

XS: M-A, Dong, Joe, Jack, Gus

March 19, 1978.

Dear Walter,

I typed three pages of a letter to you a month ago, and did not post it because I wanted to re-type parts of it. I typed nearly four pages of a fresh letter on March 8, with additional information of further developments in the situation I had described in the previous letter, but it underwent the same fate. So this is my third attempt, and I hope it succeeds!

I have orally briefed a Swedish comrade, who left here on March 5, and a French comrade, who left here on March 9, both on the situation that has been developing very rapidly here since the end of last year, and on our serious need of adequate liaison with the FI centre and support from it in this situation. I have briefed them much more fully than I consider it safe to do in a written communication like this, or can do adequately, in any case, due to lack of time and the complexities of the situation. I trust, therefore, that this letter will serve essentially to confirm what you may gather or have already gathered indirectly from the reports the two comrades must have given to leaders of their sections.

We think that the USec comrade who is to visit Japan and Ceylon, should visit us first, and as soon as possible. He ~~should~~ should be a comrade who knows Ceylon well, preferably, and should stay here for at least a week. ~~Anyway~~ I think it is ~~important~~ most desirable that arrangements be made for Com. Sakai to visit here at the same time, if it is possible and financially feasible, especially as the Bureau has failed to implement the promised arrangement for him and me to meet at the center at least once a year. It is ~~over~~ two years since we last met together in Brussels, following the IEC meeting. The repeated postponements of the WC thereafter, and the substitution of ballots among IEC members for meetings of the IEC by the ~~the~~ USec, as well as the failure of the Bureau to arrange for Sakai and myself to be present at any USec meeting since the last IEC meeting, has resulted in a de facto dropping of any proper connection with Asia by the USec. This is a matter on which I wish to have a discussion with the Bureau, and to be heard by the USec before the agenda/~~for~~ the WC is finalised. I think it is most unfortunate that financial considerations are leading to the creation of a situation in the International which mirrors, to some extent, the relations between the American and European imperialist powers and the rest of the world! In any case, I must say that our sending copies of ~~our~~ minutes of meetings of our leading bodies, will not be an adequate way at all for the Center to keep touch with the ~~the~~ life of our section, apart from the security risks involved. If we were engaged primarily in revolutionary propaganda and educational activity, of course, the position would be somewhat different. The USec should also bear in mind the fact that attendance of IEC members at USec meetings, as observers, is no great problem for members of some sections, ~~and~~ keeping touch with the lives of such sections is not confined to some member of the Bureau reading copies of minutes of their leading bodies. I trust that ~~the~~ closer Euro-American co-operation at the Center will result in a more serious approach to the question of making the FI function more like a 'World Party of the Socialist Revolution' than it has been able to do due to the Euro-American rift that has prevailed in it since 1969.

I know that you, personally, are aware of the necessity for setting right the imbalance in the functioning of the FI, and that it has a "disconnected Asia sector", to quote from your own letter to me of June 4, 1977. My remarks and requests are intended for both the bureau and the USec itself. That is why I wish to be heard on these matters by the USec, apart from discussing them with the bureau.

I do not know why ~~Sakai~~ Com. Sakai refused to come to the Center; but I do not think that the absence of an Asian comrade at the Center is the main reason for the very unsatisfactory relations of the Center with the Asian sections. The main reason is the failure of the Center to arrange for regular personal contact with the Center. ^{by the USec} Written communications and the lengthiest of documents are

no substitute for proper and adequate discussions between leading comrades at the Center with leading comrades who cannot be at the Center if they are to be leaders in the mass movements in their countries. Likewise, I repeat, ballots of IEC members, who are unable to attend USEC meetings as observers, in between IEC meetings, are no substitute for meetings of the IEC, at reasonable intervals. It is the IEC, and not the USEC that ~~can~~ should function between congresses as the international leadership. How this is to be achieved is, in my view, a more important question for the VI in the current world situation than some of the items relating to this or that aspect of the international situation itself, that are presently listed for the agenda of the next WC, whenever it is to be held, ultimately. For those who have the opportunity to be at the Center, or can afford to visit it regularly, at least for USEC meetings, participation in the decision-making functions of leadership is quite different from those whose functions of leadership in their own countries and remoteness, as well as lack of funds for travel and stays abroad, make it impossible to maintain ~~for~~ anything like the same frequency of contact with and discussions at the Center. I trust that this letter will serve to make all those comrades in the USEC, who seriously desire to build a 'world party', and not merely to 'build the party' in their own countries, a little more conscious of the necessity for discussing this question, and taking concrete action, before the WC, to remedy the thoroughly unsatisfactory and unfortunate situation that now exists in that regard.

