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NOTES
ON THE HISTORY
OF THE OPPOSITIONS
AND OF THE
TROTSKYIST MOVEMENT
IN INDIA

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The spectacular development of the section in Ceylon of the Fourth International, the well-known Lanka Sama Samaja Party, and later its participation in a government of a Popular Front" type in the 1960's and its rapid degeneration, have attracted the attention of observers of the movement in India. The birth and development of this party are no more than an episode in an infinitely richer and more complex history.⁽¹⁾

The first elements of a revolutionary movement that was clearly and consciously anti-Stalinist sink their roots into the Indian Communist Party itself. We know how desperately British Imperialism determined to prevent the creation of a section of the Communist International in its Indian colony. The Indian Communist Party was founded in October 1920 by the emissary from Moscow, the former nationalist leader M. N. Roy. It did not last long, and the trials of the first Communist leaders for "conspiracy" (the Cawnpore affair) were able to impede considerably the development of a Communist organisation which had thus been beheaded. It is probably in this situation that we should seek one of the reasons for the policy of the leading group of the party, around M. N. Roy, who was linked to the German "Right" (Brandler) and the Russian "Right" (Bukharin), and for the enthusiasm with which they accepted the official line of integration into the nationalist formations, in India the Congress Party - since at the same time the Chinese Communist Party was entirely subordinated to the line of the Kuomintang in China.⁽²⁾

S. N. Tagore

The first oppositional voice to make itself heard was that of Soumyendra Nath Tagore, the nephew of the poet, one of the first militants to be won to Communism. In 1925 he joined the Swarajya Labour Party of Calcutta, at the same time as the other Communist militants in the region. This party, which published the weekly Langal, set itself the objective of the independence of India by the un-armed struggle of the masses. Its first conference was held at Krishnagar in 1926, and decided to transform it into the Workers' and Peasants' Party of Bengal. The celebrated novelist Naresh Sengupta was elected president and Soumyendra Tagore one of the two secretaries. In this period he played an influential role in winning to Communism and in the mass work of a number of the "revolutionary terrorists", that is, of elements who supported recourse to armed struggle and who had extended their influence widely in North India since the beginning of the 1920's.⁽³⁾

At the VIIth Plenum of the Communist International in 1927 M. N. Roy continued to defend the line of a policy of unity with the Congress Party. But at the same moment Soumyendra Nath Tagore presented to the political secretariat of the Communist International a report which argued in the opposite direction. He emphasised that British

policy was changing; they now wanted to encourage a limited industrialisation in India, which would permit an enlargement of the market and, at the same time, the utilisation of the cheap labour of the colony. Tagore concluded that this policy was leading the Indian bourgeoisie, the leading force of the nationalist movement, to seek a compromise with London and, in any case, to oppose resolutely any revolutionary movement. His conclusion was that the industrialisation of India, linked with the agrarian crisis which neither imperialism nor native capitalism, linked as they were to the great landed proprietors, could resolve, opened the way to the socialist revolution: it was the proletariat, brought to power by that revolution, which would realise the democratic tasks and would make the national revolution in India an integral part of the world revolution. Thus the Indian leader found himself expounding positions very close to those of Trotsky, who at the time was engaged in a sharp polemic against the Chinese policy of Stalin and Bukharin, which was subjecting the Chinese Communist Party to the Kuomintang.(4)

This was the time when the young Indian leader was summoned to follow the courses at the international Lenin School in Moscow. Less fortunate than his Chinese comrades at the same period, he was unable, despite all his efforts, to get hold of even the writings of Trotsky. He was convinced by the avalanche of accusations that Trotsky had committed some breach of the discipline of the Communist International and of his party, but for all that he refused to go along with the characterisations which the victors were presenting at the time. At the general meeting of the students at the Lenin School which was called to condemn Trotsky in the ritual terms, he took the floor twice to dispute what was stated in the resolution, against which he voted - an act, we may suspect, of great courage, which earned him a summons to appear before the Control Commission of the Communist International.(5)

He appears, thanks to the intervention of Bukharin, that despite this risk he was able to participate between July 17 and September 1, 1928 in the Sixth Congress of the Communist International in Moscow. We do not know whether, like other delegates, he found in his file "The Critique of the Draft Programme of the Communist International" and had discussions with the Trotskyist militants who, in the congress itself, interviewed several foreign leaders, including Thorez and Togliatti, on Trotsky's behalf. We know that an Indo-nesian delegate, speaking under the party name "Alfonso", delivered from the platform a criticism of Bukharin which was also a presentation of the Trotskyist conception of the Chinese Revolution.(6)

Tagore criticised Kuusinen, who gave the report, on the ground that he underestimated the level of industrialisation in India. He vigorously opposed Kuusinen's proposal that the Workers' and Peasants' Party be dissolved; he wished to retain it as a fish-pond, from which the underground party could recruit, and he demanded that the control of the Indian Communist Party be transferred from the Communist Party of Great Britain to that of the Communist International.(7)

Tagore was on his way back to India when the news reached him, in Berlin, of the turn towards "the Third Period", which was openly undertaken at the Tenth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, as well as its implications for India. He was already deeply shocked by the policy of sabotage of the workers' united front which presented the Social-Democrats as "social-fascists" and as enemy No. 1, and he also discovered that the new orientation implied summarily rejecting any form of collaboration with the Indian Congress, including the All-India Trade Union, which it controlled through its members. Allies of yesterday were summarily labelled as "British agents" or "opportunists with left phrases". The decision to dissolve the Workers' and Peasants' Party was taken, and resulted in placing the underground Communist Party in a state of dramatic and hopeless isolation.(8) Soumyendra Nath Tagore understood that he could not immediately return to India, and was to remain in Germany for several years, publishing the journal Red Hindustan which severely criticised the Stalinist policy in Germany and in India, and undertook also, with some success moreover, to promote organisation and material means to defend his comrades in India who were condemned in the "conspiracy" affair. He was gravely ill with tuberculosis, which compelled him to take several long stays in sanatoria; he was then imprisoned for some months in Hitler's Germany on the absurd charge of having tried to assassinate Hitler. He wrote several books which were published in India

by publishing houses near to the Communist Party, but he could not find a publisher for his book defining Hitler-ism and demonstrating the responsibility of the Stalinist Communist International for the unopposed victory of the fascists over the German workers' movement.(9) He finally left Germany in November 1933 and visited Romain Rolland, who had become throughout the world the standard-bearer of Gandhi's "non-violence". Soumyendra Nath Tagore did his best, in vain, to convince him of the reactionary character of the Mahatma's policy and of his fundamental hostility to the demands and the revolutionary movement of the masses. This interview was to form the preface to the book which he published in France in 1934, under the title "Gandhi", which without doubt is the most finished criticism which can be made of the Mahatma from the standpoint of Marxism.(10)

The Communist League of India

On his return to India, Soumyendra Nath Tagore did his best to explain to his comrades of the Communist Party of India whom he rejoined after seven years' absence the reasons for his doubts and reservations about the "party". It was all in vain. He found not the least echo among them, and concluded, therefore, that the practice of the Communist International had decomposed the Indian party in the same way as it had earlier decomposed the German Communist Party, and that both of them had gone over to the side of the bourgeois order - without, of course, wishing to do so. He had not the least contact with the Trotskyists, but, like them, he concluded by facing the question of "a new Communist Party", and he devoted himself to this task, with limitless self-sacrifice and exceptional abilities.(11)

He believed that the human material existed in two currents; these were different but in reality complemented each other and, furthermore, were often linked. The first was the current of those who are called, perhaps for lack of a more adequate term, the "terrorist parties", or even "revolutionary terrorists", but who can be better understood in the West today if we speak of them as "armed revolutionaries", these fighters who surged out, arms in hand, on the fringes of the campaigns of civil disobedience and taking reprisals for acts of violence by the forces of order. These were won by writings on Marxist theory but were repelled by the behaviour no less than by the politics of the Stalinist Communist Party. Two organisations in Bengal, one led by Sengupta and the other by Subhas Chandra Bose, linked to the "terrorist parties", had been through a disappointing experience with the Communist Party in 1932 - 33. They turned towards a young university Marxist, Dr. Blupendra Nath Dutta, who warned them against the Communist Party of India, but helped them to set up study circles and educational conferences. (12) Soon after Tagore arrived in India, Dutta put him in touch with two student leaders, Prabhat Sen and Sudhir Dasgupta.(13). In May 1934 Tagore created, with his new contacts, an "initiative committee" with a view to founding a new Communist Party. The "Communist League of India" was formed, at a founding congress, on August 1, with a Central Committee of seven, of whom Gyan Dasgupta was the general secretary. He was replaced in the following year by Prabhat Sen, who himself was followed by Soumyendra Nath Tagore on account of the arrests and condemnations, which were severe, and then the descent into clandestinity which prevented any "legal" activity. Beginning in autumn 1934, the League published the weekly journal, Gana-Vani, the title of which exactly reproduced that of the Workers' and Peasants' Party of which S. N. Tagore had been the leader in 1927.(14)

The Communist League of India held its Congresses (the first in 1934 and the second in 1940) and its Conferences (1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939). In 1939 it adopted the name "Communist Party of India", in order not to leave the monopoly of the name "Communist" to the Stalinist Party. In 1940 it became the Communist Party of India (Revolutionary) and, finally, the Revolutionary Communist Party of India (RCPI), the name under which it will go down to history. From Congress to Conference it elaborated and sharpened its programme, through a series of programmatic documents: "To be anti-imperialist, we must be anti-Congress" (1935), "The Bourgeois Democratic Revolution in India" (1936), "United Front or Betrayal" (1938), "Popular Front against the Front of the People" (1940) finally. Tagore denied being a Trotskyist, while he paid striking homage to Trotsky's merits, but he was strongly influenced by Trotsky

and by the theory of the Permanent Revolution.(15)

The Revolutionary Communist Party

The programme which the party adopted in 1935 underlined that:

"Due to the fact that it appeared late, the Indian bourgeoisie has deserted the democratic revolution. Therefore it is necessarily the working class which is the determining force of the revolution in India.... It is through the political party of the proletariat that the working class and the peasants... will take part in and will lead the national revolution. But the working class and the peasants must first become an independent political force."

