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Speech to the Ceylon Criminal Justice Commission

2 November 1973

Chairman and Members of the Commission:

A representative of one social class is addressing the representatives of another social class. That is what is happening here. A representative of the exploited and oppressed proletariat is addressing the representatives of the exploiting and oppressing class. We should not forget that the living reality which transpires here is a struggle for the fulfilment and class interests of two opposed social classes. Although I have been designated the 'thirteenth suspect' by this Commission in the present inquiry, the Chairman himself has stated that I am the chief suspect. That being so it will be necessary right at the beginning to tell you who I, the thirteenth suspect, am. I am a Marxist-Leninist. I am a modern Bolshevik. I am a proletarian revolutionary. Marxism-Leninism is a clear doctrine. In no way is a Marxist-Leninist a conspirator. I, a Bolshevik, am in no way a terrorist. As a proletarian revolutionary, however, I must emphatically state that I am committed to the overthrow of the prevailing capitalist system and its replacement by a socialist system.

To disown capitalism which has turned grey, reactionary and obsolete in the course of human social development, to say that this system must be replaced with the new socialist system of production which has come to the fore as befitting the latest and noblest historical stage in the course of the development of human society, and to act accordingly, is in no way a conspiratorial act. I am not a conspirator in the context of the development of history. I am no conspirator in the context of the development of society and humanity.

Honourable Members of the Commission: May I make one request to begin with? I have been subjected to every possible indignity and harassment at the hands of the ruling class and have been for several years the target of numerous defamations, slurs and slanders, mud-slinging and character assassination—and all this without any protection from the law. The only request that I make of you, is to respect my right to express my innocence freely and without any let or hindrance. The ruling clique of capitalists will gag me for a long period, if not for all time. In these circumstances I do not wish to blame myself for not saying all that I have to say before you now. I beseech that I be not gagged.

This suspect, who is making use of his right to state the facts that will prove his innocence, does not intend under any circumstances to refrain from saying what he has to say. This capitalist institution has been used against me in a somewhat heavy way. I am not surprised. I know that the ruling class sets up its institutions to serve the needs of capitalism. Pleading my case before this Commission could be considered a futile exercise if it simply provided a legal cover for the unscrupulous and arbitrary decisions, and the disgraceful course of action, on which you have embarked. But I intend to explain the historical process which led to the most furious, the most barbarous and the most widespread human slaughter that has taken place in the recent history of our country.

Honourable Members of the Commission: 'The noblest, the most valuable, the greatest and supreme treasure that a man has is his life. He lives only once. He should spend that life in such a way that at his dying moment he will have no cause for regret, repentance, shock or sorrow; in such a way that he could really be happy in the thought of having sacrificed his life advancing the development, the liberation and the victory of mankind—the people of the whole world.' This is a Soviet writer's interpretation of life. I agree with this aspiration and do not wish to have any reason for sorrow should the capitalist ruling clique cut short my life in the prime of my youth.

The Charges against us

I have no regrets whatsoever about my life and the fate in store for me. I hope to tell you everything concerning the history of the April incidents, without any qualms about possible reprisals against my person. The charges made against us are grave. We have been charged with the breach of Sections 114 and 115 of the Penal Code. According to the writ issued to you by the then Governor-General, and also

according to the indictment served on us, the period at issue is that between the beginning of 1968 and the end of 1971. It is said that during this period we 'conspired against the Queen's government'. It is said that during this period we conspired criminally to overthrow the Government of Ceylon. It is said that we have 'waged war against the Queen' or have abetted such acts. Similarly, the opening submissions of the State Prosecutor have attempted to show that the birth of the *Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna* was in itself tantamount to a conspiracy. What we actually said and did during this period is the crux of the matter; accordingly my own views and conceptions are as much the subject of inquiry as anything else.

Mr Chairman: There was a time when Ceylon was a direct colony of the British Empire on which, it used to be said, the sun will never set. When the second imperialist war was raging, these colonies were trampled under the yoke of Admiral Geoffrey Layton's war chariot; the colonial government engaged in a ruthless suppression of the Leftist movement of this country after incarcerating the leaders and proscribing their parties (the Lanka Sama Samaja Party and the United Socialist Party); the masses were full of sorrow and racked by oppression; colonial troops were ransacking the Island and autocracy was in complete command, with capitalists raking in more and more profits and revolutionaries languishing in jail. It was in such a sad and dark time, similar to the present, that I was born in Tangalle, in July 1943. I grew up in Kottogoda, a small village in the Matara district. I was admitted to the Godanda Government Primary Boys' School in the middle of 1947 where I received Primary education until 1953.

When a whole country's progress is obstructed, when the forward-march of an entire nation has been halted, when a whole people find themselves poised on the brink of a dark abyss, it is not difficult to understand why just and honest men will show no signs of fear as they enter prisons and suffer untold hardships, face constant harassment and even sacrifice their lives for the purpose of saving their country and their people from that national calamity. After the second imperialist war the administration of this country was handed over to the local capitalist class, as part of a neo-colonialist strategem, and the country continued along the same bankrupt path of capitalist development. In such an atmosphere my generation entered their youth. We inherited by this time a vast reservoir of experience from our parent society. It was this social experience that pushed us towards the path of revolution.

