Indian sub-continent or in Burma. Unlike most of the South East Asian countries, Sri Lanka's economy was not ravaged by the Second World War and her plantation economy was producing a profitable balance of trade. Furthermore, the Sri Lankan government maintained widespread welfare services. Besides free health and education (free of tuition fees) services, a weekly minimum ration of rice was distributed at a highly subsidized price. Total expenditure on welfare services absorbed 56.1 per cent of the government's revenue in 1947. It was generally recognised that the standard of living of the people of Sri Lanka was the highest in Asia, with the exception of Japan, Hong Kong and some parts of Malaya. In addition, there was no viable political threat to the existence of the Westminster model of political administration.

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Samuel P. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven, 1968), 449.
The main opposition to the government was that of the Marxist
Left, but they were scattered and involved in hair-splitting
ideological debates among themselves. The rivalries that
existed between the opposition parties were so intense that
more than a year elapsed before they could select a leader
of the opposition. They commonly used the word 'revolution'
and other rhetorical terms drawn from the Marxist political
vocabulary but their practical acceptance of Westminster
Parliamentary traditions showed that they had rejected
revolutionary methods of capturing power. Most of their
activities were confined to parliament and their extra-parlia-
mentary activities did not go beyond strike actions. Under
these circumstances Sri Lanka in 1948 was considered "an oasis
of stability, peace and order". 3

A careful observer, however, could see the fragility
of this so-called 'stability, peace and order'. The economy
of Sri Lanka was based solely on three primary export crops -
tea, rubber and coconut. This economic system could be cited
as a classic example of an underdeveloped dependent economy.
The sectoral inequalities in productivity, the disarticulation
of the economic sectors and the external domination that are
the main characteristics of underdevelopment were clearly mani-
fested in the Island's economy. As the secondary sector was
very meagre and limited to a few industries subordinate to the
plantation sector, most industrial and consumer goods had to
be imported from western industrial centers. Therefore, in

both import and export sectors, the economy was highly
vulnerable to the prices of the world market.

In the economic sphere, the U.N.P. believed that the
prosperity of the country lay in trade ties with the West and
made no attempt to remodel the colonial economic structure with
which their interests were also identified. Thus, the plantation
economy was considered a great asset to the country. They
hoped everything would be well if the existing political struc-
ture was maintained. An attempt was made to improve traditional
agriculture. The U.N.P. solution to the economic problems of
the country was based on opening up the dry zone through massive
irrigation schemes. By establishing new colonisation schemes
in the dry zone they hoped to solve unemployment and alleviate
the population pressure of the wet zone. In many ways it was
a continuation of the policy followed during the Donoughmore
period by D.S. Senanayake as Minister of Agriculture. What
was remarkable in the U.N.P. economic policy was its lack of
planning. As a consequence, the nation's valuable Sterling
balances, some Rs. 1,260 millions, were frittered away to import
luxury consumer goods, under the policy of a free economy.4

As in the case of the colonial economic structure,
the new rulers made no attempt to transform the colonially
oriented administrative structures to suit the new situation.
Government and administration were heavily Colombo-centered

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4 A.J. Wilson, Electoral Politics in an Emergent State; The
and the media of administration was English. The bureaucracy was trained under colonial rule; their value orientation, their dress, their manners and their language separated them from the masses of society. Most of them were contemptuous of the 'swabasha' layers of Sri Lankan society. Consequently, Government came to be looked up on by the masses as a "distant object, awesome, and its members as persons to be approached with fear and reverence. It was not 'their Government' but a process turned over by their British 'masters' to the local versions of this masterdom".  

The U.N.P. government followed a very conservative policy. The Defence and External Affairs Agreement with Britain, the enactment of the Public Security Act of 1947, the trade union (Amendment) Act of 1948 and the Indian and Pakistani Residents (Citizenship) Act of 1948 clearly demonstrated their conservative outlook. The U.N.P. during this period took a firm anti-Communist stand internally and a pro-Western foreign policy externally. The U.N.P. persistently claimed that the Marxists posed a serious threat to the religions and to Sinhalese culture and they represented themselves as the protectors of democracy, of religion and of the Island's civilization. U.N.P. leader D.S. Senanayake was hailed as 'the father of the Nation' who won the Freedom Battle without shedding a single drop of blood.

The resignation of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike from his

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5 A.J. Wilson, Electoral Politics, 9.
Ministry of Health and Local Government and also from the ruling U.N.P. in July 1951 was significant, because it gave birth to an alternative party within the Parliamentary structure. In September 1951 the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (S.L.F.P.) was formed under his leadership. According to Bandaranaike his party would be a "middle party between the U.N.P. and the extreme left". Within a short period of time the S.L.F.P. became a rallying point for those who opposed the economic policies and the cultural values of the Sri Lankan "upper class" within the ruling U.N.P.

After D.S. Senanayake's sudden death in 1952, his son and Minister of Agriculture Dudley Senanayake succeeded him. The new prime minister soon decided to go to the polls under very favourable circumstances and the U.N.P. received an absolute majority. Bandaranaike became leader of the opposition and his S.L.F.P. challenged not only the ruling U.N.P., but also the left's traditional position as official opposition party.

Sri Lanka's superficially favourable balance of trade ended after the Korean War boom and was followed by a depression which clearly reflected the adverse effects of a lop-sided economy. The adverse terms of trade led Dudley Senanayake's Government to take drastic steps. Cutting down government subsidies resulted in a substantial increase in the price of rice. The left parties around which the working class had been

organized called a strike to protest the withdrawal of the subsidies on 12 August 1953. Widespread opposition broke out and a curfew was declared. The loss of nine lives to police bullets on that day forced the young and inexperienced Prime Minister to resign, paving the way for a more conservative Sir John Kotalawala, to succeed him.

In the years preceding 1956, there were remarkable new developments in the political sphere that determined the future political developments of the country. Among the most important, certainly in terms of political repercussions, was that Sinhalese Buddhist nationalistic forces began to exert their influence on the course of events. Bandaranaike addressed these nationalist forces and hoped to use them to topple the Western-oriented U.N.P. establishment.

After a continuous period of power the U.N.P.'s alienation from the rural masses and the underprivileged urban classes became more and more apparent. The leadership of the U.N.P., with the passage of time, came to regard themselves as the 'natural rulers' of the country. The personality of Prime Minister Kotalawala seemed to epitomize everything antithetical to the development of Sinhalese culture. As a reaction on the part of the forces that had suffered under U.N.P. rule, there emerged a demand for an anti-U.N.P. common front. In this situation Bandaranaike had many opportunities. His indigenous

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type of vague socialism coupled with a nationalistic outlook, satisfied the various elements of the anti-U.N.P. common front.

Consequently, a common front emerged in February 1956 as a loose coalition known as the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (People's United Front - M.E.P.) under the leadership of Bandaranaike. It consisted of Bandaranaike's own S.L.F.P., W. Dahanaik's Basha Peramuna (Language Front), K.M.P. Rajaratna's Jathika Vimukthi Peramuna (National Liberation Front) and some influential individuals such as I.M.R.A. Iriyagolla. In addition, Bandaranaike entered into a no-contest pact with the L.S.S.P. and with the C.P.

The M.E.P. programme responded to the cultural and economic aspirations of the dissatisfied Sinhalese petty bourgeoisie. It promised to make Sinhala the only official language while preserving a 'reasonable use' of the Tamil Language. In the economic sphere it advocated a mixed economy, with a greater degree of state intervention in major economic resources. On foreign policy, contrary to the pro-western policy of the U.N.P., the M.E.P. enunciated the concept of 'dynamic neutrality'.

In the 1956 general election, the M.E.P. achieved unexpected victory over the ruling U.N.P.

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8 It is important to note that the M.E.P. programme never defined what was meant by the term 'reasonable use of the Tamil language' with precision. This ambiguity also contributed to develop tension between the two communities.
The M.E.P. victory in 1956 was clearly a turning point in the contemporary political developments of the Island. It manifested the entry of a number of new forces into the political arena. As Wilson points out, the most significant outcome of the M.E.P. victory was that the rural masses and the nationally-inclined Sinhalese intelligentsia now came to grips with the realities of political power.9

After its comfortable victory Bandaranaike's government tried to make changes in the cultural and economic spheres to satisfy the social elements from which the M.E.P. received its support. In June 1956, Sinhala became the official language of the country. A ministry of Cultural Affairs was established to assist the indigenous cultures. The Central Institute of Ayurveda and the College of Indigenous Medicine were established. The Vidyalankara and Vidyodaya Pirivenas were granted University status. A Buddha Sasana Commission was appointed to make recommendations to up-hold the Sanga (Buddhist) organization.

The year 1956 marked a transformation from the laissez-faire economic doctrine of optimum opportunities for private commercial interests.10 The new government began to intervene in important aspects of the country's economic life. The Port of Colombo and the Bus Companies were nationalized and the Port Cargo Corporation and the Ceylon Transport Board were.

9 A.J. Wilson, Electoral Politics, 23.
10 Ibid., 22.
established. Philip G. Goonewardena as Minister of Agriculture introduced the Paddy Land Act as a starting point in the agrarian reform programme.

The M.E.P. government opened diplomatic relations with the socialist bloc and moved away from the pro-western foreign policy of the previous government.\textsuperscript{11} The naval base at Trincomalee and the Military Air Port at Katunayake were taken over by the government from the British.

These steps in economic, political and cultural spheres gave a new appearance to the Sri Lankan political structure, but did not amount to a structural change in the socioeconomic composition of the Island. For instance, the M.E.P. government did not challenge the foreign dominance of the plantation sector and of the Agency Houses. Although the election manifesto of the S.L.F.P. promised to take Sri Lanka out of the Commonwealth, once in office it was abandoned. Changes made by the M.E.P. government gave a democratic appearance to the socioeconomic and political structures of the Island, but the realities of a dependent colonial economy remained intact.

The 1956 M.E.P. government reigned over a period of political calamities. Initially, the official language issue arose as a protest against the privileged position of the English educated classes; but as sentiment developed to declare Sinhala the sole official language, it became a contest.

between the Sinhala speaking majority and the Tamil speaking minority on the Island. Unprecedented communal clashes followed. The Federal Party, the Tamil political organization, organized passive resistance on the Galle Face Green (near the House of Representatives) on the day the Parliament began its second reading of the Official Language Act. This action heightened communal tension between the communities, but a serious crisis was averted when prime minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike entered into a pact with S.J.V. Chelvanayagam, the leader of the Federal Party. The Bandaranaike – Chelvanayagam pact calmed Tamil fears but enraged the extreme elements of Sinhala Nationalism. The opposition U.N.P. took this opportunity to embarrass the new Prime Minister and aroused opposition to Bandaranaike's rapprochement. Under the threat of a 'Satyagraha' (hunger strike), Bandaranaike abrogated the pact he had concluded with the Federal Party, without the consent of his partners. The reaction on the part of the Tamil F.P. was an anti-Sri campaign and it generated an island-wide pattern of communal clashes.

Bandaranaike had collected divers anti-U.N.P. forces under the umbrella of M.E.P. in 1956. Therefore, the M.E.P.


13 As a protest to the language policy of the Government, in March 1958 a campaign was begun by the Federal Party to obliterate the Sinhalese letter Sri in the automobile license plates in the northern part of the Island. This is generally known as anti-Sri campaign.
contained various internal contradictions and factional strifes. Before long, the right wing of this loose coalition began to dominate and influence the policies of the government. For example, the right wing of the S.L.F.P. so amended the Paddy Land Act proposed by left wing Minister of Agriculture Philip Goonewardena as to defeat its purpose. A proposed Act of Co-operative Bank was rejected by the Government parliamentary group. The Prime Minister could not provide strong enough leadership to control the internal factions in his cabinet. In early 1959 discord between right and left wings in the cabinet reached a crisis point. So strong was the right in the S.L.F.P. that Bandaranaike was forced to resuffle his cabinet, forcing both Philip Goonewardena and William Silva who represented the left to resign from their ministries. The rivalry between Bandaranaike himself and the right wing of the S.L.F.P. emerged by the end of 1959. On 25 September 1956, a henchman of Buddhurakkitha— a leading figure of the right wing of the S.L.F.P., assassinated the Prime Minister. His tragic death made him a political martyr in contemporary Sri Lanka.

The assassination of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike was followed by a period of political turmoil. W. Dahanaike became Prime Minister but he could not provide leadership. When the S.L.F.P. deserted him, he was compelled to dissolve parliament.

In the March 1960 election, five parties - the U.N.P led by Dudley Senanayake, the S.L.F.P. led by C.P. de Silva, the L.S.S.I.P. led by N.M. Perera, the M.E.P. led by Philip Goonewardena and the Lanka Democratic Party (L.D.P.) led by
W. Dahanaike – sought a mandate to form their own government. Since no party could gain an absolute majority, Dudley Senanayake was invited to form a minority government. When his government was defeated on the Speech from the Throne, he advised the Governor-General to dissolve Parliament. Before the 1960 July election, the late Prime Minister's widow, Sirima Bandaranaike, became leader of her late husband's party. The S.L.F.P. under the leadership of Mrs Bandaranaike again concluded a no contest pact with the L.S.S.P. and the C.P.. In the general elections of July 1960, the S.L.F.P. received an absolute majority and Sirima Bandaranaike became the world's first woman Prime Minister.

Sirima Bandaranaike's S.L.F.P. Government in 1960 vowed to continue the policies of her husband's Government of 1956. In the economic sphere, the S.L.F.P. continued the policy of strengthening the public sector. In 1961 the biggest commercial Bank on the Island, the locally owned the Bank of Ceylon, was nationalized. In addition, the People's Bank was created to provide rural credit facilities. Amid wide resistance on the part of the Catholic Church, the Aided Schools were nationalized by the government. State intervention in the import and distribution of essential commodities increased, and the activities of the Co-operative Wholesale Establishment were expanded.

In spite of these bold moves, Mrs. Bandaranaike's government could not solve the country's worsening economic problems. The adverse effects of the dependent economy were beginning to threaten the political stability of her government.
In this situation she had to face threats from two directions—
one from the ultra-reactionary forces and the other from the
organized working class.

In January 1962, right-wing elements in high levels
of the Armed services, the Police and civil service, most of
them Christians, planed a coup d'état 'to save the nation'
from the government's nationalization programme, Leftist
trade unions and the religious and communal troubles. The
government discovered and arrested the plotters before they
could seize power.

During this same period, labour unrest threatened
the government from below while the left parties called for
an "all-out struggle" to replace the S.L.F.P. government with
"a real socialist government". A series of strikes developed
in the public as well as the private sectors. Under these
conditions the left parties decided to unite. A United Left
Front (U.L.F.) was formed by ignoring the ideological differen-
tes that existed between them and concentrating on the basis
of a common programme. The formation of the U.L.F. in 1963
was responsible for building up a strong and united Left and
this was clearly shown at the Borella by-election in 1963
where the U.L.F. defeated both the U.N.P. and the S.L.F.P.
candidates. Parallel to this development, the divided trade
unions united in action, under the famous 21 demands.¹⁵

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In the context of worsening economic crisis, Sirima Bandaranike's government realized the potential threat from an organised working class. As a means of countering a massive challenge from that direction, she invited the left parties around which the working classes had been organised to enter her government in 1964. Leaders of the U.L.F. held secret meetings with Sirima Bandaranike, and the L.S.S.P. and the C.P. agreed to join the government. The L.S.S.P. leaders were given three portfolios in the new coalition including Ministry of Finance. The C.P. did not accept ministries through it offered to support the coalition. The new coalition government was defeated in parliament after C.P. de Silva crossed the floor to protest coalition politics. In the general elections of 1965 the U.N.P. obtained marginal success and formed a rival coalition government which included the F.P. and the M.E.P.

"Students of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) politics are invariably impressed by the democratic political system and by the successful operation of the Westminster Parliamentary model". 16 The seventeen years of political experience since the transfer of power led most observers to conclude that the concepts of Western democracy had taken firm root on the Island. Tyagi and Bhardwaj boast that "Ceylon (Sri Lanka) fulfills all the

prequisities of a successful democracy”,¹⁷ and James Jupp writing on political developments since independence suggests “the question to be asked is not why has the model failed? but why, and to what extent has it succeeded?”.¹⁸

Such optimistic assessments are based solely on superficial political appearance. In reality, the intensification of the inherent contradictions in the socioeconomic and political structures were bound to explode in the near future. The maturity of these contradictions gave birth to a new phenomenon in Sri Lankan politics. This was the catalyst for the New Left movement in Sri Lanka.

Chapter III

The Crisis of the Old Left

because the old left movement had no capacity to
take the path of socialism, had gone bankrupt and
deteriorated to the position of propping up the
capitalist class and had no capacity to protect
the rights and needs of the proletariat any longer,
we realised the necessity for a new left movement.¹

It is appropriate that any study of the emergence
of the New Left in Sri Lanka should commence with an examination of the crisis faced by the established left parties during the period 1960-65. Basic problems facing the left movement from its inception came to the forefront and pushed it through a process of metamorphosis. The crisis can be analysed by examining three main issues: (i) the strategy to obtain power to implement their policies, (ii) problems of left unity, and (iii) the strategy regarding their relations with liberal bourgeois parties.

The crux of the dilemma confronting the old left movement was their vacillation in deciding upon the strategy to gain power. Even though their ultimate goal had been clearly stated as "the attainment of complete national independence and that of socialism, socialization of the means of production and distribution, exchange and the abolition of social and economic inequality and oppression arising from differences of class, caste,

¹Rohana Wijeweera, CJC Proceedings, Vol.19, 7551.
race, creed or sex", it was of little consequence without a clear-cut strategy to achieve state power. Since their origin they vacillated between parliamentary and revolutionary methods of acquiring power. Consequently their strategy was inconsistent, veering at times towards extra parliamentary methods and at others toeing the parliamentary line. As a result of this bewildering vacillation the old left could not achieve success with either parliamentary or revolutionary strategies. After the general election in 1947 when the U.N.P. was unable to obtain a clear-cut majority, both L.S.S.P. and B.L.P. refused to support moves by some opposition groups to form an alternative government. First, at a public reception for opposition members of parliament and again at a mass meeting on the Gall Face Green after the election, N.M. Perera stated that the L.S.S.P. was a revolutionary party and could not as such accept office under a capitalist government. At the same time, however, the L.S.S.P. was anxious that its leader be recognized as leader of the opposition in parliament. At the L.S.S.P. conference held after the re-union of L.S.S.P. and its splinter B.L.P. on 4 June 1950 it was reiterated that their fundamental objective was to overthrow the capitalist state and seize political power for the working class at the head of the toiling masses. Again in 1950 at the annual conference, revolutionary methods were re-emphasized. The resolution adopted at that conference

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2 G.J. Lerski, Origins of Trotskyism in Ceylon (Stanford, 1968), 27.
3 Ceylon Daily News, 6 November 1947.
states,

The road to the objective of establishing a workers (sic) and peasants (sic) government lies along that of a direct mass struggles (sic) alone, and not through parliamentary devices and manoeuvres. The scrapping of the capitalist administrative apparatus, building of mass organizations in all spheres to defend the interest of masses against their enemies and the arming of the people are some objectives of such a workers (sic) and peasants (sic) Sama Samaja government.4

But this revolutionary line began to fade in the 1951 annual conference of the L.S.S.P. After this conference, Leslie Gunarwardena, secretary of the L.S.S.P., told the press

All the resources of the party would be directed to forming a Sama Samaja government in the next parliament. Such a government, it is stated, need not mean a government of the party alone but it would have to be a government pledged to implement the following fourteen point programme.5

The resolution further declared that the party should seek an electoral agreement with the Sri Lanka Freedom Party. Again in 1954, Colvin R. de Silva, deputy leader of the party stressed revolutionary class struggle as the method of achieving their objective of a “peasants supported workers’ state”.6

The M.E.P. victory of 1956 had a great impact on the thinking of left parties. It strengthened their belief in parliamentary methods and the possibility of coming to power by ballot. The Draft Thesis for the 6th National Congress of the

4 Ceylon Daily News, February 8th, 1951.
6 Colvin R. de Silva, Their Politics and Ours (Colombo, 1954), 3-25.
Ceylon Communist Party stated

The C.P. seeks to establish full democracy and socialism in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) by peaceful means. It considers that by developing a mass movement, by winning a majority in parliament and by backing this majority with mass sanctions the working class and its allies can overcome the resistance of reaction and ensure that parliament becomes an instrument of the people's will for bringing about fundamental changes in the economic, social and state structure. 7

Consequently, for the first time in their history L.S.S.P. and M.E.P. made a bid to obtain a mandate to form a government of their own in the general election of March 1960. As such, the L.S.S.P. and M.E.P. entered candidates for the majority of constituencies. However, the election result were one of stunting defeat for the left parties. Out of 101 L.S.S.P. and 89 M.E.P. candidates only 10 of each were elected, only 4 of 53 C.P. candidates were victorious. A majority of left party candidates forfeited their deposits. With this bitter defeat in mind and just before the 1960 July election, the L.S. S.P. entered a no contest pact with the S.L.F.P. and entered only 21 candidates. "Instead of abandoning the parliamentary strategy after this shattering blow", one ex-L.S.S.P. member complained, "they abandoned the political principles that appeared to have cost them votes." 8

Inability to agree upon parliamentary versus revolutionary tactics merely highlighted the dilemma facing the Sri Lanka left movement in its struggle to achieve unity. The history of the Sri Lankan left movement is, on the one hand, a story of constant effort to unite while its record of further disintegration remained consistent. After the first crack in the L.S.S.P. in 1939 resulted in the formation of the United Socialist Party, a fierce antagonism developed between the two left factions. When the Second World War broke out the L.S.S.P. expressed its opposition to an 'imperialist war' while the United Socialist Party (which became the Ceylon Communist Party in July 1942) extended its cooperation to the British War effort following the Soviet entry into the War. In July 1940 the L.S.S.P. was proscribed and some of its leaders were imprisoned, but the C.P. escaped this repression because of their cooperation in the war effort. However, most L.S.S.P. leaders were able to escape to India where they continued their political activities secretly. In contrast to the L.S.S.P., the C.P. engaged in "respectable politics", closely collaborating with the Ceylon National Congress. At the Ambalangoda session of the Ceylon National Congress in 1943, three communists - S.A. Wickramasinghe, Pieter Keuneman and V. Vaidiyalingam - were admitted to the Congress Working Committee.

After the War the division between the L.S.S.P. and the C.P. remained very acute. In addition, the L.S.S.P. itself divided at the end of the War. More doctrinaire Trotkeyites including Colvin R. de Silva, Leslie Gunawardena,
Bernard Soysa, Doric de Souza and Edmond Samarakkody organized separately and continued the Bolshevik-Leninist Party which they had formed when in hiding in India. In 1951 the L.S.S.P. and the Bolshevik-Leninist Party were re-united but in protest Philip Goonewardena and his followers broke away from the L.S.S.P. and formed the Viplawakari (revolutionary) L.S.S.P.

In the early years of the 50s, ideological differences between the C.P. and L.S.S.P. were very strong. In the 4th Congress of the C.P. held at Matara, the thesis of a 'progressive national bourgeoisie' was put forward. In their annual conference in 1950, the L.S.S.P. severely condemned "the false slogans of National Front, 'Popular Front,' 'Peoples Democracy' and their variants advanced by the Communist Party in its new line". Notwithstanding constant pressure from the rank and file for left unity they were divided by deep ideological, tactical and personal differences. In 1950 the deputy leader of L.S.S.P. charged that "the C.P. actually holds that its first task today is to destroy trotskyism". Conversely, the C.P. accused the L.S.S.P. of serving as a tool of reaction by attempting to divide the Left and isolate the C.P. The question of left unity emerged vehemently at the L.S.S.P.