The tasks which the Communist League of India set before itself were:

- "1. To accelerate independent Communist organisation of the working class, of the peasantry and of the middle class.
2. To organise and develop the independent class organisation of the peasants on the basis of the class struggle, of intransigent opposition to rural capitalism and to imperialism and of the maintenance of their ideological and political independence.
3. To develop the anti-imperialist movement, on the line of the class struggle, to increase the speed of the movement, to deepen and strengthen it.
4. To organise a genuine left bloc within the Congress, in order to deepen and sharpen the conflict between the counter-revolutionary leadership and its anti-imperialist base and to win the latter to the genuine anti-imperialist programme developed outside the Congress..."(16)

Soumyendra Nath Tagore, who shortly after his arrival in India had broken off all contact with the Communist Party of India (which refused all discussion), had not openly taken up a position in relation to the Communist International. He was, however, to do so very quickly when the problem arose of drawing a balance of the policy of the Popular Front in France and in Spain, as well as of the theory of the "anti-fascist" war. His first concern had been to begin to build the new party by recruiting above all in the workers' milieu. He settled at Kidderpore, near Calcutta and began to recruit among the sailors and transport workers. He then widened his platform and began a campaign on the scale of the continent for the liberation of the political prisoners: in May 1935, following a very violent speech which he delivered in the middle of Calcutta, he was condemned to a year in prison.(17)

As soon as he had arrived in India, he had begun negotiating with the All-India Trades Union Congress, in which were the leaders attached to Roy's group, to the Socialist Aid Group in the Congress and independent unions such as the union which Subhan Chandra Bose, the former student leader, founded in the great Tata works.(18) Tagore had had experience in Germany of the "Red Trade Unions" and wanted none of them. However, he hoped to get guarantees from the All-India Trade Union Congress that it would not enter into any international affiliation, would recognise the principle of the class struggle and would insist on regular elections in all the unions affiliated to it.(19)

However, it was the success which the Communist League of India met among students that was to enable it to undertake large-scale organising work in the direction of the workers. After winning or forming provincial students' unions, the militants of the Communist League of India were numerous enough to penetrate into the working-class quarters in a campaign of trade union organisation. This enabled them to develop, to inspire and to lead very important sectors of craftsmen and workers, while however other former student militants, such as Harendra Nath Bose, began successfully to work to organise peasants and were met by the landlords with assassination and terror.(20)

The Communist League of India had thoroughly understood the policy of Stalinism thanks to the experience of the Spanish Civil War and of the Popular Front Government in France. It was, therefore, not caught by surprise by the approach of the war, in which the entry of Great Britain was inevitably dragging its Indian colony. The day after war was declared, a meeting of the Central Committee, enlarged by the inclusion of the district leaders, was held in Calcutta (Circus Avenue), and declared, taking

into account that the war could only be an accelerator of contradictions, in favour of preparing to overthrow British rule by force, through a plan which was carefully worked out from both the organisational and the technical points of view.(21) While the Communist Party of India was caught by surprise and totally disarmed by the consequences of the German-Soviet Pact, and remained silent for... thirty-four days, Souymendra Nath Tagore, in the name of his party, declared, on September 4, 1939, that the war was "an imperialist war of robbery for the redistribution of the colonial world between the Powers": he called on the Indian workers to refuse to give a man, a penny or any tool or arm to the imperialist war-makers and to do everything to "transform the imperialist war into a civil war".(22) He was immediately arrested and imprisoned under the Defence of India Act.

He was not the only one. The great majority of the Congress leaders were playing with the idea that they must not "take advantage of the situation", and hoping that their British masters would make the necessary concessions, in the interest of their war against "fascism" and for "democracy", one fraction among them voiced the rage of the nationalist petty bourgeoisie. Its standard bearer was a former student leader, Subhas Chandra Bose, who had been elected unanimously as president of the Congress at its meeting at Haripura in 1938. In this position he had earned the determined hostility of Gandhi for his slogan: "By non-violence or not, liberty at any price!". He had been elected in 1939 by a simple majority against Gandhi's supporters and had finally resigned in the face of the refusal of the latter to co-operate with him. Bose had recently formed the "Forward Bloc" and flung himself at the declaration of the war into a campaign of meetings intended to mobilise the Indians against the war, and this earned for him too a quick arrest under the Defence of India Act.(23)

The Congress Socialist Party

The attitude of the Congress Socialist Party towards the war cannot be separated from the man who was long identified with it, one of its principal founders and at the same time its most popular leader, Jayaprakash Narayan, known as "J.P."

He was born in a family of middle peasants, went to college, and left in 1921 in response to the call by Gandhi to boycott the British institutions of education like the college at Bihar where he was. He decided, none the less, to pursue his studies, and went to USA, arriving in California in October 1922, and doing nearly every kind of job before graduating and becoming a teaching assistant. It was in USA that this young Indian encountered Marxism; though he never joined the American Communist Party, which at that time was led by Jay Lovestone, he thereafter thought of himself as "a Communist". When he returned to India he was quickly disgusted by the Communist Party, which was busily denouncing the "traitors" Gandhi and Nehru, whom the occupying imperialist power was holding in jail. He was convinced, according to his own words, that "in the colonial countries, the Communists must not in any circumstances isolate themselves from the struggle for independence, even if the leadership of it is in the hands of the bourgeoisie". He joined the Congress Party and soon found himself in charge of the department for labour relations, and then, after the All-India Congress Committee was prohibited in 1932 as part of the Civil Disobedience Movement, he became the general secretary of the underground organisation, and was quickly arrested.(24).

In prison, (the central prison in Nasik Road) he formed the group which was to give birth to the Congress Socialist Party. The new party came out of a double disappointment. On the one hand, once again, Gandhi had called off a civil disobedience campaign which had mobilised millions of men and women throughout the country. On the other hand, the strike in April 1934 had been defeated, and the defeat was followed by the banning of the Indian Communist Party, the incapacity of which was thus revealed. The group led by M. R. Masani was fundamentally a left social-democratic group, close to the Independent Labour Party, of which its leader had for years been a member. Narayan, for his part, was "a Marxist and a revolutionary". He wanted to get a united front with the Indian Communist Party and devoted to this aim the energies of the new party which crystallised round him the discontent of very wide layers, not exclusively proletarian. The bases of the party were laid at Patna in May 1934. Some months later its foundation congress was held in Bombay, with a

fifteen-point programme including: "repudiation of the public debt, transfer of power to the masses of producers, planned development of the economy, socialisation of the key industries, state monopoly of external trade, organisation of producers' co-operatives and co-operatives for distribution and credit, elimination of the prices and great landed proprietors and confiscation without compensation of their lands."(25)

But Narayan, like all the militants influenced by Lovestone, Brandler and the Right Opposition, was not clear about Stalinism. In a first phase - up to 1936 - the over-general proposals of the Congress Socialist Party about "the unity of the socialists" were received by the Communist Party of India only with sarcasms and insults. Then, after the turn in the Communist International, the propositions of the socialists were refined, in order to force the hand of the communists and motivate them for a united front. In fact the Socialist congress at Meerut proposed to the Communist Party, not merely that there should be a party-to-party united front, but agreed to open its own doors to the individual entry of Communist Party members, in order in this way to prepare "the conditions for unification"...(26) This presented the Communist Party with a magnificent opportunity, because it was illegal and had been isolated as the result of its own sectarianism, with its repeated attacks on the nationalist movement and especially on its "left", It now got the chance to make its way among the masses, not only through the Congress Socialist Party itself, but in the organisations which it controlled, the trade unions and peasant unions, and even the Congress Party itself. The conflict soon broke out openly after secret circulars of the Communist Party of India were discovered. The Lahore Conference in 1938 correctly gave a majority to the list of candidates of Narayan over a list controlled by the Communist Party of India.(27)

Narayan's position, which was adopted by the Congress Socialist Party, was perfectly clear. He repeated the position which he had always held, against any war imposed on India by the colonial power which ruled it. For declarations very similar to those of S. N. Tagore, Jayaprakash Narayan was arrested a few days later.

The Revolutionary Socialist Party

The year 1940 saw the appearance of another of these "centrist" groups, which had broken from the Communist International and which did not place trust in the Congress any more, but, at the same time, were totally ignorant of the existence and the activity of the Trotskyists on the national and the international scale. This group came from those who had been regarded as "terrorists" but who really were for "armed revolution", some of whom during the 1920's had joined the Communist Party while others, in the 1930's, had joined S. N. Tagore.

This current of nationalist fighters, the incarnation of which at the beginning of the century had been such a group the well-known Anushilan Group (28), had been deeply impressed by the Russian Revolution in its early years, and had turned towards socialism. The well-known Hindustan Revolutionary Army became the Hindustan Revolutionary Socialist Army in 1928, with the enthusiastic support of the terrorist, Bhagat Singh (29). Its cadres, when in prison, reflected, read and discussed and converted themselves to Communism, without at the same time deciding to take the step of joining the party which carried that label. When the majority of the detainees was released, from 1935 onwards, the turn of the Communist Party of India, following the Communist International, towards the policy of the Popular Front - which, under a veneer of "anti-fascism" and of struggle against Japanese imperialism, had the perspective of gradual "reforms" of British rule, did not particularly encourage the integration of these fighters.(30)

The "armed revolutionaries", who had a strong following in Bengal, then decided to form their own party: this was to be the Revolutionary Socialist Party, formed in May 1940, almost entirely of "professional revolutionaries", men who had come out of prison and were soon to go back there.(31) The first general secretary of the party was a veteran: Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, member of the Anushalin group in 1906 and won to socialism in 1924 and after (32). These "cadres" had no "masses" with them.

But this was, in fact, the situation of most of the revolutionary groups which formed themselves in these years - when the situation encouraged the thought that the masses would soon flow towards these formations.

The First "Trotskyists"

Like the Congress Socialist Party, like the Revolutionary Communist Party and like the Revolutionary Socialist Party when it was officially formed, the Trotskyist groups also arose when the war was drawing near and then under the repression based on the Defence of India Act. Before 1940 at least two formations, it seems, claimed to be Trotskyist and to stand, especially for the Fourth International, which, as we know had been founded at its international conference in September 1938.

These groups came into existence at different times. What appears to have been the first was called the Mazdoor Trotskyist Party. It came into existence in Uttar Pradesh thanks to the activity of some Communist militants who had broken with Stalinism. Chandra Vadan Sukla was one of the leaders of the Communist Party of India in Gujerat and later in Bombay at the time of the "Third Period". He criticised the Moscow Trials, was accused of Trotskyism and became a Trotskyist. The same happened to Onkar Nath Shastri, likewise a cadre of the Communist Party, but at Kanpur. He had criticised the "sectarian" line and found himself reading deeply into Trotsky's writings. These men organised themselves and won recruits, for example, the youthful Raj Narain Arya, at Kanpur, and the leading member of the Revolutionary Socialist Party in Calcutta, Mahadeb Bhattacharya.(33) These were no more than a handful of cadres, but they could hope to find troops to lead.

