

**JANATHA VIMUKTHI PERAMUNA (JVP) :
A STUDY OF ITS TACTICS, STRATEGY AND IDEOLOGY**

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This is to certify that the dissertation titled JANATHA VIMUKTHI PERAMUNA: A STUDY OF ITS TACTICS, STRATEGY AND IDEOLOGY, submitted by Mr. Ajay Darshan Behera in partial fulfilment for the award of the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY is original and has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiner for evaluation.

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PREFACE

The political systems in the Third World are marked by violent uprising, revolutions and instability. There are only a few among the developing countries that have been able to maintain representative institutions. Sri Lanka had a relatively stable political history till 1971, when a youth-led organisation ~~launched~~ launched an insurrection in a bid to capture power. This upsurge marked a totally new phase in the history of the island republic.

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The Janatha Vimikuthi Peramuna which launched the insurrection in 1971, has undergone tremendous changes since then. Three distinct phases can be discerned in the evolution of the organisation. The first phase can be traced to the period since its emergence in the late 60s till 1977. A period which was witness to the emergence and evolution of the organisation till 1971, when immediately after the insurrection it was proscribed till 1977. The second phase starts from 1977 to 1983, when the proscription on the JVP was lifted and its leaders pledged to work within the democratic parliamentary framework of Sri Lanka. The third phase begins from 1983, when it was proscribed again on charges of complicity in the anti-Tamil riots, till the end of 1989.

All these three phases, are marked by distinct strategies to capture power but there hasn't been many changes in the

ideological position of the JVP, though shifts here and there can be discerned.

The purpose of this study is to analyse the insurgency situation in Sri Lanka since 1971. The focus of the study is on the organisation ----- its emergence and growth, composition, ideology and strategy. The period of study will be confined from the initial emergence of the JVP in the late 60s till the end of 1989.

The scheme of chapterisation is as follows: Chapter one goes into a theoretical understanding of insurgency. Chapter Two discusses the "Origin and Evolution" of the JVP. This will be studied on the background of the Sri Lankan situation before 1971 and the role of the Left Movement in Sri Lankan politics. Chapter Three discusses the "Character and Composition" of the organisation. The focus will be on the composition of the social base of the organisation. A few specific characteristics of the JVP will be identified and analysed. Chapter Four discusses the "Theory and Ideology" of the JVP. All the ideological dimensions of the JVP like the Sri Lankan political system, economic crisis, the Tamil issue and India will be discussed. Chapter Five, "Strategy and Tactics" will deal with the 1971 insurrection, the planning and operation of the insurrection. The theory of insurrection developed by Wijeweera will be discussed. The second part of the chapter will deal with the second phase in their strategy. And the third part with their third phase of strategy and how it differs from their earlier strategies.

CHAPTER - 1

INSURGENCY - A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

GUERRILLA WARFARE, INSURGENCY AND TERRORISM

In world politics revolutionary armed struggle has occupied centre stage for nearly half a century. Popular armed struggle, either on an extensive or a limited scale, to achieve national liberation or democratic liberties, has spread all over the world. However, the forms these armed struggles can take, have varied from place to place and "are affected by the geographical conditions, by social and political processes and also change as the result of technological innovation".¹

The two most popular forms of armed struggle are guerrilla warfare and armed insurrection. However, there is a problem of nomenclature as there is no clear dividing line between these two forms of armed struggle. Further, to complicate understanding, the word terrorism is also used as a synonym for insurgency and guerrilla warfare.² Before going into a theoretical understanding of insurgency, it would be useful to differentiate

1. Quoted from Walter Laqueur, *Guerrilla: A Historical and Critical Study*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), pp. vi-vii.

2. Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism and the Liberal State* (London: Macmillan Press, 1979), p.50.

and understand the differences between these terms, even though the difference might be very minor and subtle.

Much confusion surrounds the definition of Guerrilla warfare, which is described "as being an irregular war carried on by small bodies of men acting independently".³ The word 'Guerrilla' was originally used to describe military operations carried out by irregulars against the rear of an enemy army or local inhabitants against an occupying force. Most recently, it has been applied to all revolutionary wars and wars of national liberation, insurrection, peasant wars and terrorist acts.⁴ Since 1945, guerrilla warfare, like insurgency which has implied a politico-military campaign, is used with the object of overthrowing the government of a state.⁵ Thus there is not much difference between guerrilla warfare and insurgency. Insurgency is defined as "a protracted struggle conducted methodically, step by step, in order to attain specific intermediate objectives leading finally to the overthrow of the existing order."⁶ Generally, the insurgents have the support or acquiescence of a

3. Quoted from John Pimlott ed., *Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: The Military Press, 1985), p.8.

4. Laqueur, n.1, p.vi.

5. Pimlott, n.3, p.8.

6. Quoted from David Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, (London: Pall Mall Press, 1964), p.4.

substantial part of the populace. The methods that they adopt to achieve their aim of overthrowing the government may include guerrilla warfare, civil disobedience, sabotage or terrorist tactics.⁷

Though the dividing line between insurgency and guerrilla warfare is not clear but a neat differentiation can be made between terrorism on one hand and on the other hand insurgency and guerrilla warfare. Terrorism is violence, or threats of violence, individual acts of violence, or a campaign of violence designed primarily to instil fear, to terrorise.⁸ It represents a series of actions designed to instil fear throughout a target population in an effort to produce a pervasive atmosphere of insecurity, a widespread condition of anxiety. The goal of terrorism is not to destroy the opposing side but instead to break its will and force it to capitulate.⁹ Thus, terrorism is only a means to an end. According to Paul Wilkinson terroristic violence has the following characteristics (a) it is inherently discriminate in its effects, (b) it is arbitrary and unpredictable both in the minds of its victims and audience and

7. Julian Paget, *Counter - Insurgency Campaigning*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), p.14.

8. Brian Jenkins, *International Terrorism: A New Mode of Conflict*, (Los Angeles: Crescent Publications, n.d), p.1.

9. Neil Livingstone, *The War Against Terrorism*, (Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1986), p.4.

in its effects upon individuals and society, (c) it implicitly denies recognition of all rules and conventions of war. It does not distinguish between combatants and non-combatants and recognises no humanitarian constraints, and (d) it rejects all moral constraints.¹⁰

Some western observers use terrorism and insurgency as co-terminous words, as sabotage, terrorism, etc., are also part of insurgent activity. But most Third world revolutionaries would not agree with this contention as terrorism can alienate potential support for insurgents and hinder the real revolution.¹¹ Guevara believed terrorism to be "a measure that is generally indiscriminate and ineffective in its results, since it often makes victims of innocent people and destroys a large number of lives that would be valuable to the revolution".¹² Regis Debray is also against terrorism as related to revolutionary or insurgency movements. "Terrorism is to be taken as individual action. It is not related to the development and objectives of a revolutionary movement".¹³ The basic differences

10. Wilkinson, n.2, pp.52-53.

11. Wilkinson, n.2, p.58.

12. Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p.26.

13. Regis Debray, *Strategy for Revolution*, (London: Penguin, 1920), p.86.

between terrorism and guerrilla warfare are (a) guerrillas may fight with small numbers and often inadequate weaponry, but they often fight according to conventions of war, taking and exchanging prisoners and respecting the rights of non-combatants. Terrorists place no limits on means employed and frequently resort to widespread assassination, terrorising the civilian population and even killing innocent people.¹⁴ Most terrorism has a political motive or is carried out for political gains. But unlike guerrillas and insurgents who have strong ideological affiliations, terrorists are not highly ideological and are most often linked instead by common experiences and aspirations, or a commonly perceived enemy, rather than by any formal ideology.¹⁵

One can conclude from the above observations that guerrilla warfare and insurgency even if they are not co-terminous, it is difficult to make a clearcut distinction between them. On the other hand terrorism is distinctly different from guerrilla warfare and insurgency.

14. Paul Wilkinson, *Political Terrorism*, (London: Macmillan, 1974), p.80.

15. Livingstone, n.9, p.41.

THE INSURGENCY DOCTRINE

Two general patterns for insurgencies emerge from the history of past revolutionary wars.¹⁶ One is based essentially on the theory and experience of the Chinese Communists and was offered as a blueprint for revolution in colonial and semi-colonial countries. The other pattern, a variation of the first in its early stage, has been followed in several nationalist insurgencies. These patterns are built on broad generalizations.

THE COMMUNIST PATTERN

To the communists, revolution consists not merely in overthrowing the existing order but also in carrying out afterward a complete Communist transformation of the society.

Phase One: Creation of a Party.

The first step for the insurgents is to create a party. According to the theory it should be the party of the proletariat, but since the proletariat is small or nonexistent in

16. David Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, (London: Pall Mall Press, 1964), p.43.

colonial and semi-colonial countries, the lowest class of peasants must be included in it.¹⁷ And as the proletariat cannot produce competent early leaders, they must be sought for among the intellectuals and particularly among the students.¹⁸

For operations the party must be organized into both open and clandestine apparatuses.¹⁹ This first step can be accomplished by legal and peaceful means at least in the countries where political opposition is tolerated.

Phase Two : United Front.

The second step consists in rallying around as many allies as possible.²⁰ Activity during the second step remains generally within the bounds of legality and non-violence.

Phase Three : Guerrilla Warfare.

If the insurgents do not seize power by political efforts, then armed struggle becomes the only other resort. In this step,

17. *Ibid.*, p.45.

18. *Ibid.*, p.45.

19. *Ibid.*, p.45.