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10 Colvin R. de Silva, Left Disunity - A Reply to a Critic
annual party conference in 1952. A resolution for close cooperation with the other left parties proposed by a group opposed to the party leadership was defeated, but the battle continued within the party throughout the proceeding year. The L.S.S.P. expected the C.P. to accept their 14 point programme; the L.S. S.P. party secretary stated that "The party would persist in its effort to persuade the Ceylon Communist Party to join in a left United Front in the election struggle to form a government on an agreed programme of such a nature described above (14 point programme)".12 Once again the unity issue emerged at the 1953 party conference and again the resolution for the united action was defeated on a vote of 259 to 125 because of the influence of the party leadership. After the defeat of their resolution the dissident group which consisted of one-third of the entire membership left the party. Most, eventually joined the C.P. or one of the other existing left parties.

The common animosity of the V.L.S.S.P. and the C.P. to the L.S.S.P. prompted the formation of a United Front by the V.L.S.S.P. and the C.P. This United Front broke down in 1955 when the V.L.S.S.P. joined the S.L.F.P. - dominated M.E.P. coalition.

In 1958 Philip Goonerwadena and his group were elbowed out of the government. Thereafter Goonerwadena changed the name of his party to M.E.P. to indicate that it was his party which carried the legacy of the 1956 political change. On the

eve of the 1960 March election the left parties were so divided that they clashed with each other in many constituencies. A cry for left unity again emerged at the end of 1962. This time it emerged at trade union level. A series of strikes in both private and public sections led by trade unions affiliated with left parties forced their political leadership to take united action against the Sirima Bandaranaike government. The first manifestation of this new development towards left unity was shown in the joint rally of the three left parties in February, 1963, to protest the termination of American aid as a result of the Nationalization of the assets of American petroleum companies in Sri Lanka. A joint May Day rally reflected further development of this trend when the leader of the L.S.S.P. states "if the three parties March together in the manner they had done for the rally it would be possible to overthrow the government and establish a socialist state." 13 Soon after the May Day rally, the left parties started negotiations to form a United Left. In the negotiations, the L.S.S.P. abandoned their policies on the Tamil language and citizenship rights for the plantation workers. After protracted negotiations, the three parties agreed to form the United Left Front on a limited programme. 14 After more than two decades the leaders of the left parties...

14 The central committee of the L.S.S.P. adopted the resolution for the U.L.F. only by 27 votes to 11.
in Sri Lanka appeared on one Platform. The Formation of the United Left Front was greeted with great enthusiasm by the bulk of ordinary left sympathizers. After the inaugural rally of the U.L.F. a newspaper reported that "A massive crowd of supporters stood in hushed expectancy as the leaders of the three left parties - Mr. Philip Goonewardena, Dr. N.M. Perera and Dr. S.A. Wickramasinghe - lit the traditional oil lamp symbolizing the birth of the United Left Front at Independence Square yesterday evening." However, it was a short act in the tragic drama of the Sri Lankan Left.

Prior to independence the L.S.S.P. policy towards the Ceylon National Congress was very clear. In their programme for the establishment of socialism no room was allocated to the role of the bourgeoisie. The C.P., however, advocated a limited role for the progressive national bourgeoisie. After the Ambalangoda session of the Ceylon National Congress in 1943 the C.P. agreed to some united action with the Congress. By the 1947 election, they decided to support some U.N.P. candidates against L.S.S.P. candidates. In late 1948 this policy of 'collaboration' with U.N.P. was suddenly changed when Pieter Keuneman relinquished his post as General Secretary to Harry Abeygoonawardena who represented the left wing of the party. However, in 1950 the C.P. in their 4th National Congress returned to the policy of collaboration and put forward the theory of two stages of revolution and the progressive role of the national

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bourgeoisie. In 1951, when the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (S.L.F.P.) was founded by S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, the C.P. readily analysed it as a party of the national bourgeoisie. After the 1952 election, Bandaranaike was able to become the leader of the opposition only because he was supported by the C.P. and V.L.S.S.P. The attitude of the L.S.S.P. regarding the new party was not consistent. Even though the S.L.F.P. was viewed as a division of the capitalist class and a bourgeois party, they expressed their eagerness for joint actions with the S.L.F.P. In a press statement of 3 January 1952, the L.S.S.P. secretary stated "the party should seek an electoral agreement with the Sri Lanka Freedom Party." In 1955 the V.L.S.S.P. entered into a coalition with S.L.F.P. and after the M.E.P. victory two members of V.L.S.S.P., Philip Goonewardena and P.H. William Silva, were given ministries in the new government. Before the election, the C.P. and L.S.S.P. also concluded a no-contest poll agreement with the S.L.F.P.-led M.E.P. coalition. After the election the L.S.S.P. offered critical support while the C.P. pledged unqualified support to the government. The relationship between the Left and S.L.F.P. broke down in 1958, but after the 1960 March election both the C.P. and L.S.S.P. concluded no contest pacts with Mrs Bandaranaike, leader of the S.L.F.P. After the S.L.F.P. victory, once again the L.S.S.P. and the C.P. offered their critical support to the Sirima Bandaranaike government. In 1960, Leslie Goonewardena,

the secretary of the L.S.S.P. clarified its stand.

The Lanka Sama Samaja Party, while functioning as an independent group bound neither to the government party nor to the opposition party, today adopts a position of general support of the government, holding itself free to criticise the government as well as vote against it where it disagrees.¹⁷

As for the C.P., their tactic after the 4th congress was unity of working class and the national bourgeois forces to defeat the reactionary alliance between imperialism and the U.N.P. As N. Shanmugadasan, then central committee member of the C.P. revealed later, in August 1962, the C.P. central committee discussed the possibility of unity with the S.L.F.P. and passed a resolution to that effect.¹⁸ But at the end of 1962, the attitude of the Left towards the S.L.F.P. government changed suddenly. A series of strikes in the public sector in December 1961 and January 1962 created a confrontation between the left and government. The government took a firm stand in curbing these strikes and on some occasions used Armed Forces to quell them. During the Colombo harbour strike in January 1962, the Army was used to smooth the functioning of the harbour. At the annual conference of the L.S.S.P. in 1962, a new resolution was adopted to carry on an all out struggle to replace the S.L.F.P. government and put forward the new slogan of "Forward to a genuine socialist government".¹⁹ Similarly the C.P. also

¹⁹ Ibid., July 24th, 1962.
changed its policy regarding the government and in 1963 Pieter Keuneman wrote in the World Marxist Review:

Supported by the left, Mrs. Bandaranaike's government at first pursued the line of weakening the economic and political positions of imperialism and compradore capital. But later, towards the end of 1961, it began to reverse this trend. Began to compromise with the foreign and domestic vested interests, to vacillate and retreat; it clashed with the working class and the Left Parties, and began to rely more on emergency powers and on the support of the armed forces.

It was under these circumstances that the Left abandoned their conditional support of the S.L.F.P. and the United Left Front was formed.

After years of power, Sirima Bandaranaike's government was facing difficulties both internally and externally. Even though it had a sufficient majority in the House of representatives its existence was precarious because of the incompetency and inefficiency of its own ministerial ranks. M.P.'s of the S.L.F.P. were deserting the party and its parliamentary majority was rapidly decreasing. The main problem was the government's inability to meet the economic crisis of the country. There followed a succession of finance ministers (F.R. Dias Bandaranaike; P.B.G. Kalugalla, C.P. de Silva). None of them presented two consecutive annual budgets.

The government had to face challenges from the emerging United Left Front as well as from the traditional opposition, the U.N.P.. As government used greater emergency

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powers to curb working class agitation and strikes, the desertion of workers from the government became more and more apparent. The newly formed United Front created an enthusiasm among workers and gave an impetus to their strike actions. As strikes erupted in various government institutions, chaos reigned. The Habour strike lasted for 55 days, the Bank strike for 3. After these were settled C.T.B. went on strike for 17 days. In this difficult situation Prime Minister Sirima Bandaranaike showed her astuteness. Realizing the potential threat from the working class and, as a means of countering a massive challenge from that direction, she invited the traditional left parties, around which the working class had been organized, to join her government in 1964. Although Philip Goonewardena laid down conditions on behalf of the U.L.F. which the prime minister found impossible to accept, N.M. Perera negotiated privately with the P.M. on behalf of the L.S.S.P. As the central committee of the L.S.S.P. considered the invitation of P.M. to join the government, three conflicting factions appeared. One represented by 14 central committee members including Edmond Samarakkody, V. Karalasingham and Bala Thampo categorically opposed coalition. The second faction sponsored by 8 central committee members including Colvin R. de Silva and Leslie Goonewardena approved coalition with the government if the U.L.F. as a unit was included. A third faction represented by N.M. Perera and 20 other C.C. members suggested that the L.S.S.P. unilaterally join the government, deserting the U.L.F. if necessary. At the special party
conference a resolution proposed by N.M. Perera and the unilaterals was approved, receiving 500 votes to only 160 and 75 votes respectively for the other two proposals. After their resolution was defeated, the group opposing coalition left the L.S.S.P. and formed a new party, the Revolutionary Lanka Sama Samaja Party (R-L.S.S.P.).

At the same time the Ceylon Communist Party was torn apart by the Sino-Soviet dispute in the international Communist movement. By about 1963 the Sino-Soviet conflict began to affect the Sri Lanka Communist Party. From the early beginning of the rivalry, the majority of the leaders of the Sri Lanka Communist Party supported and approved the Soviet stand. After the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (C.P.S.U.) in 1961, Pieter Keuneman declared that it was a turning point in the entire Communist Movement. The Ceylon C.P. praised C.P.S.U. for its efforts to eradicate the Stalinist personality cult and accused the Albanian Party of trying to break "the unity of the Socialist camp and the international Communist Movement." Further, in 1963 when the ideological differences between the C.P.S.U. and Chinese Communist Party (C.C.P.) emerged, the Ceylon C.P. again took a firm pro-Soviet stand. As Kearney has pointed out, "the unequivocal pro-Moscow stand of the Ceylon party (Communist) leaders had

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few parallels in Asian Communist parties".23

Whereas the majority of the polit bureau members unquestionably approved the Soviet line, two members, N. Shanmugadasan and Premalal Kumarsiri, took a pro Chinese stand. The dissention between Shanmugadasan, General Secretary of the Ceylon Trade Union Federation and Ceylon Plantation Workers' Union, and the Party first appeared over the question of the C.P.'s joining the U.L.P. By mid 1963 Shanmugadasan adopted the Chinese line in open contrast to his party's official line. In a speach organized by the Socialist Society at the University of Ceylon on 8 October 1963 Shanmugadasan so severely criticized the C.P. leadership that he could no longer stay in the party. Consequently, Shanmugadasan and Premalal Kumarsiri were suspended from the party and 10 days later Shanmugadasan was expelled completely. He was charged with forming a 'Marxist Study Circle' as the nucleus of a party within the party and of seeking to turn the Ceylon Trade Union Federation, using his position as general secretary, against the party leadership. 24 Premalal Kumarsiri, editor of the Sinhalese language party organ, was also expelled for advocating the Chinese line. Thereafter the rivalry between factions within the C.P. cropped up openly and the dissidents publicly challenged the pro-Soviet stand of party.

English educated and older Communists are going the Soviet way while the Sinhala educated tend toward China. Dr. S.A. Wickramasinghe and Mr. Pieter Keuneman support Russia. Mr. N. Shanmugadasan favors China. The last named is closer to the rank and file having worked himself into the confidence the trade unions while Dr. Wickramasinghe and Pieter Keuneman have been more interested in Parliamentary activities.  

A fierce struggle erupted between the two factions to gain control of Communist led trade unions and other organizations. The pro-Chinese faction was able to get the Ceylon trade union federation on their side and its president, pro-Moscow M.G. Mendis, walked out of the annual meeting of the federation in December 1963. By November 1963 the central committee of the All Ceylon Federation of Communist and Progressive Youth League also took up arms against the pro-Moscow leadership of the party and called on the Federation membership to fight party revisionism. In December 1963 another group of central committee members including D.N. Nadunge, N.K.D. Jinendradasa, N.L. Perera, Higgoda Darmasena, W.S. de A. Siriwardena and K.W. Wimalapala rejected the pro-Soviet stand of the party leadership.

The Division within the Communist Party became a complete rupture in 1964 when both groups held separate party congresses. Even though a majority of the polit bureau members

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26 Ibid., December 19th, 1963.
27 Ibid., December 9th, 1963.
remained in the pro-Moscow party, more active secondary level leaders gathered in the pro-Chinese wing of the party which held its congress in January, attended by 399 delegates and 149 observers from 109 party branches. A new central committee was elected and Shanmugadasan and Premalal Kumarasiri were named to the positions of General Secretary and National Organizer.

The pro-Soviet faction of the party held its congress in April 1964 with 422 delegates attending. Pieter Keuneman was named as party secretary and other pro-Soviet leaders completed the party hierarchy.

Finally, in accordance with the rupture of the International Communist movement the Ceylon Communist party divided into two contending parties. While the Ceylon Communist Party pro-Moscow (C.C.P.(M)) advocated a peaceful path to socialism through use of the parliament as the people's will, the Ceylon Communist Party pro-Peking (C.C.P.(P)) rejected the peaceful path to socialism and urged a more radical strategy. Thus, within a short period of one year the traditional left parties united for the first time in their history, but divided again, and disintegrated more than ever.

After the established left parties had entered a coalition with the S.L.F.P. and leaders of the L.S.S.P. were given three important ministries while the R.L.S.S.P. and C.C.P. (P) became rallying points for the radical left. In a short

period of time these radical groups of the traditional left achieved considerable success in winning over sizable trade unions at the expense of the L.S.S.P.

The emergence of the C.C.P.(P) and R-L.S.S.P. is very important to this study because these two parties acted unconsciously as intermediaries between all but one New Left group and the established left. In many respects the links that bind the traditional and New Left are found in these parties. At the same time they represented characteristics of both old and New Left. These two parties, the C.C.P.(P) and the R-L.S.S.P., prepared and provided the womb to conceive the new left groups. Most of the leaders of the new left received their political schooling, organizational experience and ideological substance from these two parties.

At first these parties became rallying points for radical elements of the left in Sri Lanka who challenged the moderationist tendencies of the old left. While the traditional left overwhelmingly accepted a gradual and peaceful transition to socialism, the C.C.P.(P) and the R-L.S.S.P. vehemently challenged the theory of peaceful transition and advocated revolution and armed struggle. In contrast to the old left who placed their hopes on parliament and confined their activities to achieving victory through coalition with the S.L.F.P., the radical parties emphasized the primary importance of extra-parliamentary struggle. Whereas C.P. and L.S.S.P. had become more sensitive to the balloting behavior of ordinary voters and were activated by day-to-day practical
political events, the two new radical parties emphasized the importance of harmonizing their activities with clear-cut-Marxist theory. The C.C.P.(P) accepted the invincibility of Mao's Thought and R-L.S.S.P. championed Trotskyism.

The new radical parties had not completely saved themselves from the heritage of the old left. Most of the leaders of both the C.C.P.(P) and R-L.S.S.P. were old guard leftists who had begun their political lives in 30s and early 40s. They had the same experiences and also came from more or less similar social and educational backgrounds as the old left leaders. The secondary level leaders and district organizers, however, were youngsters who had entered the arena of politics in the late 50s and early 60s with an entirely different social and educational background.

Even though the radical tone of the C.C.P.(P) and R-L.S.S.P. attracted the more energetic and radical elements mostly youths; they were unable to provide a programme of action different from the old established left parties. Theoretically, they rejected peaceful methods of achieving socialism but they were not able to build up an alternative revolutionary organization. They criticized the old left who had succumbed to the "parliamentary myth" but they also contested elections to pinpoint and to uncover fraud. As a result there existed a vast contradiction between their theory and actual practice. Reviewing past experiences, Sanmugadasan himself admitted later that:

Of course, there were mistakes on out part also.
We allowed a gap to develop between our theory and practice, between our words and deeds. Born out of a revisionist party, we could not easily break away from revisionist organisational forms and styles of work. Organisationally, we did not completely sever the umbilical cord that tied us to the old party although we did so theoretically. By the time we came to correct these errors in our 9th Congress in 1968, some damage had been done.29

Chapter IV

The Emergence of the New Left

The history of the Sri Lankan left movement after 1965 is, to a certain extent, a history of the birth and development of the New Left. The left splinter groups, C.C.P. (P) and R.L.S.S.P. reached the zenith of their expansion in 1965, but their success was shortlived. Thereafter, the gap between the leadership of both parties and their radical membership widened rapidly. The birth of the New Left can be traced to ideological conflicts developing within the C.C.P.(P) and R.L.S.S.P.

In the period 1965-68 four groups developed within the C.C.P.(P). They were the Gini Pupura group led by Kalyananda Thiranagama, Rohana Wijeweera's group, Samajawadi Sangamaya led by Nihal Dias and Sarath Wijesinghe and Peradiga Sulanga group led by Gamini Yapa. The R.L.S.S.P. also underwent a process of disintegration and split into three groups - Samarakkody group (R.L.S.S.P.), Bala Tampo group (L.S.S.P.(R)) and Revolutionary Communist League (R.C.L.). These splinter groups waged a continuous ideological struggle with the leadership while competing among themselves.

The first group to emerge from the struggle in the

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1 The first division in the C.C.P.(P) developed between Shanmugadasan and Premalal Kumarasiri. When Shanmugadasan gained control of the party, Kumarasiri was forced to leave. Kumarasiri's banishment provided an opportunity for younger members to climb in the party.
C.C.P.(P) was led by Kalyananda Thiranagama. K.A. Wimalapala, D.U. Jayasekara and Kularathna Wickramasinghe who had left the C.P. with Shammugadasan in 1964 joined him. They secretly organized themselves with a view toward building up a truly revolutionary party in Ceylon. A. Gunasekara, the capable organizer of the Island's largest peasant organization, Lanka Govi Sammelanaya, decided to join them with his organization.

At the same time, division between the Wijeweera group and the C.C.P.(P) developed. Rohana Wijeweera came from a left-inclined, petty-bourgeois family in Southern Sri Lanka (Kottegoda, Matara) which was considered a communist stronghold from the very beginning. Wijeweera's father had been a supporter of the communist candidate for Hakmana in 1947. This communist background helped Wijeweera to obtain a Soviet scholarship to study medicine at the Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow. As a student there two of Wijeweera's friends influenced his political thinking. One was Murad Aidit, brother of the chairman of the Indonesian Communist Party; the other was Sheikh Abeid Karume, a Zanzibarian student who later led the 'one day revolution' in Zanzibar in January 1963.

Murad Aidit, who received publications of the Chinese Communist Party from Indonesia introduced Wijeweera to Maoism, from Karume, Wijeweera borrowed the strategy of 'one day insurrection'. When Wijeweera returned to Sri Lanka in March 1964 for summer vacation, Sri Lankan Communists were very tense. The party was divided sharply according to the Sino-Soviet dispute and both factions were actively seeking control...
over local party organizations. In Sri Lanka Wijeweera met Premalal Kumarsiri, a loyal C.C.P.(P) leader at the time, and developed a close relation with that party. In view of his political relations with the C.C.P.(P), the Soviet embassy did not renew Wijeweera's visa. To continue his studies at the Lumumba University was now impossible, so Wijeweera began his political career in the C.C.P.(P).

In early 1965, just a month before Premalal Kumarasiri left the party, Wijeweera became a candidate member of the party. Shamugadasan expected to overcome the loss of Kumarasiri by promoting more youthful and energetic members. As an active member and one who opposed 'revisionism' even in the Soviet Union, Wijeweera was popular among the party cadre. He developed a relationship with members of the party who would later became his lieutenants in forming a new organization.2

From the beginning, Wijeweera questioned party leadership. During Shamugadasan's election campaign in the Colombo Municipal election, Wijeweera "came to realise that Shamugadasan was not a true Marxist, but merely a capitalist."3 Wijeweera secretly organized a group within the party to oust Shamugadasan as leader. On Wijeweera's invitation, about 10 members of the party gathered at Karunarathna's house at

2 In this period Wijeweera met two other men who influenced his future - Karunarathna, branch secretary of Wattala and Wijesena Withana alias Sanath, district secretary of Anuradhapura.

Akmeemana on Vesak day in May 1965. The crisis and the deterioration that had set in the left movement was discussed for days. The conspirators, led by Wijeweera, came to the conclusion that there was no distinction in substance between the Peking wing led by Shammugadasan and the former Communist Party either in philosophy or programme. Therefore, it was decided to wage an internal ideological struggle within the Peking wing and prepare for a future Revolutionary Marxist Party. It was Wijeweera's first test of leadership and "several of those present became pioneers in the political movement which would later assume the name of Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People's Liberation Front)." 4

By this time Wijeweera had been invited to work full time in the party. He accepted as it would facilitate his supporters' infiltration of the C.C.P.(P) and promote the internal party struggle to topple Shammugadasan. In August 1965 Wijeweera was appointed Assistant Secretary of the Youth Front. He had two objectives in mind in this period; firstly, to criticize the leadership and expose 'the faulty nature and false appearance of the politics of Shammugadasan'; and secondly, to organize an inner circle within the party loyal to himself. His activities were confined mainly to the Youth League of the party. Before long, Shammugadasan became aware of the rebellious activities of Wijeweera. The sparing between

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4 Criminal Justice Commission, Judgement of the Inquiry No.1 (Politbureau), (Colombo, 1976), 114.
Wijeweera and Shammugadasan became an open fight at the Youth Congress in April 1966. A day prior to the opening of the Congress, Wijeweera's group gathered at Thimbirigasyaya to discuss strategy. They decided to support the existing committee of the Youth Congress because it consisted of followers of Wijeweera. The Congress accepted the list of officers submitted by Shammugadasan which effectively countered Wijeweera's influence in the Youth League.

After the Youth Congress the division between Wijeweera and Shammugadasan intensified. Wijeweera and Gunetilake, who was also a party fulltimer, openly challenged Shammugadasan over his appointment of Jinendrepala as editor of the party organ Kamkaruwa. Shammugadasan summoned the district committee members and branch secretaries of the C.C.P.(P) to party headquarters and condemned Wijeweera and exposed 'his anti-party activities'. Shortly thereafter Wijeweera was removed from membership in the party.

Expelled from the party, Wijeweera went to Anuradhapura with Karunarathna, met Sanath and discussed the future. A second discussion attended by 15 of Wijeweera's followers was held at Akmeemana. They, according to Wijeweera, decided to form into "a revolutionary body and spread this

5 Those summoned to this secret meeting were Sanath alias Withana, Piyatilake, Loku Athula, W.T. Karunarathna, Milton, D.A. Gunawakewa, T.D. Walter, Wimalagune, Delgado Raja and Mahinda Paliyawardena. C.J.C. Document S-13P, 3.
revolutionary thought amongst the people of Ceylon and Wijeweera was named secretary of the organizational committee.

The main intention of the Wijeweera group was to build up a base among the peasantry of the dry zone. Sanath, experienced in political work among the peasantry, suggested that they concentrate on the workers of the Land Development Department. With their help penetration of the dry zone peasantry could be expedited. This incipient political movement captured Danapala, the Trade Union leader of the Land Development Department; and using this connection, Wijeweera, Sanath, Piyatilake, Milton and loku Athula were able to conduct political discussions at Land Development Department work-sites at Colombo, Mahivangane, Hasalaka, Dewagiriya, Mareke, Padaviya Anuradhapura and Rajanganaya. According to Wijeweera

At this time my discussions were confined to one lecture on the economic situation, threat of Indian expansionism, the need for a revolution and the failings of the left parties. There were at times forty to fifty who attended these discussions. Sanath, Piyatilleke, Milton and Loku Athula also conducted similar classes.