The other formation, which arose perhaps a little earlier but was formally set up a little later than the Mazdoor Trotskyist Party, was the Bolshevik Mazdoor Party. It was formally set up only in 1939 on the initiative of a militant who had been associated with the Trotskyist movement in South Africa during the preceding decade; this was M. G. Purdy.

This man, whom our English sources call Murray Gow Purdy and our Indian sources Murgaoon Purdy Singh, worked in South Africa, where possibly he had gone with his parents as immigrants. If we believe his account, he became a "Trotskyist" in 1928 when he was a member of the Communist Party of South Africa. He was the secretary of the Laundry Workers' Trade Union in 1934. His activity in the Bolshevik-Leninist League and the International Workers' Club had marked him for the attentions of the colonial authorities, who made his life impossible, and led him to decide to leave the country. According to his Indian legend, he left South Africa as a sailor on a ship and went to fight in Spain. However, this episode is improbable, because he did not say a word about it in the letter in which he introduced himself to the American Trotskyist leader, Max Shachtman.(34)

His letter is dated December 1938, and in it he does not mention any organisation round him, but only sympathetic elements. Likewise, he expresses sharp hostility to certain personages who, he says, present themselves as "Trotskyists" in India, such as N. M. Jain (J. Kotelawalla) and Dr. Chitnis, "rich people" who were not Marxists, who wrote that Trotsky was responsible for the repression at Kronstadt and who called themselves Trotskyists only because they wanted to publish Trotsky's works to make themselves important and "promote" themselves. In 1939 he had round him which was oriented towards the left of the Congress, but in addition was interested in the caste of the "untouchables", that "sub-proletariat", the pariahs (35). He seems at that time to have assumed the title of a party, which is certainly an exaggeration. However, it seems that it had in its ranks men of a certain importance, either thanks to their militant past or, at any rate, to their trade union positions. Sitaram B. Kolpe, a talented journalist, had a position in the All-India Union of Journalists, (of which he was to become president). Among other well-known militants in the Purdy group, Gour Pal, who was then a member of the Revolutionary Communist Party, mentions several well-known trade union figures, Muralidhar Parija, of the Engineers' Workers Union, and the trade union leaders, Shanta Ben Joshi and Mallikarjun Rao (36). All these men were evidently persecuted from the outbreak of the war onwards, because

their organisation, loyal to the principles of the Fourth International, saw in the war of 1939 an imperialist war for the re-distribution of the world, and saw their main enemy in British imperialism.

Parallel with these formations and, at first, with no link to them, there appeared in Calcutta a group which emerged from the political development of students who were in contact, through their unions, with the Revolutionary Communist Party, or with Roy-ists, who have familiarised them with the ideas and the writings of Marxism. The Revolutionary Socialist League was founded on the initiative of a former militant in the Congress Party, Kamalesh Banerji. He came from a great family and had been educated in a college in Calcutta, and began his political struggle in 1930 in a Bengali students' association near to the "terrorist parties". He played an important part in organising the campaign of civil disobedience in 1932, which earned him six months' imprisonment in the same year. When liberated, he worked actively in the Congress Party and in the Radical Students' League inspired by the Roy-ists. At that time he began to read Marxist works and to seek a way out through socialism. He was reserved in his attitude to Stalinism, from which he finally turned away at the time of the Moscow Trials, finding in "The Revolution Betrayed" the answers to his questions about the USSR. In 1936 he broke with the Congress and tried in 1937, with the Indian Trotskyist (who worked in England) Ajit K. Roy, to form the first Trotskyist nucleus in Calcutta. From 1939 onwards he did his best to make Trotsky's ideas known in the Indian press and to publish a Trotskyist journal. In 1939 he played a decisive role - with Indra Sen - in founding the Revolutionary Socialist League in Calcutta (37). He tried to get in touch with the other Trotskyist nuclei in India and in Ceylon. These militants claimed to be "Trotskyists" and to stand for the Fourth International. It seems likely that they were in touch with the Fourth International and especially with its British section through their compatriot, Ajit K. Roy, who was one of its leaders and was to be in Britain during the war.(38)

Other Trotskyists in this part of the world were trying, moreover, at the same moment to find sympathisers and co-thinkers, especially by going to the sessions of the Congress and the meetings of the elements of its "left". It was the Trotskyist militants in Ceylon, who at that time were running the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, who were soon to find the means to effect the desired contact.

The "T Group" and the Lanka Sama Samaja Party

The Trotskyist experience in Ceylon - which has had its historian (39) - began with a stay in Europe of students belonging to some of the rich families of the country. Leslie S. Simon Goonewardene studied in London and became a lawyer at Gray's Inn. He followed a course at the London School of Economics. Don Philip Hupasinghe (known as "Philip" Gunawardene) - the names can easily be confused by a European - studied for nearly ten years in USA, especially at the University of Wisconsin, where he knew Jayaprakash Narayan. Colvin R. de Silva followed higher studies in law and history in London. These young people knew all the Marxist groups in the British Universities, and Colvin de Silva and Leslie Goonewardene at least were in contact with the first group of the Left Opposition in Britain, the Marxist League, one of the founders of which, moreover, was an Indian militant, H. J. Aggrawala.(40)

They were hardly half a dozen young revolutionary intellectuals, who came back to their country at the beginning of the 1930's, whom amateurs of the sensational and experts in infiltration were to call "the T Group" (obviously T for Trotsky). Their first foothold in the organised workers' movement in Ceylon was the trade union of the workers in the Wellawatte Mill, who chose ^{the lawyer} Colvin de Silva as their president. Between February and July 1933, a hard-fought strike developed there; it was finally successful despite the desperate opposition of the man who had led the workers' movement in the island until then, A. E. Goonesinghe, who suffered a striking defeat.(41) Furthermore, a well-conducted campaign against the official commemoration of November 11 in Ceylon led to the creation in the same year, on the initiative of the South Colombo Youth League, of the Suriya Mal movement, which they controlled, an anti-imperialist movement which became the first centre in Ceylon of propaganda for independence (the suriya mal is the tulip which is the symbol worn by its supporters).(42)

In 1934 - 35, when there were epidemics and floods, they organised help, went about the countryside, helping, caring, denouncing... and discovering with surprise what an echo they got. The announcement of elections to the State Council in 1936 decided them. On December 18, 1935, twenty of them founded a new party, the socialist (or equality) party of Ceylon, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, the manifesto of which listed twenty-two demands which responded to the immediate needs of the masses of the people. Colvin de Silva was elected its president.(43) The LSSP decided to put up four candidates in the elections: Dr. A. S. Wickremasinghe and Leslie Goonawardene were defeated, but N. M. Perera and D.P.R. Gunawardene were elected in March 1936.(44). The new party had the wind in its sails. In 1936 it had only thirty members, but (45) at the beginning of 1937 it numbered 700 and its journal, Sama-samajaya had a print-run of 8,000, as many as its press could produce. There soon followed an organ for youth, The Young Socialist, an English-language organ, Sama-samajist, a weekly in Tamil, Samartharmam.(46)

The two young deputies were to make use of the excellent hand which the Council of State offered them as a parliamentary platform. On the first day, in consideration of the calamities which the countryside had suffered and of the unemployment, N. M. Perera proposed the introduction of free meals for school-children, (47) a proposal which was later accepted. He also proposed the abolition of village chiefs, the abolition of indirect taxes, the use of native languages in the local courts, the introduction of the Sinhalese language in civil administration, the abolition of taxes on irrigation and measures against unemployment (48) They championed the cause of minorities, especially of the Tamils, as well as the use of the native language in all the courts and in primary schools. Their speeches on education made a great impression as did their campaigns against the death penalty and the regime in prisons. At the time of the debate on draft constitutional reform, the Samasamajist deputies spoke for the abolition of the functions of the Governor and for all power to reside in the Council of State, an elected body, and this cost them the support of a number of the liberal or democratic colleagues.(49)

During this period the LSSP itself was changing. The Conference of December 1936 accepted a programme of demands more advanced than the 22 points, from an oil monopoly to national independence, by way of the eight-hour day.(50) But, as George Lerski emphasises, the position which it took up in respect of the civil war in Spain is still more significant.(51) Educational courses in Marxism were started. A popular speaker, Mme. Kamaladevi, was invited from the Indian Congress Socialist Party, to visit Ceylon. On April 1 35,000 people listened to her speaking at an open-air meeting over which Colvin de Silva presided, under a huge banner reading "How to destroy the Power of Imperialism". In 1937 the LSSP organised a formidable "Human Rights" campaign, against the deportation of a British citizen who was charged with having been too friendly with the coolies in the tea plantations.(52) It launched a recruiting campaign and led a successful strike in an oil refinery, then giving its support to a successful strike of eighty workers at Vavasseurs's Coconut Mills at Toluwagoda.(53) But the colonial authorities counter-attacked. Several strikes were broken by the resistance of the employers combined with police repression. At its second annual conference, on December 28, 1937, the LSSP adopted a more sharply defined revolutionary position in its opposition to imperialism and its analysis of classes in struggle. But it still made no reference to Trotsky any more than it praised "Stalin the genial". There can, however, be no doubt that the development of the Moscow Trials, combined with reading The Revolution Betrayed, had a great influence on the leaders of the LSSP from 1936 onwards. Continuous contact was established in 1938 with the Revolutionary Socialist League and with the Socialist Workers' Party, respectively the British and the American sections of the Fourth International, but an open break from Stalinism appeared in the LSSP's press only after the German-Russian Pact. D. P. R. Gunawardene then declared, on September 5, 1939, before the Council of State:

"This war is a war between two imperialist powers, fascist German imperialism and French and British imperialism. It is also a war for the division and re-division of the colonies and semi-colonies. We refuse to be a party to the imperialist war in any way. We are opposed to all imperialist wars and exploitation. The class struggle does not cease because a country is at war."(54)

Several months of external and internal polemic followed - notably against the majority of the "London Group" led by Dr. Wickramasinghe. - before the Executive Committee adopted the decisive resolution in December 1939:

"Since the Third International has not acted in the interests of the international revolutionary workers' movement, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party declares, while expressing its solidarity with the Soviet Union, that it has no further confidence in the Third International." (55)

Leslie Goonwardene was to write:

"This is perhaps the first time that Trotskyists threw Stalinists out and not the opposite." (56)

Those who were excluded formed the unified socialist party, the forerunner of the Communist Party, which was to come into existence in 1943. The strike wave which shook the island at the beginning of 1940 and the tremendous propaganda against the war to which the Samasamajists devoted themselves sealed their fate: on June 18 Colvin de Silva was arrested along with N. M. Perera and D. P. R. Gunawardene. Edmund Samarakkody was arrested on the 19⁽⁵⁷⁾. The LSSP hit back with a meeting and a demonstration which were violently broken up by the police. Eleven other leaders, including the treasurer, Selina Perera, were arrested, and the party was no longer able to function. (58) None the less, it was to be able to hold an underground conference of 48 delegates on April 21, 1941, with Leslie Goonwardene present. (59) At that date the LSSP really entered the Trotskyist movement.