The situation in Ceylon at the moment is unique for us. The GPU has ~~now~~ become not only the vanguard organisation in the mass movement, but also the pivotal organisation of a broader united front of trade union organisations than anything previously realised on the trade union front. This is something that deserves not publicity in the next issue of "IP/Imprecorr", as a bit of news, amongst various other bits of news from various countries, but ~~the~~ proper study by the leaderships of sections that have already acquired positions of leadership in the mass movements of their countries, or are actively engaged in penetrating them. I am not in favour of any advertisement of what we are doing in relation to what is happening in the mass movement in Ceylon, as we may inform our enemies more than ~~we~~ we may interest our comrades elsewhere, by publicising what we are doing. All possible publicity should be given, however, to the utterly reactionary things the UFP Govt. is doing, and to the activities and declarations of the GPU and the Joint Trade Union Action Committee and its other constituent organisations in that regard.

The JVP, unfortunately, has proved to be not merely a negative but even an inhibitory influence amongst the masses, in relation to the development of a mass struggle against the reactionary policies of the UFP Govt. Despite my efforts to correct them, through personal discussions with their leaders, they have persisted in ~~an~~ utterly sectarian attacks on the leaderships of the SLFP, the LSSP and the CP, coupled with no more than a show of opposition to the policies of the UFP Govt. They have not merely eschewed 'armed struggle' publicly, but show not the slightest real concern for the development of the class struggle under the present regime. Apart from seriously damaging, if not losing the 'revolutionary' image they had gained as a result of what they tried to do and suffered under the previous regime, they are now being ~~discouraged~~ ^{discouraged} with some effect, ~~of~~ of having entered into a 'contract' with J.R. Jayewardene to attack the leaderships of the LSSP, the CP and the SLFP, ~~as~~ as a 'quid pro quo' for the release of all the political prisoners.

We have deliberately refrained from any public criticism of the current line of the JVP, even though it is clear to us that the chances of our influencing them by discussion, to turn in our direction, are somewhat meagre. ~~It~~ Their essentially petit-bourgeois character, and the strong Stalinist hang-over in their theoretical ~~orientation~~ orientation, make any serious and meaningful dialogue with them very difficult. What a colossal mistake it would have been for us to have taken W.'s description of themselves as 'modern Bolsheviks' at face value, merely because of his presentation of what he tried to do and did, and because of what he and his movement suffered in consequence!

The stated object of the JVP, nationally, is the establishment of a "Proletarian Socialist Govt." on the programme they published before the last general elections. To establish such a govt. the task is to create a 'genuine Communist Party', for which they carry on propoganda meetings, lectures and study classes, besides publishing newspapers. They claim to have a trade union wing, a women's and a youth organisation. They even celebrated International Women's Day on March 8! Internationally, they aim to 'revive the Third International' on 'Leninist' lines. 'Trotskyism' for them is a petit-bourgeois degiation from Marxism, and includes belief in 'spontaneous revolution', by the masses. Organisationally, they reject the right to organised factions or tendencies, as being inconsistent with 'Bolshevik' organisational principle, and conducive of organisational weakness.

I gave W. your revised message on Jan. 8. He said he had handed it to his PB, for them to deal with it. We have heard nothing from them on that thereafter. The attendance at JVP meetings has steadily declined. Their last, widely advertised meeting at Hyde Park on Feb.10, purportedly to oppose the UMP Govt.'s budgetary and other policies, drew a crowd ~~about~~ of about 2000, and was empty of any political content relevant to the current situation. I have maintained cordial personal relations with W. and other JVP leaders, and have analysed and criticised their politics quite sharply, though in comradely fashion. As there was no material change in their line, our CC decided on Feb.22 to write to the JVP, formally requesting a discussion with them, on the basis of a critique of their current line. I have been so tied up with developments in the campaign against the anti-working class proposals contained in the draft law published by the Govt. as a White Paper on Employment Relations, that I haven't yet had time to draft the letter to the JVP.

Events here are happening so fast that the situation keeps changing from week to week, and even from day to day.