20. *Ibid.*, p.46.

the first objective is the guerrilla's survival. For survival, it is quite essential to see that links between the insurgents and the masses are properly maintained.²¹

Phase Four : Movement Warfare.

By guerrilla warfare the insurgents cannot win over the enemy, as it might alienate the masses and break the united front. A regular army has to be created to face counter-insurgent forces. The guerrilla war has to be converted to movement warfare, where the insurgents can exploit the fluidity and logistical facilities afforded by the local populace.²² In the process create bases and liberated zones.

Phase Five : Annihilation Campaign.

Once there is a balance of forces between the insurgents and counter-insurgents, the scope and scale of the insurgents operations will increase swiftly. A series of offensives aiming at the complete destruction of the enemy will constitute the last step. But at any time, the insurgent may make peace offers, provided there is more to gain by negotiating than by fighting.²³

21. *Ibid.*, p.50.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

The Bourgeois-Nationalist Pattern

The goal of the insurgents in this case is generally limited to the seizure of power. There is no clear post-insurgency programme and no broad organization to back them.

Phase One : Blind Terrorism.

The first step is to get publicity for the movement and its cause. This is done by random terrorism, bombings, assassinations and kidnappings, etc.²⁴ The purpose is not to kill many people but to make them notice. And it is also a warning that the perpetrators are willing to resort to violence.²⁵

Phase Two: Selective Terrorism

The aims in this step is to isolate the counter-insurgents from the masses, to involve the population in its struggle. This is done by killing low-ranking government officials who work closely with the population.²⁶

24. *Ibid.*, p.58.

25. *Jenkins, n.8, p.5.*

26. *Galula, n. 16, p.59.*

COMMUNIST THEORY ON INSURGENCY: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The actual roots of this theory can be traced to Marx and Engels. The founding fathers of communism did look at insurgency as a way of the revolution. Marx even claimed that only by unorthodox methods of warfare can a weaker force actually defeat a stronger one.²⁷

The Soviet Contribution

The most important Soviet contributor to this theory is Lenin. Lenin sometime in 1906, described guerrilla warfare as a combination of terrorism, and robbery and ambush to support the revolutionary struggle, that it should be one of the instruments of a broad revolutionary strategy.²⁸ But he preferred a revolutionary movement which entailed the participation of the masses and popular support. "It was an inevitable form of struggle", he argued, "at a time when the mass movement had actually reached the point of an uprising and when fairly large intervals occur between the big engagements in the civil war".²⁹

27. John S. Pustay, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare*, (New York: The Free Press, 1965), p.25.

28. V.I. Lenin, *What is to be done?* in James Cannor ed., *Lenin on Politics and Revolution*, (New York: Pegasus Press, 1975) pp.51-52.

29. Cited in Laequer, n. 1, p.172.

He claimed that guerrilla warfare in combination with uninterrupted strikes, attacks and street fighting throughout the country would effectively exhaust the enemy.³⁰ He however, cautioned that the Bolsheviks should not regard it as the sole or as the chief instrument of struggle, or a substitute to other methods of revolutionary warfare.

Stalin in fact build up a special theory of guerrilla warfare after the German occupation of the western USSR. This theory states that, to be effective guerrillas operating behind enemy lines will have to harass the occupation forces and inflict maximum damage on communications and logistics installations. This was to be a military mission. Then, in occupied areas they had to maintain the allegiance of the masses. This was a political and psychological mission.³¹

Contributions of Mao Tse-Tung

Mao has contributed most to the development of the theory of modern Communist insurgency. Mao prescribes that an insurgency movement, to be successful, will have to pass through three stages. The first stage, the 'strategic defensive', is

30. Ibid.

31. Pustay, n. 27, p. 28.

characterized by the initiation of insurgency by small armed forces who have to make a gradual retreat before the enemy retaliates. This retreat results in a loss of space but a gain in time.

The second stage is 'stalemate'. With persistent raids and attacks the enemy is kept at bay. This has a debilitating effect upon the morale of the enemy camp. The war reaches a state of equilibrium. The insurgents morale increases.

Stage three, the 'strategic offensive' begins, when guerrilla warfare becomes supplementary. Regular army units are created. The regular army, assisted by the guerrillas then pursue the war to a successful termination.³²

Contributions of Vo Nguyen Giap

Though Giap reiterated Mao's theories, yet he modified the three-stage insurgency theory. He expands Mao's theory of revolutionary stages, particularly from the second to the third. He establishes three preconditions for entry into the last stage---superiority of revolutionary forces, a favourable world

32. Pustay, n.27, p.31

situation and a noticeable weakening of the enemy's resolve.³³

Contributions of Ernesto "Che" Guevara

Guevara's theory serves as a corroborative exercise for Maoist principles of action applicable in the Latin American context. It adds universality to the prescriptions of Mao.

From his experiences in the Cuban revolution Guevara made these observations (1) The forces of the people can win a war against the army, (2) It is not necessary to wait for the fulfilment of all conditions for a revolution because the focus of insurrection can create them. (3) The area for the armed struggle in underdeveloped America is the rural regions.³⁴

Guevara's most important contribution to communist insurgency theory are his expositions on the nature of the initiatory phase of insurgency warfare and the urban dimension to guerrilla warfare.³⁵

33. R.L. Garthoff, "Unconventional Warfare in Communist Strategy", *Foreign Affairs*, (New York), vol. 40, no.569, July 1962, p.10.

34. Douglas Hyde, *The Roots of Guerrilla Warfare*, (London: The Bodley Head. 1968), p. 126.

35. Pustay, n.27, p.49.

Contributions of Carlos Marighella

After the repeated failures of rural-based guerrilla warfare and the death of Guevara in 1967, Carlos Marighella a Brazilian Communist attempted to develop a new strategy which in the long run would integrate urban and rural guerrilla warfare strategy. It consisted in converting the political crisis into armed struggle by means of a series of violent actions that would force the government to transform the country's political situation into a military one.³⁶

THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ARMED STRUGGLE

The progression of insurgency does not rest on mere military prescriptions but on philosophical foundations laid down, even by Chanakya and Sun Tzu. But it was sometime in the 1960s, that the philosophical foundation for these was advocated strongly.

Political philosophers from the New Left such as Herbert Marcuse taught the student population of western societies that it was the instrument of revolutionary change in an increasingly materialist society. In his last major work "Counter-revolution

36. Gerard Chaliand, *Terrorism: From popular Struggle to Media Spectacle*, (London: Saqi Books, 1987), p.84.

and Revolt" he wrote the revolution involves a radical transformation of the needs and aspirations.³⁷

Marcuse believed that man in western capitalist society was every bit enslaved as his counterpart in the totalitarian societies of the communist bloc. His concept of society was the view that the state in both the systems maintained a dominant class interest through violence, sometimes mental, psychological and physical. It was this institutionalised violence on the part of the state that to Marcuse was justification for the use of violence against it.³⁸

Frantz Fanon, a neo-Marxist intellectual of Africa provided a new ideology on the cathartic role of violence in the African revolution. According to him violence was a cleansing force which could liberate the masses from their inferiority complex. He further claimed that violence raises national consciousness and mobilises an oppressed people and binds them together into a new nation.³⁹

37. Quoted from Peter Land, *Marcuse and Freedom*, (London and Sydney: Groom Helm, 1985), p.180.

38. Pim Lott, n. 3, p.120.

39. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (Penguin Books, 1963), p.74.

COUNTER-INSURGENCY WARFARE

Because of the rampant insurgency situation in the last five decades, most states, both in the third world and developed world have developed their own methods of countering insurgency. It is agreed among counter-insurgency planners that operations against insurgents cannot fall within the purview of general conventional warfare in which regular forces like infantry, armour and artillery can be used.⁴⁰ But at the same time the counter-insurgents cannot use the insurgents methods of warfare. A method of warfare is to be applied which takes into account the nature and characteristics of the revolutionary war.⁴¹

There are a few important aspects to be kept in mind in the counter-insurgency warfare. The first law to be followed is to get the support of the population. At the initial stages any counter-insurgent tactics should give primacy to the political over the military power. The primary purpose of the military is to afford the political power enough freedom to work safely with the population.⁴² Political authorities can work with three purpose (1) to re-establish the counter-insurgents' authority over

40. Pustay, n.27, p.84.

41. Galula, n.16, p.74.

42. Thomas Kuster, "Dealing with the Insurgency Spectre," *Military Review*, (Kansas) vol.67, no.2, February 1987, p.25.

the population, (2) to isolate the population as much as possible, by physical means and (3) to gather intelligence leading to the final step - elimination of the insurgent political cells.⁴³

In this process two broad methods of tackling insurgency comes to the forefront. One is to try and win over the insurgents and include them in the mainstream political process⁴⁴. But in the case of recalcitrant insurgent groups the counterinsurgents usually try to destroy the insurgent political organisations and purge the suspected leaders.⁴⁵

The effort always is not to destroy the insurgent's forces and his political organisation. If it is destroyed, then it can be recreated again.⁴⁶ The best method is to win over the insurgents and the masses which have been supporting them. But it has been noticed that because of the role violence has been playing increasingly in society, most states prefer to tackle insurgency in the harder way by military confrontation, often using tactics employed by the insurgents themselves.