Contacts with Trotsky

By the end of the 1930's these contacts had been reduced to a minimum. The British Trotskyists appear to have retained a contact with a Bombay journalist, I. K. Yagnik, editor of The Advocate, who published, on request, articles in his weekly paper under the cover of a "forum" and in this way published Trotsky's principle articles of the decade. (60) We have seen that Purdy made contact with the SWP in 1938. The same year, Selina Perera, the wife of N. M. and treasurer of the LSSP, went to Britain and established contact there with the British Trotskyists, who were in the midst of their re-unification under the influence of Cannon, who had been sent to the World Congress by the SWP. She then spent a month in New York, in contact with the leaders of the SWP, and stupidly prevented herself from crossing the Mexican frontier by failing to obtain a document which she could have obtained without difficulty. She was trying to pay a visit to Trotsky, who regretted not having had with her the discussion which he hoped. (61) Trotsky was not badly informed when in July 1939 he issued his "Open Letter to the Workers of India" (62) Within the SWP, a young, active and dynamic leader, Stanley Sherman, took a great interest in India, studied its press and hunted for contacts. (63)

A first sketch of regroupment was outlined in 1939. The Revolutionary Socialist League arose from the link between K. Banerji and A. K. Roy and, therefore, with the British Trotskyists also. The Mazdoor Trotskyist Party of M. G. Purdy was prepared to discuss unification. The Bolshevik Mazdoor Party, which had just been formed in Uttar Pradesh accepted the perspective of a fusion, and delegated Chandra Vadan Sukla to try to win, in Calcutta, the members of the Revolutionary Communist Party, grouped round Gour Pal, to an eventual fusion. However, this did not interest the American leadership just at this moment: Stanley Sherman, for his part, deplores what he calls the "sectarianism" of the Revolutionary Socialist League and the fact that it had formed itself as an independent organisation. (64)

Contacts, at first exclusively by letter, had existed since 1938 between the Congress Socialist Party and the SWP. Max Shachtman kept up a correspondence with M. R. Masani, who was inclined to publish Trotsky's articles. (65) The secretary of the Congress Socialist Party, Yussuf Meherally, met Shachtman in the course of a visit to the United States and they talked about a regular collaboration by Trotsky in his party's press. (66) It was under the youthful pressure of Stanley Sherman that Trotsky decided to write his "Open Letter to the Workers of India", after much holding back. This was completed on July 25, 1939. It drew on the lessons of current

history, the incapacity of the national bourgeoisie to lead the struggle for independence to victory. He developed at length the significance of the war and its consequences for the British colonies, especially the "anti-fascist" turn in the Communist International. The whole piece is a passionate call for the class independence of the Indian proletariat in its struggle against imperialism. Trotsky had no illusion: he recognised that "in its initial phase, the revolutionary party will doubtless be a small minority". But he stressed the necessity to form in every industrial centre, "groups of workers who stand under the banner of the Fourth International", of carefully selecting candidates for membership from the intellectuals, of fighting in the trade unions, in the educational societies, in the Congress Socialist Party and, in general, in all the mass organisations.

This crisis on the Socialist Workers' Party, which began at the end of 1939, and then the split and the formation of the Workers' Party, led by Shachtman, called many things into question. Sherman Stanley was a member of the Workers' Party. He and Shachtman possessed all the means of contact, and there was no possibility, at the beginning of the war, that the Indians could get into direct contact with Trotsky - who, in any case, was to be assassinated in August 1940. In an internal bulletin of the Workers' Party dated August 1940, Sherman announced that the Indian Trotskyists had gone with Shachtman and cried victory. If the statement was true - and the SWP formally denied it - the victory did not last long. In the course of the following years, it seems probable that the only regular contact of the Indians with the rest of the world was that between the Revolutionary Socialist League in Calcutta and the Revolutionary Communist Party in Britain, of which Ajit K. Roy was a member. During the war, British seamen and Trotskyist militants conscripted into the armed forces made some useful contacts. In general, the Revolutionary Communist Party and the Socialist Workers' Party received the essential documentation from India, and the journal Fourth International could therefore publish the programmatic documents which reached it before the great uprising of 1942.(67)

The Bolshevik - Leninist Party of India

There is a persistent legend that it was the militants from Ceylon who came to India to implant "Trotskyism" there and that the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India (BLPI) which appeared in 1942 as the officially recognised section of the Fourth International was no more than the Indian appendage of the LSSP of Ceylon. Despite appearances this is no more than a legend.

The truth is that the outbreak of the war and the existence of links with the British Trotskyists from 1939 onwards were an influence in favour of a unification which the war, with its consequent privations and the decomposition of the most elementary economic mechanisms (let us not forget the atrocious famine which struck India and claimed millions of victims) made all the more necessary because it could only provoke and more or less accelerate the develop the ripening of a pre-revolutionary situation. It was these necessities which led to the birth of the BLPI.

The first conference in that direction was held in March 1941. The delegates from three organisations claiming to stand for the Fourth International met there. These were the groups which we have already seen at work, the Revolutionary Socialist League in Bengal, led by Kamalesh Banerji and Indra Sen, the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, led by Shastri and Sukla, and the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, represented by delegates from Ceylon.(68)

In the end the Mazdoor Trotskyist Party, led by M. G. Purdy, withdrew. It did not agree with the "pro-Congress Socialist Party" orientation which thought the others were following. The Conference accepted several fundamental programmatic documents, and decided to form a provisional leadership, the Committee for the formation of the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India. After a period of exchanges between the groups followed by new discussions and amendments, a sufficient basis of agreement was reached for the creation of the new party to be announced in May 1942. The BLPI was then provided with "a provisional central committee".(69)

The origin of the legend that militants from Ceylon "landed in India" is obviously connected with the notoriety which the LSSP comrades possessed but their comrades on

the Indian sub-continent did not have, from the fact that some of its members had taken part in the foundation and, finally, that the leadership of the new party was to be found in the course of the following years up to 1948 in the hands of comrades who were of Ceylonese origin, because during this period the general secretary of the BLPI was named K. Tilak, (Leslie S. Simon Goonewardene). Despite the obstacles which the colonial government placed in its way, the LSSP, moreover, had not discontinued its activity. After the arrests a replacement leadership functioned, consisting of Robert Gunawardene, William de Silva, Victor Karalasingham and S. C. C. Anthony Pillai. On two occasions the Colombo prisoners emerged at night from their cells, with the complicity of their guards, and spent the night in discussion with their comrades, returning to the prison at dawn. However, the extension of military operations to Asia, the fall of Singapore in February 1942 and the direct threat of a Japanese attack led to the policy of the British becoming harder and the repression more severe. On March 13, simultaneously, the arrival of the Cripps mission in India and the banning of the LSSP were announced. The imprisoned comrades and their party appear to have taken the decisive step on that date. On the night of April 5, 1952, Colvin de Silva, Philip Gunawardene, N. M. Perera and Edmund Samarakkody escaped from prison, taking their guard with them. (70) Only Samarakkody stayed in Ceylon to strengthen the replacement leadership in an illegality of ever-increasing difficulty. The three others decided to go to India to contribute to the organisation of the revolutionaries and the preparation for the struggle there.

When the three fugitives arrived in India they made their way to Calcutta. The BLPI had already formally come into existence. A "founding conference" at the beginning of 1941 brought together the groups which formed part of the formation committee. Sen and Banerji as well as Sukla and Shastri, the group of Anant Mandekar in Bombay and a group of militants from Ceylon who were already installed in Calcutta. These were Selina (Shila) Perera, Bernard Soysa, Leslie and Vivienne Goonewardene, Doric de Souza and some others, who were called "the Entally Group", from the quarter in the suburbs of Calcutta where they found places to live. (71) The arrival of the Ceylon leaders of course meant a considerable re-inforcement, and shortly afterwards still more re-inforcements arrived, S. C. C. Anthony Pillai, the Tamil, and Victor Karalasingham, for example, who settled in Madras, where they were to play a considerable role. (72) But the repression for its part was not slow to strike when they published the first issue of the journal of the new party, called The Spark, after Lenin's Iskra.

The foundation of the BLPI resulted from an agreement which for all that could not overcome all difficulties. Thus, the Purdy Group, one of the first to claim to stand for Trotskyism in India, stayed outside the BLPI, which it characterised as a "centrist petty bourgeois party" and attacked in particular for thinking too much about work inside the Congress Socialist Party, and therefore in the Congress itself (73). However, the times did not favour polemics between groups - or even internal discussion. The leaders of the BLPI projected a national conference in March 1942 in order to homogenise the ranks of the party which had been formed by an agreement at the top. But the police were so close behind them that they did not manage to hold it. In fact, when the first delegates arrived in Calcutta where the conference was to be held, as before, in a working class quarter, the colonial authorities mounted mass searches and raids, and arrested several militants, including Kamallesh Baner. The proposed conference had to be abandoned, as too dangerous in the circumstances. (74) Instead of the broad conference which had been intended, some weeks later they held a restricted conference in Bombay. (75) In fact the small group, which the BLPI still was, had hardly the time or the practical possibility to prepare for the storm which burst in August 1942.

The August Struggle

The Congress leaders, apart from the Forward Bloc led by Subhas Chandra Bose, had joined the general agreement not to engage during the war in struggles which could place Great Britain in the war in serious difficulty. But this was not an easy position to maintain in the long term. The Churchill Government had seemed to negotiate, when it sent the Cripps mission at the time of the great Japanese

victories, had hardened its position. After these negotiations there had been great disappointment in the country. Under the pressure from below, and despite much reluctance on the part of other Congress leaders, Gandhi decided to launch the anti-British campaign under the slogan, "Quit India".(76) The colonial authorities replied by arresting the general staff of the Congress Party, thereby provoking an outburst of anger from among the masses.