After devoted and assiduous work by pioneers of the movement (namely Wijeweera, Sanath, Loku Athula, Piyatillake, Milton and Danapala), they were able to build up a base of devoted followers across the country. Time had come to organize their political movement more tightly. Consequently, in mid-1967,

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7 Ibid., 7.
the leaders of the movement met at Kalatthawa where Sanath was teaching. The Kalatthawa discussions lasted about three days and "paved the way to the emergence of the political movement".  

After the Kalatthawa discussions, more attention was paid to formulate systematic indoctrination classes to recruit new members. Following a preliminary orientation, there were four indoctrination classes at this stage. The preliminary orientation discussion, entitled "impending political danger", discussed the threat of a U.N.P. dictatorship with the backing of the C.I.A. Once basic agreement was reached on the preliminary discussion, four indoctrination political classes followed. By 1968 the Wijeweera group had taken firm root on the Island as a clandestine revolutionary political movement.

In the meantime other C.C.P.(P) splinter groups had been active as well. Kalyananda Thiranagama's group had left the C.C.P.(P) before Wijeweera and was also working to establish a revolutionary political party. They published an underground newspaper called Gini Pupura (The Spark) and were identified as the Gini Pupura group. Compared to Wijeweera's group, Kalyananda's supporters consisted of more elderly persons

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8 C.J.C. Judgement, 116.

9 They were 1. The economic crisis, 2. Indian expansionism, 3. Independence, 4. The left movement in Sri Lanka. The fifth indoctrination class, the path the Ceylonese Revolution should take, came little later. The fifth class was drawn up soon after the Kalattawa discussion, the class was finalized at the end of 1968.
such as Ariyawansa Gunasekare, D.U. Jayasekera and K.A. Wimalapala.

Another important group emerging from the C.C.P.(P) was Gamini Yapa's followers. Earlier, when Shanmugadasan broke away from the C.P. in 1964, one of his bright youthful followers was Gamini Yapa. He was a Science Graduate of Colombo Campus, University of Ceylon and subsequently a science teacher for a brief period. He soon rose to the post of Central committee member and later editor of the widely circulated party organ *Kamkaruwa*. He was also District Secretary of the C.C.P.(P), Colombo branch. Before long, Gamini Yapa became discontented with the party leadership, but he did not leave as had Wijeweera and Kalyananda. He genuinely thought that the party could be corrected through internal struggle.

"Since 1965," Yapa explained,

we also had criticized and opposed various incorrect tendencies and attitudes amongst the leadership, but in vain. The leadership was bent on suppressing the members and youth leagues who were critical of the organisational politics and procedures of the leading bodies of the party.\(^10\)

Frustrated, he turned his energy to building up a revolutionary circle within the party as a nucleus for a revolutionary party. In early 1969 Gamini Yapa and his group left the C.C.P.(P) and formed the *Peradiga Sulanga* (Eastern Wind). Gamini Yapa justified their action as follows:

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*\(^{10}\) Lanka Guardian, Which Way for the Left - 11; Gamini Yapa - *Peradiga Sulaga (East Wind)* Group, 2-11 (September, 1979).*
The leadership was not able to produce a revolutionary programme to meet the demands of the members and the working masses. Though they spoke highly about grasping revolutionary armed struggle they did not have any intention to take at least the first step towards their goal. The powers of leadership were abused to the extent of suppressing all initiative on the part of members, and the internal party criticism was curbed. The immediate cause for our withdrawal from the party was the wholesale expulsion of members whose only crime was criticising the method and working styles of the party leadership.

*Paradiga Sulanga* adhered to the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung. They were the foremost champions of his strategy of a protracted People's War, and counterposed it to the strategy of a one day insurrection advocated by wijeweera group. By 1968-69 they were able to build up a peasant base for their organisation, notably around Hanguranketa.

In addition to the groups mentioned above, the *Samajawadi Sangamaya*, a student organization of the C.C.P.(VP) at the University of Ceylon, also left the party. After internal division of the C.P., *Samajawadi Sangamaya* followed Sanmugadasan. Led by Birti Gangadhara, Newton Gunasinghe and Shanmugaratnam, it was very influential in student politics at the University of Ceylon in 1965 and 1966. The division between *Samajawadi Sangamaya* and its mother party began to develop in late 1966 when leadership of the student organization passed into the hands of a dissident group led by Nimal Dias, Sarath Wijesinghe and Siriwardena. At a stormy annual session in 1967, *Samajawadi*

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11 Ibid.
Sangamaya voted to dissolve their connections with the C.C.P. (P) and to become an independent revolutionary organization. A little later, Samajawadi Sangamaya expelled Nihal Dias, the previous leader, and Sarath Wijesinghe, Siritwardena and Dissanaike took command. All three dissident groups which had already left the C.C.P.(P) made spirited efforts to win over the Samajawadi Sangamaya. Kalyananda tried but failed to convince Sarath Wijesinghe. Wijeweera and Lokumathula also met with Sarath Wijesinghe, Siritwardena, Podi Disanayake and others. After series of prolonged discussions, most of the members of the Samajawadi Sangamaya decided to work with Wijeweera.13

The desertion of the Samajawadi Sangamaya was the final blow. These fissures debilitated the once proud C.C.C. (P) and by 1969 it had become an enfeebled political organization.

The integrity of the R.L.S.S.P. did not last as long as that of the C.C.P.(P). The first division in the R.L.S.S.P. appeared just after the dissolution of parliament in December 1964. The student union affiliated to the R.L.S.S.P. denounced the party leadership for voting with the opposition parties to topple the coalition government of the S.L.F.P. - L.S.S.P. They formed a loose organization called Sisyaha Satan Peramuna (Students Fighting Front) and published a newspaper.

12 After his fellow comrades deserted Nihal Dias also made a unsuccessful attempt to form a political organization with Raja Gunatilake. But they could not stand up with the J.V.P.

13 However, very few namely Piyasena Kukule decided to work with Peradiga Sulanga and Passara Dissanaike decided to work with Gini Pupura.
entitled "Sakthi" (The Strength). At the end of 1966 the Sakthi group divided again. One part joined the main L.S.S.P. which was now in coalition with the S.L.F.P. and the C.P. they controlled the newspaper, Sakthi, thus forcing the dissident students to publish their own newspaper, Virodaya, and to identify themselves as the Virodaya group. In 1968 the Virodaya group acquired the name Revolutionary Communist League. As was the case of similar groups leaving the C.C.P. (P) the leadership of the Revolutionary Communist League consisted mainly of youths.

In 1968 another major split occurred in the Revolutionary L.S.S.P.. This time, Bala Tampo, the organizer of the most powerful private sector white collar trade union, Ceylon Mercantile Union, broke away and formed the L.S.S.P. (R). During this split another group led by Wilfred Perera left the R-L.S.S.P. and joined the Revolutionary Communist league.

At the same time an internal rift between Wijeweera and Darmasekara within the Wijeweera group gave birth to another political organization led by Darmasekara.

Darmasekara was a graduate of Vidyalankara University and came to politics a member of C.C.P.(M) when he was an undergraduate. In 1967 he became President of the Student Council at Vidyalankara University and later the President of the Jathika Sisya Sammelanaya (Lanka Student National Federation) affiliated

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\[14\] Virodaya, 1:1 February 1967.

to the C.P.(M). Influenced by the literature of the Cuban Revolution, he grew discontented with the party that urged the parliamentary path to socialism. As a popular student council leader he had supporters, mainly youths, in the party and he tried to organize a secret revolutionary circle within the party. In early 1968, one of Wijeweera's lieutenants learned of Darmasekara's disaffection and arranged a discussion between Wijeweera and Darmasekara. Darmasekara and his followers agreed to work with Wijeweera and were assigned to work the Kalutara district and Kurunegala and Ratnapura districts to Jayakody and Lal Parakrema.

The union between Wijeweera and Darmasekara did not last. The rift was probably the result of a personality conflict between the two leaders. Wijeweera believed "Darmasekara was trying to create a clique of his own and trying to make out that he was the leader of movement". In mid 1969 Darmasekara and his friends Jayakody, Fernando and Lal Parakrema were summoned to Kataragama to resolve differences. Darmasekara and others agreed to confine their political activities to their respective districts and to submit the membership lists from their districts. Even after this warning

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17 C.J.C., Document S-13A, 12.
18 Ibid.
Wijeweera found that the Darmasekara group was still trespassing upon district boundaries. The differences between Darmasekara and Wijeweera came to a crisis and before the general election of 1970 Wijeweera decided to expel Darmasekara and his supporters. This was the first major split within the J.V.P. since its birth. After expulsion from J.V.P., Darmasekara and his group worked as a separate political organization.

At the beginning of the seventies there were five underground political groups working in the countryside. They waged a continuous struggle against the traditional left parties who had succumbed to parliamentary politics, while continuing the fratricidal strife among themselves.

With the emergence of these underground revolutionary groups a new element entered Sri Lankan politics. Even though there were acute ideological and tactical differences, certain common characteristics possessed by all these groups justifies treating them as one entity. While not identical, they were different manifestations of the same tendency. First of all, the emergence of these political organizations from similar origins occurred in the period after 1965. Secondly, these groups consisted primarily of youthful leadership addressing youthful audiences. The leadership, without exception, came from the unprivileged social classes; none of them had access to power and privilege within the existing structure of society. All of them possessed similar educational backgrounds; they were a product of Central Schools, Maha Vidyalayas and Sri Lanka Universities. None of them were able to attend
Western Universities except Wijeweera. They unanimously rejected Parliamentary politics as a capitalist manoeuvre to withhold real state power from the people and they insisted upon revolutionary direct action, particularly armed revolution, by the people. However, in determining the strategy of armed revolution, they varied from one end of the spectrum to the other. Wijeweera advocated sudden widespread insurrection of short duration while Gamini Yapa proposed a protracted people's war.

To be sure, all these groups in common chorus insisted upon radical changes in the existing political, social and economic structures of society. All believed socialism to be the solution to the country's problems.

Another conspicuous common characteristic shared by these groups was their dedication and commitment to their political goals. Sacrificing all the comforts of life, they were inspired by an almost messianic faith in their, and in unique revolutionary mission of Sri Lanka. They believed that they had a duty to liberate the people from exploitation and misery, and a holy right to act as the trustees of an oppressed and mute. The following passage from a letter of an ordinary member of the J.V.P. detained after the 1971 uprising captures the nature of their commitment:

The responsibility is on us to change this social system. If we try to evade this responsibility we will have to die as slaves. Then we will be excused by ourselves, but not by the future generation! They will come in search of our graves and curse us... Though we are born
as slaves in a slave land, we have the liberty
to die in a liberated land...19

At this point we are confronted with the difficulty
of giving definition to this new political tendency. The 1971
uprising destroyed most of the myths which prevailed in Sri
Lankan politics and provoked a number of scholars from various
disciplines to try and explain it. Most of them clearly avoided
giving definition to the phenomenon and their narrations concern-
ing the development of new revolutionary political groups are
limited to brief background introductions. A few tried to define
the new revolutionary political groups but these definitions
are ambiguous and unsatisfactory. Charles Blackton for example,
uses the term "Ultra - Marxists"20 because this tendency repre-
tends left radicalism in Sri Lankan politics and champions
revolutionary armed struggle. But Blackton neglects the basic
fact that the legitimacy of armed revolution on the part of
oppressed classes is an organic part of Marxist philosophy.
The term 'Ultra Marxist' is redundant and expressions such as
ultra Marxist, 'moderate Marxist' and 'genuine Marxist' are of
little analytical use. A.J. Wilson prefers the term 'revolu-
tionary left'.21 It is a very broad definition and avoids many

19 Chandra Anagiratne (Chief Rehabilitation Officer), The
unpublished manuscript on 1971 uprising. (I express here my
sincere thanks to Mr. Anagiratne for allowing me free access to
this valuable manuscript).
20 Charles S. Blackton, "The Marxist and the Ultra Marxist of
Sri Lanka Since Independence", The Ceylon Journal of Historical
21 A.J. Wilson, Politics in Sri Lanka 1947-1973,* (London,
1974), 161
problems; however, Wilson includes the C.C.P.(P) and the R-L.S.S.P. in that category. As has been pointed out by this author, there are several marked differences between those parties and the new revolutionary political groups. Since it fails to differentiate the new tendency from the old left on the one hand and from the R-L.S.S.P. and the C.C.P.(P) on the other, the term 'revolutionary left' must be discarded.

Old left parties identified this new element as 'Ultra Left'. The most elaborate exposition of this definition can be found in Colvin R. de Silva's essay, _April 1971, A Fore Doomed Ultra Leftist Adventure._

... This is sheer demagoguery and represents nothing but Ultra-Leftism seeking again to raise its head. It is said that there are some Left organizations, groups or grouplets today which peddle the politics of 'Ultra Leftism'.

Although some of the groups of the new tendency later admitted in their self criticism, that they had succumbed to ultra left deviations, the term 'ultra left' can not be used to define and identify the new phenomenon for several reasons. Primarily, this term has been used with much sardonic tone and as such it may affect the objectivity of historical scholarship.

Considering all these factors this author prefers to use the term 'New Left' to identify and define these political

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22 Colvin R. de Silva, _April 1971 A Fore Doomed Ultra Leftist Adventure_ (Colombo 1979), 18-19.

groups. The term 'New Left' first acquired importance in political debates in the early 1960s with the emergence of militant student and youth movements in North America and Western Europe. These new radical and youth movements developed independently of the established left parties, mainly communist, which hitherto claimed a monopoly of left radicalism. They were critical of the Soviet form of communism and used the term New Left to identify and differentiate it from the old left. Even though the international New Left became a marked political force only in 1960s, the origins of the international New Left can be traced to 1956.

At the 20th Congress of the C.P.S.U. in 1956 Khrushchev condemned Stalin and, in the same year, the Soviet army invaded Hungary. These incidents were instrumental in challenging the hegemonic position of the Soviet Union in the World radical movement. As a protest to the Soviet invasion of Hungary, Jean Paul Sartre broke with the French Communist Party which approved the action.

In the United States, Martin Luther King led the successful Montgomery bus strike in 1956 which has been considered a new wave in the civil rights movement. In 1956 Fidel Castro, one of the heroes of the New Left, and a handful of his followers landed in Cuba. In England radicals unaffiliated with the Communist Party of G.B. or other marxist organizations began to publish radical journals—Universities Left Review and The New Reasoner which later merged as the New Left Review.
This new radical tendency became a massive political movement in 1960s. In the United States, militant students and youth began to organize into the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (S.N.C.C.) and the Students for a Democratic Society (S.D.S.) founded in 1960. Similarly the civil rights movement took on a more radical tone in the Mississippi Freedom Summer and in the Alabama March in 1964-1965. Radicalization of the civil rights movement was manifested by the transition from the nonviolent rhetoric of Martin Luther King to Malcolm X, and his call for Black Power in the Spring of 1966. Similarly, by 1965, student action gained impetus through the Student Power movement and the Free Speech Movement (F.S.M.) at the University of California. In April and May 1968 students at Columbia University rebelled against University authorities. At the same time hundreds and thousands of youth went into the streets to participate in anti-Vietnam rallies and demonstrations and 'Vietnam Summer' in 1967.  

The new wave of student and youth radicalism in the 1960s was not confined to the United States. Western Europe also witnessed a massive uproar of student and youth radicalism. As Statera points out, both chronologically and ideologically West Berlin was the birth place of the European student protest.

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24. Vietnam Summer was a group dedicated to organize new constituencies to oppose American involvements in Southeast Asia. Those who conceived the project were identified with the New Left. See Kenneth Keniston, Young Radicals (New York, 1968), 4.

A new form of student and youth radicalism, independent from the established left parties, was developing. The Freie Universitat appeared as the center of student activism. Especially after 1964, Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (S.D.S.) became politicized. On 2 June 1967 a demonstration organized by the S.D.S. to protest the Shah of Iran's visit to Berlin ended in confrontation with police. The political radicalism of the S.D.S. was highly articulated in their protest against the Axel Springer Verlag press monopoly. In Italy, the national student union (UNUFI) was transformed into a militant political organization after 1966. In France, student uprising in May 1968 accompanied worker's protests challenging the de Gaulle regime and forcing the General to step down.

All these developments accounted for the emergence of a new political phenomenon which has been identified as the New Left. As Kenneth Keniston states, it is not a movement in

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26 At the outset S.D.S. began as the youth organization of the German Social Democratic Party (S.D.P.). In 1961 S.D.P. and S.D.S. split. After 1964 S.D.S. moved rapidly to the left as S.D.P. moved to the right.

27 Axel Springer Verlag controls 78% of the daily newspapers and magazine circulation of Berlin, 43% of the circulation of all West Germany. During that period A.S.V. systematically carried out a campaign against radical students.

28 Before 1968 there were three Marxist student organizations in France - Trotskyist Jeunesse Communiste Revolucionnaire (J.C.R.) and Federation des Etudiants Revolutionnaire (F.E.R.) and Maoist Union de la Jeunesse Communiste (Marxiste-Leniniste). But the initial step in the events which led to the uprising was taken not by the groups of the left, but by the Union Nationale des Etudiants de France (U.N.E.F.).
the traditional sense, but a series of unco-ordinated groups and individuals who reject the traditional 'liberal' approaches to political action, just as they reject the 'Old (Marxist) Left', with its doctrinaire views of history, social change, and tactics. Staughton Lynd summarized the common concerns of the international New Left as:

rejection both of capitalism and of the bureaucratic communism exemplified by the Soviet Union; anti-imperialism; and an orientation of decentralized 'direct action', violent or nonviolent.30

The Sri Lankan New Left emerged as a part of this global unrest. As a political movement in a country of the third World, however, Sri Lanka's New Left contains specific characteristics of its own. An examination of the similarities and differences between the Sri Lankan New Left and the New Left in the West reveals that the term New Left is especially appropriate in the Sri Lankan political context.

One of the basic common features was its youthful character. The Sri Lankan movement was also comprised of youths. Some observers tended to view the New Left as a youth revolution (Taruna Viplawaya). It is not surprising that after discovering the existence of New Left groups in Sri Lanka, a wide publicity was given to so-called youth problems.

Both in Sri Lanka and the West, the New Left challenged

29 Keniston, Young Radicals, 17.
the established left. Radicalized youths were unwilling to accept the leadership of the established left. The emergence of the New Left was closely related to the crisis faced by the International Communism in the late 50s and early 60s. One of the manifestations of this crisis was the emergence of unorthodox Marxist and radical movements. Similarly, the Sri Lankan left movement also faced a crisis which paved the way for the emergence of the Sri Lankan New Left. The crisis in the international communist movement - the Sino-Soviet conflict - had a direct impact on the Sri Lankan New Left. As was the case in West, Vietnam was responsible for radicalizing youths in Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lankan New Left received ideological substance and inspiration from the international New Left. Leaflets and pamphlets on student and youth struggles in West were published in Sinhala. The ideological impact of Western New Left Philosophers, such as Frantz Fanon, Regis Debray and Che Guevara was also great.

**31** Leading New Left theoretician, born in Martinique in 1925, left the West Indies 20 years later, after military service studied medicine specializing psychiatry in France. He left for Algeria in 1952. He soon threw in his lot with the Algerian liberation movement (P.L.N.). His major work - The Wretched of the Earth - emphasised importance of peasantry in national liberation struggles.

**32** French journalist, closely associated with the revolutionary movements of Latin America. His works included Revolution in the Revolution.

**33** (Ernesto Guevara de la Serna) Born in Rosario in 1928, Argentina, received his M.D. degree from the Uni. of Buenos Aires, met Castro in Mexico in 1956, joined him in the Cuban Revolution, Minister of Industries in Castro administration for a brief period, left Cuba in 1965 to join revolutionary guerilla war in Latin America, in 1967 Oct. 7 captured by the Bolivian Army near Yelegrande after been wounded and shot afterwards. He became a symbol of dedication and revolutionary valour.
There are remarkable differences too. The New Left in the West first originated as a movement for social justice. They expected neither an overall structural change of the existing socio-economic system nor to capture state power. They expected a more just social order within the existing framework. In contrast, the Sri Lankan New Left from the very outset expected a transformation of existing society. It was not merely a movement for social justice but a movement directed at capturing state power.

Secondly, the New Left in the West challenged some basic tenets of Marxist philosophy. Ideologically, New Left philosophers challenged working class leadership and the inevitability of a proletarian socialist revolution. According to Herbert Marcuse, revolution is no longer possible as a consequence of workers uprising because of their integration within the system. Therefore struggle could only be undertaken by a group which had somehow resisted total integration into the status quo. Students, for example, not yet tied down by jobs or a family were relatively free to critically examine their society. It is from marginal groups such as students and American Blacks that revolutionary potential could develop.34 In contrast to orthodox Marxist theory, Fanon believed that the peasantry was the most revolutionary force in colonial societies.35

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35 Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (New York, 1963).
Nevertheless, the New Left in Sri Lanka stressed the importance of developing Marxism and Leninism according to the socio-historical conditions of the country. All of the New Left groups in Sri Lanka claimed that the traditional left parties deformed Marxism and it was their duty to rescue Marxism from degenerated left leaders who fled from the world revolutionary mainstream.\footnote{Vimukthi, February 27, 1971.} The Sri Lankan New Left firmly believed in the inevitability of social revolution and were preparing for the impending socialist revolution. All of them paid lip service to working class leadership though virtually none of them were workers.

The New Left in the West developed as a open, loosely organized mass protest movement. The New Left in Sri Lanka first emerged as small, tightly organized clandestine revolutionary bodies. It is true that they published irregular newspapers from time to time but all of their activities were in secret. They believed that a revolutionary movement should invariably be an underground one.

The term New Left was first used in contrast to the old left in Sri Lanka. The remarkable differences between old left and New Left leaders in origins, social backgrounds, policies and strategies rationalized the division of New Left from old.

At a glance, age and time differences between old
left and New Left are apparent. The origin of the old left rests in the 1930s whereas the New Left emerged in the late 1960s. The old left was born when Sri Lanka was still under British rule; the New Left emerged nearly two decades after the transfer of power. Age differences of the leadership are also apparent. It is true that old left parties had youth organization but party leaders without exception were over fifty years of age. New Left leadership was under thirty. For certain, one generation differs from another in terms of its formative experiences.37

Of more concern is the wide gap in social background between the leadership of the old left and new. The leadership of the old left came from land owning families or from the upper middle classes who made fortunes in the early 20th century economic boom.37 They received their education in prestigious urban

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37 Philip Gunawardena (1900-1972), original member of the L.S.S.P. and the leader of the M.E.P., was the son of a land owner (Boralugoda Rahalhamy). He received his education in Prince Wales College, Moratuwa and Ananda College, Colombo. Then he went to Wisconsin University, U.S.A. where he met his Marxist teachers – Scott Nearing and John Commons. S.A. Wickramasinghe (1901-1981), leader of the Communist Party, was from land owning family in South Ceylon. He also had his Medical education in England. N.M. Perera (1905-1979), leader of the L.S.S.P., was son of a rent collector in Colombo who own cloth shop. N.M. Perera received his education at Ananda College and obtained his Ph.D. from London School of Economics. Colvin R. de Silva (1907-), deputy leader of the L.S.S.P., is a son of a registered Medical Practitioner was also a land owner. He went to St. John’s College, Panadura and Royal College. He obtained his Ph.D. from London University. Pierer Keuneman (1909-), General Secretary of the C.P., is the son of a Supreme Court Judge. He went to the Cambridge University and earned his Master’s degree. Leslie Goonewardena’s father was a doctor in Panadura who was also a land owner. Leslie Goonewardena went to St. Thomas’s College in Colombo, and to a public school in Wales. He did his B.Sc. degree at the London School of Economics and qualified as a barrister.
colleges, graduated from the Western Universities and were engaged in the more prominent professions. Leadership of the New Left came from unprivileged peasant or rural based petty bourgeois families who received their education in government Central Schools, spoke Sinhala and had intimate relations with Sri Lankan rural masses.