43. Galula, n.16, p.115.

44. Galula, n.16, p. 107.

45. Galula, n.16, pp. 123-4.

46. Galula, n.16, p.77.

A better way to tackle insurgency is to prevent it rather than fight it.⁴⁷

INSURGENCY IN THE THIRD WORLD

The history of contemporary political evolution in the Third World is marked by varied experiences of insurgencies. There are various factors for which the situation in the Third World is conducive for insurgencies. First of all, insurgencies have been quite common against imperialism and the fight for national liberation. In Asia and Africa the rising tide of nationalism gave way to many insurgencies. However, with the departure of the colonial powers also there was no peace and stability. This was due to the socio-political instability created by the withdrawal of the colonial powers. The newly liberated countries in their quest for modernisation and development generated various tensions. Various factors contributed to insurgent situations and rise of insurgent groups in the Third World, after liberation. These were due to neo-colonialism, poverty, oppressive regimes, problems of cultural adjustment, separatist nationalist minorities and Marxist-Leninist parties. Generally, these factors led to conflicts which frequently took the form of armed struggle. The continents of Asia, Africa and Latin America

47. Steven Daksal, "Insurgency Threat and Ways to Defeat it", *Military Review*, vol.66, no.1, January 1986, p.33.

have been marked by insurgencies of some kind, starting from the Chinese civil war, the Malaya Emergency, the Burmese civil war, the Philippines insurgency, the vietcong insurgency in Southeast Asia and the Cuban revolution to the Indonesian, Moroccan, Tunisian and Algerian revolutions. Most Third World countries have experienced insurgencies of one kind or the other.

The South Asian Experience

Most South Asian countries gained independence from imperialism without any Militant struggle, unlike certain countries of Asia and Africa, and mostly by means of peaceful and non-violent measures. But this tradition of non-violent means of political mobilisation was not to last long. Soon, after independence, most countries of South Asia were embroiled in domestic conflicts of various dimensions. Some of these conflicts took the shape of violent struggles and insurgent movements.

The insurgent movements in South Asia can be broadly grouped under two heads _____ the Secessionist or separatist movements and the anti-systemic movements. Most conflicts in the region are related to confrontation between ethnic groups. Ethnic groups mobilise on the basis of various demands like affirmative

discrimination, autonomy and secession."⁴⁸ Since the 1970's most of these groups have developed separatist tendencies, which earlier used to be mainly autonomist.⁴⁹ These movements symbolise a revolt against the state and its power structure. Insurgency has become the basic mode of confrontation with the state apparatus and the other groups.

Separatist demands have come from various ethnic groups in South Asia. Insurgencies in Pakistan has been mostly due to secessionist demands. The Baluch People's Liberation Front (BPLF) was involved in an insurgency for a long time from 1973 to 1977.⁵⁰ There have been a few other insurgent movements in Pakistan like the revolt of the Haris, a low peasant caste against the landlords in Sindh Province. The Tamil militants in the north-east of Sri Lanka have been involved in an insurgency since 1983 to further their demand for a separate state of Tamil Eelam. India has been facing insurgent movements almost since independence in the form of Naga and Mizo nationalism in the north-east. The insurgent groups in the north-east deny that

48. See Urmila Phadnis, "Ethnic conflicts in South Asian States", in Urmila Phadnis & others ed., *Domestic Conflicts in South Asia - II*, (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1986), p.100.

49. Ibid., pp. 100 - 101.

50. Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow: Baluch Nationalism and Soviet Temptations*, (Washington : Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1981), pp. 10 -12.

they were ever a part of the Indian reality and have claimed a separate identity for themselves and a demand for secession.⁵¹ May be the only success story of a separatist movement was the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971.⁵²

Anti-systemic movements are those which believe in a revolutionary change in the social and political order. These movements believe that the system has to be transformed by capturing power by means of armed insurgency. The two major anti-systemic movements in South Asia that come to mind are the Naxalites insurgency in the late 60s in India⁵³ and the JVP insurgency in Sri Lanka since 1971. though Nepal also has had its experience with Naxalites since 1973⁵⁴, but the threat posed by them has not been as grave as in India. Most anti-systemic movements are ideological movements and profess a Marxist-Leninist ideology.

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51. Giri Deshingkar, "Growing Insurgency", *Seminar*, no. 305, January 1985, p.38. *where 'addition'?*
52. S.D. Muni, "Dimensions of Domestic Conflicts in South Asia", in Urmila Phadnis & Others ed., *Domestic Conflicts in South Asia - I*, (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1986), p.57.
53. Mohan Ram, "Communist Movement in India", in Hari Sharma & Kathleen Gough ed., *Imperialism and Revolution in South Asia*, (New York: Monthly Press, 1975), p. 348.
54. Tribhuvan Nath, *The Nepalese Dilemma 1960-74*, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1975), p.459.

The roots of almost all insurgencies can be traced to socio-economic factors. This is related to the process and level of development which has a potential to disturb social equilibrium and become a source of conflict.⁵⁵ The basic causes of separatist movements can be located in deprivation and discrimination regarding share in political, administrative and economic power. Sometimes powerful regional economic and political interests mobilise on the basis of ethnic identity. The roots of most insurgencies can be traced to internal domestic factors. But a major factor which gives them sustenance is the involvement of external powers, who exploit these situations either for strategic or economic reasons.⁵⁶

State responses to insurgencies in South Asia have also been varied. At the same time there is a common trend in the responses among all countries. The first approach is co-optation or accommodation. This approach is applicable mostly in the case of insurgencies based on ethnonationalism. In India, the Mizo National Front (MNF) was weaned back to the Parliamentary process by giving substantial concessions, in terms of political power. The other approach is to ruthlessly suppress insurgent groups, even to the extent of elimination by strong counter-insurgent

55. Muni, n. 52, p. 61.

56. Muni, n. 52, p. 61.

tactics. In India, insurgencies inspired by revolutionary ideologies have been suppressed but not the insurgencies based on ethnonationalism.⁵⁷

INSURGENCY IN SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka is one of the few countries which did not have violent political tradition. It never even had a militant nationalist movement. Till 1971, it had a tranquil history when a youth-led organisation called the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) launched an insurrection to topple the government and capture power. The strategy adopted by this organisation was very unusual, unlike most previous experiences. A protracted war was neglected or avoided in favour of a relatively rapid seizure of power, possibly with the illusion of achieving a relatively quick victory.⁵⁸

However, within a few weeks of the outbreak of the insurrection, the Sri Lankan state was able to crush the insurgency. Six years later in 1977 when the JVP was legalised, it emerged as a moderate leftist party which claimed that it

57. Deshingkar, n. 51, p. 39.

58. For an assessment of the method of a quick seizure of power compared to the protracted struggle see William J. Pomeroy, *Guerrilla and Counter-Guerrilla Warfare*, (New York: International Publishers, 1964), pp. 66-69.

would function only within a democratic parliamentary process. Their stint in parliamentary politics did not last long and it was proscribed again in 1983 on accusations of being involved in anti-Tamil riots. It is not clear when again they started the insurgency after 1983, but by 1987, it was a full-grown insurgent movement threatening the Sri Lankan state. The methods adopted during this period were different - it was a protracted guerrilla warfare. But the Sri Lankan state by adopting tough measures had by the end of 1989 eliminated the top leadership. It is not clear what effect this has had on the organisation, whether the organisation has become defunct due to the elimination of the top leadership or it is still intact with a new leadership having taken over.

POPULATION INCREASES (1946-71)

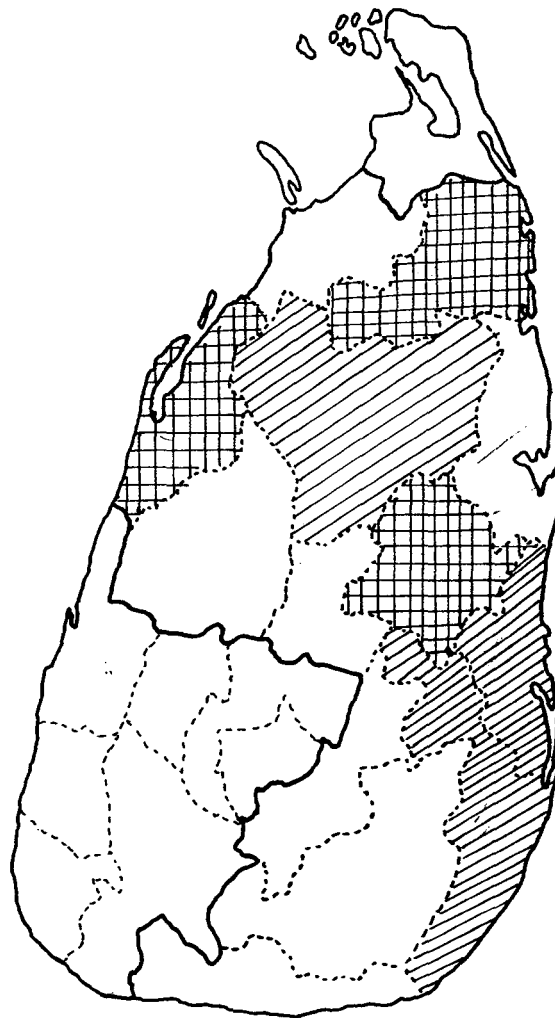


Figure: 1

SOURCE: Bernard Swan, Sri Lanka Mosaic: Environment, Man, Continuity and Change (Colombo: Varga Institute, 1987) p. 85.

CHAPTER II ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION

A political movement, comes into being against a specific background and due to specific factors that contribute to the historical growth of such a movement. The origin of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna in Sri Lanka can be traced to a specific set of factors.