August 1942 seemed to be the beginning of a revolution, which the leadership of the Fourth International hailed as the equivalent in World War II of the Russian Revolution in World War I.(77) It began with an enormous movement which shook British rule to its foundations and mobilised very numerous layers of the population. The working class in certain regions - for example in Bombay - observed this movement with a certain reserve, or - as at Jamshedpur remained restricted to national demands but strikes ensued in demonstrations and sometimes in armed struggle. In the cities the petty bourgeoisie was ready to fight, and students went into all the factories and harangued the processions. It was soon the turn of the peasants to join the movement, from one end of India to the other. Their struggle was to last for months in the form of local explosions and the activity of armed partisans, the groups of whom were former in the villages and supported by them. Gour Pal, today a Trotskyist militant and a former member of the RCP, recalls this when he writes:

"Robbed of everything and dehumanised by centuries of ferocious exploitation, unprecedented in human history, the abused nation fought heroically, without knowing how it should fight, with what, on what line and for what aim. To the delight of the imperialist masters and of their allies led by Gandhi and Jawaharlal the people fought almost with their bare hands, and were killed. Hundreds of men were shot down like dogs in the streets. Dozens of villages were burned. Hundreds of women were raped and children bayoneted. The struggles were broken up into scattered parcels of resistance and could not be either co-ordinated or centralised. None the less, the fighting went on. The Bidyut Bahinis, groups of guerrillas sworn to fight to the death, and Patri Sarkars (parallel governments) in an important zone in the district of Minapore in Bengal, as well as in dozens of places in Bihar, in Uttar Pradesh and in Gujerat. They took several prisons by assault in Bihar and in Uttar Pradesh and freed the political leaders (the Congress leaders, however, instead of taking their place at the head of the masses in insurrection, called the police and got themselves arrested). In spite of the greatest sacrifices, giving so many examples of heroism and sacrifice, the rebels and the revolutionaries were finally defeated."(78)

The Movement of August 1942, a revolutionary explosion without precedent in the history of India on such a scale, was the first trumpet-call of the revolution during World War II, but it had no leadership capable of leading it to victory. What was a historic opportunity for it - that the Congress leadership were all locked up in jail, was not a sufficient condition. The middle cadres of the Congress apparatus held firm and resisted the mass movement which spontaneously overtook them. In the factories the Communist Party of India, legalised after months of appeals, thus rewarded for the enthusiasm with which it supported what it now called "the people's war" (79), used all its influence - which was real - in the balance to calm the workers, to bring them back to order and to working for the war, to prevent or to stop the strikes. It is no accident that many young people, when they speak of the "August betrayal", mean by that the role which this party played in August 1942. Those leaders of the Congress Socialist Party who had not been arrested or who escaped arrest do not seem to have understood the importance of political work and organisation in the factories and did nothing to unify the movement the supports of which finally gave way one after another. At the outset they concentrated all their attention on conquering the streets, a course which obviously was costly in human lives and subject to very sharp ups and downs, and later, when the forces of order had recovered control in the cities, they failed to understand that the change in the relation of forces had to be re-evaluated and plunged up to their necks in the peasant guerrilla movement.

The BLPI, the RSP, the RCP and all the other revolutionary formations plunged without hesitation into the August movement and did their best to be carried along by it and

to direct it, to play in it a role, if not that of a motive force at least that of co-ordination. Yet even that was beyond their strength. Only occasionally were they able to succeed in winning important influence in any particular sector, and then they could not retain it for long, and everything collapsed with the disappearance of the militant who achieved the break-through, because the repression was both ferocious and systematic. In the end all these organisations were beheaded and rendered unable to function on the national scale, a situation which lasted until the end of the war. Soumyendra Nath Tagore, who had already been imprisoned for a year in September 1939, was once again in prison when the August movement burst out. (80) He was therefore to remain there until 1945. Gour Pal was arrested in 1939 and escaped, but was re-captured; he was badly treated in prison after the August struggle and was released only in 1945 (81) Jayaprakash Narayan was imprisoned in 1939 and escaped with some companions on November 8, 1942. They went to Nepal, where they were received with rifle-shots, crossed the frontier back into India and re-taken on September 17, 1943. He was held at Fort Lahore, not tortured but simply deprived of sleep, in the hope of forcing him to "confess" that he was a Japanese agent. (82) As for Purdy, he was arrested in 1942. After some days' freedom following an escape, he was not to leave prison again until 1947, when he was deported as a "foreigner" (83) Kamallesh Banerji, a member of the provisional Central Committee of the BLPI and one of those who carried through the unification, was arrested under the Defence of India Act, for a "seditious" speech which he delivered at the Scottish Churches College in September, 1942. (84) He was neither tried nor sentenced, but stayed in prison until October 1945. Another member of the nucleus, Indra Sen, was arrested immediately after the "August struggle" and later interned in his home district, far away from Calcutta. He later succeeded in escaping and reaching Bombay, where he was to edit The Spark, while the new leadership behind which was the Entally Group of Calcutta, was, for its part, publishing Permanent Revolution and Bolshevik-Leninist. (85)

The BLPI was to receive further blows in 1943. Following a general denunciation made in July of that year by a member of the Communist Party of India who infiltrated its ranks (86), there were searches in several cities where Trotskyist nuclei were active. Leslie Goonewardene, who was the principal leader of the parti, succeeded in evading the search, though the police had visited his home the first, but others were arrested. At Bombay, the police were able to lay hands on two important fugitives, the former LSSP leaders, D. P. R. Gunawardene and N. M. Perera, the two deputies who escaped from the central prison in Ceylon in 1942. In Madras Lionel Cooray and R. S. V. Senanayake were arrested. The two Ceylonese were sent back to Ceylon under a heavy escort, and appeared on February 8, 1944 before the court at Kandy, where they made a political declaration which does not lack spirit. (87) In the meantime they had been deprived of their elective mandate for repeated and unjustified absences. They finally came out of prison in June 1944.

It would be wrong to under-estimate the impact of the blows struck at the revolutionary organisations and in particular at the BLPI by the colonial authorities. The imprisonment of a man like S. N. Tagore of the RCP, or Jayaprakash Narayan, the leader of the CSP, that of the majority of the cadres of the BLPI or of the RSP, had serious consequences. When these leaders, taken out of circulation in this way, recovered their freedom, at the moment when the organisations (severely damaged and preserved with difficulty under the state of war) could begin to put themselves together again, the general conditions for independence in India, with in particular the fantastic development of religious antagonisms and the communalist outbreaks, with their perspective of a partition to meet the demand of the Moslem League by creating an independent Moslem state in Pakistan, had profoundly changed.

The Post-War Crisis

The post-war years saw a tumultuous development of the workers' movement and a radicalisation of the masses, which could have been expected to encourage the development of revolutionary organisations, even if we take into account that the Communist Party of India had taken advantage of its having been legalised thanks to its "patriotic" attitude during the war after 1941 and had used these conditions to win positions, especially in the trade unions, to the disadvantage of their imprisoned or clandestine advers-

aries.

Two factors combined to give an explosive character to this post-war period. First, the repression. The British Government intended in fact to punish as "collaborators with the enemy" the nationalist volunteers who had followed Subhas Chandra Bose in the adventure of the Indian National Army, which had fought at the side of the Japanese. (88) This repression was at the origin of the very serious troubles in 1946 and in particular of the series of mutinies which broke out in the Royal Indian Air Force - in which many saw "the Potemkin revolt" of the Indian Revolution. Furthermore, the end of the war meant liberation for thousands of young militants who had been arrested in 1942, burning with hatred of the "betrayal" of their movement, who found outside prison an atmosphere which was receptive to their calls for action. Economic conditions were deteriorating. The Cost of Living Index, 100 in 1939, had risen to 934 by August 1944. The first factory closures were announced and thousands of railway workers were paid off. To poverty in the cities were added shortages and even famine in the countryside (according to Krishna Menon the great famine of 1943 claimed six million victims in Bengal. Between April 1945 and April 1946 1,087 strikes are reported, involving over a million strikers. These figures were unprecedented. There were several general strikes in cities or regions: 1,960,000 strikers in 1946 and 2,215,000 in 1947.

Let us confine ourselves to mentioning some of the principal events in this period which was rich in great working-class struggles. The signal was given in March 1946 when the dismissal of 260,000 railway workers and 150,000 jute workers was announced. On July 21 1946 began the general strike of the postal and telegraph workers, which developed on the 29th into a general strike of solidarity in Calcutta and throughout Bengal. This was followed by a strike of the employees at the Imperial Bank. The railwaymen in South India went on strike on August 24 against the sackings and the government replied by the use of fire-arms at Golden Rock and 4,000 arrests in a single day. There were violently contested strikes in coal-mining, electricity, the civil service and a general strike in November, in Ceylon; N. M. Perera was arrested. At Calcutta again on January 21, 1947, there was a demonstration of students outside the French embassy - this was brutally repressed, because the "Indo-Chinese War" was just beginning; the repression provoked a protest general strike on February 5, 1947. This movement was marked by hundreds of meetings, gatherings and mass demonstrations. There were fresh risings in the countryside, where peasants attacked store-houses where the harvests were kept, demanding or carrying into effect a share-out. This article is not intended to deal with this important aspect of Indian history, but we know how British imperialism hit back at this powerful social movement by means of the "communist" movement. The exacerbation of religious hatreds had been carefully kept alive and fostered over a long period. The separatist activity of Jinnah's Moslem League and the response of the Hindu communalist reactionaries ended with the religious rioting and the "Great Massacre" in Calcutta on August 16, 1946, which was the forerunner of that partition of the country, which threw the blame on the religious adversary for all the evils which befell the poor people of every religion in the land.

One of the first signs of internal weakness in the BLPI and of the fragility of the principles of certain of its leaders was the crisis which broke out in July 1944 after Philip Gunawardene and N. M. Perera was released from prison. In fact they immediately developed a bitter fractional struggle, the aim of which, it appears, was to recover the organisational independence of their former party. The LSSP had become "the Ceylon unity" of the BLPI. They rejected the decisions of the 1943 and 1944 conferences of the LSSP. The two former deputies, whose prestige had been raised by their having been imprisoned, attacked what they called "the bureaucracy of the regional committee" led by Bernard Soysa, demanding that it be "re-organised". They founded the journal, "Samasamajaya", in which they publicly announced that they intended to fight against "the band of parlour Bolsheviks camouflaged in the regional unit of the BLPI" (89). Their operation was successful, because immediately, following a re-unification, the "Ceylon unit" recovered the title of LSSP and the former leaders went back to their leading positions. But this was only a truce; we soon see another split.

We know less in detail of what happened on the continent of India. In 1943, a split in the BLPI - or a regroupment of those of the Trotskyist elements which had rejected unification within it - gave birth to a dissident Bolshevick-Leninist Party. A national conference was held on 26 to 31 December 1943. This brought together the representatives of this last-named organisation and the leaders of the former Bolshevick Mazdoor Party round Shukla and Shastri. The BMPI, thus constituted, proclaimed itself to be a member of the Fourth International and its only "genuine" Indian section. It published Bolshevick-Leninist in English and Age Kadam (Forward!) in Hindi (90). The BLPI, robbed by it of the title of its English-language journal, then issued The New Spark.