My Path to Marxism

In 1954 I was admitted to the Godanda Government Senior English School. That same year this school was transformed into a Sinhala language school. It was there that I obtained my secondary education. I found myself drawn towards the Communist Party as a result of the massive agitational campaign against imperialism and capitalism conducted throughout the South by my political mentor Comrade Dr S. A. Wickremasinghe, the present General Secretary of the Ceylon Communist Party, and also as a result of the experiences I had gained from society. It was during these days that I first read the Sinhala edition of

that historic document of Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, and also Liu Shao Chi's *How To Be A Good Communist*, though I must admit that at that time I failed to understand them correctly. I learnt the ABC of politics at the propaganda rallies and Youth League seminars of the Communist Party. I am grateful to Comrade Dr Wickremasinghe for this.

As a member of the Communist Youth League I took part in political activity for the first time in my life with a sense of feeling and understanding. In July 1959 when I was studying science for the GCE (O Levels) I had to leave my school because of the shortage of science teachers and enter Dharmasoka College, Ambalangoda. In December of that year I passed the GCE (O Level) exam in Science.

At the General Elections of 1960, the Ceylon CP entered the fray with 53 candidates—the highest number it had ever put forward at an election in its entire history. As it was a small party I had to focus all my endeavours on its election campaign. The experience I gained in this election campaign in remote areas like Aparakka, Dandeniya, Urugamuwa and Radampola was considerable. One day, after the elections, I read a news item in the magazine *Soviet Land* to the effect that the Soviet Premier, Khrushchev, who was on a tour of Indonesia in the middle of 1960, would shortly be opening an International University in Moscow for the benefit of youth from the colonial countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. By this time I was finding it difficult to continue higher studies due to economic factors. During the 1947 General Election, my father, who was organizing the election activities of the Communist candidate for Hakmana, Comrade Premalal Kumarasiri, found his jeep forcibly stopped by reactionaries. He was abducted and beaten up, an experience that left him a permanent invalid. My family found it materially impossible to finance higher education for me. At my own wish I applied for entrance to the proposed new People's Friendship University of Moscow.

On winning a Medical Degree Scholarship, I left for Moscow on 25 September 1960. After the preliminary examination held there I was admitted to the Faculty of Philology on 1 October 1960, to learn the Russian language. At seventeen, I was then the youngest student at the university and I cannot forget the great assistance my Soviet teachers extended to me. I studied Russian till June 1961. In addition, I attended the lectures on World History and Historical Materialism held there in the English language. I refer here with gratitude to the well-known Soviet historian Professor Metropolski. Had I not been his pupil, it is possible that I would not be here before you today. It was this great man's ideas that helped me to understand how I could be of greater service to mankind in this present era, by giving up my love for medical science and becoming a revolutionary rather than a doctor.

In June 1961 I passed with distinction the final examination in the Russian language and was accordingly selected a member of the University delegation that was to visit Soviet Georgia in August. In the meantime I spent the first month of the summer holidays (July 1961) in Soviet Moldavia. During that month I worked as an agricultural

worker in a village in the Torspol District of the Soviet Moldavian Republic and also on a nearby State farm. This was the first employment I ever had. During this month we had the opportunity, every evening after work, to see the other farms, factories and electric power stations in the area. It would be completely true to say that it was here that I was convinced of the evil of the private property system and the value of the collectivized property system. It was here that I received the magnificent opportunity to live and work and exchange views with the Soviet working class and to see and understand the victories of socialism.

The Impact of Sino-Soviet Dispute

On 1 September 1961 I commenced my medical studies. In the same educational year I studied, as additional subjects, Political Science and Russian Literature at this University. In the same month I was elected Deputy General Secretary of the Union of Ceylonese Students in Russia and accordingly I had to engage myself in student welfare work too.

At the time of the 22nd Congress of the CPSU I witnessed the differences of opinion, which were boiling and brewing within the international Communist movement, burst its seams and spill out into the open. By this time we were feeling dissatisfied with the policy and programme of the Ceylon Communist Party of which we had become staunch followers due to our meagre knowledge of Marxism. We felt that rightist and social-democratic tendencies had become the predominant force inside the Ceylon CP. We thought that the Ceylon CP was degenerating into a social-democratic party and that to save the Communist Party from this disaster we should launch an ideological rectification campaign within it. Together with the present National Organiser of the Communist Party, Comrade K. P. Silva, who was then on a visit to the Soviet Union, and the late Comrade Dharmakerthi, I took the initiative of setting up a 'Marxist Education Circle' for the benefit of Ceylonese students.

During the summer holidays of 1962, I came back to Ceylon, but returned to the Soviet Union with my confidence in the Communist Party shattered still further. In September 1962, during my second year in the Medical College, my interest in politics came to the fore pushing my interest in medical science to a secondary place. I had the opportunity of discussing the Chinese Communist Party's position in the Sino-Soviet ideological conflict with comrades like Murad Aidit, a close friend of mine and brother of the then leader of the Indonesian CP, the late Comrade D. N. Aidit, and comrade Che Ali who was an Indonesian students' union leader. As a result of these discussions I felt that I was in a position to agree with most of the views put forward by the Chinese CP and accordingly I found myself on the Chinese side in the Sino-Soviet dispute. This in no way means that I became anti-Soviet. This conflict appeared to us at the outset as a fraternal ideological struggle between the Chinese and Soviet parties with the common object of arriving at a correct programme. I did not then realise that it was to develop into a conflict between enemies. I thought it would

remain a fraternal debate. I did not like the idea of having two conflicting and contradictory voices in the international communist movement. However I admitted the fairness of having two voices, one right and one wrong, rather than having only one voice and that one wrong. But what was most unfortunate here was that, though there were two voices, both these voices happened to be wrong.