In addition to differences in social background, the political behaviour and the methods used to achieve their political goals were also different. The old left was organized in legalized, registered political parties and contested elections and engaged in parliamentary politics under the Westminster structure. The New Left, which were almost underground political organizations, rejected parliamentary politics and attempted to organize for an armed uprising. The old left paid more attention to the organized working class while the New Left paid less attention to trade unions. The nucleus of the New Left organization was the dedicated youth organized in a para military manner.
History of the Sri Lankan Left

1935
Lanka Sama Samaja Party

1942
L.S.S.P.

1945
Bolshevik Leninist Party

1950
Viplawakari L.S.S.P.

1956
Coalition with the S.L.F.P.

1960
Mahajana Eksath Peramuna

1963
United Left Front

1964

1965
Coalition with the S.L.F.P.
(1964)
Coalition with the U.N.P.
(1965)

1. Revolutionary Communist League
2. L.S.S.P. Revolutionary
3. Dharmasekara Group
4. Wijeweera Group
5. Samajawadi Sangamaya
6. Gini Pupura Group
7. Peradiga Sulaga Group
Chapter V

The Social and Historical Origins of the New Left - I

Emergence of the Petty bourgeoisie

It is impossible to understand the origins of the New Left if our attention is confined only to immediate political developments. The emergence of the New Left can not be attributed only to the errors and miscalculations committed by the old left. Indeed, the origins of the New Left have to be sought in the nature of socioeconomic development in Sri Lanka from about the mid 19th century. It does not mean that the course of development of the New Left and the 1971 uprising of the J.V.P. was predetermined in all its features or in the sequence of all its events, but its general direction had been developing for generations. In order to understand the emergence of the New Left in broad historical perspective and to elucidate its social origins it is necessary to trace the genesis and growth of the new enlightened generation in the village which had been identified variously as rural petty bourgeoisie, rural middle class, emerging village leadership.

1 Newton Gunasinghe, "Production Relations and Classes in a Kandyan Village", Modern Ceylon Studies, 6:2 (July 1975), 135-6
local elites, and Sinhala educated lower middle class. The emergence of a new enlightened generation is inextricably related to the disintegration of the traditional social and economic structures of the peasantry. The disintegration of the traditional community was a direct result of the colonial economic transformation set in motion under British rule and its related administrative and other super-structural developments. The impact of this economic and administrative transformation on the village was many fold.

The most important change occurred in village land tenure; the creation of a plantation sector dispossessed the village of a crucial portion of its land. By means of the notorious Waste Land Ordinances No. 12 of 1840 and No. 1 of 1897, a part of the village land was claimed by the colonial state and sold to British entrepreneurs for conversion into large scale plantations. The remaining ancestral acres cultivated by peasant families were converted into commodities.


Ralph Pieris, "New Elites in Ceylon" Transactions of the Fifth World Congress of Sociology (Louvian, 1959), 302.

However, Michael Roberts does not accept that development of plantation 'led to the expropriation of land used by the inhabitants of the Kandyan highlands'. For this point of view see Michael Roberts, "The Impact of the Waste Land Legislation and the Growth of Plantations on the Techniques of Paddy Cultivation in British Ceylon: A Critique", Modern Ceylon Studies 1:2 (July 1970), 157-198.
and, consequently, created a land market in the village. An examination of records full of mortgages, leases and outright sales clearly reveals how land transactions developed from the mid 19th century. As land became a commodity, land alienation and its ensuring concentration in the hands of a few became perhaps the most serious socioeconomic problem of the village community. This situation was further aggravated by the obnoxious Grain Tax which discriminated against traditional agriculture, often compelling the peasants to mortgage, lease or sell their lands for payment of taxes. In case of default the government auctioned the lands of peasants to recover the tax. Obeysekara illustrates the process in the central province:

The following statistics are available for the Central province for the year 1885, when 3607 parcels of paddy land and 6486 highland amounting to 10,093 parcels of land were sold by the Fiscal on the orders of the court for recovery of private debt. The likelihood is that most of these debts were incurred in attempting to pay the Paddy Tax. During the same period there were 3770 sales by the Crown in default

I had an opportunity to examine land records of a Kandyan village (Delumgoda) in detail from early British times to present day when I was working as a research assistant to Mr. Newton Gunasinghe. In this point I should state my gratitude to Mr. Gunasinghe for explaining to me some phenomena of Kandyan social landscape relating it to that of other under-developed countries.

of the tax, so that in a period of five years in the Central province alone there were 13,863 sales of parcels. According to the Census of 1881 there were in this province 54,387 and 56,009 adult cultivators respectively. Assuming that each cultivator represented a family, one in about four families lost a parcel of land. 9

Under the impact of capitalist economic relations the remaining ancestral acres in the village cultivated by the peasant families for subsistence agriculture were converted into commodity production. Even rice, the subsistence staple of the villagers, had become a commercial crop that could be sold in the market. As surplus production flowed out of the village in the form of commodities, the rural poor could no longer rely on village grain surpluses; the traditional socio-economic balance and security was disrupted. 10

The expansion of commodity production revolutionized village exchange relations. Prior to the colonial economic transformation the everyday wants of the villagers were supplied by the agricultural produce of their ancestral acres. Commerce


10 The economy of the pre-colonial village had been organized in a manner that could provide some form of social security supplying even a poor peasant his basic needs. Therefore it was no surprising that Maitland (Governor of the colony 1806-1812) had stated that "there is not an inhabitant in this island that would not sit down and starve out the year under the shade of two or three coconut trees, and whole of his property and whole of his subsistance rather than increase his income and his comforts by his manual labour"—cited by L.J.B. Turner, "Some Aspects of the Economy of the Maritime Provinces of Ceylon, 1798-1805", Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register, 4:4 (1919).
played only a marginal role in the village economy, and even then "commerce was carried on by means of barter".\textsuperscript{11} The expansion of commodity production was coincidental with the erosion of the agrarian barter economy and monetization of exchange relations. "Whenever money penetrates a traditional economy, where barter used to be the predominant traditional form, it had a tendency to reify the exchange relations and set them against those social relations on which the traditional social order was based".\textsuperscript{12} Monetary forces began to dominate every aspect of village exchange relations except the share cropper — landlord relationship. Ralph Pieris remarked that "a business civilization was in the making, and money was abundant; but money did not automatically provide the people with the degree of security which they had enjoyed in the traditional social order".\textsuperscript{13}

As a consequence of the penetration of capitalism, wage labour emerged as an important employment relation. This new form of employment, as against the old forms such as labour rent (Rajakariya), exchange labour (Attam) and share cropping (Ande), "reduce the context of the social relationship

\textsuperscript{11} Ralph Pieris, "Society and Ideology in Ceylon during a Time of Troubles", 1795-1850" pt. III, University of Ceylon Review, 9:3 (July, 1951), 79.


\textsuperscript{13} Ralph Pieris, "Society and Ideology", 97.
between the employer and the employee (or the partners) into a mere cash nexus and disrupt the traditional social fabric.\textsuperscript{14}

New consumption patterns also emerged in the village. The self-sufficiency of the village, as far as major requirements were concerned, was disrupted and the village became heavily dependent on an array of commodities such as flour, sugar, cloth manufactured products etc. imported from urban centers. At the beginning of British rule Fredrick North (Governor of the colony, 1798-1806) concluded that the effects of foreign trade "were not felt a few miles outside the principal ports."\textsuperscript{15} A century later, however, in his report on the census of 1911 Denham remarked "The habits and wants of the native have changed considerably in the last hundred years, that there is today a large and increasing demand for European goods."\textsuperscript{16}

The gross outcome of all these changes was the breakdown of the independent village microcosm and its integration into the colonial national economy. The village became an organic but dependent part of the national economy and through it of the imperial economic order.

Nothing would be further from the truth than the assertion that this economic transformation was simply a

\textsuperscript{14} Newton Gunasinghe, "The Perpetuation of Under-development", 25.
\textsuperscript{15} Ralph Pieris, "Society and Ideology", 79.
\textsuperscript{16} E.B. Denham, Ceylon at the Census of 1911, Being a review of the result of Census (Colombo, 1912), 158.
classical transition from feudalism to capitalism. It set in motion developed capitalist production relations, but the forces of production did not undergo a parallel development. The Sri Lankan village did not experience the technological agricultural advancement which accompanied the development of capitalist production relations in Western European countries. Under the influence of the colonial superstructure in Sri Lanka, capitalist relations penetrated the villages without the corresponding forces of capitalist production. An extraordinary combination of an archaic form of technology with modern capitalist relations resulted. It did not entirely destroy feudal relations; to the contrary, it strengthened some of the feudal relations by giving capitalist content to feudal forms.

This process of colonial economic development has been described by some scholars as the creation of a dual economy. For example, H.N.S. Karunatilake writes:

A fundamental characteristic of the economic structure of Ceylon is the existence of a typical dual economy. This was created by the rapid progress of the plantations. The traditional and modern sectors that constitute the dual economy have co-existed for more than hundred years in virtual isolation. The rate of advancement evidenced in the plantation economy was totally lacking in the rural economy. One reason for this was the virtual isolation of the plantations from the villages.¹⁷

The economy had two principal sectors, one comprised of plantation agriculture, manufacturing, commercial and service sectors, directly export oriented; and the other traditional sector of subsistence agriculture, handicraft, local trade and small scale commodity production for domestic consumption. This dualism was the result of the superimposition of capitalism on a traditional economy, and it does not mean that the externally oriented modern sector had forged ahead leaving the rest of the economy behind as has been explained by dual economic theorists. The underdevelopment of the traditional sector was itself a result of capitalist development. In fact, "the externally oriented sector subordinated the traditional sector to serve its own interests. Those two sectors are organically linked, for the development of the former implies the increasing underdevelopment of the latter".18

Apart from the colonial economic transformation, another important development with decisive impact on the traditional social fabric was the expansion of education and the creation of new employment opportunities in commercial establishments and government service. The modern system of education developed during the 19th century to fulfill the political, economic and social needs of British rule. The government set educational standards and allowed Christian missionary agencies to manage the schools under a system of

financial grants. British education policy was geared toward the creation of an elite assimilated into the metropolitan culture and providing the local administrative personnel capable of working in official language. As a result there developed two kinds of schools; fee-levying English-medium schools providing a Western-oriented education for a minority; and free and inferior elementary schools in the indigenous languages for the majority.

To be sure, modern education was one of the important agents of tacit social change. Villagers considered education the most accessible means of social advancement, and with the rapid expansion of government departments and their activities, vacancies in the lower rung of government service were opened to the indigenous population. Offices in the government service, even in lower echelons, were highly admired. Denham vividly observed this tendency:

The older generation regards education as an investment for their children, which will enable them to take up positions to which their new-acquired wealth entitled them. The small landowner and the cultivator who have prospered believe that education will make a clerk of his son or fit him for a learned profession, that the latter will then hold a better position in the world than his father, and consequently the fortunes and, what appears to him equally strongly, the status of the family will be assured. The

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20 There was a contemporary saying - Receiving an office is good a thing even in hell" (Nila Lebeema Harakadiye Unath Hodai)
younger generation seek escape from rural life, from manual toil, from work which they begin to regard as degrading, in an education which will enable them to pass examinations, which will lead to posts in offices in the towns, and so to appointments which entitle the holders to the respect of the class from which they believe they have emancipated themselves.\(^{21}\)

The 1911 census roughly estimated that at least 300,000 persons or 7 percent of the total population depended upon government salaries for their subsistence.

These developments had a decisive impact on the rural social structure. One of the most important aspects of this social change was the creation of a landless peasantry. Apart from that, a section of the village community benefitted from the new avenues opened by colonial economic and administrative developments. Three groups who benefitted from these new avenues of social and economic advancement came to prominence in the village. They were:

a) Shop-Keepers: The expansion of commerce in the village offered economic opportunity to a section of the village community. As Yalman states "the ubiquitous village shop is one of the striking features of the Ceylonese Landscape. These small trading enterprises are the channels which bring the money economy into even the most isolated villages."\(^{22}\) In most cases the village

\(^{21}\) Denham, Ceylon at the Census, 398.

\(^{22}\) Nur Yalman, Under the Bo-tree Studies in Caste, Kinship and Marriage in the interior of Ceylon (California, 1967), 49.
shopkeeper acted as village money lender and pawnbroker as well.

b) Those who benefitted from new employment opportunities such as teachers, clerks, petty officers and also those who were relegated to the less esteemed posts in the public service requiring little or no knowledge of English.

c) Land owners who benefitted from the new land market.

That these three groups were interconnected, economically and socially, was one of the prominent features in the new rural social fabric revealed in the census of 1911. For example, "of the 8,949 government servants, 1915 or 21 percent derived an income from land; of the 97,511 men in trade, 5,329 claimed to own land and 4,543 admitted to cultivating it".23

These groups formed a broad social segment which may be identified as the rural middle class or rural petty bourgeoisie. The economic base of this class was in the ownership of small scale means of production and or exchange. Some of its members supplemented these, particularly ownership of village land, with income from employment elsewhere. The term rural middle class can be used to denote this class only in the sense that they occupied an intermediary position between the rural upper class (Mostly aristocratic land owners or plantocracy) and the poor peasants. As far as its economic base is concerned they are aptly described as rural petty bourgeoisie. Using the term petty bourgeoisie without some clarifications,

23 Denham, Ceylon at the census, 398.
however, may be misleading. Traditionally this term was used to identify such elements as small producers, small traders and artisans. Nicos Poulantzas identifies another segment of the petty bourgeoisie - new petty bourgeoisie - which "consists of the non-productive wage-earning workers" and government state sector employees.\(^{24}\) Whether government servants such as teachers, clerks and the like who have no ownership claims to land or other productive resources and depend solely upon their labour can be categorized as petty bourgeoisie is questionable. On the one hand the new petty bourgeoisie sell their labour power, but they do not produce surplus value in the Marxist sense. In determining the class status of the new petty bourgeoisie, political and ideological criteria should also be taken into account. It can be argued that "the economic interests of the traditional petty bourgeoisie and the new petty bourgeoisie are somewhat different - the advance of capitalism serves the interest of the new while it works against the interest of old".\(^{25}\)

According to classical theory, when capitalism develops the worker is alienated from his means of production. This alienation did not take place in Sri Lanka in its entirety. The worker who obtained employment outside the village often


\(^{25}\) Charles Abeyesekara, "Insurgency '71-two new studies (3)", *Lanka Guardian* (November 15, 1979), 12.
continued to possess sources of income within the rural sector itself. In this context both old and new petty bourgeoisie can be considered as factions of the same class.

Newton Gunasinghe identifies seven classes in his village survey of Delumgoda and describes the economic origins and the nature of the petty bourgeoisie as essentially a class that controls petty production and exchange. On the one hand they are suppressed by the semi-feudals. On the other hand they are exploited by the middle bourgeoisie. They are also confronted by the poor peasant and rural worker. It is a vacillating class. In the realm of agrarian relations they supported the land reform laws, but opposed the Paddy Land Act. Their ambition is to rise to the middle bourgeoisie, but the hard facts of economic reality thwart these attempts. It is a heterogeneous class. Like a lobster it has many limbs and claws which it extends into various spheres of rural economic activity.

One of the conspicuous characteristics of the 20th century social landscape in rural Sri Lanka is the prominent position of this class. On account of its economic and social position in rural society, this class had the ability to make use of the new educational and occupational opportunities, and thus to raise their economic and social standing. Their

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26 The seven classes identified by Gunasinghe as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>No of families</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Non-resident semi-feudal land lords</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Middle bourgeoisie</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Petty bourgeoisie</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Middle peasants</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Poor peasants</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Urban workers</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Rural labours</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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aspirations continued to grow as their world view expanded. They took over the leadership of rural organizations and state institutions at the village level.

In the economic sphere there was a remarkable gap between the Sri Lankan capitalist class and the emerging rural petty bourgeoisie. Whereas the upper capitalist class invested large quantities of capital in plantations (mainly in rubber and coconut and to lesser extent in tea), graphite, etc., the economic sphere of the rural petty bourgeoisie did not extend beyond village level. Members of the capitalist class had access to superior educational institutions and, in most cases, they finished their education in the Inns of Court in London or at medical schools in Scotland. Education for the petty bourgeoisie was limited to vernacular education and even when an English education was conceivable it was limited to Sri Lankan schools. The capitalist class were highly westernized and culturally separated from the ordinarily folk. Their language was English. Indeed, the Sri Lankan upper class was more westernized than any other country outside the Philippines. To the contrary, the petty bourgeoisie were Sinhala-speaking and were the patrons of traditional cultural and Buddhist and Hindu values.

By the end of the 19th century the steady growth of a political consciousness among the petty bourgeoisie was

28
Francis Carnell, "South Asian Nationalism and the West", St. Antony's Papers, No.7 (1960).
clearly visible. At first it was manifested along cultural and religious avenues. The growth of Sinhalese newspapers, controversies and polemical writings and the proliferation of religio-cultural societies highlighted the awakening of a new enlightened generation of Sinhala-speaking petty bourgeoisie. The earliest Sinhalese newspaper was *Lanka Lokaya*, started in 1860.\(^{29}\) *Lak Rivi Kirana*, a weekly, began the same year and *Lak Mini Pahana*, also a weekly, two years later. The last quarter of the century witnessed a brood of newspapers.\(^{30}\) In 1901 there were 11 Sinhalese newspapers.\(^{31}\) The 1911 census report concludes,

Sinhalese Newspapers and magazine have increased considerably, and several now obtain a large circulation. There has been remarkable progress in the vernacular press during the last ten years; and, with very few exceptions, the standard and tone appear to be considerably higher than are found amongst the native press in India.\(^{32}\)

The controversies, fueled by polemical writing, are one of the most interesting phenomena in the history of the

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\(^{30}\) It included *Sarasavi Sandarasa* (1880), a weekly representing the Vidyyodaya Pirivena and edited by Veragama Punchi Bandara; the *Kasaya*, a weekly, edited by J.D.S. Abeywickrama; the *Dinakara Prakasaya* (1890) and *Jnanodaya*, edited by G. Hendrick Perera Senaratna; *Hitavadi* (1896), edited by Pundit Karunaratne; *Dinapata Prayrtti*, a daily, and *Ira Udaya*, a weekly, edited by G. Don Bastian; and the *Jnanaadarasaya* (1896), edited by A. Mendis Gunasekara.

\(^{31}\) For complete list of Newspapers see, Harischandra de Silva, *Printing and Publishing in Ceylon* (Colombo, 1972), 39.

\(^{32}\) Denham, *Ceylon at the census*, 444.
Late 19th century and can be classified under three headings: literary, religious and caste. The religious controversies could be further subdivided into those between Christianity and Buddhism and the sectarian controversies between the various Nikayas of the Sangas.\textsuperscript{33} Some aspects, especially the caste and literary controversies and their social origins, need to be studied in more detail. However, it is safe to say that these controversies reflect the awakening of a new generation in society. Most important was a series of debates held at Baddegama, Kelaniya and Gampola between Buddhists and Christians culminating in a two day debate held on August 1873 at Panadura between Christians led by Rev. David de Silva and Buddhists led by Bhikkhu Migettuwatte Gunananda.

The proliferation of religio-cultural societies further highlighted the assertion of the petty bourgeoisie in the social arena. At the height of the religious revivalist movement, branches of the Buddhist Theosophical society (\textit{Parama Viz-na-nartha Samagam}) sprang up in many villages and towns across the country. This enthusiasm reached beyond religion. For example, \textit{Gnana Prabodha Samagama} which emerged during the same period, was a society for the awakening of intelligence while \textit{Gnananukula Samagama} concerned itself with wisdom.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{33} Sarathchandra, \textit{Sinhalese Novel}, 43-51.

\textsuperscript{34} At this point I should state my indebtedness and gratitude to the scholarship of Michael Roberts whose persevering quest for hidden and neglected historical evidence that provides us valuable historical evidence. However, I feel these facts needs more careful interpretation.
The bulk of these societies, however, emerged as a consequence of the religious assertion of Buddhists. The Sinhalese Diary for 1893 mentions 25 associations, some with branches. The backbone and driving force of these societies were the emerging petty bourgeoisie. Michael Roberts divides the leadership of these societies (Samagamas) into five categories: traditional aristocracy and lower rungs of the headman system, leaders of the Sinhalese literati, ayurvedic physicians, the small businessmen and traders and Buddhist monks.

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35 This fact is clearly revealed by the names of some Samagams that indicate their objective. The following Samagam names can be cited as examples:
1. Sugatha Dhammadara Samagama (The Society for the Aid of the Buddhist Doctrine).
4. Sri Sam Buddha Sasanadhara Samagama (The Society for the Aid of Buddha Sasana).

36 Sinhalese Diary for 1893 (Colombo, 1893), 75-87.
38 For example, the president of the Colombo Gnanabhivurdi Samagama (society for the development of wisdom) was C. Don Bastian, the editor of Dinapatha Pravritti and Ira Udana. Further, Veragama Pubchli Bandara, the editor of Darsavi Sanda Resa, G.P. Weerasekare and D.H.S. Kaviratna were among the office bearers of the Buddhist Theosophical Society of Colombo. However, above mentioned societies were Colombo centered. In the village level organizations school teachers played a leading role.
39 In 1901 there were 3424 ayurvedic physicians in the Island. See, Denham, Ceylon at the Census, 484.
40 For example, in the Hatton Religious Association Four out of five office bearers were traders. Hatton town developed mainly as a supply centre for surrounding estates. In this situation traders played a big role in Hatton social life. See. Sinhalese Diary for 1893.
Except for the first and last categories, the leaders belonged to the petty bourgeoisie. All these societies were religious or cultural associations, but they clearly reflected the growth of political consciousness among the nascent petty bourgeoisie. As Kumari Jayawardena reminds us, "in Ceylon as in many other territories of Asia and Africa revolt against imperialism began under the guise of religious movements which were anti-Christian and anti-Western." \(^{41}\)

The increasing politicization of the petty bourgeoisie is one of the decisive factors in early 20th century political history. Temperance agitation reflected and further accelerated the tendency. As a by-product of the Buddhist revivalist movement in the last quarter of the 19th century, temperance agitation became the more vehement mass movement with stronger political content. The credo of the temperance movement was simple but telling:

Ceylon is a Buddhist country and Buddhism condemns the use of intoxicants; the government has, by opening a large number of new toddy shops, encouraged the increased consumption of alcohol. For revenue purpose government was trying to destroy the Buddhist values and convert Ceylon into a nation of drunkards. \(^{42}\)

National leadership of the temperance movement was still provided by the more articulate elements of the Sri

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\(^{41}\) Kumari Jayawardena, *Rise of the Labour*, 33

\(^{42}\) Tissa Fernando, "The Western-Educated Elite and Buddhism in British Ceylon; a neglected aspect of the nationalist movement", *Contribution to Asian Studies*, iv (1973), 24.
Lankan capitalist class. The temperance agitation provided an opportunity to utilize Buddhism for political ends. The most militant and charismatic leader at the time was Anagarika Darmapala who was among the first to advocate 'Sawaraj'.