It is generally accepted that the JVP originated somewhere around the second half of the 60s. With whatever little data there is, it has rather been difficult to trace the exact date or month when the movement was formally launched. Since the JVP in its pre-1970 period existed as a clandestine movement and never had the tradition of maintaining records pertaining to its activities, there are no authentic sources available to construct a chronological order of its evolution since its inception.

However, it is much more important to understand and analyse the factors that led to the origin and growth of the movement, rather than construct a chronological order of its evolution. There are two main areas of agreement on the background of the emergence of the JVP in the second half of the 60s.

These are :-

1. The socio-economic crisis of the 60's that resulted in youth unrest and its loss of faith in the existing social, economic and political order.
2. The failure of the traditional left parties in Sri Lanka in bringing about revolution or socialism, thus creating a vacuum within the Left Movement.¹

The socio-economic crisis of the 60's seems to be the main objective condition for the birth of the JVP. Most writers have examined this background and have drawn attention to the post-independence economic crisis in Sri Lanka connecting it with such factors as the demographic explosion, expansion of education, mass unemployment, rural landlessness and indebtedness.

1. J. Uyangoda, "Socio-economic Roots of Revolt", *Lanka Guardian*, (Colombo), vol. 4, no. 3, 15 May 1981, p. 17.

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Population Explosion

The influence of demographic factors in the insurrection is indicated by the concentration of suspected insurgents in the age group of 17-25. The Island's population had been growing very rapidly, particularly since the 1940s. This was due to a drop in the death rate following the implementation of public health services and a near-eradication of Malaria. Deaths per 1,000 population plummeted from 21.9 in 1945 to 14.3 in 1947 and thereafter steadily declined. It reached 7.5 in 1970.² In the 45 years between 1901 and 1946 the Island's population grew by about 3 million, while in the 25 years between 1946 to 1971, about 6 million persons were added to the population.³

Youths under the age of 25 have constituted a very large and gradually rising proportion of the Sri Lankan population. In the 24 years between 1946 and 1970, the number of persons aged 15-24 almost doubled.⁴

2. Sri Lanka, Department of Census and Statistics, *Census of Population, 1971 : Preliminary release*, no. 2, (Colombo, 1972), p. 1.

3. Ibid.

4. Ceylon, Department of Census and Statistics, *Preliminary report on the socio-economic survey of Ceylon, 1969-70*, (Colombo, 1971), p. 1.

Robert Kearney and Janice Jiggins surveying the demographic factors and socio-economic environment relate this swift population growth, particularly amongst the youth, to the lagging economic growth, which facilitated the emergence of political volatility among the youth.⁵ An enlarged youth population meant greater pressure on the existing opportunities and infrastructure.

Expansion of Education

A second major change in Sri Lankan Society was a very rapid expansion of education during the preceding two decades before the insurrection. Robert Kearney offers the argument that "a dynamic enlargement of educational opportunities, concentrated primarily within a single generation, produced roaring aspirations and expectations among youths."⁶

Education and literacy had been advancing steadily in Sri Lanka since the late 19th Century. The literacy rate rose from 17.4% in 1881 to 57.8% in 1946.⁷ However, the pace of

5. Robert Kearney and Janice Jiggins, "The Ceylon Insurrection of 1971", *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, (London), vol. 13, no. 1, 1 March 1975, pp. 45-48.

6. Robert Kearney, "Educational Expansion and Political Volatility in Sri Lanka : The 1971 Insurrection", *Asian Survey*, (California), vol. 15, no. 9, September 1975, p. 728.

7. Ibid., p. 728.

educational expansion accelerated after the 1940s. There were advances not only in the basic education but also in the levels of education attained.

The steep rate of population growth compounded the educational expansion. There was a sharp increase in the number of school age children ---- not only in the proportion of children attending school but also the average number of years each child remained in school. Between 1945 to 1970, school enrolments increased more than three-fold from 867,000 to 2,700,000.⁸ After 1945, education in government institutions was provided free from the primary to the university levels. Secondary education, once available only in the English language was gradually extended in the Sinhalese and Tamil languages. This was done by opening 'Central Schools' to which children could proceed upon completion of primary education in the village school.⁹

The expansion of primary and secondary education was followed by an astonishing rise in university enrolments. These developments were related to "electoral compulsions which gave a

8. Kearney and Jiggins, n.5, p.46.

9. Kearney, n.6, p. 730.

new orientation to socio-educational policies during the Bandaranaike era."¹⁰ In 1956, the SLFP leader S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike made Sinhalese the official language and founded two universities with Sinhalese as the medium of instruction. Until 1959, the medium of instruction in the universities was English, which was generally limiting admissions to those able to attend the expensive and exclusive English-medium Secondary Schools. The shift in the language of admission was followed by spiralling enrolments, amongst the Sinhalese youth, from the rural areas, as well. Between 1960 and 1970, the number of university degrees awarded annually increased more than sevenfold.¹¹

The swift pace of educational expansion in the two decades before 1970 was also reflected in differences in educational levels between age-groups. One-third of the population 45 years of age and older had no schooling and only one-fourth had completed a middle school or higher education. In contrast, less than one-twelfth of the children in the age-groups of 15-19 and 20-24 years had no schooling. In the age-group 20-24 more than 60% had completed a middle school or higher education.¹²

10. Urmila Phadnis, "Insurgency in Ceylonese Politics : Problems and Prospects", *IDSA Journal*, (New Delhi), vol. 13, no.4, April 1971, p. 586.

11. *Matching Employment Opportunities and Expectations: A Programme of Action for Ceylon*, (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1971), vol.1, pp. 3-4.

12. Kearney, n. 6, p. 730.

Another aspect was the rapidly rising numbers of Sinhalese pursuing university studies were heavily concentrated in the arts curriculum of social studies and humanities. Most were from rural schools with few or no facilities for science training which could lead to university admissions in the science, medicine and dentistry, agriculture and veterinary sciences, and engineering faculties. According to a survey of 1967 university admissions, Sinhalese comprised 93% of admissions in social studies and humanities, but only 47%, 37% and 44% of admissions in the faculties of medicine and dentistry, agriculture and veterinary science, and engineering respectively.¹³

In 1971, it was estimated that three-fourths of the students seeking admission to the greatly desired university science courses with promising career prospects came from 21 private schools, generally accessible only to children of affluent urban families. While the other one-fourth came from 152 government schools.¹⁴

13. Kearney, n. 6, p. 733.

14. *Matching Employment Opportunities and Expectations: A Programme of Action for Ceylon*, n.11, p. 133.

Education and Unemployment

The pace of the educational expansion, coupled with sluggish economic growth, led to staggering levels of unemployment for educated youths during the 1960s. Employment opportunities failed to keep pace with the spiralling output of the island's secondary schools and universities.

In the decade between 1959-60 and 1969-70 unemployment climbed from about 340,000 or 10.5% of the labour force, to 546,000 or 13.9% of the labour force. In 1960-70 youths aged 15-24 accounted for 82% of all unemployed persons. Unemployment was particularly severe among youths who had completed a secondary or higher education. In the 15-24 age group the unemployment rate for males completing GCE 'O' level was double for males with no schooling or with primary schooling.¹⁵ The extent to which unemployment was concentrated among the young is indicated by the dramatic differences in unemployment rates between age groups at each educational level. At GCE 'O' level 51% of males and 79% of females aged 15-24 were unemployed. For educated youths, the period of idleness before finding employment was frequently very long.¹⁶

15. Ceylon, Department of Census and Statistics, *Statistical Pocket Book of Ceylon*, 1970 (Colombo: Department of Government Printing, 1970), p.51.

16. Kearney & Jiggins, n. 5, p. 48.

The high level of unemployment among educated youths reflected not only an overall shortage of employment opportunities but a strong and persistent preference for white-collar jobs, particularly in the public services, which led the youthful job-seekers to disdain agricultural and other manual work. Not only do cultural values contribute to a strong desire for white-collar employment, but the salaries are also considerably higher, making possible a different and better life-style.¹⁷

Education had long been a real channel of social mobility. The youths completing their education prior to 1971 expected to step into clerical or administrative posts because similar education had previously been stepping stones to white-collar office employment. It was only when the numbers of educated youths soared dramatically in the 1960s that education ceased to provide virtual assurance of secure and remunerative white-collar office employment.

Sometimes the youth, after completing his education that had always in the past led to employment as a clerk or a school teacher, was almost compelled to return to his father's paddy field. Even that option was not always open. The family plot

17. Kearney, n. 6, p. 737.

might have been sold or given to his less-educated older brothers since his education was presumed to have removed him from dependence upon agriculture.¹⁸

Education and the Potential for Political Violence

Educational expansion can be associated with a rising potential for political violence. Robert Kearney applies Ted Gurr's theory about the rising levels of expectations unmatched by improvements in perceived circumstances as an impetus to political violence, to the Sri Lankan situation.¹⁹ He stresses that the heightened aspirations and expectations engendered among youths by greatly enhanced educational opportunities and the crushing of these aspirations and expectations under the

18. Kearney, n. 6, p. 737.

19. Gurr applies the theory of relative deprivation to political violence. He defines "relative deprivation as actor's perception of discrepancy between their value expectations and their value capabilities. Value expectations are the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully entitled. Value capabilities are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of getting and keeping ." (p.24) "Potential for collective violence is defined as the scope and intensity of the disposition among members of coelctivity to take violent action against others." (p.29) And "Political violence refers to all attacks within a political community against the political regime, its actors ----- including competing political groups as well as incumbents ----- on its sociopolitical change, accomplished through violence. It also includes guerrilla wars, coup d'etat, rebellions and riots". (pp.3-4). For details see, Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, (Princeton: Princeton Univerisity Press, 1974).

prospects of unemployment among educated youths, produced a sense of alienation, deprivation and disillusionment. This in turn heightened the potential for political violence.²⁰

The resulting sense of deprivation and disillusionment was much greater among Sinhalese youths than among youths belonging to the ethnic minorities. The Sinhalese expectations had been much greater as a result of larger number of them coming out from universities with the introduction of the Sinhala language as a medium of instruction.²¹

Most of the suspected insurgents were more educated than the general male population of comparable age. The aspirations of educated youths for secure, white-collar employment was reasonably clear. The types of employment held by many suspected insurgents fell far short of their aspirations and understandable expectations.