At this moment I would like to raise a question which is of vital importance in relation to this trial, namely, the view of Marxists in regard to peace and violence. I do so because the question of violence is related to most of my evidence. The two most important issues of contention between the Soviet and Chinese Parties were the following problems: the question of transition from capitalism to socialism and the question of relations between the capitalist and socialist systems in the present world. Members of the Commission, our view concerning the transformation from capitalism to socialism has become a subject of your inquiry. Therefore I will explain it in some detail.

The Questions of Violence

Whether a peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism is possible has been the subject of keen and heated controversy within the world communist movement and the international working class for a fairly long time. It was suitably answered as far back as 1847 by the young Engels. In his treatise, *Principles of Communism* he poses this question as follows: 'Can private property be peacefully abolished?' and gives the following reply: 'It would be desirable if this could happen, and the communists would certainly be the last to oppose it. Communists know only too well that all conspiracies are not only useless but even harmful. They know all too well that revolutions are not made intentionally and arbitrarily, but that everywhere and always they have been the necessary consequence of conditions which were wholly independent of the will and direction of individual parties and entire classes. But they also see that the development of the proletariat in nearly all civilized countries has been violently suppressed, and that in this way the opponents of communism have been working toward a revolution with all their strength. If the oppressed proletariat is finally driven to revolution, then we communists will defend the interests of the proletarians with deeds as we now defend them with words.'

Engels' answer is quite clear. We who are Marxists, we who are revolutionaries are most desirous of seeing state power peacefully transferred from the hands of the exploiter capitalist ruling class to the hands of the proletariat. We would be very glad to receive peacefully from the few owners of property the means of production and hand them over to the custody of the entire people. If a peaceful abolition of the system which is based on the exploitation of man by man could be easily and readily brought about we would have no objection. If class distinctions in society can be abolished without any conflict and in a friendly manner we would have no reason to object. In fact we communists would most certainly prefer peaceful methods for the realization of our objects, for the fulfilment of our aspirations—for the establishment of communism on behalf of all mankind so that antago-

nistic class distinctions no longer exist, where the disgraceful process of man exploiting man no longer exists, where all the means of material production are vested in society as a whole and where the noble policy of 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs' is actually practised. However it must be emphatically stated that it is not proletarian revolutionaries who have to decide whether the proletarian socialist revolution will take place peacefully or will necessitate the use of violence.

Marx has shown clearly that the exploiting, property-owning class has never voluntarily abandoned its ruling power nor its privileges at any time in history. Not a single property-owning class can be picked out from the entire globe which has bowed its head peacefully when confronted with the verdict of history embodied in the needs and will of the majority and given up its privileges voluntarily. The class which holds state power in this society makes use of this state power to protect and consolidate its property system. In order to protect their property there will be no cruel or disgusting crimes against the oppressed masses which these capitalist ruling classes will not commit.

The capitalist classes make use of their unlimited power in this society to subordinate members of the oppressed classes to bourgeois ideology. If the threat of an independent ideological development is observed within the ranks of the proletariat, the ruling classes realize the danger and employ all their customary methods to destroy it. They will infiltrate their agents to mislead and entice it towards them and to win over degenerate and traitorous individuals within it. They will seek by every devious means ideologically to disarm this independent movement inside the proletariat. They will resort to disgraceful slanders in order to divide and humiliate it, its policies and its disciplined members. When all these efforts fail, they seek its destruction through capitalist laws, courts, prisons, repressive rules and regulations and, in the end, even resort to violent attacks and massacres. This is the truth, tested out in the annals of the class struggle.

The state machine is an institution brought into being as a result of the emergence of class divisions based on the system of private property and the resulting class conflict. It arose and developed as a powerful weapon necessary for the ruling class in power to repress and govern the proletariat it exploits. Without the assistance of this institution—the State machine—which is the creature of the class struggle, the ruling class cannot secure or improve its class needs and interests. It has never been impartial. In any society where a class system exists the state machine safeguards the interests of one class. It serves one class. The state machine in a feudal society is the class weapon of the aristocracy. In a capitalist society it is the weapon of the capitalist class. In a socialist society, of course, the dictatorship of the proletariat is at the service of the proletariat. The entire history of present-day society bears witness to the fact that whenever the proletariat, together with other oppressed groups in society, tries to secure its rights or change the existing social system by peaceful means, the exploiter classes, which represent a tiny minority in society, always act to protect their property system by completely negating and annulling the peaceful struggle of the proletariat by the use of violence.

We Marxists are proletarian revolutionaries. We do not conceal this fact from anyone. We hope for a complete revolutionary change of the existing social system and act with that goal in view. Ours is not the role of sitting on the fence with folded arms waiting for the day when this capitalist system is taken for burial on the shoulders of others; this capitalist system has bequeathed suffering and oppression to the working class of this country which is over three million strong. It has made poverty and want the sole inheritance of the middle and lower peasants who comprise more than half the population of this country, it has brought unemployment to the youth and malnutrition to the infant, it has become the fount and source of each and every contemporary social problem that the bulk of the nation suffers. The socialist revolution in a country can be hastened or delayed depending on the degree to which objective conditions are ripe and subjective conditions, i.e. consciousness, organization and leadership have developed.

Counter-revolutionaries resort to violence. Therefore to ensure the safe delivery of the new social system, it becomes necessary for proletarian revolutionaries to resort to revolutionary violence against the violence employed by the capitalist class.

The fundamental issue is the question of state power. The main task in any social revolution is the destruction of the capitalist state and the creation of a proletarian state, in other words, the dictatorship of the proletariat. For us Marxist-Leninists the consolidation of the proletarian dictatorship is the essential precondition for the transition to a socialist system. No socialism can be built without the proletariat first capturing and later consolidating state power. To retain state power the capitalist class will use violence. We Marxists are not preachers of violence. We only predict the certainty of violent acts in the course of the revolution. We prophesy that the decaying ruling classes, to prevent the forward march of society through a socialist revolution, will resort to counter-revolutionary violence and the proletariat will answer with its own revolutionary acts of violence.