On 1st March we held a General Membership Meeting of the CMU which was in some respects the most significant meeting in the 30 years that I have been its general secretary (I completed the 30 years on 2nd Feb.1978). It was like a democratic army deciding to fight, come what may, to hold the front against a threatened enemy onslaught, even alone, if necessary. We took the decision at Hyde Park, under completely unexpected and adverse weather conditions -- a sudden clouding of the whole sky, just half an hour before the meeting was to begin, with the onset of rain just as the CMU members were beginning to assemble for the meeting, having stopped work for the purpose. When it became clear that we would have to hold the meeting, if at all, without any prospect of a break in the rain, we called all those who were taking shelter in buildings surrounding the park to come into it and vote whether to hold the meeting in the rain or postpone it. Those of us who were on the platform decided to take no protection from the rain together with the vast majority who had no umbrellas, in case they were willing to take a drenching rather than abandon the meeting. The vote was unanimous to go on with the meeting. I spoke in English, with ~~my~~ translation into Sinhala. The meeting lasted two hours; and the most amazing thing about it ~~it~~ was that the crowd swelled while it continued, even though there was not only rain, but wind and lightning occasionally. Never in my life did I have an experience of a crowd increasing to such proportions under such conditions. We had distributed 10535 admission cards, which were also to be shown at the voting on the resolution placed before the meeting for adoption by the General Council, before the meeting, on the basis of signed lists signifying willingness to attend the meeting from amongst Union branches in and around Colombo. The ballots, completely soaked, were cast into ~~two~~ big boxes by those who stayed to the very end of the meeting i.e. about 6.30 p.m., when it had ~~already~~ become quite dark and when many were shivering from the continuous wetting. We counted them some days later, when they had dried and could be sorted. The total was 3162! The impact of that meeting on us, and on our friends and foes alike, was much greater than if we had had three times that number, in fine weather, as we had expected.

On 2nd March, joint picketing during the lunch intervals, i.e. workers standing or parading in front of their work-places, with placards displaying slogans against the anti-working class proposals in the White Paper, began. This was on an agreed decision of the Joint Trade Union Action Committee, which was set up on Jan. 23, by 16 trade union organisations, including the GLU and all the major trade union federations led by the SLFP, the LSSP and the CP, as well as ~~others~~ others of lesser importance, like Shanmugathasan's and the IEP group, and two big teachers' unions. The Police tried unsuccessfully to stop the picketing by snatching away placards and even arresting a few picketers, on the first two days. I pointed out to the Police tops that the Police had no legal basis to stop peaceful picketing, and they not only gave way, but agreed to return the placards taken unlawfully from picketers, after consultation with the National Security Council! The URP resorted to physical attacks upon picketers in a few places, but had to abandon the attempt to deter the picketing by such methods. A few comrades of ours, including Com Upali, were set upon with clubs in one such incident, but they escaped serious injury. The picketing increased from day to day, as hundreds and hundreds of workers in more and more work-places joined the picket lines with each passing day. It was the first sign of a resurgence of working class militancy on a fairly big scale, from the depths of demoralisation that division and defeat had brought it into, after years of class collaboration and treachery of Coalition leaderships in the unions.

On 4th March, I addressed a seminar of Branch delegated of the Sri Lanka Independent Trade Union Federation on the White Paper, at the invitation of the General Council of that Federation. Sirimavo Bandaranaike was on the praesidium, as patron of the SLITUF, and I spoke for nearly an hour, for the first time ever, in her presence! That was one better than having a united front with 'the devil's grandmother', and I rather enjoyed the experience!

On 7th March, the JFUAC met to discuss a draft joint declaration on the White Paper, that I had prepared after a preliminary consultation with the SLFP, LSSP and CP leaders in the Joint Committee. While we were discussing the draft, I was called to the telephone. I was told that Gemini Dissanayake, Minister of Irrigation, Power & Highways, who is a close confidant of JR (the President), and who was one of the four members of the Cabinet Sub-Committee that made the draft law published in the White Paper, wanted to speak to me. Wondering why, I took up the 'phone receiver, only to be told that the President wished to speak to me! JR then said he would like to discuss the White Paper with me, adding that DR. N.M. Perera had spoken to him! I said that I was engaged in a discussion of a draft declaration on that matter in the JFUAC, and that I would first like to know what the Govt. would have to say to our Joint Declaration. He asked me whether I would send him a copy, and I readily agreed. (This is not for publication) The draft declaration and the developments in the working class movement in relation to the White Paper should be publicised, not only by the Center, but by all sections in the capitalist countries especially.