The grass roots level leadership of the temperance movement was provided by the petty bourgeoisie who had been active in the religio-cultural societies. With the tide of temperance agitation rising temperance activities became the predominant interest of these societies. In addition, new temperance societies, Amadyapa Samagam, sprang up in most places. In Gampola, in addition to the formal temperance society (Sri Punnivawardena Amadyapa Samagama), two existing religio-cultural societies, Buddhhalankara Samagama and Sri Sambuddha Sasanadara Samagama, also discussed temperance issues. Temperance agitation generated unprecedented vigour during the protest over the Excise Ordinance of 1912 which provided for the establishment of liquor travens. The Total

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43 Anagarika Darmapala, Walisinghe Harischandare, John de Silva, Martinus C. Perera, Lisboa Pinto, Arthur V. Dias, D.C., D.S. and P.R. Senanayakes, W.A. de Silva, D.B. Jayatilake, Marcus Fernando and A.E. Buultjens can be mentioned as example.

44 The arrival of Darmapala’s temperance crusaders caused great excitement in villages and towns. Kumari Jayawardena recalls that “he used to thrill the crowds with his rousing invective, denouncing the Europeans as ‘beef-eating pariahs’ and condemning Government officials, missionaries, and the christianized Ceylonese. See Jayawardena, Rise of Labour, 115.

45 New Ordinance intended to separate the sale of arrack from that of toddy. The Island was divided into toddy selling areas and the right to sell toddy within each area was sold by auction. To facilitate the separate sale of toddy the Government introduced over 1100 new toddy travens.
Abstinence Central Union was formed the same year. "At the first T.A.C.U. held in January 1913, delegates of over 60 district societies were represented. By 1915 the T.A.C.U. was able to claim a membership of nearly 50,000". One of the devices used by the temperance movement to rally mass support was the public protest meetings which attracted large crowds and speeches were not limited to temperance issues alone. The temperance platform was shrewdly used to embarrass the authorities and to challenge British rule. H.L. Dowbiggin, Inspector General of Police, wrote "Nationalism and politics generally figured largely in these temperance meetings, in fact they were political meetings held under the cloak of temperance".47

The temperance movement was the first attempt to mobilize the masses under the leadership of the capitalist class. In order to mobilize the masses and to conduct mass meetings, they needed a host of intermediaries. The emerging petty bourgeoisie acted as a link between these national leaders and the ordinary masses. In other words, the temperance movement provided the petty bourgeoisie with an opportunity to test their abilities and capabilities. K.M. de Silva observes:

The temperance agitation marked the emergence, as a factor in public life of a strata of society

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47 Kumari Jayawardena quotes in Rise of Labour, 145.
which had hitherto been inarticulate and quiescent, the lower rungs of the rural elite (petty bourgeoisie - G.B. K) consisting largely of notaries, school teachers and small traders. 

Against this background we can see the rapid politicization of petty bourgeoisie. This tendency was reflected in contemporary Sinhalese newspapers, novels and drama. In addition to the growing political tone of existing newspapers, more vociferous ones were started including Sinhala Bauddhaya (1903), Sinhala Jatika (1911), Dinamina and with some reservations, Sinhala Samaya (1903).

The petty bourgeoisie social and political mentality of the time was articulated in Piyadasa Sirisena's (1875-1946) novels. Sarathchandra writes, "The resentment of the Sinhalese-speaking middle class against the extremely anglicised mode of living of the upper class reached its climax at the time of Piyadasa Sirisena. His works are a true reflection of the polemical spirit of the day." He used his novels as a weapon for social crusades and declared an uncompromising war against Western cultural innovation. To be certain, his works reflected the socio-cultural contradictions between the nationalistically-inclined petty bourgeoisie and the westernized upper class.

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49 His most popular work was 'Jayatissa sake Rosalin hevat Vasanavanta Vivahaya' (Jayatissa and Rosalin or the Happy Marriage) published in 1906. In the following decade, 25,000 copies were sold. For the complete list of his works see Sarathchandra, Sinhalese Novel, 92-112.

50 Sarathchandra, Sinhalese Novel, 92.
Drama and poetry were other important media used by the petty bourgeoisie to air their political grievances. Don Bastian Jayaweera Banda, John de Silva and Charles Dias wrote dramas using rousing historical themes. The political content of plays such as Sri Wickrama Rajasinghe, Duttugemunu and Sinhala Parabawa Natya also attracted the attention of the authorities. These patriotic dramas were very popular among the Sinhala-speaking petty bourgeoisie and the urban working classes. In his review of the Census of 1911 Denham writes,

It is a common sight to see a crowd gathered round a gramophone in a village, and listening attentively to records in the vernacular of a religious, historical, satirical, or amusing description. Extracts from the plays of Mr. John de Silva are in great demand. These are mostly historical works; the History of the Renunciation of his Kingdom and his life by King Sri Sanga Bo, the Reign of Sri Wickrama Rajasinghe, the last King of Kandy, the tragedy of Ehelapola.... There is a satirical play or comedy by this author which is frequently played, as well as forming several gramophone records - the "Sinhala Parabawa Natakaya", which means literally, 'The Drama of the Decline of Sinhalese Race'. The object of this play is to satirize the adoption by the Sinhalese of European customs, especially the adoption of European dress, food, and drink.

The 1915 riots can properly be viewed only against this background. The riots and the repression that followed were a very important episode in the history of Sri Lanka. The riots were basically communal disturbances between Buddhists and a section of Muslims known as Coast Moors. Although the

51 See Kumari Jayawardenya, Rise of Labour, 171.
52 Denham, Ceylon at the Census, 173.
the initial explosion occurred over a religious issue, the riots can not be explained solely as a religious outburst. "A close interweaving of religious, political and economic forces was evident during the riots".\(^{53}\) As the year 1915 happened to be the centenary of the Kandyan Convention, there was a upsurge of nationalist sentiment. Some scholars, namely Kumari Jayawardena, P.V.J. Jayasekera\(^{54}\) and Michael Roberts\(^{55}\) have pointed out various aspects of the political and economic background of the 1915 riots. Without mentioning these aspects, I want to emphasize the role played by the economic rivalry between the Sinhalese petty bourgeoisie and the coast Moors who were mostly petty traders.

Coast Moors were recent immigrants and were engaged in petty trade throughout the country. In many villages their shops provided foodstuffs and other day-to-day necessities for the villagers. As the Coast Moor village shop keepers were often pawnbrokers and money lenders as well, allegations were frequently made of usury and rapacious business dealings.\(^{56}\) In 1915 Governor Chalmers wrote to the Secretary of State that

(The coast Moors had) always been viewed by the villager with feeling entertained at all times and in all lands towards transitory aliens who

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\(^{53}\) Kumari Jayawardena, Rise of Labour, 163.


\(^{55}\) Michael Roberts, "Hobgoblins, Low-country Sinhalese plotters, or Local Elite Chauvinists?: Directions and Patterns in the 1915 Communal Riots", Ceylon Studies Seminar (July 1970)

\(^{56}\) Kumari Jayawardena brings this point out with great clarity. See Rise of Labour, 167-169.
make money out of the local peasantry by supplying their wants at the 'shop' and frequently securing mortgage of the land of thriftless debtors.57

In these circumstances, the activities of the Coast Moors invariably posed a challenged to the rising Sinhalese petty bourgeoisie. Piyadasa Sirisena, leading exponent of the petty bourgeois social ideology, advised the Sinhalese to "refrain from having transactions with the coast Moors, Cochin and the foreigner".58 Sinhalese shopkeepers and traders were active in the campaign against their business competitors. There is no doubt that the market was the first school in which the nascent petty bourgeoisie learned their nationalism. An examination of the social position of the 'alleged ring leaders' of the 1915 riot reveals that they were not hooligans or criminals but rather members of the Sinhalese Buddhist petty bourgeoisie and the working class.59

British authorities met the riots with ruthless suppression; Martial Law was declared and prominent Buddhist

58 Ceylon National Archives, Confidential Report No. 14502, 1915.
59 In Gampola where the disturbances first broke out the leading role was taken by the well known elements of petty bourgeoisie namely Telenis de Silva (a trader, landed proprietor), Hettihe-wege Charles de Silva (a trader), K.S.W. Dissanaike (Inspector for the society for the prevention of cruelty to animals), A.H.W. Perera. For a list of alleged ring leaders and their social positions see Michael Roberts, "Hobgoblins", 86-90.
leaders including F.R. and D.S. Sengnayakes, D.C. and D.B. Jayatilakes, W.A. de Silva, C. Batuwantudawe and Edmond and Dr. C.A. Hewawitharanaras were detained. It was a severe setback for the incipient political movement of the petty bourgeoisie.  

In a survey of the evolution of the political behaviour of the petty bourgeoisie, the temperance movement and the 1915 riots are very important. The temperance movement gave the petty bourgeoisie the opportunity to acquire organizational skills and political experience. At the same time, however, it paved the way for the establishment of political leadership by the capitalist class over the incipient petty bourgeoisie. In the temperance agitation, the petty bourgeoisie and a section of the capitalist class for the first time formed a common front against the British rule. Considering the social relations the petty bourgeoisie enjoyed in rural society, this alliance provided a good opportunity to organize a mass nationalistic movement. Most of the political leaders utterly feared the politicization of the temperance movement, but they used it as a stepping stone to enter national politics. K.M. de Silva states that "the temperance movement provided the take-off point into national politics for the Senanayake family."  

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60 At this point the tragic episode of Dharmapala should be mentioned. He was the first spokesman of the national entrepreneurial class. Therefore he often contradicted the rest of the pro-colonial capitalist class. However, he was the exponent of the national bourgeois political ideology with no such class behind him. After 1915 he became isolated and other leaders publicly denounced him and some even betrayed him to the Colonial Secretary.

61 K.M. de Silva, "Reform and Nationalist Movement", 383.
sure, the temperance movement was instrumental in consolidation future Senanayake-Jayatilaka leadership in national politics.

After establishing their leadership over the petty bourgeoisie, the capitalist class leadership confined the nationalist movement to constitutional reform, and the political activities of the petty bourgeoisie became an appendage to the Ceylon National Congress. To demonstrate that the constitutional reform movement was not merely a movement of a small body of Colombo lawyers, and that Sinhalese speaking sections of Sri Lankan society were behind the English educated classes in their agitation for constitutional reform, Mahajana Saba (M.S.) were established. Mahajana Saba were an outcome of the decision taken by a joint meeting of the Ceylon Reform League and the Ceylon National Association on 13 September 1918, but credit for their establishment rests with F.R. Senanayake. In the early 1920s Mahajana Saba sprang up in many parts of the Island. These Mahajana Saba branches were loosely affiliated to the Central Mahajana Saba and through it to the Ceylon National Congress. Regional Mahajana Saba branches acted as branches of the Ceylon National Congress. One of the significant features was that the proceedings of Mahajana Saba were in vernacular languages. As can be seen in data and tables presented by Roberts, the politicized element of the petty bourgeoisie who came into prominence in the later period were initially active in Mahajana Sabas.62

62 See Roberts, "Political Antecedents" for a list of M.S. and list of the members of the M.S.
The grant of universal suffrage under the Donoughmore Constitution in 1931 greatly enhanced the political importance of the rural petty bourgeoisie. After that, all of the upper class politicians wanted to be the 'Duppataje Hitawatha' (the friend of the poor) and for that they needed the help of the petty bourgeoisie. Some of the nationalist leaders had their own personnel commanding in their respective constituencies, but as a whole they had to rely upon the rural petty bourgeoisie who acted as their agents to get them elected to the State Council. The introduction of universal suffrage did not change the political scene radically, however, as the dominance of the capitalist class over the petty bourgeoisie had been well established by this time. Almost all the nationalist leaders were returned to the state council and their political hegemony was unchallenged.

The left movement in Sri Lanka which emerged from the same period was not able to break down the unbalanced alliance of the capitalist class and the petty bourgeoisie. The reasons for the left's inability to wean the petty bourgeoisie away from the so called nationalist leadership were two fold. On the one hand the socialist youths who had just completed their higher education and returned from Western Universities with imbibed Marxism were not ready to give preference to the cultural and religious demands of the petty bourgeoisie. As avowed internationalists, they took up arms against the communalistic and chauvinistic aspects of the petty bourgeois mentality. Secondly, the majority of the petty bourgeoisie were
politically conservative and they regarded Marxism as an alien doctrine which posed a grave threat to national values.

The left movement did attempt to organize the petty bourgeoisie in rural areas; their ability to build up a rural mass base in 'Kelani-velly' and Southern Sri Lanka was reflected in electoral victories. Their unequivocal critique of the Headman system was no doubt attractive to the rural masses who witnessed and suffered its evils first hand. The left could organize a few of the petty bourgeoisie members, but as a whole they did not have their finger on the pulse of the rural petty bourgeoisie.

S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike was one of the leaders of the upper capitalist class who realized the political potential of the Buddhist, nationally-inclined petty bourgeoisie. It was indeed an irony of history that the son of the Christian Maha Mudaliyar, who was educated at the exclusive Anglican high school - St. Thomas College - and then at the University of Oxford came forward to give leadership to the Sinhala-speaking Buddhist-nationalist petty bourgeoisie. It was evident that even before Sinhala Maha Saba began, Bandaranaike realized the political importance of the petty bourgeoisie. He cultivated close relations with leading members of the petty bourgeoisie who were active in local Mahajana Sabas. The All Ceylon Village Committee conference was one device Bandaranaike used to develop his contacts with this generation.

As has been pointed out earlier one of the striking
features of colonial economic development in Sri Lanka was the virtual absence of an indigenous industrial class. In the 1930s, however, there gradually developed a national entrepreneurial class. The economic boom in the early 20th century presented the opportunity for primitive capital accumulation for some sections of the plebeian stratum such as street hawkers and small entrepot traders. Industries such as soaps, matches, candles, biscuits, soft drinks, shoes and beedi were pioneered by national entrepreneurs. The scarcity generated by the wartime (1939-1945) stoppage of goods from Western industrial centers gave them an excellent opportunity to cater to the indigenous market without competition. As far as social origin, field of economic interest and cultural background are concerned, these nascent entrepreneurs were entirely different from the Sri Lankan plantation aristocracy (plantocracy).

The development of a national entrepreneurial class was the decisive factors in the breakdown of the alliance between the petty bourgeoisie and upper capitalist class. Culturally as well as economically, the rural petty bourgeoisie were closer to the national entrepreneurial class than to the colonial capitalist class. Nevertheless, during the 40s the national entrepreneurial class was not mature enough economically or socially to play an independent role in politics or to challenge the political dominance of the upper capitalist class. The development of a national entrepreneurial class and
its subordination economically and politically to the upper capitalist class are keys to understanding the political behaviour of the petty bourgeoisie since the establishment of Sinhala Maha Saba.

The establishment of Sinhala Maha Saba (S.M.S.) by S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike in 1937 resulted from his relationship with the nationalist and politically alert petty bourgeoisie on the one hand and the nascent national entrepreneurial class on the other. Bandaranaike was the General of S.M.S. and played a key role in its organization, but it was not merely 'Bandaranaike's personal political vehicle'. S.M.S. provided the stage for a certain section of society and aired its political views. The virtual forerunner of the S.M.S. was the All Ceylon Village Committee Conference started by Arthur V. Dias and D.H. S. Nanayakkara in 1925, and presided over by Bandaranaike after 1930. Below Bandaranaike, the leadership of Sinhala Maha Saba was occupied by elements of the upper strata of the petty bourgeoisie or by those who were rising from petty bourgeoisie to upper class and who had their own political bases and command in their respective areas. A. Ratnayake, D.M. Rajapaksa, Jayaweera Kuruppu, A.P. Jayasuria and M.P. de Soysa can be mentioned as examples. The backbone of the S.M.S. was the Buddhist nationalistic petty bourgeoisie. One of the most important constituent elements of the S.M.S. were Sinhalese literat and journalists - Piyadasa Sirisena, D.W. Wickramarachchi, Boralessgamuwe G.H. Perera, Hemapala Munidasa, Jayantha Weerasekara, D.S.W. Gauthamadasa and so on. G.F. Wickramarachchi
and D.J.S. Paranayapa were well known Ayurvedic physicians.

S.M.S.'s attention focused mainly on the cultural, religious (Buddhist) and linguistic issues of the Sinhalese. It should be borne in mind that cultural issues contained political content, and political demands were expressed in cultural terms. As Kearney points out, the Sinhalese language movement was essentially a class rather than a communal issue until its character began to change in the early 50s.63

The establishment of S.M.S. is a turning point in the political history of the petty bourgeoisie. It is so not because their political and economic demands were articulated in S.M.S. but because it brought the politically alert petty bourgeoisie under the control of the national entrepreneurial class.

At the time of the colonial transfer of power, the rural enlightened generation of petty bourgeoisie occupied a very important position in the Sri Lankan social fabric. This social class exercised an enormous influence in the rural world where a majority of the people lived and they became a decisive factor in politics. The Soulbury Constitution made provisions to provide weightage in representation in favour of rural areas, but the petty bourgeoisie had no political party dedicated to their own needs. Many points of conflict existed between the petty bourgeoisie and the main forces in Sri Lanka.

Lankan politics - the U.N.P. and the left opposition. On the one hand, they opposed the economic policies and cultural values of the Sri Lankan upper class which the U.N.P. represented; on the other, they were afraid of the radical changes envisaged by the Marxists. The major weapon used by the U.N.P. to drive a wedge between the Buddhist-Nationalistic petty bourgeoisie and the left was the alleged threat to religion from Marxist dictatorship. At the general election in 1947, for example, posters depicting temples, churches and mosques in flames with the caption 'save the country, religion and the nation from the Sama Samaja fire' were widely distributed by the U.N.P.

When Bandaranaike left the ruling U.N.P. in 1951 and formed the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (S.L.F.P.), most of the politically articulate and nationalistic petty bourgeoisie joined him. It is a matter of fact that the emerging national entrepreneurial class whose economic and social interests were disturbed by the policies of the ruling U.N.P. were the main and dominant element in the S.L.F.P., but the cultural, social and to some extent economic needs of the Sinhalese petty bourgeoisie were also articulated in the S.L.F.P. programme. In other words, in the S.L.F.P., the petty bourgeoisie found a voice to air their political grivances, a forum for their political energy, and an aim to mobilize the political forces for which they were in command. The force behind the tide of religio-cultural mass nationalism was the Sinhalese
intelligentsia of the petty bourgeoisie. To be sure, 'they wanted a room in the sun'.

The political grivances and attitudes of the petty bourgeoisie, their anger toward the dominance of the westernized, affluent upper class which enjoyed political power under the U.N.P. government, and their traditional loyalties were orchestrated by Bandaranaike in his ascent to power. One of the determining factors behind the M.E.P. election victory in 1956 was its ability to mobilize rural petty bourgeoisie against the U.N.P. under the political banner of the M.E.P. Various other social groups such as the dissident element of the westernized upper class who left the U.N.P. due to personal quarrels found a refuge in the S.L.F.P., but the dominant one was national entrepreneurial class. As for the other partners of the M.E.P., Philip Goonewardena's V.L.S.S.P. was the most ruraly based and nationalistic of the left parties at the time, and W. Dahanayake's Basha Peramuna, Rajaratne's Jatike Vimukkthi Peramuna, and Iriyagolla's Republican Party were the ones that emerged from the tide of Sinhala Buddhist nationalistic waves and were typical expressions of the cultural values of the petty bourgeoisie.

After coming to power, the M.E.P. government in 1956 changed government policies in the spheres of language and religion; these, together with its nationalization programme, met the aspirations of a large section of petty bourgeoisie. For example, the establishment of the Central Institute of Ayurveda and of Ayurveda College to enhance the position of Ayurveda
medicine and state recognition of Ayurvedic physicians was the fulfillment of the long-term aspirations of Ayurvedic physicians. The Ministry of Cultural Affairs was created to assist the indigenous culture and artists who were neglected by the previous government. At the same time the government moved to broaden the economic base of the national entrepreneurial class. One of the first steps taken by the M.E.P. government was granting tax holidays for new industries. Even though the petty bourgeoisie was the driving force that brought the M.E.P. to power, those who held the reins of power in the M.E.P. government were of the national entrepreneurial class, upper bourgeoisie and even some elements of the westernized upper class. Therefore, the new regime did not seriously intend to restructure the socioeconomic framework inherited from the past; nor were they interested in putting an end to the hegemonic position of the English educated elite so as to accommodate the interest of the sons and daughters of the petty bourgeoisie who, for the first time, had asserted themselves in rural politics.
Chapter VI

The Social and Historical Origins of the New Left - II

Crisis of the Petty Bourgeoisie

The political change in 1956 marked a turning point in the history of the political behaviour of the petty bourgeoisie. In order to understand the changes in the political behaviour of the petty bourgeoisie after 1956 our attention must be directed to several new developments.

After independence rapid population growth ensured the numerical growth of the petty bourgeoisie as well. Within 25 years, the population nearly doubled.\(^1\) This growth was the result of a reduced mortality rate for both infants and the elderly, while the crude birth rate remained relatively stable. Credit for the decline in crude death rate was normally given to the introduction of a nationwide D.D.T. Programme to eradicate Malaria.\(^2\) In 1947 the D.D.T. Programme was intensified and house-to-house and environmental spraying campaigns started. The crude death rate dropped dramatically. In addition, government expenditure in other areas of public health and medical care trebled between 1948 and 1958.

\(^1\) In 1946 total population of the country was 6,657,339 and it rose up to 12,711,143 in 1971. Source - Department of Census and Statistics, The Population of Sri Lanka (Colombo, 1974).

Table I
Crude Birth Rate and Crude Death Rate, 1933-1965.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Birth Rate</th>
<th>Death Rate</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Birth Rate</th>
<th>Death Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source - Registrar General Department.

Statistics of population growth do not substantiate the popular myth that the sudden appearance of a youth cohort was the basis for political volatility and particularly youth unrest. Population growth in Sri Lanka did not produce the 'unprecedented, massive' youth cohort that can be seen in Indonesia. Since the rapid population growth was an outcome of a reduced death rate among infants and the elderly, the population of all age groups increased and the age cohort under 25 years old did not rise drastically.

Table II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1946</th>
<th>1953</th>
<th>1963</th>
<th>1971</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Ages</td>
<td>6,657</td>
<td>8,098</td>
<td>10,582</td>
<td>12,711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-14</td>
<td>2,478</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>3,215</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>1,322</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>1,471</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-64</td>
<td>2,626</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>3,127</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 over</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source - Department of Census and Statistics (1974)

In 1946, population under 25 constituted 57.1 per cent
of the total. In 1953 and 1963 it was 57.8 and 59.5 respectively. From 1963 to 1971 this percentage rose only 0.3. Indeed, the youth population grew rapidly but proportionately to the growth of the entire population. Not youthful population growth, but the fact that it took place in an underdeveloped economy incapable of expanding to meet the demands placed upon it, caused the crisis.

The major factor which determined the political behaviour of the petty bourgeoisie after 1956 was the worsening economic conditions of the country. The economic system inherited in 1948 was a classic example of an underdeveloped economy. Sri Lanka had to rely mainly on the export of primary agricultural products to finance its imports of consumer and capital goods. In 1948, 34 per cent of Sri Lanka's gross national income was derived from export and an equal percentage of national income had been spent on imports. Political change did not bring about any modification in this pattern.