CHIEF JUSTICE FERNANDO: If a burglar comes to you for advice, you may tell him: 'Well it may be necessary for you to carry a revolver because the owner of the house might also have a revolver.' Under our law you cannot carry a revolver in those circumstances.

13TH SUSPECT: You have a good knowledge of your law. The knowledge that I have is of the views I hold and of the things I have said and done. What we have said and done has been presented here in a completely distorted form. But when the entire truth is made known, you will be able to take any course of action the law allows.

Departure from the Soviet Union

After I was cured of an illness in February 1964, the doctor advised me to take leave for one term. I decided to spend this leave in Ceylon and arrived back on 24 March 1964. During the latter half of 1963 the Ceylon Party split into Russian and Chinese wings. My political mentor Dr S. A. Wickremasinghe remained in the leadership of the Russian wing, but I took the side of the Chinese wing in accordance

with the policies and views I held. I even sent my congratulations from Moscow to the Congress of the Chinese wing.

JUSTICE ALLES : Would it be correct to say that you were refused a visa to return to Russia?

13TH SUSPECT: After my return to Ceylon I worked as a sympathizer of the Chinese wing. During this period I was invited by a number of student unions and other public associations from several districts to speak to them on Socialism and about the Soviet Union. I was questioned by the audiences on the factors which led to the Sino-Soviet polemics and answered these questions from the Chinese point of view. For this reason the local leaders of the pro-Moscow Party became angry with me. In August 1964, when I applied for a visa to return to the Soviet Union, the Soviet Embassy refused my application without giving any reasons. At that time I was taking a greater interest in political work in Ceylon. That is the answer to the question posed by Justice Alles.

JUSTICE FERNANDO: Why did it surprise you? When they refused you a return visa they treated you correctly. You came back from Moscow and you attacked Soviet Communism.

13TH SUSPECT: No. I am not anti-Soviet. Even today I admit that the Soviet Union is a workers' state. I will always defend it against the onslaughts of the capitalist class. But there are theoretical problems that divide the Soviet Union from us. They are family problems. If you attack the Soviet Union I shall defend it. But I reserve the right to criticize openly and state the differences between the Soviet Union and us.

Origins of the JVP

In the middle of 1967, according to a prior agreement, a comrade whose name I cannot disclose and comrade Sanath came to my mother's house in Hunnadeniya. We had a discussion there related to our future course of action. As a result of this at the end of 1967 a discussion was held by several of our sympathizers and ourselves. The discussion was of historic importance since it paved the way for the emergence of a new political movement—the *Janatha Vimukti Peramuna*. There was a special reason for conducting these discussions over this period. A new political trend had grown on an international level and gaining ground even in this country.

After the killing of comrade Che Guevara in Bolivia, and through the Tricontinental Congress and OLAS, this trend received worldwide publicity and had an important repercussion. The Cuban Embassy in Ceylon had various speeches and texts by comrades Castro and Guevara printed in Sinhala and widely distributed throughout this country. Among these were Castro's *History Will Absolve Me* and *The Second Declaration of Havana, The Path the Latin American Revolution Should Take, Those Who are Not Militant Revolutionaries Are Not Communists* and *From Moncada to Victory*. As a result of this many of our sympathizers felt that Ceylon should take the same path and emulate the heroic example of Che. The essence of this view was that under present conditions the revolution can take place without a revolutionary party. This view rejected the Leninist conception of the necessity of a fully

fledged revolutionary organization for the victory of the proletariat and the socialist revolution. According to this view the betrayal of the old Left Movement in the face of capitalist repression had created a situation where a revolutionary party could not be formed; revolutionaries should commence the armed struggle so that the oppressed masses would be awakened by the sound of gun fire, a process which would rally them behind the revolution. The same comrades maintained that political activities, political classes, discussions, agitational campaigns and ideological struggles to organize the proletariat as a class and fight for the revolution, were either impossible or unnecessary. Those who wanted to follow the Cuban road had not even properly understood it themselves. They held the mistaken view that the revolution was launched, fought and won by 111 men with guns. They did not realize that broad sections of the masses—the *Llano* organization and the July 26th Movement—had been mobilized against the cruel Batista dictatorship. This false concept was completely rejected at the Kallatawa discussion. We defeated the petty-bourgeois adventurism which had developed behind the cover of the Cuban model and discussed what to do next. The innumerable negative examples we gained within the Old Left Movement and the break-away pro-Chinese grouping, which claimed to be revolutionary, and our considerable experience of the international communist movement became useful to us as the basis of our discussions.

Tasks of the Revolution in Ceylon

We held, first, that the views we had in regard to the development of the Ceylonese revolution, when we were in the Chinese wing, were incorrect. When we were in the Chinese wing we held that the present stage of the revolution, was that of struggle for a people's democracy. At the Kalattawa discussion we rejected that view. What was relevant for Ceylon was a socialist and not a people's democratic revolution. I must explain why we rejected the concept of the people's democratic revolution.

This concept was copied by the Ceylonese Party from the leadership of the former Third (Communist) International and from China. On an analysis of the present nature and stage of social development in Ceylon and the international nature of capitalism, we came to the view that the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal tasks of the revolution in colonial and semi-colonial societies can be carried out only by attending to the socialist tasks since in the epoch of imperialism (the extension of capital internationally), no anti-imperialist task can ever be effectively completed without socialism. The uncompleted and neglected tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution, such as national independence, agrarian revolution and democracy can only be accomplished through a socialist revolution. They can be carried out only by the proletariat.