On 10th March, the new Prime Minister, D. Premadasa, made a reference to the White Paper in the National State Assembly (see press cutting). On the same day 13 of the 17 organisations represented in the JFUAC signed the declaration. Four declined to do so, saying that we should either not address the Govt. at all, or only confine ourselves to a statement rejecting the White Paper in toto, without referring to any specific aspects of it, as that might suggest that we were willing to agree to amendments in those respects! Their real reasons were no doubt different, ~~and~~ due to certain sectarian and other differences between them and the dominant organisations in the JFUAC. They are of little account.

Before I conclude, I must say a word on the new "IP/Imprecorr". We are most disappointed to find that Imprecorr has survived only in the cover title, but hardly shows up at all in the contents. Our view is that you have tried to mix two different types of journals, with the virtual disappearance of one. This is most unfortunate, as we all miss the old Imprecorr.

~~You may use any or all sources of secret information, or any other information, for the purpose of this journal, and you may also use any or all sources of secret information, or any other information, for the purpose of this journal, and you may also use any or all sources of secret information, or any other information, for the purpose of this journal.~~

Monday, March 20

The LSSP ~~is~~ had a belated Party Conference over the week-end. The section that is led by Vasudeva Nanayakkara and Wickremabahu Karunaratne (a university lecturer and leader of the former 'Left Samasamaja' group that tied up with Ted Grant) held a 'party conference' last January, and they also now call themselves the 'LSSP', with Wickremabahu as their ^{representative of the} secretary and theoretical mentor. They ~~will~~ ~~have~~ away a ~~substantial~~ section of the LSSP youth, and gained control of one LSSP-led union, the Government Clerical Services Union (GCSU). Apart from this, they have two other unions under their control, the Commercial and Industrial Workers' Union and the Cooperatives, Commercial and Mercantile Union (CCMU), which are ~~the~~ splitaways from the LSSP-led All Ceylon Commercial & Industrial Workers' Union and the United Corporations & Mercantile Union (UCMU). The Vasu Group, as the new LSSP are still known, has a say in the LSSP/CP group of 9 organisations in the JCTUO (Joint Committee of Trade Union Organisations) and in the JTUAC through the ~~C~~ ~~JCTUO~~. We insisted that the JTUAC should be composed only of representatives of representative organisations. Ultimately the JCTUO had to agree to our ultimatum on this point, especially as the two SLFP-controlled federations supported our stand. The result is that the Vasu Group's say in the JTUAC ~~was~~ confined to the GCSU, as the other two unions were not representative ~~in~~ in any trade union sector. They are very upset about this, and have been manouevring with other even more unrepresentative unions to form some kind of separate grouping, but with no success, as they count for very little, even all put together.

The Healyites are sustained primarily through their very well financed newspapers, in ~~English~~ Tamil and in Sinhala, as well as by having several paid full-timers in the field. The Healyite 'International Committee' apparently regards its Ceylon section ^{as} worthy of heavy financial backing from abroad, which is in marked contrast to the attitude of the USec to our section. This is a matter that I would like to discuss when I come there (if and when the Bureau thinks it worthwhile), as I think a change of attitude toward our section is warranted, especially having regard to the fact that no other section in the International plays such a strategic role in its own country as ours does, and as we are in continual danger of liquidation, even physically, ~~and~~ more so now than ever before.

There is no doubt that the UWP will resort to direct terrorism against us, if they can get away with it, or become desperate enough. Following attempts at thuggery against the pickets on the White Paper (the picketing ended on 15th March, the last day given for 'representations' to the Cabinet Sub-Committee, with a one-hour stoppage of work before the lunch interval, combined with mass picketing) the UWP has resorted to direct physical attacks on the Vidyalankara University and Heywood Arts School student society offices. There is widespread unrest amongst the students, on university campuses and in technical schools and polytechnics, as well as among teachers, primarily due to the obvious intention of the Government to cut down on higher education and to victimise 'anti-government' groups and elements in the universities and schools. Wholesale transfers of teachers, suspensions of teachers and students, and closure of institutions where there are student strikes, are now the order of the day.