The export income of the country was heavily dependent on a very small number of commodities; tea, rubber and coconut product were responsible for about 95% of export earnings in 1967 (tea alone accounted for 65%). These primary

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agricultural exports depended for their prices on the World Market. The prices of tea and rubber, approximately 80% of export earnings, declined by 30% and 40% respectively during the decade 1960-70; export quantities did not increase so as to nullify falling prices. For example, the export index based on 1965=100 reveals a figure for 1960=102. The outcome of slow growth in exports and a sharp decrease in prices was a decline in the terms of trade by 37% between 1961 and 1971, at an average annual rate of 4% to 5%. The capacity of the country to import its requirements from its own earnings continuously weakened:

This trade ... rose by nearly 400% to an annual average of Rs. 436 million in 1966-70, or 22% of average annual export earnings. The external resource gap, i.e. the difference between current plus capital payment and total foreign exchange earnings which was at an annual average of Rs. 208 million in 1961 to 1965 (ranging from Rs. 126 million to Rs. 323 million) increased by more than three times to an annual average of Rs. 793 million in 1966-1970 (ranging from Rs. 414 million to Rs. 1235 million). In this period the ratio of the resource gap to G.D.P. rose from 5% in 1967 to 11% in 1969.

As export income failed to expand while export prices rose considerably the terms of trade deteriorated remarkably. The natural outcome of this unfavourable gap between export

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5 See. Central Bank of Ceylon, Annual Report of the Monetary Board to the Minister of Finance for the year (period 1960-70). Those normally appears on March 31 in the following year.

earnings and import payments was expanding budget deficits.7

The solution to the country's external payments problem was expected along two lines: a general improvement of the terms of trade and foreign aid. The first, however, did not materialize; the terms of trade persistently deteriorated. In this situation, all finance ministers since 1970 have been compelled to go before the World Bank and International Monetary Fund seeking assistance to finance the deficits. Obtaining foreign loans and aid became a regular feature. The growing tendency towards obtaining loans and aid from countries and international financial institutions resulted in the increasing dependency of Sri Lanka. From 1965-70 Sri Lanka obtaining total credit of Rs. 723.4 million from the I.M.F. of which Rs. 301.7 million was paid back leaving a balance of Rs. 421.7 million as of 20 May 1970.8 In addition to that, in 1969 and 1970 the government began borrowing money from commercial banks and credit institutions in Europe and America to pay day-to-day expenses. These borrowing stood at Rs. 350 million at the end of the U.N.P. rule in May 1970.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount Rs/Ms.</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount Rs/Ms.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1965-66</td>
<td>682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962-63</td>
<td>439</td>
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<td>850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963-64</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>1968-69</td>
<td>947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>1969-70</td>
<td>1150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Budget Speeches (1960-70).


Ibid.12
This crisis affected the economic life of the inhabitants of Sri Lanka in various ways. The welfare services and subsidies which were being reduced gradually, drastically affected the petty bourgeoisie, pseudo-petty bourgeoisie and working class. According to the terms of the agreement concluded with the I.M.F. in July 1965, the rice subsidy was reduced in November 1968.\textsuperscript{10} When the rupee was devalued, the cost of consumer goods went up rapidly. The cost of living index, which stood at 103.5 in 1960 and 111.5 in 1965 rose to 130.5 in 1970. As it was impossible under these circumstances to absorb increasing labour units in the work force, unemployment and under-employment increased rapidly. By 1969 there were some 14,000 university graduates, and 112,000 young people who had G.C.E. (Ordinary Level) qualifications without employment.\textsuperscript{11}

As the economic crisis deepened during the period 1965-70, groups affected by it reacted in various ways. A series of strikes in 1966 on the plantations, in the private sector in 1967, in government departments in 1968, and in the corporations in 1968 and 1969 indicated a growing belligerency.

With the worsening economic situation in the 1960s, the petty bourgeoisie was shaken to its foundations. Its youthful sections were destined to face grave problems. This new generation was deprived of the economic position that its

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 4
\textsuperscript{11} A.J. Wilson; Politics in Sri Lanka (Bristol, 1974), 62.
predecessors had enjoyed; they were unable to find employment in keeping with their social status and educational qualifications.

The crisis and the collapse of the petty bourgeoisie in the context of economic deterioration was also related to the crisis in education (the crisis in education will be discussed in the chapter vii). The stagnant rural economy forced the petty bourgeoisie to place hopes on avenues other than direct economic activities for their social advancement. The only avenue open to them for upward social mobility or at least to preserve their existing social status was education. Hence, the petty bourgeoisie educated their children in the firm expectation that it was the best possible investment. Their aspirations were frustrated when their children remained unemployed.

One important impact of the economic crisis was a depreciation of the importance of cultural and religious factors in politics. After 1956 the petty bourgeoisie began to realize that what they wanted was something more than changes in the cultural sphere. The fact that Bandaranaike donned national dress and celebrated 'Sinhala New Year with 'Keum and Kiribath', while Dudley Senanayake did not, was not any more relevant than the fact that one went to Oxford and the other to Cambridge. As soon as the M.E.P. assumed power, Sinhala was proclaimed the official language of the country. However, it did not affect the overall transformation of the colonially-
oriented administrative structure expected by those who demanded it. Instead it led to a series of clashes between Sinhala and Tamil speaking communities in the country.

Similarly the political activities of the Sanghas and their importance began to decline in 1960s. After the assassination of Bandaranaike by a monk, the political activities of Bikkus were viewed with caution. Having learned a lesson from their defeat in 1956, the U.N.P. decided to seek the support of the petty bourgeoisie. The reorganization of the U.N.P. after 1956 reflected this attempt and Dudley Senanayake was able to obtain the support of a section of Sanghas.

The national entrepreneurial class also underwent a dramatic transformation after 1956. They had sought power in opposition to the establishment, but as their interests and opportunities widened due to state assistance (eg. the Development Finance Corporation established in 1956 granted loans to private enterprise Rs. 25.1 million in the next few years), the differences between them and the upper capitalist class began to disappear. As their interests merged, the gap between the national entrepreneurial class and the petty bourgeoisie widened.

Furthermore, certain developments in the parliamentary process after 1956 led to the emergence of the Member of parliament as a powerful figure and representative of state power in his constituency. This enabled the members of parliament to maneuver for the support of the petty bourgeoisie.
by fulfilling some of their social, economic and status aspirations. But the economic crisis undermined their capacity and thwarted their efforts to satisfy the socio-economic aspirations of bulk of petty bourgeoisie.

These developments ultimately led to the polarization of the petty bourgeoisie. One section sought to achieve their goals with the help of existing parties, namely the S.L.F.P. and the U.N.F. and became a conservative social force passively accepting the status quo. The educated youths of the petty bourgeoisie, however, were by and large untouched by this process and began to feel the full impact of the growing socio-economic crisis. They felt alienated from the mainstreams of Sri Lankan politics. It was the youthful sections of this class who first realized that their aspirations and ambitions could not be fulfilled within the existing system. This youth generation of a crisis-ridden petty bourgeoisie began to feel the necessity for change, for a new system in which their aspirations could be fulfilled.

The social and political environment in which this new generation grew up is one important factor that inclined them towards radical politics. They were brought up in a post-colonial political environment and their education mentally prepared them not to accept social inequality. They gradually began to understand the reality of their society. They compared the ideals of democratic society such as equality, opportunity and priority to capabilities that they learned in the class
with the crude reality of Sri Lankan democratic society.

Furthermore, this generation was brought up in a new historical era of social and political upheaval. The romanticized episodes of revolutionary valour of Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, the liberation struggles of the Indo-Chinese people and growing student militancy in the Western Hemisphere were among the major factors which influenced the ideology of youths in 1960s. Consequently there developed a new socialist ideology among these youths which threatened the ruling ideology of the society that legitimized the existing order.

The emergence of a radical youth generation of petty bourgeoisie who had lost confidence in the existing socio-economic system and who were searching for collective solutions created the conditions for new left politics in Sri Lanka. They refused to accept the U.N.P. or the S.L.F.P. as parties capable of changing the existing socio-economic structure in which they were unable to fulfill their aspirations. The assimilation of the national entrepreneurial class by the system destroyed any remaining idealism. Nor were they prepared to accept the leadership of the left parties.

Another important factor in their political thought was rejection of the process of parliamentary democracy which had failed to offer any serious solution to their growing socioeconomic problems. The failure of the so-called 1956 'peaceful revolution' of Bandaranaike to meet the needs of the petty bourgeoisie shattered their hopes of obtaining solutions
to their problems through parliament. In this context, the
tendency to search for a violent revolutionary solution emerged.

Petty bourgeois youths believed that the revolution
was imminent and that the social system was collapsing because
its economic and social base was eroded by economic crisis. In
order to prepare for this forthcoming revolution, organizations
had to be formed and strengthened within the shortest possible
time. This hurly burly for the expected forthcoming revolution
was clearly reflected in the J.V.P.'s political behaviour. They
began to prepare for the imminent 'Big Struggle', rejecting all
other forms of political activities as mere "skirmish struggles".

Though these young radicals were objectively allied
with the proletariat, they refused to accept working class
prominence. They conceptualized a broader category - the
oppressed class - and included themselves in the ranks of the
proletariat which they defined as the class of the 'property-
less. This aspect is clearly manifested in the J.V.P. "What is
meant by the working class", asked Rohana Wijeweera?

Isn't it a part of the proletariat? Is it not
a section of the proletariat itself which is
spread throughout the country selling their
labour? There are large numbers dispersed
throughout the country who are unable to live
even a moment in this capitalist society who
are without an opportunity to sell their labour.
The unemployed rural youths, chena farmers,
share croppers, to what class do these people
belong? If we categorize a separate class,
as a working class, it will be necessary for us
to recognize class divisions such as students,
teachers, doctors, engineers, etc.12

---

Deshapremi, August 8, 1970.
One of the most important aspects of the new radicalism of crisis-ridden petty bourgeoisie was its nationalistic character. Even though the petty bourgeoisie were drifting towards socialism in the context of economic crisis, their socialism was deeply permeated by their nationalistic heritage. The new radicals were brought up in very traditional family backgrounds of an older generation of petty bourgeoisie, and the sheer chauvinism of the older generation penetrated the minds of a younger generation in the guise of patriotism.

This nationalism in socialist wrapping is clearly evidenced in the J.V.P. political ideology before 1971. The word patriotism was one of the most widely used words in J.V.P. literature and it was the title of one of the J.V.P. newspapers. The struggle for which they were preparing was a patriotic struggle. Janatha Vimukthi of 1 August 1970 expressed the nature of their struggle as:

The colonial economy, the queen's government, the Roman Dutch Law and the imperial traditions which arrived in the country through the guns and bullets of foreign imperialists will be chased out of the country by the patriotic traditions and the guns and bullets of patriotic people.

Rohana Wijeweera was first introduced to the public as 'Deshapremi' Wijeweera (patriotic Wijeweera) by the J.V.P. in their Island-wide poster campaign after he was arrested in 1970. When the J.V.P. started to hold public meetings, the five big portraits hung on the stage were of Marx, Lenin, Che Guevara,
Keppetipola (feudal chieftain who led the first armed struggle against the British rule) and Puran Appu (popular hero of 1848 peasant uprising). Out of five popular indoctrination classes of the J.V.P., one was entitled 'Indian Expansionism'. Pre-colonial era Sri Lanka had been subjected to repeated South Indian invasions and continued tension between Sinhalese and Tamil communities made Indian Expansionism an emotionally charged question. These nationalistic responses of the J.V.P. partly explain its success in becoming the main New Left organization.

Hero worship and personality cults are conspicuous characteristics of petty bourgeois mentality. This element was one of the important factors influencing the social psychology of petty bourgeois radicals. The petty bourgeoisie are inclined to believe a messiah who will direct them to a new era and a new land free of the evils of 'capitalist' society. Hero worship blended with Sinhalese chauvinism gave a new interpretation to the Gemunu Concept which says that a Sinhalese hero coming from Rohana (the historical name for Southern Sri Lanka) would secretly organize forces to rescue the country from alien danger. Closely associated with hero worship is the personality cult. As a political movement of the radical petty bourgeoisie, all new left groups more or less contained elements of the personality cult.

Finally, Narodnic-like sensitivity to the problems of the peasantry was a constituent element in the political thinking of petty bourgeois radicals. One reason for this is their peasant origins. Peasant problems and grievances such as land
hunger, poverty in the rural sector, water problems of dry zone peasants and flood problems of the wet zone were highlighted in new left propaganda.

Close examination of the data relating to the social background of the New Left movement reveals the relationship between the petty bourgeoisie and the New Left. The data examined here pertains to the pre-1971 J.V.P. Quite a few New Left groups and grouplets were active in the period prior to 1970, but by about 1970 the J.V.P. had so expanded to a point that they could claim to be the New Left movement in Sri Lanka. The social base of the J.V.P. represents that of New Left.

Here I am analysing statistical data relating to three organizational levels of the J.V.P.; Political Bureau, District Secretaries and Kandy District Committee (see appendices I, II and III).

Some of the characteristic features of the P.B. (Political Bureau) emanating from the examination of the data can be itemised as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition of the Political Bureau</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Grade Govt. Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social Composition of the Fathers of the P.B. Members.

Small Traders and Businessmen  -  4  28.57%
Middle Grade Govt. Service  -  4  28.57%
Cultivators  -  1  7.14%
Unknown  -  5  35.71%
Total  -  14  100.00

Another important feature of the P.B. was its youthful character. Out of 14 P.B. members, 11 were below 30 years of age. Further, 92.85% of them had educational qualifications either of or above G.C.E. (O.L.) Ordinary Level.

The composition of District Secretaries of the J.V.P. can be itemised as follows.

Composition of District Secretaries

Unemployed Youths  -  4  15.38%
Graduates - Unemployed  -  2  7.69%
Undergraduates  -  5  19.23%
High School Students  -  9  39.61%
Middle Grade Govt. Servants  -  5  19.23%
Peasants  -  1  3.84%
Total  -  26  100.00

As for the criteria, all but one of the District Secretaries were under 30 years of age. When we compare the composition of the District Secretaries with that of political Bureau no remarkable difference can be seen. Even when we come to the District Committee level the conspicuous features of the P.B. and District Secretaries can more or less be seen without exception.
The only difference is that more student and unemployed participation is evidenced.

**Composition of Kandy District Committee**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates - Unemployed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduates</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayurvedic Physicians</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Kandy District Committee we can see a high percentage of undergraduates (38.86%). One reason for this is the influence of the University of Peradeniya which was situated in Kandy District. The Kandy District Secretary was also in charge of the University for the J.V.P. and more undergraduates were recruited as fulltime workers and assigned police areas to do J.V.P. political work.

An examination of the data at the three levels reveals that it is not a workers' or peasants' movement but a petty bourgeois one. Most high school students and undergraduates were from petty bourgeois homes. Even in instances where they were from peasant background they could not be considered as a part of peasantry because ideologically they had alienated themselves from the peasantry.
### Political Bureau of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (2nd April, 1971)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Educational Standard</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>College/University Attended</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Father's Occupation</th>
<th>Residence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wijeweera</td>
<td>Medical Student</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Dharmasoka College</td>
<td>Trader</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tangalla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanath</td>
<td>Teacher Trainee</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Hikkaduwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karunaratne</td>
<td>G.C.E. (O.L.)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Akmeemana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loku Athula</td>
<td>G.C.E. (O.L.)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Rahula Vidyalaya Stafford College</td>
<td>Student Driving</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Kadalawatha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anura Ranjith</td>
<td>G.C.E. (O.L.)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Dharmasoka College</td>
<td>Student Station</td>
<td>Marster (CGR)</td>
<td>Ambalangoda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uyangoda</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Vidyalankara Pirivena</td>
<td>Cultivator</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kaburupitiya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunanda</td>
<td>G.C.E. (O.L.)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Dharmasoka College</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Head Master</td>
<td>Ambalangoda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.D. Silva</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Lino Operator</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Enderamulla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Maduwage</td>
<td>G.C.E. (O.L.)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Dharmasoka College</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Ambalangoda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumanayake</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Vidyarama Pirivena Peradeniya University</td>
<td>Overseer in an estate</td>
<td></td>
<td>Elpitiya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danapala</td>
<td>8 Standard</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Worker</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Kochchikade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisil Chandre</td>
<td>G.C.E. (O.L.)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Dharmasoka College</td>
<td>Unemployed, Barber</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Ambalangoda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piyatilake</td>
<td>G.C.E. (O.L.)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Gamini Vidyalaya Nalanda College</td>
<td>Student Ship Chandler</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kandena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Bojage</td>
<td>Graduate (B.Sc.)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Rahula Vidyalaya Richmond College</td>
<td>Works</td>
<td>Trader</td>
<td>Weligama</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix - II

**District Secretaries of the J.V.P. (1971)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Educational Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colombo-Central</td>
<td>Osmond de Silva</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Seewali Vidyalaya, Wanathamulla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombo-South</td>
<td>Wasantha Kanagaratne</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Olcott C., Prince C. Isipatana V.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aladin Subasinghe</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Teacher (B.A.)</td>
<td>Talwatte V., Peradeniya University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombo-North</td>
<td>W.M. Milton</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A.M. Premaratne</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kandy Road</td>
<td>Premasiri</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Peradeniya University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalutara</td>
<td>Nayanananda</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Madampe M.V., Peradeniya University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puttalama</td>
<td>Wilson</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Narammala M.M.V., Peradeniya University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratnapura</td>
<td>Nandasiri</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Peradeniya University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kegalle</td>
<td>Sarath Wijesinghe</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Kegalle M.V., Peradeniya University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matalle</td>
<td>Wijesundara</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Unemployed (B.A.)</td>
<td>External-Peradeniya University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurunegala</td>
<td>Samaratunga</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Unemployed (B.A.)</td>
<td>Narammala M.M.V., Peradeniya University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matale</td>
<td>Susil</td>
<td>-30</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kotte</td>
<td>Nimal Maharage</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Sarananda Virivena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laxman Fernando</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anuradhapura</td>
<td>Jayasinghe</td>
<td>-30</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polonnaruwa</td>
<td>Susil</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galle</td>
<td>Jagath</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amparai</td>
<td>Nissanka</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baddulla</td>
<td>Sunanda</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Darmasoka College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kandy</td>
<td>Ranjith</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Daramasoka College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moneragala</td>
<td>Premasiri Gamage</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wavniyawa</td>
<td>Gunawala Tennekoon</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuwara Eliya</td>
<td>Kanila</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trincomalee</td>
<td>Garusinghe</td>
<td>-30</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hambantota</td>
<td>Pantis</td>
<td>-30</td>
<td>A Peasant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Composition of the Kandy District Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Parents background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>Vijitha</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Teacher(Mother)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kandy</td>
<td>Deepal</td>
<td>High school student</td>
<td>Police Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peradeniya</td>
<td>Ratnasiri</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Middle Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kadugannawa</td>
<td>Bandula</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Government Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gampola</td>
<td>Chandradasa</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Head Master</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pussellawa</td>
<td>Samson</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nawalapitiya</td>
<td>Deva</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wattagama</td>
<td>Wilbert</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katugastota</td>
<td>Priyantha</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kundasale</td>
<td>Wimal</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talatuoya</td>
<td>Batugoda</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunnasgiriya</td>
<td>Weerakoon</td>
<td>Graduate-Unemployed</td>
<td>Trader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panvila</td>
<td>Rajaratne</td>
<td>Ayurvedic Physician</td>
<td>A Peasant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galagedara</td>
<td>Cyril</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>A Peasant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hasalaka</td>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>A Peasant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pallekele</td>
<td>Sisira</td>
<td>Graduate-Unemployed</td>
<td>A Peasant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teldeniya</td>
<td>Saman</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Rural Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ginigathhena</td>
<td>Jayantha</td>
<td>High school student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter VII

On Top of a Volcano

No matter how vital we think the role of leadership in a rise of a mass movement, there is no doubt that the leader can not create the conditions which make the rise of a movement possible. He can not conjure a movement out of void. There has to be an eagerness to follow and obey, and an intense dissatisfaction with things as they are, before movement and leader can make their appearance. When conditions are not ripe, the political leader, no matter how gifted, and his holy cause, no matter how potent, remain without a following.

By the end of 1970 the J.V.P. overwhelmingly dominated the New Left political sphere. It was able to mobilize thousands of youths all over the Island with the exception of those in Tamil-Speaking Northern and Eastern provinces. Despite the fact that leadership of the movement basically consisted of elements of a section of the petty bourgeoisie who had drifted towards insurrectionary politics in the face of economic crisis, they organized youths from petty bourgeoisie to lumpen proletariat cutting across all under-privileged social classes. By the end of 1970 they could claim that they had organized a mass movement in the real sense of the word.

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1. After the uprising Prime Minister warned in the Parliament that "we are all sitting on top of a volcano today. We are unable to say at what movement this terrible volcano will erupt" Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 96:10 (25 November 1971) 2211, 19-16.

The culmination of this development was the armed uprising of 1971. When the insurrection was over there were 17,953 alleged 'suspected insurgents' in custody - 11,748 were arrested and 6,205 surrendered. According to official estimates, 2,600 were found to be free from involvement in the activities of insurrectionary politics and were released after a couple of months. Further, nearly 5,000-6,000 were found not directly involved in the insurrection, having only attended the political classes conducted by the J.V.P.. Accordingly, out of all 17,953 arrested or surrendered only about 9,500-10,000 participated in the uprising.3

Statistical data from 10,192 'suspected insurgents' who were interviewed by chief rehabilitation officers at the rehabilitation camps and at the prisons is available though it remains unpublished.4 When examining this data two points have to be taken into account. Firstly, this data fails to distinguish between the leadership of the movement who made all the decisions and determined the course of events and the ordinary members who carried out the decisions. In an authoritarian movement such as J.V.P., where the principle of democratic-centralism was totally absent, the true nature of the movement is obscured by treating the entire membership

3 All these statistical data are based on the unpublished survey of the Chief Rehabilitation Officer, Chandre Anagiratna. (hereafter I am referring to it as "Survey-Anagiratna").

indifferently. It is obvious that the statistical data of the majority invariably overshadowed that of the numerically smaller leadership. Secondly, this data does not take into account the numbers who were killed during the uprising.

Group A of the following occupational table (except the first category of clergy) can be considered as privileged positions, but this category amounted to only 2.6% of the total in custody. Group B basically consisted of petty-bourgeois ranks. The category of traders listed in Group C should also be included in Group B. This petty-bourgeois segment made up 21.6% of the total. Group C minus the traders can be considered as peasants and workers. They make up the majority, 45.9% of the total. Students and unemployed youths complete the list with 29.9%.

Comparing this table to the tables of the political bureau and district secretaries of the J.V.P. reveals a remarkable difference. The P.B. and D.C. of the J.V.P. overwhelmingly consisted of petty bourgeoisie youth while the majority of those arrested after the uprising of 1971 were workers and peasants.