To argue that a new democratic stage exists between the capitalist system and the socialist system is to ignore the principles of social development and mutual class relationships. World capitalism, taken in its entirety, has developed sufficiently to provide the objective conditions suitable for a socialist revolution on a global scale and therefore

socialist tasks are on the order of the day even in the undeveloped countries of the world.

At the same discussion we argued that a proletarian revolutionary party must be established. However there cannot be a Marxist party without Marxists. What has the Old Left Movement done during the course of thirty years and more to develop Marxists? It was quite apparent that the Old Left leaders had succumbed to capitalist ideology and paid scant attention to the question of providing the working class with a basic Marxist understanding. These Old Left leaders did not have the cadres who could have propagated Marxist ideas in Sinhala. Although they conducted a political class or two on certain subjects in a haphazard and irregular fashion, they did not provide the working class vanguard with systematic political education. They took no serious steps to raise and maintain political consciousness within their own ranks. As a result, when they turned to the right, there was no strong group of Marxists to fight back effectively, and most of their members followed suit.

Political Education

I say all this to try and show you the context in which our five education classes came into being. Considering the negative experiences we had gained through the Old Left, we realized that to provide the people with a knowledge of Marxism, a correct, simple, established method should be adopted so that they would be able to grasp the subject readily. I am not going to conduct these five lessons here. I will only give you a brief introduction.

The first class was on the subject: 'Economic Crisis'. As it is the mode of production or the economy of a social system on which other structures rest, we realized the importance of making a fundamental analysis of the economy. We analyzed the economic situation, its crisis, its origin, its causes, its development, its future and its inevitable consequences. We explained that the economic crisis in colonial and semi-colonial societies is in the process of being transformed into a political crisis; that before long it would result in a great national calamity and how the only way of escaping this calamity was to take the forward path of class struggle and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat and hasten both socialist industrialization and the collectivization of agriculture.

The second class was entitled: 'Independence—a neo-colonial stratum'. This provided a basic Marxist interpretation of the socio-economic-political meaning of the changing of flags—the lowering of the Union Jack and the raising of the Lion—that took place on 4 February 1948. In this class we explained that what was received was neither full independence nor economic independence. We showed how the strategy of British imperialism necessitated a neo-colonial device to protect its colonial investments and property from the rising tempest of anti-imperialist liberation struggles resulting from the change in the international relationship of forces at the conclusion of the Second Imperialist War. We maintained that political independence without economic independence was a sham.

The third class concerned the way in which Indian expansionism affected Ceylon. The idea of 'Indian expansionism' was first put forward by the Chinese Communist Party. The editorial board of this Party's daily newspaper *Renmin Rebao* published two articles entitled 'The Chinese-Indian Border Struggle and the Nehru Doctrine'. These gave a lengthy *exposé* of the class needs of the Indian ruling class, its basic philosophy and argued that the Indian capitalists aimed at spreading their economic and political dependence over their smaller neighbours. This process was named Indian expansionism. In our class we discussed how this affected our country. We explained the class needs of the powerful Borah capitalists in this country, the way in which these compare with Indian expansionism; the racist politics they engage in for the purpose of keeping the estate workers of Indian origin separate from the rest of the working class and under their own heel. We stated that the capitalist class had misled the estate workers of Indian origin and trapped them and we determined to rescue these workers from the ideological grip of the capitalists. However we had no cadres to do this. The many efforts we made to build cadres among comrades of the national minorities were fruitless.

The fourth class was on 'The Left Movement in Ceylon'. The purpose of this class was to learn the lessons from the unhealthy experiences of the Old Left and understand the reasons for its failure. Here we criticized the policies and programme of the Old Left from the 1930s onwards. This was done primarily so that we could learn the lessons of previous defeats.

The fifth class was the most important class. As there have been incorrect references to it, I expect to take some time to speak about it. It involved burning questions of the Ceylonese Revolution. The fifth class was originally referred to as 'The Path To Socialism in Ceylon'. Later on, after the text *The Path the Latin American Revolution Should Take* became well known, certain persons referred to this class as 'The Path the Ceylonese Revolution should Take'.

After the publication of Che's *Guerrilla Warfare* certain of our sympathizers, as well as members of other groups, thought of seeking solutions to the prevailing economic crisis by similar methods. Two other books appeared in Sinhala at this time: Lin Piao's *Long Live the Victory of People's War* and Mao Tse-Tung's *Selected Military Writings*. Some sought to apply the remedies prescribed in these volumes. The Chinese wing and their supporters thought that the Ceylonese revolution should be a repeat of the Chinese revolution with protracted war moving from the countryside to the towns. There were others, especially those groups that broke away from the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, who advocated the example of the Russian Revolution. It was these factors which led us to prepare the fifth class.

Our purpose was to defeat mechanical materialist concepts and show how incorrect and unscientific they were, and also provide our supporters with correct ideological tools. Through this class we intended to make a fundamental analysis of the experience gained by the international working-class movement in the class struggle starting from the Paris

Commune of 1871 up till the present time. We explained the difference between social reform and social revolution and showed how reforms serve the capitalist class and revolutions the proletariat. We showed how the path a revolution had taken in one country in a certain period and under certain conditions had been different in another country in a different period and under different conditions and how, therefore, socialist revolutions do not follow a single uniform path, but vary in their paths depending on the time, the place and the conditions peculiar to each occasion. In this way we demonstrated that the Chinese Revolution was different from the model of the Russian Revolution and the Cuban Revolution was different from them both and that therefore it was possible to see the emergence of a model different from previously cited experiences.