In this situation, the Inter-University Student Federation decided to call a strike on March 15, and called upon students to join the workers' picket-lines at some work-places, with their own slogans as well as slogans supporting the workers. On the following day, there was an armed attack by UWP thugs on students in the canteen of the Vidyalankara University. The leading UWP thug was set upon with broken bits of chairs and killed. The University had to shut down, in consequence, and the students had to be removed in buses under police escort, with gangs of UWP thugs keeping a look-out for them even in Colombo. The campus is at Kelaniya, whose MP is Cyril Mathew, Minister of Scientific & Industrial Affairs, who we believe to be JR's right hand man for the use of terrorism against the Government's opponents, wherever they may resort to direct action. He was obviously behind an attack on a group of workers who broke away from the UWP - controlled fake 'union', the Jathika Sevaka Sanghamaya (National Employees' Union), of which Mathew became President when JR relinquished that office just before he

assumed office as President of the Republic on Feb.4). The workers, including hundreds of young women, were employees of Dasa Industries (also in the Kelaniya electorate), where there had been no union under the previous regime. Gunadasa, the proprietor, became a millionaire and the biggest Ceylonese business magnate, as well as the biggest financial backer of the SLFP. After the elections, Mathew established his 'union' in Dasa Industries; but the workers soon became aware that it was a fake. Led by 27 electrical workers, they 'revolted' on Jan.13, with a lightning stoppage of work by over 1500 workers, mostly young women, in solidarity with the 27 workers who were shut out for refusing to ~~start~~ start work the previous day till their demand for a reasonable monthly wage was met. In that situation, as often happens, they made a bee-line for the CMU headquarters, and joined up the next day (a holiday). On the following working day, the 27 workers were attacked by green-shirted thugs, after Mathew had gone there, spoken to them and to some policemen who were there, and had left. He is reported to have gone to the place again, a few days ago, and threatened that he will smash the CMU branch there, as it has survived the ~~last~~ attack and is increasing in strength, despite the adverse relationship of forces between the ULP and ourselves in the area. The Vidyalankara campus is very close to Dasa Industries, and the ULP thug who was killed (and been given a big funeral with Mathew present) is said to be the leader of the group who attacked our CMU workers in January. Even JR is said to have visited the funeral house.

The Inter-University Student Federation will be sending a delegation to meet us at the JIUAC meeting fixed for this afternoon. Right now, some student leaders have called to see me, as they did yesterday, and usually do whenever the students are in trouble or in struggle.

I was away in Jaffna from last Thursday till Saturday (March 18), and started this letter, once again, on my return. In the meantime, I learned from May, that precautions had been taken at CMU headquarters against a surprise attack, that could not be ruled out, over the week-end.

Wijeweera and/or another of his comrades are planning to visit Europe soon. W. has contact with the Ginipipura group in London, and probably with their help, expects to take medical treatment over there. He told me some weeks ago that he would like to contact you and other leading comrades amongst those who signed the message to him, on a personal basis. Please let me know what you think. We think that you should not give him any publicity if he does contact you, either by way of published interviews or otherwise. There can be no question of "winning him over" to our politics by your or anybody else talking to him on a personal level. He has evaded any serious political ~~with~~ discussion with us since he came out of prison. At present he is lying low, and has not been heard of since he last spoke in Hyde Park of Feb. 10, when he spoke about his heart condition and of going to London for treatment.

The interest shown in our efforts to mobilise the working class to cope with the threatened attack upon it and the mass movement as a whole by the ULP Govt by comrades of the Swedish section, has been manifested by them concretely in offers to help our section financially. Some of them have even given us more generous contributions, on a personal basis, than we have ever received before from comrades of other sections. They have even raised the question of a regular contribution to our section in their recent congress. This has been most encouraging to us, because it shows their appreciation of what our section is doing under very difficult circumstances, and of what we are capable of doing with adequate aid from our comrades in more fortunate circumstances. Please let me know whether a special contribution from several Swedish comrades, which we requested them to forward to the Center, to be kept to our credit, has been received.

Our position in Jaffna is encouraging. At long last, an active group has emerged there to work for us politically, and also to organise the CMU effectively in the Northern Province. They formed themselves into a 'Revolutionary Marxist League', and we propose to take the group into the Party, as a cell. One former LSSP(R) comrade, a very good one, has joined, after a long period of inactivity.

I am to leave for a JIUAC meeting in Kandy this afternoon; so I must end this.

P.S. Please copy this document and hold under separate cover to Jeyaraj

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