Table No. 1
'Suspected Insurgents' Classified by specific Industry and Occupation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry or Occupation</th>
<th>Public Sector</th>
<th>Private Sector</th>
<th>Other Sector</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group - A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy</td>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctors</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
continued from page 147.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Public Sector</th>
<th>Private Sector</th>
<th>Other Sector</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Grades</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>108</td>
<td></td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officers-Armed and Police</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group - B</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technicians/Physicians</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>551</td>
<td></td>
<td>698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Grades in Govt.Service</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Ranks-Armed &amp; Police</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group - C</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivators</td>
<td>2737</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishermen</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traders</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
<td>474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile Weavers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beedi Wrappers</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>205</td>
<td></td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Labours</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>803</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinnamon Peelers</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbers</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhobies</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estate Labours</td>
<td>198</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group - D</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td></td>
<td>1270</td>
<td></td>
<td>1270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td></td>
<td>1783</td>
<td></td>
<td>1783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1123</td>
<td>5838</td>
<td>3231</td>
<td>10,192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This data highlights a simple truth—the J.V.P.'s ability to mobilize underprivileged youths on a massive scale. How did a handful of inexperienced petty bourgeois youths, mostly high school students and undergraduates who were also tyros in politics meet with such success in marshalling youths against the existing system. Governmental authorities
including the Prime Minister tried to explain it as a case of
the misguidance of youth by disgruntled and ambitious elements
seeking to fulfill their sinister aims. What is important,
however, was not the leader's ability and skill to 'mislead'
but the followers willingness and readiness to be 'misled'.
In other words, the important point was the existence of a
generation so disgruntled that they were ready to take up arms
against the State.

This author does not mean to minimise the role played
by the leadership of J.V.P. or the importance of its political
ideology. As a matter of fact, the dedication and sheer deter-
mination of the J.V.P. can not be found in any other political
party on the left or right in Sri Lanka. But to emphasize only
subjective factors is insufficient and misleading. In order
to understand why these youth were determined to vanquish or
perish by taking up arms against the existing system, attention
should be directed to the economic, social and political condi-
tions of the country.

One of the salient features of the Sri Lankan economy,
even after the two decades of independence, was the perpetuation
of its colonial character. In 1970 as in 1947, the economy of
Sri Lanka was mainly dependent on a few export crops which

5 Sirima Bandaranaike, Statement on the State of Emergency,
Mansard's Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 94:15,
6 J. Uyangoda, 'Ideology and Social Psychology' Lanka Gurdian,
(November 1, 1979), 15.
were highly vulnerable to the vagaries of price in the international market. After independence, especially after 1956, the Sri Lanka government established a small steel plant and factories for tires, textiles, cements, papers, plywood and salt; but these attempts failed to alter the fundamental colonial character of Sri Lanka’s economy.

Table II

The Proportion of Tea in Total Export Earnings (in millions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Exports Rs.</td>
<td>1846</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>1700</td>
<td>1690</td>
<td>2035</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>1916</td>
<td>2033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea Export Rs.</td>
<td>1142</td>
<td>1201</td>
<td>1027</td>
<td>1061</td>
<td>1162</td>
<td>1062</td>
<td>1120</td>
<td>1947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea Exports Value as % of Total Export</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>58.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Furthermore, no government prior to 1972 dared to change the ownership pattern of the plantation sector. The dominance of British ownership remained the most prominent feature in the plantation sector, particularly the tea industry.

Table III

Ownership of Tea Lands, 1972

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership Category</th>
<th>Acreage</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sterling Companies (Registered in London)</td>
<td>158,147</td>
<td>26.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Rupee Companies (Registered in Colombia)</td>
<td>150,887</td>
<td>25.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ceylonese Individuals</td>
<td>152,468</td>
<td>25.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Non Ceylonese Individuals</td>
<td>10,859</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ceylonese and Non Ceylonese Individuals (Jointly)</td>
<td>4,085</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. State</td>
<td>13,530</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Ceylonese Small-holders</td>
<td>107,645</td>
<td>18.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
continued from page 150.

Ownership Category | Acreage | Percentage
Total               | 597,645 | 100.00


During the first U.N.P. regime (1947-1956) the left opposition demanded nationalization of the estate sector, but the government refused to consider any proposal to nationalize British interests, particularly the British-owned tea estates. D.S. Senanayake was reported to have said that it would be foolish to kill that which laid the golden egg. Even after the S.L.F.P. led coalition came to power in 1970, N.M. Perera in his first budget speech confessed, "we have agitated for the nationalization of the tea estates for the past forty years. After assuming office, I realized "that it is not advisable to do now"."

The younger generation viewed the plantation sector as a legacy of colonialism. Suffering from a worsening economic crisis, their anger was naturally directed towards the British-dominated estate sector which excluded their participation. The first of the J.V.P. indoctrination classes blamed oneconomic crisis creation of plantations:

The primary root of the burning economic problems of the country is the collapse of simple self-

7 Quoted by A.C. Alles, Insurgency-1971 (An account of the April Insurrection in Sri Lanka), (Colombo, 1979), 286.
sufficient economy. Birth of tea plant at the expense of Kurahan plant is the main cause of the economic crisis. The problems of this country could be solved only in reinstituting rice plant and Kurahan plant at the expense of Tea and Rubber plant.

The J.V.P.'s analysis reduced the complex causes of the country's economic problems to a very simple formula, but the salient colonial features of the plantation sector gave credibility to this simple explanation. During the economic crisis of the 1960s, the plantation economy became a target of criticism.

Another manifestation of the economic crisis was the constant increase in the cost of living during the decade 1960-70. Real wages in both industry and agriculture were falling, resulting in a lower standard of living for the people. Although it is impossible to get an accurate statistical picture of the impact of mounting prices on living standards as The Economic Intelligence Unit (London) points out, some estimates are possible. The cost of living index which is shown on the following table is calculated for Colombo and does not, of course, take black market prices into account; nor are minimum wage rates representative of the remuneration received by workers. However, faute de mieux, these data provide evidence that the living standard of the people was being eroded by rising prices.

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8 Quote in Janatha Sangamaya, 71 April Uprising: Background and Politics (in Sinhala), (Dehiwala, 1980), 96.
Table No. IV

Consumer Prices and Wages (1952=100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1965</th>
<th>1969</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>% Change in 60-70</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>103.5</td>
<td>112.5</td>
<td>130.5</td>
<td>138.2</td>
<td>33.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>100.8</td>
<td>107.3</td>
<td>127.9</td>
<td>136.6</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>95.1</td>
<td>126.8</td>
<td>130.9</td>
<td>137.3</td>
<td>44.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel &amp; Light</td>
<td>102.7</td>
<td>100.7</td>
<td>124.9</td>
<td>136.1</td>
<td>32.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
<td>101.5</td>
<td>101.5</td>
<td>108.4</td>
<td>109.8</td>
<td>8.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>117.5</td>
<td>128.3</td>
<td>147.1</td>
<td>153.2</td>
<td>30.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Minimum Wage Rates

In Agriculture

a) at current prices | 110.2 | 116.3 | 138.8 | 140.2 | 27.22
b) at constant prices| 106.5 | 103.4 | 106.3 | 101.5 | -4.69

In Industry & Commerce

a) at current prices | 128.1 | 132.8 | 161.7 | 166.0 | 29.12
b) at constant prices| 123.8 | 118.0 | 123.9 | 120.1 | -2.99

Source: The Economic Intelligence Unit (London), Quarterly Economic Review (Ceylon), No. 2, 1971.

The crisis of a stagnant rural economy also contributed to the emergence of the desperate and dissident youth generation that formed the backbone of insurrectionary politics.
A direct relationship between the emergence of insurrectionary politics and a stagnant rural economy is apparent. The firm support that the J.V.P. received came not from the urban centers but from rural areas. Indeed, most of the activities of the April uprising occurred in rural areas such as Thambuttegama, Rajanganaya, Deniyaya and Uragaha. The majority of those in custody after the April uprising were from rural areas. Any study of the New Left and insurrectionary politics in Sri Lanka that does not take into account its relationship with the stagnant rural economy would be one sided.
One of the constituent features of the underdeveloped economy of Sri Lanka was the stagnation of the hinterland. Despite the agricultural self-sufficiency drive of the U.N.P. government and the so-called industrialization drive of the M.E.P. and S.L.F.P. governments of 1956, no fundamental change occurred in the rural economic structure. Instead, we find the continuous development of underdevelopment in the rural sector. No attempt was made to establish agro-based industries in rural areas, and the absence of the articulation of economic sectors was notoriously evident. As in the plantation sector, government refused to effect a change in the land ownership patterns of the rural sector. The single attempt in this direction was the Paddy Land Act of 1958 which effected only the share cropper-landlord relationship.

Other aspects of the crisis were the continuous growth of the rural population, the on-going process of social change and the rising expectations of the younger rural generation. As mentioned earlier, population doubled within the 25 years period preceding 1971. More importantly this growth occurred in a period of rapid social change.

This process of social change had two aspects; firstly, as an increasing number of children of the lower social layers managed to obtain education, the social base of the rural intelligentsia was widened; and secondly, in the context of the parliamentary democratic process the rural folk were rapidly politicized. The expansion of education and increasing
political participation enhanced the expectations of the rural youths. The stagnant rural economy was not able to accommodate the population growth, much less the rapid social change and rising expectations of the educated.

In this situation the man/land ratio deteriorated rapidly. Simultaneously, the pressure of population on land increased because of the virtual absence of any avenue to absorb increasing population units other than land. The rural population on an arable land unit (an acre) increased from 1.23 to 2.01 between 1946 and 1971.\textsuperscript{10} The colonization schemes in the dry zone and haphazard distribution of land among villagers in the wet zone and upcountry under village expansion schemes were not sufficient to alleviate the problem.

No economic problem is more fundamental in the peasant sector than land hunger except perhaps the thirst for water in the dry zone. A socio-economic survey of Pata-Dumbara, conducted by University of Ceylon (Sarkar and Tambiah), reveals how extensive was the land problem in the Kandyan highlands.

\textbf{Table No. V}

\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Extend of Land} & \textbf{\% of Households} & \textbf{\% Extend Owned} \\
\hline
2 acres and more & 4.95 & 47.94 \\
1 acre and less than 2 acres & 5.73 & 23.25 \\
\frac{1}{2} acre and less than 1 acres & 9.29 & 18.09 \\
Less than \frac{1}{2} acre. & 13.83 & 10.72 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

\textsuperscript{10} See Marga Institute, \textit{A Comparative Study of Population and Agricultural Change in Sri Lanka (Ceylon)}, (Colombo, 1972), Chapter iv.
### Extent of Land

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% of Households</th>
<th>% Extend Owned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Paddy Land</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This is not an exceptional but a representative example. As Warnapala stated, in a peasant country like Sri Lanka where 72% of the population were dependent on agriculture, 26% were landless and another 26% were owners of less than ½ an acre. A village survey (Delumgoda) conducted by Newton Gunasinghe revealed that situation had not changed even in the 1970s.

Each of the New Left political groups and the J.V.P. in particular gave more prominence to the problems of the peasantry than to those of the working class. Newspapers published by the J.V.P. prior to 1971 (*Virukthi*, *Ratu Lanka*, *Deshapremi*) clearly demonstrate the J.V.P.'s sensitivity to the problems of the peasantry. Most of the J.V.P. supporters came from the poor peasant families. In his survey Chief Rehabilitation Officer (C.R.O.) Anagiratne observed:

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.... Both in the camps and in the Kegalla district, I found that the average extent of land owned by families to whom the suspects belong is 1/2 - 1 acre. In Kegalla district alone, however, the average reduces to 1/2 - 1/4 an acre.13
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12 Newton Gunasinghe, "Production Relations", 129.
13 Anagiratne, *Survey*. 

The insurgents did not belong to landless families or the rural proletariat; but they were on the brink of the rural proletariat as land holdings of their families were no longer sufficient for their subsistance.

Any examination of the crisis of the rural economy must take into account regional disparities. In comparison to other areas, the dry zone had low educational, sanitary and communication facilities. The peasantry in the dry zone suffered from drought and malaria. The failure of land colonization schemes not only aggravated existing problems but created new ones.

This situation provided the New Left with fertile soil in which to plant the seed of insurrectionary politics. Unlike the leadership of the traditional left whose activities were mainly concentrated in the urban areas, the New Left and particularly the J.V.P. worked with peasant youth and addressed their problems. The J.V.P. believed that there were three potential revolutionary forces in Sri Lanka: the urban proletariat, the Plantation workers, and rural proletariat. Their definition of rural proletariat was not clear but it consisted of agrarian workers, tenant farmers, chena cultivators unemployed rural youth and poor peasants. Unlike the plantation worker who was seen as an instrument of Indian expansionism or the urban workers who were strongly influenced by revisionist politics of the traditional left parties, the rural proletariat was seen as a genuine revolutionary force. Thus, the problems of the peasant sector received much attention in
J.V.P. literature:

The capitalist economic system had swallowed up the fertile land in the upcountry and in the wet zone areas creating a great shortage of land for the Ceylonese people. Liptons, brook Bonds and other white imperialist companies owned thousand of acres. 90 local families share one acre, The so-called left wing leaders of our country have said that the peasantry is not revolutionary, and that they are against socialism These leaders can never understand the problems of Ceylon... It was only socialism that could permanently liberate the upcountry landless peasant, the peasant of the wet zone whose crops are constantly destroyed by floods, the dry zone peasant who is the victim of drought, the agricultural labours, chena cultivators and the share croppers.14

In the context of this deteriorating economic situation, the people's indebtedness increased rapidly. the Survey of Rural Indebtedness in Ceylon 1957 placed total indebtedness in the rural areas at Rs. 516 million or about Rs. 424 per rural family. It was 34% of annual income or 9% of the value of property owned by the family; 44.1% of the total borrowings was from friends and relatives.15

Another aspect of this crisis was the perpetuation of economic inequality in the country. According to a 1963 survey, the top 20% of income earners earned 55.25% of the total income. Further examination of income distribution revealed a wide disparity in the country. The majority of income earners (84.14 percent) received only Rs. 25-200 a month and

14 Vimukthi, 5 September, 1970.
15 Department of Census and Statistics, Survey of Rural Indebtedness in Ceylon 1957 (Colombo, 1959), 5.
as many as 45.9% received less than Rs. 75 per month. That the situation was more or less the same in 1973 is revealed by the following table.

**Income Distribution of Sri Lanka - 1973**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Units (Rs.)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Average Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 - below</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 - 199</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200 - 399</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400 - 599</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600 - 799</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800 - 999</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000 - over</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>1551</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The spread of education and party rhetoric during election contests, contributed to the growing consciousness of political and economic inequality. Even in ancient Greece inequality was considered as an aspect of political instability. Aristotle observed that "in all cases, the cause of sedition is always to be found in inequality".16

Sri Lanka's most serious political and economic problem was high and inexorably rising unemployment. The true extent of Sri Lanka's unemployment problem is unknown and the data is more or less unreliable. Under employment is even more difficult to define with precision. The monthly data giving the number of people registered for employment at the Labour Exchange is far from complete but it seems indicative of the trend. In September 1967, 254,000 were registered in the

Labour Exchange. In September 1969 registration reached 321,000 or nearly 15% of the total labour force.\(^7\)

The unemployment problem severely affected educated youths. As is shown in table below, in the age cohort of 15-24, the unemployment rate climbed steadily with education.

Table No. VII

Unemployment Rate by Age, Sex and Educational Level.

1969-1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Ages 15-24 y.</th>
<th>25-34 y.</th>
<th>35-39 y.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M.%</td>
<td>F.%</td>
<td>T.%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Schooling</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.C.E. (O.L.)</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.C.E. (A.L.)</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In 1969 there were some 14,000 University graduates and 112,000 high school graduates with G.C.E. (O.L.) qualification without employment.\(^8\) As Kearney states, "the high level of unemployment among educated youths reflected not only an overall shortage of employment opportunities but a strong and persistent preference for white collar jobs, particularly in the private sector".\(^9\) The report of an Inter-Agency Team of the

\(^7\) The Economic Intelligence Unit (London), Review, 4.
International Labour Office commonly known as the Dudley Seers:

More than 100,000 young people came pouring every year out of the secondary schools with paper qualifications for which the demand is very limited and one wonders about the relevance of the expectations and values they have acquired at school to the real tasks of development that now face Ceylon. 20

The unemployment problem can not be examined further without tracing its relationship to the crisis in education, particularly Liberal Arts education. Certain aspects of this development date from the late 18th century. In comparison to other South and Southeast Asian countries, Sri Lanka under the British rule had a widespread education system. Educational facilities expanded under the competition among various organizations and at a later stage, as a result of the activities of Ceylonese ministers to whom the function of education was transferred under the Donoghmore Constitution. The free education system, started in 1943, led to further rapid expansion particularly in the national languages in rural areas. Two features in the field of education in the post independence era should be noted; the rapid expansion of secondary and University education and the continuation of its colonial structure.

Increasing population and the pressure of the electorate on parliamentarians forced the government to open Central Schools and Maha Vidyalayas in remote areas and, with

the change of the medium of instruction to 'Swabasha' there was a record rush for education. The number of candidates sitting for the G.C.E. (O.L.) examination climbed from about 53,000 in 1952 to more than 314,000 in 1967. University education expanded accordingly.

In an examination of the relationship between unemployment and education three factors have to be taken into account: the attitudes and expectations of educated youths (and their parents to some extent); the nature of the education system and the structure of labour market.

Education had been the main accessible means of upward social mobility. Throughout the British era, possession of a liberal education was the main qualification for entering government service thereby liberating oneself from manual labour. After independence, many new government jobs were opened up due to an expansion of public service; and getting into government service became a primary objective for those possessing a Liberal Arts education.

After the opening of Madya Maha Vidyalayas in the early 1950s, free education became more accessible to the masses. In a situation were the land/man ratio was deteriorating rapidly,

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education became the only hope for peasant families. There was no possibility for the majority to obtain sufficient land to provide for the entire family. Small family plots could no longer provide subsistence for a growing family. Under these circumstances "education appears to be a chance for at least one son or daughter to move beyond peasant society and help the family by entering into the government service". In some cases, families could afford higher education for only one child. Hence the most prominent sibling received an education at the expense of the others. Only 50% of the students who entered grade one continued studies to grade 6 and only 35% remained in grade 8; ultimately, only 6% reached grade 12. In his survey report Anagiratne writes,

According to the data collected from 500 inmates at Bogambara Rehabilitation centre (Kandy), where suspects from almost all parts of the island were available, I found that they belong to large nuclear family units with an average of 6.2 children. A very significant feature was that most of these suspects were either the eldest, or the most promising child of the family, or at least the most senior among unmarried siblings.

In an examination of the implications of unplanned education expansion, we should not be deceived by the

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25 Anagiratne, Survey.
superficial apperance or the prevalent myths regarding the
efficacy of education in Sri Lanka. According to 1975 estimates,
20% of six year olds who were eligible to enter kindergarten
did not attend schools. In 1971, the period of 10 year schooling
was completed by only 20 percent.26

The most alarming problem connected with the system
of education was the uneven distribution of facilities. Schools
which provided science-oriented courses and had English as a
medium of instruction were mostly confined to the major urban
areas. For those so trained, there was no scarcity of employment.
To overcome this imbalance, science courses were started in
rural schools, but these were handicapped by a shortage of teach-
ing staff and laboratory facilities. For example, out of
1492 students in grade 11 and grade 12 in the Anuradhapura
district, only 216 students studied in science in 1977. In
Tangalla education district there were 2828 students in grades
11 and 12 but only 508 received science education. In contrast,
in the Colombo South education district, 5194 students received
a science education out of entire student body of 8778 in
grades 11 and 12.27 As a result of unequal distribution of
educational facilities, there arose a district separation among
schools in terms of educational facilities. Further, though
Sawabasha was the medium of instruction, proficiency in the

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27 U. Boralesgamuwa, "The Educational disparity that can
not be covered by the Book", Tharuna Lanka (February, 1980), 3.
English language was an obvious advantage when it came to employment. The 'privileged schools' in urban areas maintained high standards of English proficiency as compared to the rural Maha Vidyalayas. Therefore, there was keen competition to enter the schools which were recognized as maintaining a high standard of English and providing science-oriented courses. One of the main expectations of petty bourgeois parents was to get their children admitted to these privileged schools. In spite of free education, considerable expense was incurred for travelling, clothing, etc. at these more popular schools. The majority of the population belonging to the unprivileged social stratum had to be content with education at the Maha Vidyalayas. They generally followed courses in the humanities and social sciences.

More powerful parent bodies and articulate Old Boys/Girls associations from the privileged schools used their influence to gain even better facilities from the government. In favourably responding to these pressures, government allocated an unequal portion of its educational expenditures to these privileged schools. For example, Rs. 1.83 was allocated per student in the Colombo District for sports and library facilities in 1971, while only .09 cent per student was allocated in the Moneragala District and .29 cents per student in Polonnaruwa District.28 The uneven distribution of education facilities was made a major point of criticism by the J.V.P.:

The school system in Sri Lanka is built completely upon class distinctions. The opportunist politicians of the country shouted from the platforms that they would provide the children of our poor cultivators with the same opportunities that their children enjoyed. They promised to bring the cadjan roofed schools of the village to the level of the Royal College. Like the crane that waited for the water to evaporate (to fish) we also waited till our cadjan-roofed schools were brought up to the level of the Royal College. Today the village school buildings are worse than cowsheds. Sometimes schools become cowsheds in the night. But the children of the town have many storied schools like palaces.29

The uneven distribution of education facilities continued into higher education at the University level. The rapid growth of University education was basically confined to the Arts and Social sciences. After 1960 the University doors were opened to sons and daughters of ordinary people, but only in the Faculties of Arts and Social Science. In 1969, for example, there were 2,662 Arts graduates from the Universities, but only 230 in Science, 205 in Medicine, 90 in Engineering, 21 in Agriculture, and 18 in Veterinary Science.30 There were marked differences between students in the Arts and Science faculties. For instance, 62% of the students in Science faculties were from families with over Rs. 400/- monthly income, and 34.2% were from families of over Rs. 800/- monthly income, but 74.4% of the students in Humanities and Social Sciences came from families of less than Rs. 400/- monthly income.31

29 Deshapremi, August 8th, 1970.
30 International Labour Office, Matching Employment, 19-30
The following table analysing the origins of University entrants in 1967 points out the disparities in the educational system.

**Table No. VIII**

Distribution of Students by Schools of Origin and Faculty of Admission (1967 percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maha Vidyalaya</td>
<td>98.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madya Maha Vidyalaya</td>
<td>83.5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Govt. Schools</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Schools</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pirivena</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Candidates</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Social Science.
2. Law.
4. Medical Science.
5. Agriculture and Veterinary Science.

Source: Survey 1967.

After 1965 the unemployment problem was felt acutely by those who followed courses in the Social Sciences. The uneven distribution of education facilities narrowed the avenues of employment for those who belonged to the petty bourgeois and other unprivileged classes. In their report, the Dudley Seers committee pointed out the magnitude of the unemployment problem among educated youth:

Firstly young people in general are frustrated by the difficulties and very long delays they experienced in finding work and by the lack of opportunities for jobs with the security, status
and income to which they feel they are entitled by their education. Many people told us (and sample surveys of graduates and those with 'O' level certificate confirm this) that the painful adjustment of school leavers' aspirations to the realities of a difficult job market can last three years or even more, during what they feel that society has no use for them although they are at the peak of energy and entering which could the most productive years of their life. Losing face with their family and their friends, in many cases they feel a bitterness and resentment that are not unnatural and may well continue even after they find employment.\(^2\)

The failure of educated youths to achieve their aspirations was one of the major factors responsible for the emergence of the New Left and insurrectionary politics, a fact born out by the following statistics:

**Table No. IX**

**Type of Educational Institutions Attended by 'Suspected Insurgents'**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Institution</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Schooling</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Schools and Tutorials</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maha Vidyalayas</td>
<td>8081</td>
<td>79.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madya Maha Vidyalayas</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Training Institutes</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vidyodaya University</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vidyalankara University</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombo University</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Ceylon (Peradeniya)</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>10192</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Anagiratne.