Despite these dissensions and crises, it appears that the BLPI held a certain number of positions immediately after the end of the war. When the political prisoners were freed and political activity could start again, it was able to win several dozen militants who were also themselves worker or student cadres and had been active until then in the Congress Party, even in the RCP or the RSP, or simply in mass organisations. Gour Pal mentions especially at this period the student leader Hiren Rakshit, the former leader of the Communist Party of India and leader of peasant struggles, Naren Biswas, the Marxist theoretician, Keshab Bhattacharya and the leader of the coal-miners in West Bengal, Jagdish Jah. The BLPI controlled several trade unions in Calcutta and in the industrial belt round it, notably in the Kardah jute factories in the Tittagash and Bengal paper factories, the Tribeni textile factories as well as the trade unions of the paper workers and that of the firemen. In Madras, the Tamil S. C. C. Anthony Pillai, who had come from Ceylon, won a solid position among the tramway workers and then in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills, which was to enable him to found the Madras Labour Union, one of the strongest trade union organisations in the country, of which he was president - a leader already enjoying prestige and feared by the authorities.(91)

When Kamallesh Banerji came out of prison at the end of 1945, the BLPI, yielding to the appeals of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International, sent him to Europe, to represent it in the leading international body. Hitherto he had been known under the pseudonym of "Mahmoud", but at the International Secretariat he became "Ali" (92). Under his real name, he became a well-known journalist, the correspondent in Europe of the prestigious Amrita Bazar Potrika of Calcutta. He got the first interview with Marshall Tito after the break between Russia and Yugoslavia in 1948. But he was really only changing places with Ajit Roy, who during the war had been one of the leaders - at one moment the general secretary - of the RCP, and who came to India in 1947. After a spectacular tour in the country - he attracted an audience of 14,000 at a meeting at Madura (93) - he became secretary of the BLPI in the Bengal region.

Party Building Marks Time

But how was the party to be constructed quickly, at the pace at which, according to the leaders, the revolutionary crisis was on the way? It is true that the BLPI had in its ranks workers' leaders, to each of whom tens of thousands of workers listened, but it was rather a network than a party, a network of cadres, not a mass party or even a party of the vanguard. According to Gour Pal, it had in 1946 only 72 members (naturally excluding Ceylon), though they were all workers' or students' leaders. (94) When Roy came back in 1947, there was a first attempt at regroupment with the RCP, an organisation which the Trotskyists regarded as "centrist", to be sure, but the leaders of which had maintained class independence and their fighting strength, and, what was the main thing, they had militants and cadres in their ranks to whom workers and youth listened. A delegation from the BLPI, led by Ajit Roy and Indra Sen met that of the RCP, consisting of Sudhir Dasgupta, Tarapada Gupta and Gour Pal. No agreement was reached. The RCP did not oppose on principle the admission to the Fourth International of a unified party, but it wanted to be acquainted with all the documents, principles and positions before it involved itself. Furthermore, it had drawn from the struggles of August 1947 the necessity to stress the construction of soviets, the panchayets, which had to be built immediately as organs of struggle.

The BLPI rejected any call to construct soviets in a situation which was not yet one of revolutionary crisis, and criticised the tactic of the RCP as "left-ist" and "adventuristic" (95). The negotiations having failed, both organisations continued on their own way, the milq-posts on which were splits and crises.

The first, which struck the BLPI, evidently had its origin in Ceylon. Gunawardene and N. M. Perera opened an attack on one of their principal opponents, Doric de Souza, and "Philip" accused him no more and no less of being an agent of the British police. (96) A party hearing, to which Kamalesh Banerji came in person, was refused by the majority of the LSSP leadership, which drove out of its ranks the "Bolsheviks" of De Souza (97). With the independence of Ceylon, the question was settled; the LSSP was independently affiliated to the Fourth International and the departure of Gunawardene permitted his former adversaries to return. Thereafter the BLPI and the LSSP proceeded independently, and the former did not hide that it regarded the latter fundamentally as an opportunist party (98).

One of the principal hopes for "the construction of the party" remained the Congress Socialist Party, in which the Trotskyists always carried on "fractional" work and from which they recruited several of their cadres. The idea was that the CSP had such an audience that, if it decided to break with the Congress and assert its class independence - which was not impossible - it must at once become the rallying centre of the working class with its real vanguard. Open letters and lectures in their press were the public weapons which the BLPI used to strengthen pressure from the base on the socialist leaders and to get them to make up their minds to take a step about which they had been thinking obviously ever since 1942 at least, but which they did not decide to make.

The Trotskyist militants left their mark on the great workers' struggles in 1947 and 1948. In 1947 in Bombay it was Anant Mandekar, in the strike of the 6,000 workers at the New Kaiser-i-Hind Mills. At the same moment it was S.C.C. Anthony Pillai, leader of the trade union movement in the Madras region, in the strike at the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills, where 14,000 strikers demanded a lodging allowance. (99)

The former was arrested for "incitement to commit acts of violence" and "acts contrary to public security". (100) The second was arrested on March 28 and charged with having "promoted an illegal strike, defied the authority of the government and brought the law into contempt". A protest strike of 100,000 in the city replied to this act of provocation. None the less, Anthony Pillai was deported... to Ceylon, whence he was, moreover, to return to be triumphantly elected in the following year as a municipal councillor in Madras (101). The Times of Ceylon apologised for "the export of Bolsheviks" of which its country was guilty. The Calcutta police searched the offices of the BLPI and arrested certain leaders, including Indra Sen (102). Some of the Trotskyist leaders, indeed, were indisputably mass leaders, but for all that their party did not develop. In 1948 it was unable, for example, to convince and to win S. N. Tagore, who had just been excluded from the RCP (103), and a bitter-sweet exchange of letters dragged on with the BMPI with a view to a "re-unification" which neither side conceived except as far as it could exclusively profit from it. (104)

"Entrism"

However, in 1948 there was an important event, which had been awaited for years. This was the divorce between the Congress Party and Jayaprakash's socialists. The transfer of power from the British to the Indian Congress and to the Moslem League presented as many problems to the great bourgeois nationalist party as to its socialist partners. The Congress would henceforth be a party of government. Could it retain in its ranks "socialists" who henceforth could not form anything other than the principal oppositional force to the regime which they wanted to introduce? Could the friends of J.P., "socialists" in an "independent" India, remain within a party which they well knew was the spokesman of the Indian bourgeoisie, now at the levers of command? The partition of the country, the massacres which were its bloody accompaniment, as we know, the disappointment of everyone and especially of the most enthusiastic by this sham independence, all encouraged the split which naturally followed from the nature of the new situation. The Congress Socialist

Party decided, at its Nasik Congress, to form itself as an independent socialist party and a candidate for the leadership of the Opposition from the Left. It did not draw any balance of the experience of its past activity within the party now in power. Such an initiative, despite its limitations, could not influence the Trotskyists of the BLPI otherwise than winning enormous prestige for the old CSP, and be an attractive force on everyone who seriously intended to carry on the struggle despite "independence" and participation. The Indian Trotskyists were greatly tempted to revive the former "entrlist" tactic - which had just been re-affirmed with an almost principled emphasis by a resolution of the Second World Congress of the Fourth International in 1948.

The business was not to be easily settled. The BLPI held two successive national conferences. The first, at Madras, rejected the proposal to enter but asked for the international leadership to intervene on the question. The second rejected entry by a majority of a few votes. However, what happened was the opposite. Tempted by experience - which perhaps annoyed so many others in the past - of an all-inclusive party which incorporated the different currents of the socialist movement in general, the Socialist Party offered conditions for entry which the Trotskyists could see were particularly favourable. The BLPI let itself be tempted and, at the end of 1948, all the members of the BLPI in India entered the Socialist Party. In Ceylon, the "Bolsheviks" - former members of the BLPI - joined the LSSP, where they occupied positions of local and even regional responsibility, won positions in trade unions and in the production of important newspapers.

However, the event which the Indian Trotskyists had so long awaited, when the "Congress Socialists" won their "class independence", far from marking the birth of a revolutionary organisation amounting to a mass workers' party, signified the beginning of the end, as much for the Socialist Party as for those who came into it. In fact in 1952 Narayan suddenly went over to a form of hardly "renovated" Gandhism (105). This was followed by a serious defeat - and terrible disappointment - undergone in the legislative elections (106). These sounded the death-knell of the Socialist Party and of the confidence of its leaders in its future. Following more or less secret discussions, the Socialist Party decided to fuse with the KMPP led by Kripalani (107). This was a Gandhist dissident petty-bourgeois formation in the Congress. The fusion led to the formation of a party which was no longer a genuine socialist party (despite its calling itself the socialist party of the people, Praja Socialist Party). And they kept with them a man like Ajit Roy and a man like Anthony Pillai! (108). We cannot re-trace here the efforts which were made to "re-unify" the Trotskyist ranks after the heavy losses which they suffered in this period from going over to the Socialist Party and being "betrayed" there, after the unrealistic entrlist operations of various types in which a considerable militant capital was expended. Let us point out merely that the other formations which claimed to be on the extreme Left of the Indian political spectrum fared no better. In the end, the Socialist Party died from the capitulation of Narayan, while the RCP, deprived of S. N. Tagore, also died by the capitulation of the man who had led it into the most "left-ist" military adventures, Pannalal Dasgupta who finally joined... the Congress (109).