This class, like the other four, was political, theoretical and philosophical. If you want me to conduct these classes in full, I am ready to do it. It has been stated that there was something secret about these classes. Therefore if you want me to conduct the fifth class on its own in full I am ready to comply. (*Justice Fernando declines the offer. His words are not clearly recorded in the Court record*).

At the Kakattawa discussion we agreed that after these classes were held, those who showed political interest or keenness and were ready to go ahead should be further educated and that this should be done in educational camps where theoretical classes on Marxist Economics and Marxist Philosophy would be conducted. I want to make it clear that we did not expect anyone to become a Marxist by following these five basic classes. They were merely a bridge to draw people away from the influence of bourgeois ideology and closer to Marxism.

From 1968 onwards I began holding classes all over the country. They took place at the rate of two or three a day or night depending on the times at which people could attend. During this period I began to visit the Land Development Department (LDD) worksites in various parts of the country and hold classes for the workers there. We managed to start political work in the Land Development Department Workers' Union. For this reason, the first classes I held were mostly for worker comrades in that Department. We also began classes for other worker comrades, peasants and sections of youth.

During the year 1968 I held classes in 80 different work sites of the LDD . At the same time I conducted political classes for workers and clerks in the Colombo office of the LDD and in many private places. With the increasing demand for classes there was a corresponding need for more people to conduct them. Towards the end of 1968 other comrades began to conduct political classes. One question needs to be explained at this stage.

A large number of persons brought before this Commission have been young. Why did these youths seek connections with the JVP? I will attempt to explain this. The new situation created by the general crisis of capitalism; the lessons learnt via the Sino-Soviet ideological battle; the new echo of the Cuban revolution which resounded throughout the

world after the death of comrade Guevara, the clamour of OLAS; the struggle of the Indochinese people, in particular, of the Vietnamese, as well as other circumstances generated a new wave which had repercussions not only in Asia, Africa and Latin America, but even in Europe and North America—the bastions of modern capitalism. This radicalism of youth was by no means limited to Ceylon.

The entire history of capitalism tells us that when the working class is passive and lethargic, other sections of society suffering under capitalism will find it necessary to protest against the existing social system. It is no secret that by 1968 the working-class movement had been misled internationally by a reformist leadership and left demoralized and dispirited before the capitalist system. It is no longer a matter of controversy that the working class of France and Italy were thrust away from the path of class struggle into the backwaters of class collaboration. They were ideologically disarmed by the decadent, increasingly reformist leaderships of the Communist Parties in the face of a capitalist onslaught. What happened in colonial and neo-colonial countries like ours was no different.

The leaders of the Old Left in Ceylon were reformists who had their heads filled with Fabian ideology. These leaders, though they called themselves Marxists, were in reality guided by the writings of Laski and Keynes, and invariably betrayed the aspirations of the workers. They tied the trade-union movement to their brand of reformist, parliamentarist politics. The final betrayal was the abandonment of the 21 demands which destroyed the United Workers Trade Union and the United Left Front by open collaboration with the capitalists. This historic class betrayal left the working class discouraged and demoralized. Under the UNP government a generalized bitterness developed and both students and young workers began to demonstrate their hostility. On several occasions during this period (1968–9) the Peradeniya University Students clashed with the armed forces. Students from Colombo University crashed into the Parliament building and declared that it was nothing more than a den of thieves. In 1968 a number of youths who had attended our classes entered the universities and by the end of that year we succeeded in winning over a large section of sympathizers of the Russian and Chinese wings inside the universities. At this point we started our classes inside universities and schools.

The Right to Rebel

As a Marxist I have held, and still hold, the view that a people has the right to rebel against an arbitrary government. This is not a view held only by Marxists. Throughout history, people believing in various ideologies and religions, have accepted the right of a community to rebel against a cruel administration. We are charged, before you, of rebelling against the Queen's government, of attempting to rebel, of abetting a rebellion and conspiring to rebel.

Honorable Chairman, some time ago I learnt that as far back as 1649 the people of Britain led by Oliver Cromwell rebelled against their monarch, Charles I, an ancestor of the present Queen of England. They

wanted him off the throne and they succeeded. On that occasion the British people held the view that to rebel against an oppressive regime was fair and just. No doubt you are aware of how in 1778 the American rebellion under the leadership of George Washington succeeded against the British empire. You are also aware of the 1789 events in France known as the French Revolution. What this indicates is that even before the advent of Marxism, people in various countries held the view that they had the right to rebel. In your capacity as Judges you may have had occasion to read *Vindicia Contra Tyrannos* written under the pseudonym of Stephanos Junius Brutus in which it is stated not only that there should be insurrections against autocratic governments, but even that they should be led by Judges! The fact that Liberal thinkers have supported the right to rebel is illustrated vividly in the French *Declaration of the Rights of Man*. A passage in it reads: 'When a government violates the rights of the people, insurrection is for them the most sacred of rights, the most imperative of duties'. A glimpse into our own history will show how Mahawansa, Chulawansa and other works record innumerable popular insurrections against cruel rulers. We are not the first to be charged with rebellion against the Queen's government. Similar charges were brought against Keppetipola Adikarama and others in 1848. This demonstrates that the right to rebel was accepted by the people of our own country. In the same way I, too, accepted the view that people have the right to rebel against an oppressive regime. I still hold this view.

The next question before you is whether we did rebel during the month of April 1971. I will give you my answer in detail.