In describing the swift growth of support for the JVP among youth, Rohana Wijeweera, the JVP leader spoke of the late 1960s as a period in which -

the youth and student frustrations had increased and general bitterness was being felt at the plight of the new

20. Kearney, n. 6, p. 741.

21. Kearney, n. 6, p. 742.

generation..... (bringing) the youth of this country.....to the position of demonstrating their hostility towards the existing conditions. While under the UNP government (of 1965-70) unemployment was spreading more and more and the cost of living was spiralling higher and higher, radicalism began to take hold of the young generation.²²

The rapid pace of educational expansion, which produced vast differences in educational levels between age groups, opened a yawning generational gap in the villages. Many youths who obtained secondary or even higher education by 1971 were probably the first members of their families ever to receive education beyond the primary level. The generational difference in educational attainment may have contributed to an undermining of parental authority and deference for the older generation and its values and norms of behaviour. This also possibly spread among youths disillusionment with the existing social and political order associated with the older generations. The increased education may have also fostered among youth some amount of radicalism which might have resulted in their attempt to seek relief from their unhappy circumstances in drastic political action.²³

22. Quoted from Kearney, n. 6, p. 743.

23. Kearney, n. 6, p. 743.

DISTRIBUTION OF RURAL POPULATION (1971)

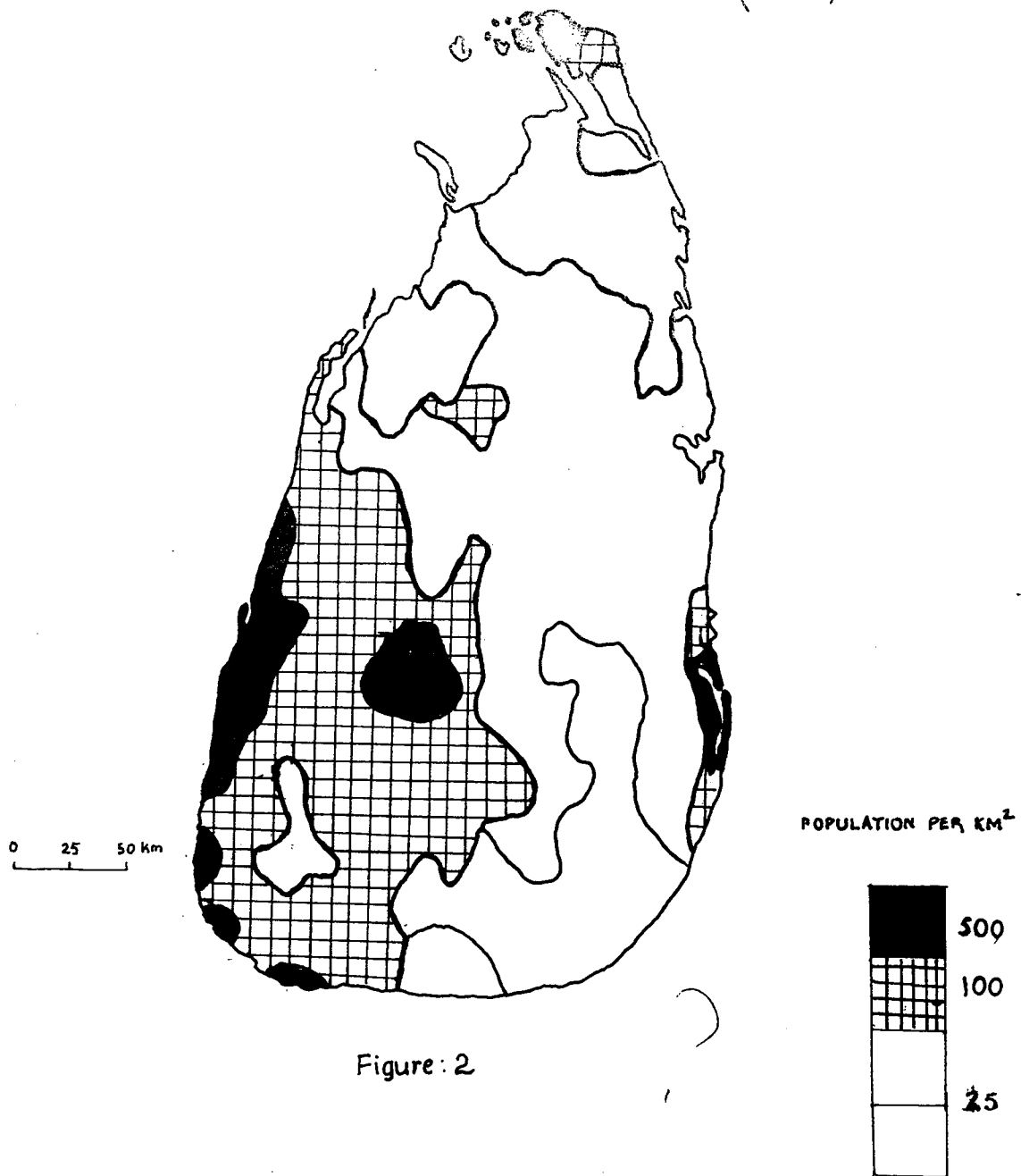


Figure: 2

SOURCE: Bernard Swan, Sri Lanka Mosaic: Environment, Man, Continuity and Change (Colombo: Marga Institute, 1987), p. 89.

THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The socio-economic background for a radical political movement was in existence in post-independent Sri Lanka. The relationship between the socio-economic crisis and the genesis of the JVP is quite established. However, the political variable also played a crucial role. The growth of the JVP and the insurgency situation of 1970-71 in the island can be related to the consequence of political developments after independence.

As in most other colonies, Sri Lanka after independence was ruled by an elite who had been junior partners of the British. The monopoly of political power held by this urban-based western oriented elite was challenged in the 1956 elections by S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike's MEP (Mahajana Eksath Peramuna).²⁴ This heralded the accession to power of the rural Sinhalese middle class which had always been relegated to an underprivileged position in the power structure. This class comprised of the rural-based vernacular educated school teachers, the Ayurvedic Physicians, small land-owners as well as traders and Buddhist Monks.

24. MEP was a coalition of parties in which the SLFP was the major partner. They contested 60 seats in an elected house of 95 and won 51 seats. The ruling UNP contesting 76 seats could retain only 8 seats. In this election, for the first time the opposition came to power. See for details, Howard Wriggins, *Dilemmas of a New Nation*, (New York: Princeton, 1960), pp. 326-366.

Later in the 60s the JVP simply took over from where S.W.R.D Bandaranaike had left. It appealed to the same class of people which was predominantly Sinhala-Buddhist, with a more revolutionary outlook. The appeal of the SLFP was receding because beyond a point it could also not bring about certain changes which it had promised to the people.

The socio-economic conditions had reached a level to facilitate the growth of a movement of the nature of JVP. But to study the growth of the organization, one has to study the developments within the Marxist movement over the decade preceding the insurrection, which played a significant role in the creation and character of the JVP.

The Left Movement

A brief survey of the left parties in Sri Lankan politics prior to 1971 may be in order to underline its contribution to the rise of the movement.

In the early years of independence, the Marxist parties constituted the principal organised opposition to the governing UNP, which came to rule immediately after independence.²⁵ It was

25. A formal Marxist movement in Sri Lanka appeared in 1932. For

the non-Marxist and vaguely socialist SLFP, that succeeded in displacing the UNP from power in 1956.²⁶ In the fifteen years before 1971 the major Marxist parties were drawn into increasingly close association with the SLFP. An electoral agreement had linked the LSSP and the CP with the SLFP in the election of 1956, and this cooperation was repeated in the July 1960 election contest. In late 1963, the LSSP, the CP and the MEP joined in forming a United Left Front. The Front collapsed in the following year, when the LSSP abruptly accepted the SLFP invitation to join in a coalition government without its United Left Front partners. In 1965 the SLFP-LSSP alliance was broadened to include the pro-Moscow CP and consolidated into the United Front that came to power five years later in July 1970.²⁷

With their growing association with the SLFP, the LSSP and CP gradually abandoned thoughts of violent revolution and became increasingly committed to seeking power through elections and the control of parliament.²⁸ It was after the 1956 election, that the

details refer to Charles Blackton, "Sri Lanka's Marxists," *Problems of Communism*, vol. 22, no. 1, Jan-Feb 1973, p. 29.

26. Refer to n. 24.

27. Blackton, n. 25, pp. 29-36.

28. Sri Lanka had an unique tradition of having a major Trotskyist party in the form of the LSSP. Till about 1950, the party believed in a mass revolutionary struggle. However, in the next two decades, the party was too involved in the parliamentary path to power. Because of the 1964 alliance with the SLFP, a more revolutionary section of the LSSP broke away to form the

LSSP came to the conclusion that "a parliament elected by Universal Franchise isan instrument that can be used for the movement towards socialism."²⁹ As the established Marxist parties became absorbed in the parliamentary process their appeals to radical and idealistic youths as revolutionary parties presumably waned.