The reader will excuse us for stopping at this point. These notes do not claim to be able to trace properly the history of the Trotskyist movement in India, nor to provide a dossier for a political balance sheet to be drawn on this question. It is clear that all the formations of the vanguard in India, whether they were "entrlist" or not, came up against the problem, which they could not solve, of the independence of the working class, under the concrete form of the link with the Indian bourgeoisie through the Congress party. A comparative study with China would no doubt be instructive. For the rest, this study had no other aim but to make other studies easier and to stimulate them, on the basis of State archives or of those of more widely extensive organisations.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) The documentation on this question is not very easily found in France. The basis and the point of departure of this study are in two un-published studies, the typescripts of which are in the possession of Professor R. J. Alexander, of the New Rutgers University, who has been so kind as to communicate them to us. One of these is Gour Pal, "Indian Trotskyism and the Revolutionary Communist Party" no date. 108 pages, divided alphabetically, a very dense text on typewritten sheets with simple interlining, format 21 by 35, and Raj Narain Arya, "Trotskyist Movement in India", no date, same kind of text and same format. In the period which interests us, Pal was one of the leaders of the RCP, which he joined in the thirties when he was still a high-school student, and Arya, who came from the Communist Party, was a member of the MTPI, one of the first Trotskyist organisations in India. Gour Pal devoted most of his work to an extremely detailed study of the RCPI, a study which is extremely precious and irreplaceable. It is unfortunate that neither writer devotes more than a few pages between them to the Trotskyist movement as such. Though the illumination and the framework of information which they provide are very useful, this first piece of work could not have been possible without recourse to the international Trotskyist press, the Indian (Permanent Revolution, Bolshevik-Leninist, Samasamajist, Spark, New Spark, New Horizon), the English (Socialist Appeal, Workers' International News), the American (The Militant, Fourth International) and, in general, the press collections of the BDIC at Nanterre and in the British Museum. For the archives, we have used those of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International (personal archives).
- (2) On this period of the history of the Communist Party of India (CPI), one consults, in addition to Gour Pal's study, G. D. Overstreet and M. Windmuller, "Communism in India", U. C. Press, 1960, and M. R. Masani, "The Communist Party of India", London, 1954.
- (3) Cf. Bipan Chandra, "The ideological development of the revolutionary terrorists in Northern India in the 1920's", pp. 163 - 189, in B. R. Nanda, "Socialism in India", Delhi, 1972.
- (4) Gour Pal, op. cit., pp. D/2, D/3, Arya, op. cit., p. 2.
- (5) Gour Pal, op. cit., pp D/4, D/5.
- (6) We do not know whether this Indonesian delegate, who was linked to the Dutchman Sneevliet, was called Mohamed Tohir, as Vilem Kahan says, or Dakhjoedin, ^{as} Sneevliet wrote to Trotsky during the 1930's.
- (7) Gour Pal, op. cit., p. D/5.
- (8) Ibid.
- (9) Ibid., pp D5, D6.
- (10) Soumyendra Nath Tagore, "Gandhi", NRF Gallimard, 1934, 248 p. Let us recall that "Mahatma" was a title conferred on Gandhi to witness to his sanctity.
- (11) Pal, op. cit., D6, D7.
- (12) Ibid. p. D12.
- (13) Ibid.
- (14) Ibid.
- (15) Arya, op. cit., pp. 5 - 9.

- (16) Pal, op. cit., p. D13A.
- (17) Ibid., p. D13.
- (18) Ibid.
- (19) Ibid., p. 13A.
- (20) Ibid., p. D16.
- (21) Ibid., pp. D24, D25.
- (22) Ibid., p. D25
- (23) Ibid.
- (24) Minoo Masani, "Jayaprakash Narayan", "Encounter", pp. 12 - 13. J. P. Narayan died in 1979.
- (25) B. R. Nanda, "Socialism in India, 1919 - 1939. A Retrospect", op. cit. p. 11.
- (26) M. R. Masani, op. cit., pp. 67 - 68. (27) Ibid., p. 71.
- (28) We refer here to Bipan Chandra (note 3) as well as to Trinidad Chaudhury, "The Story of the Revolutionary Socialist Party", which we have not been able to consult.
- (29) Bipan Chandra, in B. R. Chandra, op. cit., pp. 175 - 185. Bhagat Singh was a young Punjabi terrorist who was condemned to imprisonment for life in 1929, for having thrown a bomb in the Legislature building. While he was in prison, he was tried again for the murder of a British civil servant, was sentenced to death and hanged on March 23, 1931. He had read much in jail and as a result became a convinced Marxist. After his death, the Indian Communist Party made a martyr of him. His memory remained very popular in India.
- (30) Arya, op. cit., p. 5.
- (31) Ibid.
- (32) Ibid., and B. Chandra, loc. cit., pp. 175 ff.
- (33) Arya, op. cit., p. 8, Pal, op. cit., p. D1.
- (34) Letter from M. G. Purdy to Shachtman and Cannon, "Exile Papers", Houghton Library, Harvard, December 1938.
- (35) Pal, op. cit., p. B8
- (36) Ibid.
- (37) Pal, op. cit., p. B2, Arya, op. cit., p. 8.
- (38) There is a contradiction between two of our principal sources about Ajit K. Roy. New Spark presents him indeed in 1947 as an Indian who spent 17 years in Britain. Gour Pal writes, op. cit., p. 82, that Roy "went to England ostensibly to advance his studies, but essentially to put the BLPI in touch with the Fourth International - which obviously could not have happened in 1930, let alone earlier. But a letter from the BLPI (the Indian section of the Fourth International) signed K. Tilak, addressed to the I.S. on November 11, 1946, make it clear that Kamallesh

Banerji had tried, about 1937, "with Roy and others" to form a nucleus in Calcutta. We may therefore suppose that Roy returned to India after having lived in Britain, was associated in struggle with Banerji and his friends and that they then decided that it was preferable that he should go back to Britain, which would make an indispensable link easier to maintain.

- (39) George Jan Lerski, "Origins of Trotskyism in Ceylon", Hoover I.P. 1938
- (40) Leslie S. Simon Goonewardene came from a family of very rich planters. He studied in Ceylon at the College of St. John and then at the College of St. Thomas. He was a student in Britain, at Gray's Inn and became a lawyer in 1933. From the war period onwards he used the pseudonym K. Tilak.
- Don Philip Hupasinghe, known as Philip Gunawardene was educated at Ananda and then at Trinity College, before going to the USA. Colvin Reginald De Silva (born in 1907) of a rich family, was educated at St. John and then at the Royal College, then at King's College, London, and then Lincoln's Inn. He obtained his Ph.D. at London University (for a remarkable thesis on the British imposition of rule in Ceylon). Hans Raj Aggrawala (1906 - 1932) likewise was a student in London. He founded the Marxist League, with Francis A. Ridley. Both of them were to move away after Trotsky had very severely criticised their attempt to provide their organisation with a programme.
- (41) Lerski, op. cit., pp. 149 - 150.
- (42) Ibid., pp. 16 - 17.
- (43) Ibid., p. 29.
- (44) Ibid., p. 34. Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe (born in 1901) studied medicine and completed his studies with a specialisation in Britain. He was the force behind the LSSP group in London and was probably linked to the Communist Party of Great Britain. He was to be excluded from the LSSP in January 1940, for solidarity with the Communist International - and then founded the Unified Socialist Party, which became the ancestor of the Communist Party of Ceylon.
- Nanayakkarapathiga Martin, commonly called N. M. Perera (1906 - 1979), studied at secondary school level at St. Thomas and Ananda in Ceylon, and did his higher studies at the London School of Economics. He had a double doctorate, in philosophy and in science, and a BA in Economics. In 1935 he was a teacher with the status of "lecturer" at University College in Ceylon.
- (45) Lerski, op. cit., p. 144.
- (46) Ibid., pp. 113 to 149.
- (47) Ibid, p. 38.
- (48) Ibid., p. 38 - 50.
- (49) Ibid., p. 102.
- (50) Ibid., P. 113 to 117. (51) Ibid., p. 119.
- (52) Mark Anthony Lester Bracegirdle was an Englishman who came from Australia. He was a member of the leadership of the LSSP and beyond doubt was linked to the Communist Party. He was excluded in May 1937. On the "affair", see Lerski, op. cit., pp. 113 - 143.

- (53) Lerski, op. cit., p. 145.
- (54) Ibid., p. 206.
- (55) Leslie S. Goonewardene, "A Short History of the LSSP", p. 15.
- (56) Ibid.
- (57) Lerski, op. cit., p. 237.
- (58) Ibid., p. 239 - 241.
- (59) Ibid., p. 248.
- (60) Ibid., p. 163.
- (61) The letters in question are in the "Exile Papers" at the Houghton Library; those from S. Perera are of November 17 and 24, 1939, and those from Trotsky of November 4 and 24.
- (62) The text of the "Open Letter" is annexed in "Les Cahiers Leon Trotsky", No. 21, March 1985.
- (63) Sherman Stanley was the pseudonym of Stanley Plastrik (1915 - 1981), also known as Henry Judd, who was to edit the magazine Dissent towards the end of his life.
- (64) Cf. the letter of Stanley Sherman to Trotsky of March 12, 1939, his "Report on India", which is published in French in "Les Cahiers Leon Trotsky", No. 21.
- (65) Letter of Sherman Stanley of December 20, 1938, Houghton Library.
- (66) Ibid.
- (67) Some of these are published in French in "Les Cahiers Leon Trotsky" No. 21.
- (68) Permanent Revolution, July - September 1943.
- (69) Ibid.
- (70) Lerski, op. cit., p. 260.
- (71) Pal, op. cit., p. 21.
- (72) Ibid.
- (73) Ibid., p. B7.
- (74) Ibid., p. B2.
- (75) Ibid.
- (76) The Churchill Government sent the Labour leader, Sir Stafford Cripps, to take to India, with effect after the war, proposals to make India a Dominion endowed with a Constituent Assembly, each province remaining free not to enter. Gandhi had said that Churchill was offering "a post-dated cheque on a bankrupt bank". He then issued his famous slogan: "Quit India" and declared, despite the reservations of the other leaders and especially of Nehru: "We must free India or die in the enterprise". On August 7, 1942, the All-Indian Committee of the Congress adopted the proposal to campaign on this theme. The Indian masses seem to have taken the formula seriously.

When on August 9, they learned that all the Congress leaders had been arrested, they rose up. Gandhi, for his part, declared a hunger-strike of three weeks in protest against the violence of those who were demanding his liberation.