In this social system the privileged classes are the imperialists and their local lackeys. In this system there are a number of problems that have been growing for a long time. You know that a free education system began in this country when we were children. A large number of us from both rural and urban areas had an opportunity of receiving education. The degree of educational opportunity is almost on a par with developed countries. This is obvious when you compare Ceylon with India, Pakistan and Nepal. This has given a considerable impetus to the development of a proletarian consciousness and a proletarian political education. According to government statistics the number of children attending school was 3,500,000 and of these 270,000 leave school in search of employment every year. 50,000 have had an education up to Senior level. To say that the remaining 220,000 had received a lesser education means that under this social system they have no prospects of employment above that of ordinary wage-earners and labourers. Every year about 220,000 semi-educated persons enter society as serfs and labourers. This process has continued since the end of the 1950s. Increasingly many university graduates also found it difficult to obtain jobs and there were instances where they, too, were compelled to become general labourers.

According to government statistics issued in 1969-70 there are 3,333,000 wage-earners in this country. 56 per cent of these were rural workers and 26 per cent were estate workers working on the tea, rubber and coconut plantations. The urban workers numbered 18 percent. Over

the last seven years the economic, social and political problems confronting these three groups of workers have been increasingly acute.

The condition of the peasantry within this social system requires special attention. In the rural areas the lower peasants suffer from the problem of landlessness. An official report of the Kandyan Peasantry Commission appointed by the Bandaranaike government stated that 180 Kandyan families live in each 2 acre zone. Ninety families would thus live on one acre. This gives you an idea of the enormity of the problem of landlessness in certain areas. Within this social system, utter misery and destitution have become the common lot of the villager. And we find that only 4,000 of the more than 2,000,000 families in this country have a monthly income of Rs 1000 and over (£1 = Rs 30). Government figures confirm this fact. In brief 2 million families have a low income and lead a miserable life. It is under these social conditions that the political unrest arose which led to the April incidents.

Origins of the April Incidents

It is necessary to bring to your attention certain specific incidents which occurred in 1971. The *Janatha Vimukti Peramuna*, was implanted in the rural proletariat, the lumpen proletariat and certain petty-bourgeois layers. In the urban working class and the estates the influence of the Old Left was still paramount. In the rural areas, before our intervention, the traditions of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) were strongest. The SLFP won most of its seats in the rural areas. The worst massacres during the April incidents took place in the areas held by the SLFP. The SLFP politicians had shamelessly sown the germs of communal discord against the Tamil minority. In the 1956 elections the CP and the LSSP stood for parity on the language issue. But what did they do a short time later? They were not only against equal status for Tamil and Sinhala, but opposed even the granting of any lesser rights. It was in these conditions that we became disillusioned with them. That is why we struggled. If anyone willingly risks his or her life, or is prepared to be shackled as a prisoner, this can only be because there is no alternative. Chairman, you are aware that after this Government came to power we started our political activities in the open and they were immensely successful. Look back and see the picture of our public meetings held in various parts of the country such as Kandy, Kegalle, Kurunegala and Southern Province and Colombo—you will see the mass of humanity, thousands and thousands of people that flocked round us, to see us and listen to us. And these were not people we had forced or cajoled with the use of guns to attend our rallies, nor had we supplied them with free lorries and buses, but people who had come of their own accord because of their interest in our politics. With every passing day we were moving forward. This process continued while another parallel process was taking place: dissatisfaction with the UNP resulted, with our blessing, in the election of the United Front government, with over a two-thirds majority. The LSSP and CP had told the people that if they were brought into power with a two-thirds majority, they would amend the constitution, change the system of internal administration and open the way to Socialism. The ordinary people

took them at their word. They expected the new Government to perform miracles and that is why they put the cross against the star and the key and not against the elephant.

I have already mentioned that in the early days we were not strong in the urban working class. But by 1971 we had begun to spread out from the villages to the towns and, through our political agitational campaigns, our impact was beginning to be felt in the cities, specifically in certain sections of the working class. Young workers in factories and worksites were beginning to listen. It was then that the Old Left began to understand the threat we posed to them. They attempted to devise a course of action to deal with us. The first method was branding us as CIA agents, but you are aware that this attack failed. Then they resorted to the second method. This can best be described in the words of Mr Sarath Muttattuwagama, a leader of the CP. In a speech made at a CP mass rally in Ratnapura during the latter half of 1970, he stated that the repression of the Che Guevarists should not be left to the police. It should be the responsibility of the CP! During the same period the LSSP leaders also discussed the threat we posed. A meeting of their Politbureau issued instructions to their locals to unleash physical attacks against us. They asked for police protection to carry out this task. I have already mentioned these facts at our public meetings. When the second method failed, they discussed the matter in the new Cabinet and considered ways and means of suppressing the *Janatha Vimukti Peramuna* so that it could not become an effective political force. They decided, according to a recent statement by the Prime Minister, not to ban us as it would have made heroes out of us. The capitalist class is well aware of the futility of banning a Marxist party. So this Government suspected that even if they banned us we would carry on political activities under another name. They devised an alternative scheme which was and continues to be implemented.

You are aware that the country is facing a severe economic crisis. It is something which everyone admits. But the crisis has not materialised out of thin air. It existed on 5 April 1971. It was there before that date. At that time the government was not in a position to add to the distress of the people, to place the economic and social burden they have now placed on the masses with impunity, because there existed a revolutionary force that would have roused the people and led them to protest against these measures. It was necessary to destroy our movement before stern measures could be taken. And accordingly they prepared their plans. After January 1971 things came to a head. Mr S. A. Dissanayake, a former Inspector-General of Police was appointed Additional Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Defence and External Affairs with effect from 1 March 1971. Long before this, the CID had been using its full powers to investigate the activities of the JVP. A separate unit had been set up, which had gathered sufficient facts by April 1971 through raids and arrests of comrades from various parts of the country. They also planted agents inside the JVP rank and file.