Dissatisfaction with the Traditional Left

By the beginning of the 70s, there was enough discontent, grievance and frustrations among the youth. All it needed was leadership, organisation and ideology to guide it to something as explosive as the insurrection. And this leadership was provided by a group of disillusioned Marxist leaders.

The traditional left in Sri Lanka displayed three significant features which roused the disdain of the youth who supported the JVP. These were, one, the leadership of the old left still came from the privileged class; two, their base was

LSSP(R). See Robert Kearney, "The Marxist Parties of Ceylon," in Paul Brass and Marcus Franda, *Radical Politics in South Asia*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1973), p. 425.

29. Quoted in Kearney & Jiggins, n. 5, p. 50.

limited only to the urban working class; and three, the peasantry was completely neglected by the left parties.³⁰ These factors along with their declining revolutionary fervour and ideological confusions provided the political environment within which the JVP was founded.

JVP leader Wijeweera contended that it was

because the Old Left Movement had no capacity to take the path of Socialism, had gone bankrupt and deteriorated to the position of propping up the capitalist class and had no capacity to protect the rights and needs of the proletariat any longer, that we realized the necessity of the New Left Movement.³¹

The schisms of 1963-64 had produced two small 'ultra-Left' parties -- the pro-Chinese CP and the LSSP (R) - that at least in rhetorics maintained their devotion to the old ideas of violent revolution. Even these parties were not promising enough for the impatient youths who formed the JVP.³²

30. Politicus, "The April Revolt in Ceylon", *Asian Survey*, vol. 12, n.3, march 1972, p.265.

31. Quoted from Kearney & Jiggins, n. 5, p. 51.

32. Kearney & Jiggins, n. 5, p. 51.

Genesis of the JVP

The JVP originated from the pro-Chinese CP. The CP had had a sizeable trade union following and a powerful youth mass base which the party was not able to sustain because of a major split engineered by a party leader called Premala Kumarasivi. This, in fact, was the major turning point from the point of view of the JVP, because the Kumarasivi split within the ranks of the pro-Chinese wing of the CP paved the way for a number of young members of the party to ascend the leadership ladder. Wijeweera was one who was promoted in the hierarchy of the party, and was able to win a youth following of his own.³³

While still in the pro-Chinese CP, Wijeweera had begun to advance the strategy of a one-day revolution - a military seizure of political power. This, in fact, was his theoretical position inside the party.³⁴ But his efforts to force this political line on the disintegrating leadership of the pro-Chinese communists gained more opposition than support. A tiny group within the party led by a young party cadre, Wimal Ranasinghe, launched an ideological assault on Wijeweera's strategy of an one-day revolution which was denounced as anti-Maoist. Instead the

33. Politicus, n. 30, p. 266.

34. Politicus, n. 30, p. 267.

Ranasinghe faction advocated "mass bases, people's war, people's army, etc." In the course of its attempt to inject Maoism into the leadership of the party Ranasinghe described N. Shanmugathasan, the leader of the party as primarily a trade unionist rather than a revolutionary.³⁵

While these ideological strains were developing inside the party, Wijeweera left the party. It is not clear whether he left or was expelled from the party. It is said he was expelled from the CP when he tried to seize control of the party's youth League Federation.³⁶ The other version is, after a meeting of handful of youths from the party in May 1965, they decided to leave a year later.³⁷ Wijeweera and his supporters formed themselves into a clandestine revolutionary movement which advocated a 'one-day revolution'. Until the end of 1969 no formal organizational structure existed and the movement consisted of a small clique of friends from the pro-Chinese CP joined by few other activists, followed by slowly expanding band of sympathisers. Politicus writes that the Wijeweera group after the split from the CP did not have a name perhaps as part of a deliberate plan to build a

35. Politicus, n. 30, p. 267.

36. Politicus, n. 30, p. 267.

37. Kearney & Jiggins, n. 5, p. 52.

political organization around the personality of Rohana Wijeweera.³⁸

The leaders of this split-away group initially sought to win support from within the youth leagues, student associations and trade unions of the Marxist parties. In 1966 a decision was taken to emphasise efforts among the peasantry, and the members of the movement began to explore problems of the rural population. In 1968, they began to concentrate efforts on the universities.³⁹

At this time the movement penetrated into the university student movement, which later became a significant power base of the JVP, this was the time when the university radicals were looking for a new movement and a new leadership. The first such group came from Peradeniya University in the middle of 1968. Subsequently, Castro Dharmasekhere embraced the JVP with his followers at the Vidyalankara University. By the end of 1969, Vidyodaya University also became a stronghold.⁴⁰

38. Politicus, n. 30, p. 267.

39. Kearney & Jiggins, n. 5, p. 52.

40. J. Uyangoda, "Origin and Evolution of the JVP", *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 4, no. 3, 1 June 1981, p. 23.

Later, Mahinda Wijesekhera, a member of the pro-Moscow CP and a student leader at Vidyodaya University, after a brief passage through the pro-Chinese CP, shifted to the JVP bringing with him a large portion of the pro-Moscow CP student organisation.⁴¹

Some amount of tension and internal differences also followed within the organisation. Sometime around April 1970 there seemed to be a struggle for the leadership between Dharmasekhera and Wijeweera. Soon the Dharmasekhera group broke away on differences over Wijeweera's plan for an uprising in April 1970. This was not agreed to by Dharmasekhera.⁴² The other difference between them seems to have been over the caste-orientation of the JVP leadership. Wijeweera belonged to the Karava Caste and wanted people from his caste to assume the subordinate leadership. This also could have been a significant factor which broke the alliance between Wijeweera and Dharmasekhera.⁴³

41. Kearney & Jiggins, n. 5, pp. 52-53.

42. Politicus, n. 30, p. 268.

43. Politicus, n. 30, p. 268.

Parliamentary Elections of 1970

In early 1970, JVP leaders were supposed to have believed that the UNP government would not hold the parliamentary election due in 1970. It was also believed that they would not relinquish power if defeated by the United Front Coalition, and would resort to a dictatorship in association with the military. Consequently, the JVP began to make preparations for armed resistance to the anticipated dictatorship.⁴⁴ Wijeweera adopted the position that the situation in April 1970 was conducive for a violent seizure of power. In such an endeavour, the JVP could anticipate cooperation from the United Front parties and their supporters. A spontaneous mass upsurge was also expected.

During the first months of 1970 the government began to receive information about the existence of a clandestine rebel movement.⁴⁵ A witch-hunt and repression was launched by the UNP government against what it termed as subversive leftist organisations."⁴⁶ Though the repression was aimed at all new organisations which claimed to be revolutionary, the JVP was the

44. A.C. Alles, *Insurgency 1971*, (Colombo: Colombo Apothecaries Co. Ltd., 1976), p.28.

45. Uyangoda, n. 40, p. 57.

46. "What JVP Laid Bare? ", *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 6, no. 35, 28 August 1971, p. 1857.

main target of attack. The government arrested Wijeweera and several other members of the movement in April 1970, while the campaign for the elections of 1970 was underway.⁴⁷ It was the island-wide publicity campaign launched by the movement to secure the release of Wijeweera that brought to the notice of the public the fact that a revolutionary movement called the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna existed. Wijeweera's first public speech at the Vidyodaya University on July 14, 1970 marked the beginning of the period of the JVP's open political activities.⁴⁸ After Wijeweera's release, the organisation emerged under the name JVP.⁴⁹

Even after July 1970, the JVP did not totally abandon its secrecy. The open activities were confined mainly to propaganda and agitation. Poster campaigns were launched, a series of public meetings and lectures were held. But in its vital aspects the movement still adhered to strict secrecy. Political classes continued to be held in secret.⁵⁰ The real political and strategic aims of the movement were still subject to speculation

47. Ibid.

48. Uyangoda, n. 40, p. 23.

49. Politicus, n. 30, p. 269.

50. Uyangoda, n. 40, p. 23.

in the minds of the public. The inner leadership was not known to its rank and file.⁵¹

In 1970, the JVP leaders promised full support to the UF government provided it solved the problem of unemployment, landlessness of peasants,⁵² malnutrition and general economic problems. These measures could be effected only with a radical change in the economic structure of the island, and nationalisation of the foreign-owned agency houses which had a lions share in the islands import-export trade. They simultaneously also emphasised that they would not be satisfied with something but wanted every thing.⁵³

When the elections were held in May 1970 the UF coalition scored a convincing victory, the UNP relinquished power, and in the process, the JVP's plans and preparations for a sudden seizure of power was frustrated.⁵⁴

51. Uyangoda, n. 40, p. 23.

52. Nearly 72% of the population in Sri Lanka is dependent on agriculture. 26% of agricultural families are landless while another 26% own less than half an acre. For details see Politicus, n. 30, p. 261.

53. Urmila Phadnis, "Insurgency in Ceylon: Hard Challenge and Grim Warning", *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 6, no.19, 8 May 1971, p.967.