Youths unable to find suitable employment, realized that their parents' limited resources were inadequate to maintain

\(^2\) International Labour Office, *Matching Employment*, 20
them. Their only asset was their educational certificate, and their future dreams were based on employment through the merit of this certificate. Unfulfilled aspirations brought disillusionment and discontent. In his survey on political protest Gurr argues that "the necessary precondition for civil conflicts is relative deprivation, defined as the actor's perception of discrepancy between their value expectation and their environments apparent value capabilities".\(^{33}\) By the end of the 60's, the relative deprivation of the educated youth was apparent to any objective observer.

Sri Lanka is normally hailed as a country where British Parliamentary democracy has taken firm root. Governments had changed many times through democratic elections, and unlike many of the third world countries, there had been no serious tendency towards one party rule. With the passage of time Sri Lanka had developed a viable two party system which is the basic condition for the proper functioning of the Westminster Model of parliamentary government and in 1956, the political system was claimed to have taken a step towards populism, becoming more sensitive to the needs of the people. If true, why did the youth generation reject parliamentary politics and why did Sri Lanka's political system fail to absorb these new forces into the existing political framework?

One of the conspicuous characteristics of so-called democratic

\(^{33}\) Ted Gurr, "Psychological Factors in Civil Violence", World Politics, xx (January, 1968), 252.
parties in Sri Lanka, namely the U.N.P. and the L.S.F.P., is the undemocratic nature of their party affairs. Though both parties claimed to be public political institutions, their internal party affairs are more private than public. There are no such things as leadership conventions; the manner in which party leadership was selected was far from democratic. For example, after the death in 1952 of D.S. Senanayake, the founder and the leader of the then ruling U.N.P., his son Dudley Senanayake became prime minister and leader of the U.N.P. When Dudley Senanayake resigned from the prime ministership and party leadership in 1953, his cousin John Kotelawala acquired the leadership of his party and became prime minister. When Kotelawala abandoned his political career in 1959 he returned leadership of the party to Dudley Senanayake. This characteristic was not peculiar to the U.N.P. alone. After S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike's tragic death, for a short period the leadership of the S.L.F.P. was held by W. Dahamake and C.P. de Silva, both of whom were unrelated to Bandaranaike or Senanayake family. After a short period of uncertainty and turmoil in 1960, however, the late prime minister's wife Sirima Bandaranaike was invited to accept the party leadership. She was totally inexperienced, never having been a member of parliament. After the 1960 election victory of the S.L.F.P. she became prime minister. With her elevation, her nephew Felix Dias Bandaranaike entered politics and was given a very important portfolio in her cabinet even though a tyro to Sri Lanka politics. Some
tend to look at Sri Lanka's political parties as family properties of the Bandaranaikes and Senanayakes. The U.N.P. has been sarcastically dubbed the Uncle - Nephew Party. Realistically, politically ambitious Sri Lankans had to limit their goals to service under the leadership of either Bandaranaikes or Senanayakes.

One of the striking features of Sri Lankan politics is that the same set of leaders have dominated politics since 1948! Those who died during this period have been replaced by a son or wife or another close relative. Therefore, most faces in the front rows in 1948 could still be seen in the parliament in 1965. The social base of the Members of the Parliament was widened to some extent after 1956, but the grip of the small group of people at the hub of politics had not been loosened. In the 1965 cabinet, four state councillors (1931-1947) still held ministerial posts and in the 1970 cabinet there were five ministers who had been elected in 1947 and were active in politics since then.

In Sri Lanka an accelerating pace of social mobilization and political participation has been evident. When one set of leaders has dominated for a long period, others tend to be alienated from the mainstream of politics. Accordingly, "as long as an organization still has its first set of leaders, so long as a procedure is still performed by those who first performed it, its adaptability is still in doubt". 34

34 Samuel P. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven, 1968), 14.
The alteration of power in Sri Lanka through democratic elections is always referred to as proof of the 'sophistication and maturity' of Sri Lankan democracy. It is further said that "relatively few nations anywhere in the world are able to achieve orderly and peaceful transfers of power between rival sets of political leaders".\(^{35}\) Sri Lanka held seven general elections and on five occasions the ruling party was defeated at the polls and willingly handed over the government to the victorious party. But political power was rotating only among a small set of leaders who were socially and economically connected. As has been illustrated by Tissa Fernando, 8 out of 14 ministers in the 1956 cabinet were from one of five leading schools on the Island.\(^{36}\) In the 1956 parliament, 38% of the M.P's were from these five schools and in 1970 it was 31% percent.\(^{37}\)

Because of the narrowness of political caucuses in Sri Lanka, the system lacks control over new political forces. When political institutions do not have control over new social forces the system lacks autonomy and new forces tend to question the legitimacy of the political institutions.

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\(^{36}\) Five schools are Royal College (the leading Government School), St. Thomas College (the leading Anglican School), Ananda College (the leading Buddhist School), St. Joseph's College (the leading Catholic School), Trinity College (the most prestigious College outside Colombo).

Since political institutions are incapable of accommodating the social forces emerging with the process of social change, the vulnerability of the system to political violence is great. Huntington explains,

In every society affected by social change, new social groups arise to participate in politics; when the political system lacks autonomy, these groups gain entry into politics without becoming identified with the established political organizations or acquiescing in the established political procedures. 38

38 Huntington, Political Order, 21.
Chapter VIII

Epilogue: The 1971 Uprising of the J.V.P.

At the meeting of the political bureau of the J.V.P. held on 2nd April 1971 at the Bhikhu Hostal at Vidyodaya University, it was decided to launch an attack at 11:30 on the night of 5th April on all police stations and on other centres of the armed forces of the state with a view to seizing power.\(^1\) This decision was communicated to almost all the members of the J.V.P. within the next three days. The outcome was a series of attacks on 93 police stations on the night of April 5th and the next few days.\(^2\) Only five outskirt police stations fell into the hands of the J.V.P., but 35 police areas came under control of the revolutionaries.\(^3\) In the face of this massive challenge, the police forces were compelled to abandon another 43 police stations. The civil administration in the country collapsed and it appeared that by 14 April, all areas other than Colombo, the provincial cities and the neighbouring regions had come under J.V.P. control. The Inspector General of police stated that:

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\(^1\) C.J.C., Document S-1, 39; and Document S-4, 83.
\(^2\) C.J.C., Judgement, 433.
\(^3\) Ibid., 433-434.

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As the police stations were withdrawn and civil administration collapsed in these areas the insurgents took over. They distributed food from the co-operative stores, sold stamps at the post offices and even held their Court of Justice.4

Admittedly, the administration of a large part of the Island collapsed instantly on account of the J.V.P.'s mode of attack and its swiftness. The government forces adopted the tactic of gathering their men at the district centres and of maintaining a measure of limited control until fresh supplies of arms and reinforcements arrived.

The J.V.P. proved itself incapable either of establishing a formal defence organization in those areas that came under its sway or of mobilizing its forces to take over the major centres of power. The strategy of the J.V.P. --one day insurrection--depended on a single swift blow. They apparently had no alternative strategy or long range plans. They were armed primarily with homemade dynamite hand bombs and with shotguns. Even after the dramatic failure of the first attack, in most areas police stations were repeatedly attacked with miraculous courage and bravery. When the battle became protracted, however, the failure of the uprising was only a matter of time. But it was a decisive battle the regime had to fight and they carried out a brutal and primitive war against a section of youths of the country with a shortage of arms and ammunition. The Prime Minister, Sirima Bandaranaike, made a

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4 Ibid., p. 417.
plea for military assistance from the countries of both Western and Eastern bloc. The response was immediate and massive. The United States gave 6 helicopters and spare parts (via Britain); the Soviet Union offered five MIG-17 fighter Aircraft and two troop carring helicopters together with crew and 63 technicians. The U.K. responded with 18 armored scout cars, two helicopters, light machine guns and ammunition. India also made available 5 helicopters and crew, 2 transport Aircraft, 4 Navy frigates and 153 Gurkhas Soldiers for the defence of the Katunaike International Airport. Pakistan sent 2 helicopters and crew; and Yugoslavia, Australia, the United Arab Republic and Egypt responded with arms and ammunition. The Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China, Chu En Lai, catagorically condemned the uprising and offered a long term interest free loan of Rs.150 million in convertible foreign exchange. On the other hand no evidence of foreign involvement or assistance to the J.V.P. was discovered. The Prime Minister acknowledged that "as far as we know, the insurgency was entirely an indigenous affair, prepared and carried out by a movement of young revolutionaries, that has been building up for four or five years.... There is no question of any outside support or influence".6

Using all available means of communication the government unleashed a psychological war against the J.V.P. One Minister (T.B. Illangaratna) speaking on government controlled radio claimed that if Ché Guevara were alive he would back the United Front Government. On the same day Pieter Keuneman, General Secretary of the C.P.(M) and also a minister of U.F. Government, told his radio audience that the J.V.P. was a politically Fascist and terrorist movement which advocated an infantile form of negative nihilism. The L.S.S.P., even before the uprising demanded that "security forces must strain every nerve to bring the true organisers of this dastardly plot into the light of day, and supporters of the government must give them all the assistance possible". N.M. Perera, the leader of the L.S.S. and also a minister of the cabinet, warned of the government's determination to exterminate the 'insurgents' without mercy. The May day call again emphasised the need of "smash(ing) this reactionary terrorist movement, fascist in intent and content". Indeed they went further and formed a voluntary regiment called 'Hansa' under Reginold Mendis's command which mainly consisted of L.S.S.P. activists.

With foreign military assistance and employing all

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11 Ibid., May 1, 1971.
available units of the Army, Navy and the Air Force, after
about 15 April, government changed its strategy from defence
to offence. By the end of April the government counter-
offensive had succeeded; most rebels were captured or annihi-
lated and the rest experienced heavy casualties. Areas held
by rebel forces were forced to retreat to more interior jungle
lands. Flushed with success, the government granted rebels a
four day period to surrender beginning May 1st. The message
was dropped from the air in areas where the retreating rebels
were confined. A second period for surrender was granted from
7 to 9 June in honour of the Poson-Buddhist festival. By that
time the fate of the uprising had been settled, but the last
rebel bands were not destroyed or scattered for nearly three
months. When the uprising was over there were 17,953 in custody—
11,748 arrested and 6,205 surrendered. 12

The human toll of the war was far worse. The Prime
Minister gave 1200 as the official number of deaths resulting
from the uprising. 13 But it is widely believed that the number
of fatalities was much higher than official figures. Tillman
Durdin, a well known political correspondent of the New York
Times and present during the outbreak wrote "6000 dead in bloody
war." 15 According to my calculations. The human toll in the
insurrection ranged from 8,000–10,000 with the overwhelming

12 Anagiratne - Survey.
13 Parliamentary Debates (Hansard). House of Representatives,
proportion of the casualties among the rebels.

From the outset the J.V.P. had to fight under highly unfavourable conditions. The government forces were not unprepared. For example; Times of Ceylon reported in 5th March:

An island-wide practice Take-posts Emergency order was given at 7.05 a.m. today. The I.G.P. Mr. Stanly Senanayake, watched operation from Police Head Quarters.... It is understood that the operation was a complete success.... The 'all clear' was given 35 minutes later though no one was aware that it was only a practice.15

There were many warnings; signs of impending insurrection were everywhere. The American Embassy was attacked the day following the Take-Posts drill. "This effort appears to have been organized by a disgruntled, breakaway faction opposed to those who precipitated the action in April"16 in order to alert the security forces against intended J.V.P. activities. A bomb explosion on March 10th at Nelunendiya in the Kegalla district that killed six bomb manufacturing youths alarmed the government. The government began to arrest J.V.P. members and Wijeweera himself was arrested on 13 March and remanded. On 16 March Emergency Regulations were promulgated and a state of emergency was declared. On 20 March, another bomb explosion

15 Times of Ceylon, March 5, 1971.
16 W.H. Wriggins and H.N.S. Jayawardena, "Youth Protest".
was reported at Marrs Hall at the University of Peradeniya. Security forces searched the campus premises and discovered large caches of arms, hand bombs and explosives. Furthermore, the premature attack on the police station in the Moneragala district the day before the scheduled insurrection was a final warning.

On the other hand, there seemed little to fear from the J.V.P.. By April, the J.V.P. organizationally was at its lowest point. The leader, Wijeweera and another 5,607 J.V.P. members were in custody. The organization was torn apart by internal strife and factional struggles. In view of these circumstances, April 5th was the worst time for a J.V.P. bid to seize power.

The uprising has been interpreted in various ways. E.F.C. Ludowyk in the Spokesman, held that "the government decided to provoke armed action by the J.V.P. as the best method of settling with them." Wijeweera himself offered different interpretations on two separate occasions. During his trial, Wijeweera swore that the Uprising was not a decision of the J.V.P., but rather the decision of the factional insurgent clique of Loku Athula. Later, after his release, Wijeweera maintained that it was a proletariat uprising against

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17 Anagiratne, Survey.
18 The Spokesman (Nottingham), August-September, 1971, 65-66.
capitalist repression.\textsuperscript{20}

In order to understand how the J.V.P. drifted toward an uprising it is useful to trace certain developments of the country as well as of the J.V.P. from 1970.

Evidence of the existence of revolutionary secret political organizations had reached the U.N.P. government at the end of 1969. The education camp of the J.V.P. held at Bogahawewa in Tissamaharama in July 1969 was reported by the C.P.(M) newspaper - Aththa - with a caption 'A C.I.A. contraption to flush youth.'\textsuperscript{21} In these circumstances the top leaders of the J.V.P. namely Wijeweera, Sanath, Karunaratne and Loku Athula invited the leading members to Kamburupitiya to discuss future actions. At this discussion future defensive measures in the context of so-called dictatorship of the U.N.P. were discussed.\textsuperscript{22} In April 1970, the U.N.P. government set up a unit of the special police called the 'Guevara Bureau' headed by K.S. de Silva.\textsuperscript{23} With a sudden rush, national newspapers began to report about clandestine revolutionary political classes conducted in the countryside and the existence of secret political organizations. The newspapers contemptuously nicknamed the movement the 'Che Guevara Clique'.

\textsuperscript{20} Niyamuwa, April 3rd, 1977.
\textsuperscript{21} C.J.C., Judgement, 126.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 122.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 127.
On 8 May 1970 the opposition leaders met the Governor General and submitted a memorandum. The exact content of this memorandum is not known, but a reply sent by the then Prime Minister, Dudley Senanayake, was published in the newspapers on 11 May. It contained 5 important points:

1. Two persons named Sandol Perera and Jayasekera had been arrested by the Anguruwatota police when they were on their way to attend a class on revolution,

2. They were members of an organization which was planning to conduct an armed revolution,

3. Jayasekera was in possession of an unlicensed revolver and a round of ammunition,

4. The Ragala police had arrested a school teacher who had in his possession shotgun cartridges, stick of dynamite and maps of the Nuwara Eliya town with important points marked,

5. All these persons had admitted that they were recruited to the movement by one P.N. Wijeweera, an ex-student of Lumumba University.24

Just two weeks before the general elections on 12 May 1970, Wijeweera was arrested in the Hambantota area. His arrest was a turning point in the history of the J.V.P. After that, events of the J.V.P. gradually came to light. An island-wide hand-written poster campaign was carried out to demand Wijeweera's release. Hand written posters appeared in every

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Ibid., 128.
corner of the Island and on these posters Wijeweera was introduced as patriotic Wijeweera. The government was stunned by the widespread support of the J.V.P.

The period from Wijeweera's first arrest to the beginning of the uprising is so crowded with events that any summary seems arbitrary. Wijeweera was ultimately released from remand on 9 July 1970 by the new United Front Government. After his release, top leaders met at Badulla and discussed the future strategy under new government. It was decided to hold public meetings and publish newspapers. The first public meeting Wijeweera addressed was on July 1970 at Vidyodaya University. 19 well attended public meetings were conducted. On 1 August, the first newspaper of the J.V.P. - Janatha Vimukthi - appeared; it was followed by a host of others - Deshapremi, Ratu Lanka, Ratu Balaya, Ratu Kekulu. According to Wijeweera the circulation of Janatha Vimukthi was about 50,000. The J.V.P. experienced rapid expansion.

Simultaneously, the contradiction between the J.V.P. and the Government developed according to the pace of J.V.P.'s growth. At the news conference on 12 August, the permanent secretary for the Ministry of Internal Defence, Arthur Rajkumar Ratnawel was reported to have said;

> The movement which was reaching its head in the country was government's public enemy number one and which had to be relentlessly pursued and eradicated ... Government is considering amending the law.25

25 Sun, August 13th, 1971.
In the last months of 1970, rivalry between the government and the J.V.P. resulted in police assaults and arrests of J.V.P. members. The J.V.P. retaliated by intensifying their campaign against police. Slogans of the J.V.P. warned:

The brutal police repression is the death agony of capitalism.

Police dogs, you will dig your own graves very soon.

By January 1971 the J.V.P. began to arm its members with unprecedented speed. Most J.V.P. members were inexperienced in the manufacture of bombs, and casualties were frequently reported. By March the Island was on the brink of civil war. As later as April 1st, Prime Minister said "no blood shed in a Buddhist country". The following day the J.V.P. political bureau made its decision to initiate the revolution.

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26 C.J.C., Judgement, 196.
Conclusion

The origins of the New Left can not be grasped in their proper historical perspective without an understanding of the nature of the social formation wrought by the colonial economic transformation. In order to discern the historical origins of the New Left we have to trace the emergence and evolution of social classes and their political behaviour over a period of time. The essence of the socio-economic development under British rule, in relation to rural society, was the superimposition of capitalist relations without a complete transformation of the existing economic system. The rural petty bourgeoisie emerged in this complex social situation.

The political history of the petty bourgeoisie can be divided into three basic periods: pre-1915, 1915-1956 and post 1956. In the first period, their political activities were closely associated with the religious revival movement. The growth of Sinhalese press, the proliferation of religio-cultural associations, appearance of cultural crusadics novels and patriotic dramas highlighted the awakening of a new generation of petty bourgeoisie in the countryside. The temperance movement in the early 20th century reflected and accelerated the politicization of the petty bourgeoisie. At the same time, however, the temperance movement paved the way
for the establishment of political leadership by the capitalist class over the nascent petty bourgeoisie.

During the second phase, 1915-1956, the petty bourgeoisie were controlled by the capitalist class; first by the conservative section of the capitalist class and later by the national entrepreneurial class. When the national entrepreneurial class began to challenge the conservative section of the capitalist class for political power they appealed to traditional characteristics peculiar to the petty bourgeoisie, namely their cultural loyalty and fear of the radical changes envisaged by the Marxists. The petty bourgeoisie did not receive political power after 1956; but they were the social power behind the M.E.P. victory.

The third phase, post-1956, was an era of crisis for the petty bourgeoisie. In the context of this crisis the petty bourgeoisie developed two tendencies. One section tried to fulfill their needs individually with the help of existing parties and became a conservative social force committed to the preservation of the established order. The other section, the educated youths of the petty bourgeoisie, felt themselves alienated from the mainstream of politics in the country. The emergence of a generation which had no confidence in the existing socioeconomic system and which was searching for collective solutions created the background for the origin of the New Left in Sri Lanka. 1964 was a turning point in the history of the petty bourgeoisie; for the first time in their
history, younger radical elements of the crisis-ridden bourgeois began to lead a political movement of their own instead of becoming an appendage to the political movements of other classes. The emergence of the New Left is a consequence of the attempts of these youths to organize other underprivileged classes under their own leadership.

The economic and social factors that contributed to the emergence of the New Left arise from the contradictions in the socioeconomic structure inherited from the British. The stagnant, underdeveloped economy of Sri Lanka could no longer cope with the problems of rapid social change and population growth. One of the conspicuous features of Sri Lanka's economy since independence was perpetuation of its colonial characteristics. The export-import economy was heavily based on plantations, mainly on the tea industry and it was largely owned and controlled by foreign companies and agency houses. By the 1960s this economy, under constant pressure due to falling prices of Sri Lankan exports, reached a crisis level. The terms of trade deteriorated rapidly. This economic crisis affected Sri Lankans in various ways; welfare services and subsidies were reduced, the cost of consumer goods skyrocketed, real wages in industry and agriculture fell precipitously and unemployment increased unprecedentedly. In this context of perpetual underdevelopment, the stagnant rural economy collapsed.

Another aspect of this picture was the expansion of Liberal Arts education in the secondary and university levels,
and rising expectations. Every year, more than 100,000 youths from secondary schools entered the job market with only paper qualifications. Their entire future plans and dreams were based on employment warranted by their educations. Unfulfilled aspirations brought disillusionment and discontent.

During the period 1965-1970, the crisis deepened. The youths, lacking organizational avenues to vent their grievances, drifted rapidly towards insurrectionary means of solving their problems. They demanded change, a new system in which they could fulfill their expectations.

The inability of the governing political parties to provide solutions to the growing socioeconomic crisis, and the oligarchic nature of their political organizations partly explain the emergence of the New Left. The grip of a small group of people at the centre of politics who were socially and economically connected to each other despite their political divisions had not been loosened. Governments changed many times in the elections, but political power was rotated only among a small group of leaders. The narrow band of political leadership meant that the political system lacked autonomy over new political forces. In a society affected by rapid social change and political mobilization, new social groups arise; when a small set of leaders have held the reins of power and controlled the formal political institutions for too long, the legitimacy of the entire political system is questioned. Hence, the entry of new social forces without
identifying formal political institutions end up in a desperate protest or rebellion against the existing political system.

Furthermore, the inability of the traditional left to provide leadership to the youths who were discontented with the political system paved the way for new and non-traditional movements. There was a visible gap, as far as social background was concerned, between the leadership of the old left who hailed from upper social classes and those who had come to the forefront with the process of social change and political mobilization. This social chasm thwarted the ability of the old left to provide leadership to the radical petty bourgeoisie. The high life style of the leaders of the old left parties has been given exaggerated importance but we can not evade the fact that it had a significant impact on the consciousness of the petty bourgeoisie. The acceptance by the traditional left parties of coalition politics made them appear an integral part of the existing social and political order.

The immediate political circumstance that gave birth to the New Left was the crisis of the old left. Dissent among the left parties in Sri Lanka was heightened by the Sino-Soviet conflict on the international level. In 1964, the C.P. of Ceylon was torn apart by the Sino-Soviet conflict as was the L.S.S.P. over the issue of coalition politics. The emergence of the C.C.P.(P) and the R.L.S.S.P. signalled a transitional period in the emergence of the New Left. Chronologically, they link the New Left and the old.
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VITA AUCTORIS

Mr. Keerawella was born in Gampola, Sri Lanka, on 29 July 1950. He received his primary education at K/Uduwa Vidyalaya and high school education at Gampola Vikramabahu Madya Maha Vidyalaya. In 1968 he entered the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya, and was selected for the special course in Modern History. As a undergraduate he was active in the Student Politics. After the 1971 uprising of the J.V.P. he was detained in a detention camp till October 1973. In 1974 he resumed his formal education and the following year obtained a B.A. (Hons) degree. In a brief period he worked as a research assistant to Mr. Newton Gunasinghe, and in late 1975 was appointed assistant lecture in Modern History at the University of Peradeniya. In October 1980 he was granted study leave to pursue a Master's degree at the University of Windsor in Canada.