By 1 March 1971 arrangements had been completed for the deployment of military units in various parts of the country to collect intelli-

gence about our activities. Press reports in relation to these manoeuvres appeared between 1 and 5 March. In the same week police powers were vested in officers of the Army. On 5 March the police rehearsed a plan in order to find out how much time it would take them when the alarm was sounded. This rehearsal was to test their alertness in an emergency and it was conducted in Colombo as well as in other parts of the island. On the 6th there was an attack on the US Embassy which supplied them with the excuse needed to repress the revolutionary movement. On 13 March I was arrested and on 16 March a State of Emergency was declared. 4,098 people were arrested *before* 5 April 1971.

In April 1971 the revolutionary pre-conditions for the seizure of power by the proletariat and for an armed revolutionary struggle were absent. That is my view. In the absence of a revolutionary situation—i.e. both objective and subjective conditions—an armed uprising was not possible.

My view is that the conditions were not ripe for organizing an armed revolutionary uprising to seize state power. The objective conditions were maturing fast, but they were still unripe. It had not reached a stage where the masses saw no other solution but revolution. It is true, however, that then, as now, society was moving in that direction. The subjective conditions were also lacking: that is, the existence of a revolutionary party that has steeled itself, won the support of the masses and is fit to lead them in an armed struggle for power. The *Janatha Vimukti Peramuna* was developing and moving towards that goal, but had not reached full maturity. We had failed at that time to establish the JVP in the Northern and Eastern provinces and in the Estate sector as a political force. And then there was the question of mass support. It is true that out of the millions who voted for the Coalition Government, tens of thousands had by this time washed their hands of it. It is also true that this section was the politically developed section. They were abandoning the Coalition Government and moving leftwards towards the JVP. But there was a section which, although disgusted and frustrated did not break away from the government during those eight months. In other words the JVP had not yet reached the stage where the masses could see it as a real alternative to the government, accept its leadership and join in the class struggle under its banner. In our Marxist conception, a revolution—an armed uprising—is not something done behind the backs of the masses.

JUSTICE FERNANDO: Have revolutionaries in any part of the world never made mistakes?

13TH SUSPECT: Mistakes have been made. In fact they have learnt lessons from these mistakes. Mistakes can happen in the future as well.

JUSTICE FERNANDO: I said a mistake. I meant a miscalculation.

13TH SUSPECT: There can be no revolution without the participation and active support of the people. That is our stand.

I told you earlier that I reject the position that it was a JVP decision to seize state power on 5 April 1971. I do not admit that. But as I discovered later and something I do not deny is that there have been instances when certain comrades of the JVP, in the face of intolerable repression, resorted to a struggle against such repression.

'More buds will bloom . . .'

In March 1971 a class need arose for the ruling class to suppress the revolutionary movements of this country, especially the JVP. They acted accordingly. The April incidents were the result. I interpret the process as one initiated by the counter-revolution. This does not mean that anyone who acted against capitalist repression on April 5, or had mistaken a decision taken by others to be a JVP decision, or even decided on such a course on their own in the absence of another alternative, was thus a counter-revolutionary. A number of close comrades of mine are no longer living. The entire revolutionary leadership of the Matara district exists no more. Comrade Susil Wickrema, Comrade Jayatissa of Deniyaya, Comrades Piyatassa, Loku Mahatmaya, Suraweera, Jayaweera, the two Bogahawatta brothers were all both personal friends and fellow comrades. No one can speak about their fate. On inquiring from their homes all I have learnt is that they are no longer among the living.

For me, Honourable Chairman, the April episode was an occasion when the capitalist class found its existence as a class increasingly threatened by the proletariat. It is a result of a counter-revolutionary course of action on which the capitalist class of the country embarked in order to save the capitalist system from the proletariat. It has been part of that course of action to ban the JVP today. A large number of persons connected with the JVP, but belonging to the Leftist parties have been murdered. A large number of persons connected with the JVP have been put in prison as have many who had no connection with us. It has become possible to continue the repression of the JVP in particular and the revolutionary movement in general.

In conclusion this is what I have to say: I admit that the capitalist class has been temporarily victorious. But I do not see it as a defeat for the proletariat. This is only a big retreat for the proletariat; yes, I call it a big retreat. A retreat is not a defeat, but a phase from which it is possible to recover and march again to certain victory. No revolutionary movement has raced non-stop to victory in a straight line from start to finish. Forward marches followed by retreats are quite common in revolutionary movements. That is the position with which we are confronted today and it is from this position that I have come to give evidence before you. I have not spoken here by stretching my principles for personal gain. I remain an unrepentant Marxist and what I am defending here are Marxist principles rather than my person. For as a revolutionary Marxist I have nothing else to defend.

Whatever the capitalist class may have expected to gain through the April incidents, their ultimate result has already been expressed by a revolutionary poet in the following stanza:

See these blossoms strewn on earth and withered lie
Their fragrance shall abide, shall never die.
To raise its sweetness high to limits limitless,
More buds will bloom and bloom and multiply.

The poet expresses himself in clear and plain terms. The flowers of

revolution have blossomed, but now they lie withered and dead. But their perfume has not ceased. To enhance that perfume and with that aim in view other buds will continue to bloom. In fact, gentlemen, the capitalist cause has no real reason to celebrate its success. For in the class struggle victory is a see-saw until the proletariat finally emerges victorious. That is our belief. I have concluded my evidence.