54. Politicus, n. 30, p. 268.

The United Front Government

In June 1970 Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike took over as the Prime Minister at the head of a "Broad based government,". Some very important portfolios went to Marxist members of the coalition. The United Front Manifesto had promised to take SL out of the British Commonwealth, to establish a socialist state featuring mass popular participation in political action, to readjust foreign policy to identify closely with the socialist countries, to carry out extensive nationalization and expand the public sector of the economy, and to end inequality in incomes and landholdings. There was a general expectation that the left-of-centre government would apply methods of social democracy in achieving these ends.⁵⁵

However, the United Front government was not able to implement these promises immediately after coming to power. There were several limitations on the new government. The financial position of the country was going from bad to worse. An unfavourable balance of trade had already been created down the 60s. Borrowings from the IMF and other commercial banks kept on growing. Shortages of foreign exchange compelled import controls, resulting in increased prices and shortages of

55. A.J. Wilson, "Ceylon: A New Government Takes Office", *Asian Survey*, vol. 9, no. 2, February 1971, pp. 179-180.

essential goods. Investments slowed down and unemployment and underemployment shot up. All these led to a reduction in subsidised and welfare services. The cost of living in 1970 had gone up by 5.9% and the GNP went down from 5.1% in 1969 to 4.1% in 1970.⁵⁶

The United Front's first Budget of October 1970 was an austerity budget which sought to close the yawning gap in the adverse trade balance by curtailing imports. Many food items became scarce and prices shot up. Many factories closed down or produced below capacity because of restrictions on the import of raw materials. Unemployment mounted steadily. In 1970, it was estimated that about 700,000 were unemployed. This included about 10,000 university graduates mainly in the humanities subjects.⁵⁷ The Land army, which provided employment to some 10,000 young people, was disbanded.⁵⁸

Under these circumstances the government was not in a position to carry out nationalization of banks and the plantations. It was decided not to nationalise the plantations

56. Shelton Fernando, "Socialism yet to be Defined", *Statesman*, 27 March 1971.

57. S. Arasaratnam, "The Ceylonese Insurrection of April 1971: Some Causes and Consequences", *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 45, no. 3, February 1972, p. 362.

58. Phadnis, n. 10, p. 592.

immediately because the government was not in a position to pay compensations for the plantations owned partly by foreign capital.⁵⁹

The few changes that the UF government could bring about was in foreign policy issues like recognition of North Korea and the provisional government of South Vietnam, severing of diplomatic relations with Israel and the expulsion of the US-based Asia Foundation, funded by the Americans.⁶⁰ Otherwise, there was not much change in the policies of the UF government from the earlier UNP regime.

Soon the JVP was disillusioned when it saw the pace of change was slow for its liking. The slow implementation of the UF programme seems to have contributed to the impatience and exasperation of youth and thus to have enhanced the following of the JVP.⁶¹

At this stage the leaders of the JVP felt that no acceptable change was possible under the existing constitutional and structural framework. Most leaders now believed that change

59. Arasaratnam, n. 57, p. 361.

60. Phdnis, n.53, p.967.

61. Kearney & Jiggins, n. 5, p. 51.

could be bought about only by a revolutionary seizure of state power and then the destruction of an unequal society and exploitative economic situation could be carried out.⁶² This would be followed by the building of a socialist society.

Within a few months the JVP and the UF government began to clash. The JVP commenced holding public rallies at which the government was criticised for inaction and delay. The parties of the 'old left' now sharing power, responded by accusing the JVP of being a tool of the American CIA. Some even accused them of being supported by the UNP.⁶³

Despite its commencement of overt activities in 1970, the JVP retained its clandestine and conspirational character.⁶⁴ It is difficult to say whether the preparations for the insurrection began before May 1970 were dismantled after the elections or not.⁶⁵ There seems to have been a sharp disagreement within the top leadership circle on the advisability of armed revolt in early 1971. One version was that Wijeweera gave instructions for

62. Arasaratnam, n. 57, p. 362.

63. Blackton, n. 25, p. 36.

64. Kearney & Jiggins, n. 5, p. 57.

65. Alles, n. 44, p. 90.

the seizure of power at a central committee meeting in December 1970.⁶⁶ The Plan was to take control of all administrative posts, to execute all officials and police, to capture or assassinate the Prime Minister as well.⁶⁷

The Police kept track of the secret meetings and labelled the JVP as seditious. Soon some tough measures were taken against the movement including the arrest of its activists. This prompted most of the leaders to go into hiding. In February 1971, Wijeweera made what he thought was a fateful decision. In view of the increasing police repression which he saw as threatening to destroy the movement, and possibly concerned that he might lose control of the organisation, he concluded that the organisation should be armed.⁶⁸ Some JVP units began to collect weapons and engage in robberies to obtain funds.

Simultaneously, there were internal dissensions, particularly severe quarrels and struggles for power among its leaders, disrupting centralised control and leading to independent action by factories and units within the

66. Kearney & Jiggins, n. 5, p. 58.

67. Blackton, n.25, p.35.

68. Kearney & Jiggins, n. 5, p. 58.

organisation. Pressures were building for some swift drastic action.

An intensification of preparation for insurrection was noted by the police in early 1971. An explosion at Eslamulla,¹ which killed several bomb-makers, vindicated earlier police warnings of an arms build-up.⁶⁹ On March 6, 1971 an ultra-left organization, reportedly calling itself 'Maoist Youth Front' led by Dharmasekhara with some 200 followers attacked the US embassy.⁷⁰ The following day the Prime Minister announced the deployment of the armed services for the maintenance of Public Order. On 12 March, the government arrested Wijeweera at Amparai.⁷¹ An explosion at Mars Hall on the University of Ceylon's Peradeniya campus near Kandy forced the government to end its ban on police searches of the University and resulted in the discovery of stockpiles of explosives in several dormitories, previously kept secret.⁷² With such evidence of widespread subversion, the government rounded up known JVF leaders and prescribed the death penalty for offences against life or public property.

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69. Blackton, n. 25, p. 36.

70. Fred Halliday, "The Ceylonese Insurrection", *New Left Review*, (London), no. 69, September-October 1971, p. 80 and James Jupp, *Sri Lanka : Third World Democracy*, (London; Frank Cass, 1978), p. 309.

71. Blackton, n. 25, p. 36.

72. Blackton, n. 25, p. 36.

It was in this setting, with the JVP leadership in disarray and growing numbers of JVP members in custody, that a small group of leaders allegedly met on 2nd April and resolved to execute plans for an insurrection at 11-30 a.m on 5th April. Though many leaders and units believed that the time was not right, but when the insurrection took place, they felt compelled to join with their comrades.⁷³

Conclusion

There were two major factors which contributed to the origin of the JVP -- the socio-economic environment in the 60s and the political background. The economic crisis in the 60s, the demographic explosion expansion of education, mass unemployment, rural landlessness and indebtedness were the major contributory factors to the socio-economic environment. The political variable to this was provided by the degeneration of the left parties after independence, rise of the rural Sinhala middle-class to power and the coming to power of a coalition government in the 1970 general elections.

73. Kearney & Jiggins, n. 5, p. 58.

CHAPTER III

CHARACTER AND COMPOSITION

Immediately after the April 1971 insurrection, the JVP was put down as a youth-led organization. Though it cannot be denied that its influence was strongest amongst the youth yet the character and composition of the JVP is too complex to be dismissed as belonging to any particular age-group or social class. In fact the JVP's support base was not static and shifted according to the needs of the organisation. However, before drawing any conclusions, it would be relevant to look into the various dimensions of the composition of the JVP.

Not many studies are available on the social background of the JVP. One of the most systematic studies was done by Gananath Obeyesekere on the basis of data available regarding the persons who were arrested and surrendered and were held in detention as suspected insurgents.¹ The data confirms that the social composition of the insurgency movement was predominantly one of the youth in their late teens and early twenties. 92.8% of the suspected insurgents belonged to the age group of 16-32

1. The data are from interrogations by government authorities of 10,192 suspected insurgents held in custody. These data were analysed by Gananath Obeyesekere in an article. See Gananath Obeyesekere, "Some Comments on the Social Backgrounds of the April 1971 Insurgency in Sri Lanka (Ceylon)," *Journal of Asian Studies*, (New York) vol. 33, no. 3, May 1974, pp. 367-384.

years. To still narrow it down, 77% of the suspected insurgents belonged to a narrower cluster of 17-26 years.²

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Because of the youthful character of the organisation it is quite expected that most of the suspected insurgents would have been educated upto some level. 32.2% of the suspected insurgents had passed the GCE(O) level. Another 42.3% had passed standard 5-8. Surprisingly, the number with a higher degree was less and the percentage with no education was only 2.5.³

Nearly 80% of the suspected insurgents came from schools known as Maha Vidyals. These schools generally served the village youth and the education imparted in these schools could have been responsible for so many youths from the villages taking part in the insurgency.⁴ Most of these youths were products of mass free education. Schools had poor laboratory facilities and students were generally trained in humanities courses which did not offer good employment prospects. Entering universities was difficult because of limited vacancies. The

2. Ibid., pp.368-369.

3. Ibid., p.377.

4. Ibid., p.376.

consciousness of a bleak future was made good use of in recruiting the youth and students to the insurgency movement.⁵

OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUND

A look at the occupational background of the insurgents will give us an insight into the socio-economic background as well. A majority of the insurgents were employed and only 17.5% was unemployed.⁶ According to Obeyesekere the reasons for discontent amongst the youth was not only high unemployment but also the nature of employment. As less as 0.2% belonged to what can be termed as elite occupation like the bureaucracy and other professions. Apart from the 17.5% unemployed, 40% was underemployed and poorly paid.⁷

In a comparative study of the occupational backgrounds of the son and father, Obeyesekere points out that both parents and sons belonged to similar economic and occupational backgrounds. Yet they had radically differing views of their life situation. The older generation had reconciled to their economic status.