- (77) The analogy is present at every moment in the manifesto of the International Executive Committee of September 26, 1942.
- (78) Pal., op. cit., p. D26.
- (79) We can refer to Overstreet and Windmiller, op. cit., pp. 194 - 204, for an account of the resistance to this slogan in the ranks of the Communist Party of India, and especially from those who were in prison at the time and on the point of being tried and sentenced for their activity against "the imperialist war". The Communist Party of India declared in favour of accepting the British proposals at the time of the Cripps mission. It was legalised in July 1942, at the same time as the viceroy had the first of its imprisoned members set free.
- (80) Pal., op. cit., p. D45.
- (81) Ibid., pp. D28, D29, D45.
- (82) Mino Masani, loc. cit., p. 14.
- (83) Pal, op. cit. p. B8. The press mentioned the adventures of M. G. Purdy. After he was expelled from India, he was re-discovered in London, where there is no trace of him after 1947.
- (84) Arya, op. cit., p. 8; Pal, op. cit. p. B2.
- (85) Pal, ibid.
- (86) Permanent Revolution, July - September 1943. In 1946 the English Trotskyist newspaper, Socialist Appeal, (mid-December) quotes a declaration by an ex-member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India, Soli Batliwala, which states that the members of the Communist Party of India had denounced numbers of "subversive" militants to the political police, the CID.
- (87) The Militant, October 14, 1944.
- (88) Subhas Chandra Bose (1897 - 1945) had been one of the driving forces, with Nehru, of the Left Wing of the Congress. His brief term as President of the Congress led him to a sharp conflict with Gandhi and the apparatus. He was a driving force of the Forward Bloc and recommended immediate action for independence by exploiting the difficulties of British imperialism. He was arrested and took advantage of a liberation on medical grounds to leave India. From Germany he issued appeals to the Indian people to rise up against the British. Then he founded at Singapore, with the support of the Japanese Army, a "provisional government of Free India", and formed an Indian army, (The Indian National Army) recruited among the prisoners of war, which was to fight with the Japanese for the liberation of India. He died in an aeroplane accident on August 18, 1945. Perhaps the attitude of Gandhi, issuing the slogan "Quit India" had some competitive relation with what Bose, his sworn enemy, was doing at the time? In any case, the British Government put fire to gunpowder when it claimed the right to sentence the men of the Indian National Army for rebellion against the King of England and the Emperor of India, which could only mobilise Indian opinion in their favour. The first defendants were sentenced to life imprisonment, but were quickly freed in a desire to appease public feeling.

- (89) Letter from the Ceylon Unit of the BLPI, February 1945, in the archives of the International Secretariat.
- (90) Pal, op. cit., p. 87.
- (91) All the details about the militants and the factories are given by Pal, p. B3.
- (92) Letter to the International Secretariat announcing the appointment of "Mahmoud", dated November 11, 1946. Tilak was then general secretary of the BLPI.
- (93) New Spark, January 1947, No. 2
- (94) Pal, op. cit., p. B3.
- (95) Ibid., pp. B2, B3.
- (96) See "An Analysis of the Judgement", in Samasamajist, June 1, 1947, which draws a balance of the accusations levied by both sides. Doric de Souza was accused of having had carried to the underground workers in India a letter from the CID officer Wijesoonya, and therefore to be "an agent of the police" - an accusation which the party categorically rejected.
- (97) See the resolution of March 1, 1947 in the same issue of Samasamajist, in which the conference of the LSSP, called by N. M. Perera and Philip Gunawardene voted moreover for a document which "demands the dissolution of the unrepresentative, irresponsible and sectarian Central Committee of the BLPI, three members out of five of which are in Ceylon and the secretary is perpetually on leave from the party"!
- (98) Let us confine ourselves to a good formulation, mentioned in "Report on Ceylon" by H. A. Vardhan in New Spark, No. 7, April 3, 1948: "The discovery of the unique way to have one's cake and to eat it constitutes the highest theoretical achievement of the LSSP to dat".
- (99) Socialist Appeal, Mid-April 1947
- (100) Socialist Appeal, March and June 1947. Anant Mandekar, a student and underground militant in 1942, joined the BLPI after the August days and worked in Bombay as a clerk in the New Kaiser-i-Hind Mills. He was chairman of the factory committee and led the strike. He was to have the benefit of an alibi and was liberated on December 6, 1947.
- (101) Ibid., November 1948. The election was held on October 30, 1948. He stood in Division No. 32. Anthony Pillai obtained over 5,000 votes out of 7,000 votes cast.
- (102) Ibid., June 1947.
- (103) "Split in the RCPI", New Spark No. 2, May 15, 1948, contains in particular the phrase: "The doors of teh BLPI are wide open to Comrade Tagore and his group".
- (104) Internal Bulletin of the BLPI, 1947.
- (105) Jayaprakash was, in 1972, the president of a postal workers' union. In this role he concluded, following a strike, an agreement which was neither written nor respected by the Minister. Narayan then went on hunger strike for three weeks to make up for his negligence. He then joined the Bhodan movement, which recommended sarvodaya, a grouping of men resolved to dedicate themselves voluntarily to truth and non-violence, which is fundamentally the particular form in which he returned to the Hindu religion and supported

Gandhi after the latter died. For all that he was still persecuted by Indira Gandhi.

- (106) These elections were a triumph for Nehru, the head of Government since independence, and for the Congress Party, which obtained 362 seats in the Central Parliament out of 489, and a majority in every state except four.
- (107) Acharya B. J. Kripalani, a Congress veteran, represented in some sense its "left" after the CSP split away, and opposed the "right" of sardar Vallabhai Patel. Nehru was at one and the same time the centre and the power. It was against Patel in the first place that Kripalani decided to form in December 1950 the Congress Democratic Front, the aim of which was "to rid the Congress of the corrupting influence of power politics and to make it more democratic and more useful". At first Nehru tolerated him as a counterweight to Patel, but after the latter died, he insisted to the leaders that the Front must be dissolved. Kripalani refused. He left the Congress Party and proceeded to found a new party, the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party (Party of Worker and Peasant People), the KMPP, which presented itself as a "return" to Gandhi's "ideal". Following secret negotiations between Kripalani on one side and Asoka Mehta and Jayaprakash Narayan on the other, a joint meeting of the two leaderships - A. Kripalani and Acharya Narendra Deva for the KMPP and Rammanohar Lohia and Asoka Mehta for the CSP - held in Lucknow on August 24 and 25 1952, decided to fuse the two formations. The reactions within the old CSP were not confined to the immediate reflex of protest from the Trotskyist "entrists". The organ of the Socialist Party, Janata, published on January 4, 1953, an article by one of the founders of the party, Babu Sampurnand, entitled, "Socialism Betrayed". One of the reactions, largely due to the initiative of the Trotskyists, a conference of "loyal members of the party", held at Bombay on September 27, 1952, with Tulsi Boda, the secretary of the All-India Federation of Textile Workers, in the chair, and with the presence or the support of militants with well-known names, S.C.C. Anthony Pillai, Shila Perera, Indra Sen, S. Amarnath, Rajendra Trivedi and Hector Abhayavardhan, who from that date became the editor in Madras of Socialist Vanguard, which reported this conference in its October 1952 issue.
- (108) Pal, op. cit., p. 84. Let us note, all the same, the solidarity which Anthony Pillai displayed at the conference (cf. No. 107), which contradicts what Pal states.
- (109) Pal, op. cit., p. D55 describes this final capitulation after pages of a severe attack on the man who was his principal adversary and, according to him, the evil genius of his former party, the RCP of India.

SOME DATES

- 1934
 May Foundation at Patna of the Congress Socialist Party
 Tagore founds the Communist League of India (the future Revolutionary Communist Party)
- July The Communist Party of India (CPI) is declared illegal
- 1935
 August 2 The India Act, with a new constitution voted by the British Parliament
- December 18 Foundation in Ceylon of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party
- 1936
 March N. M. Perera and D. P. R. Gunawardene, of the LSSP, elected deputies in Ceylon
- 1937
 July General elections and decision to form Congress ministries
- December 2nd Conference of the LSSP, which adopts a more advanced programme
- 1938
 January Subhas Chandra Bose elected President of the Congress Party unanimously
- July 25 Trotsky's "Open Letter to the Workers of India"
- September 3 Founding Conference of the Fourth International
- 1939
 January S. C. Bose re-elected President of Congress despite Gandhi
- March Bose obliged to resign
- July Formation by Bose of the "Forward Bloc"
- September 3 The Viceroy announces that India is at war
- September 5 Anti-War declaration by the LSSP deputies
- September 7 Tagore arrested
- September 8 The Congress Working Committee meets and decides to make the "Congress Ministries" resign
- November 15 Resignation of the last "Congress Ministry"
- Bose arrested
- Foundation of the Revolutionary Socialist League
- 1940
 January Foundation of the Revolutionary Socialist Party
- June Arrest of the leaders of the LSSP
- August 21 Trotsky assassinated

1 9 4 1	
January	Bose leaves India and settles in Berlin
March	Formation of the "Committee for the formation of the BLPI"
December	Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour begins the war in the Pacific
1 9 4 2	
January - February	Victories of the Japanese "lightning-war" in Asia
March 12	Churchill announces the Cripps Mission to India
March 25 - April 12	Cripps negotiations break down
June	Formation of a Central Committee of the BLPI, Indian section of the Fourth International
July	The Communist Party of India legalised
August 7	The All-India Congress Committee meeting in Bombay approves the slogan "Quit India"
August 9	Arrest of the Congress leaders; the "August struggle" begins
1 9 4 3	
October	Famine in Bengal (six million victims) Bose proclaims at Singapore a "Provisional Government of Free India" and forms the Indian National Army
1 9 4 4	
May	The British authorities liberate Gandhi
1 9 4 5	
June 14	The Viceroy, Lord Wavell, publishes the British proposals
June 15	Liberation of Nehru
June 25 - July 7	Negotiations at New Delhi fail
August 15	Capitulation of Japan
August 18	Death of Bose
September	Elections
November	First trials of officers of the Indian National Army; first demonstrations against them
1 9 4 6	
January	Mutiny in the Royal Indian Air Force
March	British Ministerial mission sent to India
April	First Congress of the RSP denounces the illusion of "Socialism in a Single Country"
June	Congress accepts the proposals for a Constituent Assembly but rejects the "interim" government
July 29	The Moslem League withdraws its agreement
July	Strike of postal workers and railwaymen; strike wave begins

- August 16 Days of direct action proclaimed by the Moslem League; Massacres in Calcutta; beginning of wave of great movement between "Hindu" and "Moslem" countries
- September 2 Wavell forms an interim government under Nehru
- November - December The Constituent Assembly meets
- 1 9 4 7
- February 5 General Strike at Calcutta
- February 20 Attlee announces in the House of Commons that the transfer of sovereignty will be made before June 1948
- March 22 Arrival of Viceroy Louis Mountbatten
- June 4 Announcement of the transfer of sovereignty on August 15, with partition
- August 15 Accession of India and Pakistan to independence; massacres; the country is torn apart
- October 15 Fifteen Trotskyist deputies elected to the Ceylon Parliament
- November 21 Arrest en masse of cadres of the RCP who were preparing an armed insurrection
- 1 9 4 8
- January 30 Assassination of Gandhi
- March Congress of the Congress Socialist Party at Nasik
- March Split of the RCP into two formations, one led by Tagore
- August - September Discussion on the BLPI about "entry" into the CSP
- December BLPI militants enter the Socialist Party
- 1952
- August 24 - 25 Lucknow agreements between the Socialist Party and the KMPP
- September 26 - 27 Socialist Party and KMPP fuse to form the PPSP
- September 29 Conference at Bombay of the militants "loyal" to the Socialist Party