5. For details see Robert Kearney, "Educational Expansion and Political Volatility in Sri Lanka", *Asian Survey*, vol.15, no.9, September 1975, pp.727-744.

6. Obeyesekere, n.1, p. 373.

7. Obeyesekere, n.1, p. 374

Their hopes were on the social mobility of their children who would obtain education and then become upwardly mobile. However, the children had realized the impossibility of achieving those aspirations and were therefore reacting against the system in the most extreme way.⁸

CASTE AND ETHNIC FACTORS

Much against popular perceptions and as suspected the insurgency movement was not a low caste movement. A majority of the insurgents 58.5% belonged to the Goyigama caste which is, status-wise, the highest in Sri Lanka. The Karava, the second major caste's, representation was 6.2%. The third major caste the Salagama was under represented for various reasons. Firstly, Salagama was a tightly knit caste with great deal of internal cohesion. Secondly, Salagama is traditionally hostile to the Karava caste. Since much of the leadership of the insurgency movement came from the Karava caste, it seems the Salagama caste kept away.⁹

Many of the suspected insurgents are believed to have come from the low-castes, the Vahumpura in the low country and the

8. Obeyesekere, n.1, p. 376.

9. Obeyesekere, n.1, p. 372.

*The third major caste
Duduma - toddy
tappers, not
Salagama*

Batgama in the Kandyan area. The most intense and prolonged fighting during the insurrection was in areas where there were concentrations of these two castes - in Elpitiya in the Western province (Vahumpura) and in the Kegalle district (Batgama).¹⁰

The JVP took roots in areas that had long been worked on by the Marxist parties. Members of the Karava caste had long been exposed to Marxist campaigning and agitational activities and the areas populated by the Karava castes was also a stronghold of the LSSP and the CP.¹¹

In spite of Sri Lanka being a multi-ethnic country, yet representation from the other minority groups was absolutely minimal. About 94% of the suspected insurgents were Sinhala-Buddhists and about less than 1% were Tamils, and 0.5% were Muslims.¹² Because of this under-representation amongst other ethnic groups, the JVP was criticized of being prone to chauvinistic tendencies. In his testimony before the Criminal Justice Commission(CJC), which was set up to enquire into the 1971 insurgency, JVP leader Wijeweera had said that "the many

10. Robert Kearney and Janice Jiggins, "The Ceylon Insurrection of 1971" *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, vol. 13, no.1, 1 March 1975, p.44

11. Ibid., p. 45

12. Ibid., p. 44

efforts we made to build cadres among comrades of the national minorities were fruitless."¹³ However, there could be few meaningful reasons to explain the exclusive ethnic character of the JVP. This can be partly explained in terms of the economic backwardness of the Kandyan Sinhalese community.¹⁴

The percentage of employment amongst the Kandyan Sinhalese and low country Sinhalese was 25-26% as compared to 51% among Indian Tamils. In a comparison between the two ethnic groups in regard to land-holdings, it was much higher amongst the Tamils, as high as 6.75 acres in Batticalao to 0.60 acres in Kandy and Nuwara Eliya amongst the Sinhalese.¹⁵ Therefore the desire for change in their economic status was much more amongst the Sinhalese than the Tamils.

JVP AND THE WORKING CLASS

The insurgency in 1971 was primarily led by the youth, a majority of whom were educated and unemployed. A survey of the occupational backgrounds of the suspected insurgents portrays that the working class component amongst the insurgents was

13. Ibid., p. 44.

14. Urmila Phadnis, "Insurgency in Ceylonese Politics: Problems and Prospects," *IDSJ Journal*, vol. 3, no.4, April 1971, p. 602.

15. Ibid., p. 602.

considerably less. Wijeweera had never hesitated in claiming that the JVP was a working class organisation and that after the overthrow of the state, a dictatorship of the proletariat would be established. Speaking before the Criminal Justice Commission(CJC), he claimed that by 1971 they were gaining influence amongst the working class, young workers in factories and work sites.¹⁶ Subsequent events proved otherwise.

The JVP was the result of a split from the traditional left parties over the issue of the role of the working class in the Sri Lankan revolution. They argued that in Sri Lanka the working class comprised of the urban proletariat, the plantation proletariat and the non-plantation peasantry.¹⁷ In spite of its claims of support amongst the urban working class, yet its position on the urban working class was that it was degenerate and therefore incapable of a revolutionary role. Similarly, the plantation proletariat served the interest of imperialists and therefore could not be part of a revolutionary movement.¹⁸ These might be the reasons why the actual component of the urban working class and the plantation proletariat was considerably

16. "Wijeweera's Speech Before the CJC," *New Left Review*, no. 84, March-April 1974, p. 101.

17. Fred Halliday, "The Ceylonese Insurrection", *New Left Review*, no. 69, September-October 1971, p.76.

18. Ibid., p. 76. For details of the JVP's views on the working class refer to chapter IV.

less among the insurgents. The urban working class component was less than 9% among the suspected insurgents captured.¹⁹ And participation from the plantation labour was as low as 1.9%.²⁰ The only segment of the working class from where the JVP got support was the peasantry, which was as high as 26.9% of the total number of suspected of insurgents interviewed.²¹

The relationship of the JVP to the working class has been one of mutual antagonism. During 1971, the JVP insurgents were characterised as reactionary by the plantation workers union and in fact had offered help to the government to suppress the insurgency, which was later sought for and received by the government. About 5000 workers and Trade Union activists took direct part in resisting the insurgents.²² The Sri Lanka Transport Board Intelligence used the observations of bus crews during the insurgency to provide information to government

19. Obeyesekere, n.1, p. 373.

20. Obeyesekere, n.1, p. 373.

21. Obeyesekere, n.1, p. 373.

22. For details see, Sadhan Mukherjee, "Ceylon Revolt of the Youth-II," *New Age*, vol. 19, no.24, 20 June 1971, p. 13 and W.A. Wiswa Warnapala, "The Marxist Parties of Sri Lanka and the 1971 Insurrection", *Asian Survey*, vol. 15, no.9, September 1975, p. 755.

authorities.²³

There was not much support for the JVP from the plantation labour, not only because of its stand on the plantation workers but because of certain events during the insurgency. In many plantations the insurgents looted the personal property of the workers like chickens, goats, foodgrains, etc. The plantation workers also lost their wages since many plantations were closed down due to insurgent activity. Also tea bushes, rubber trees, pepper creepers and cinnamon groves in many places were destroyed by the insurgents which affected the livelihood of the workers.²⁴ These activities did not help in the cause of the plantation workers. Thus one of the most exploited segment of the Sri Lankan working class and a potential revolutionary force was kept away from the insurgent movement. But one thing was clear that the JVP did not have much support amongst the working class.

JVP AND TRADE UNIONS

To assess the extent of support and influence of the JVP in the working class movement, one can look at the support it has got from trade unions and its role in trade union activities.

23. James Jupp, "*Sri Lanka: Third World Democracy*," (London: Frank Cass, 1978), p. 322.

24. Mukherjee, n. 22, p. 13.

In 1971, the JVP had hardly made any efforts to work amongst the trade unions. Any Marxist party would have, in the first place, tried to target the factories, the trade unions and other organizations of the working class. The major sources of its recruitment would be the members of the trade unions. The JVP was very weak in the organised trade union movement. It rejected trade union struggles. Its trade union section was set up late, as a kind of afterthought.²⁵ It was only after the proscription was lifted in 1977 on the JVP that they seriously thought of trade union struggles. However, during the 1980 General strike the JVP played a very dubious role by not supporting the strike.²⁶ The reason advocated for their stand was that they wanted the entire working class to be organised under one trade union to be affiliated to the JVP. This stand was against the basic democratic rights of workers. This attitude of the party has virtually blocked the access routes to the urban proletariat. During 1980, the only trade union of any significance the JVP possessed, the Ceylon Teachers Union, also left them to join the

25. A. Jayaweera, "1971, the JVP and the Falsification of History," *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 1, no.18, 15 January 1979, p.15.

26. For details of the 1980 General strike, refer to S.C. Fernando, "Wijeweera and Trade Unions," *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 4, no. 2, 15 May 1981. This has been discussed in Chapter V.

strike.²⁷

In 1989, during the repeated calls for strikes and boycott of Indian goods, the JVP was able to mobilise the organised labour on a Rs.2,500/- minimum wage demand, despite its tenuous hold over the trade unions.²⁸ This was possible because of two reasons. Firstly, due to the weaknesses of the established union leadership. Secondly, the trade unions, were made to abide by the JVP's dictates through coercion and terror.²⁹

ORGANISATION

Little is known of the organisation or its leadership structure since its origin to the present stage. One major probable reason for this could be its clandestine nature and the periods of proscription during which not much information was available about the organisation.

27. C.A. Chandraprema, *Putschism, Ethnic Chauvinism and Social Revolution*, (Colombo: Independent Students Union, 1989), p. 9.

28. Mervyn De Silva, "The Phoney Peace is Over - Protracted War Begins," *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 12, no. 5, 1 July 1989, p. 3.

29. *Times of India*, 13 September 1989.

Though the idea of an organisation had taken place as early as 1965, yet it was in late 1969 that the leaders of the movement decided to build a more formal and coherent organisation.³⁰ It was decided, during the discussions on the organizational structure, that the Central Committee of the party should consist of the District Secretaries and few others nominated.³¹ The country was to be divided into 27 districts.³² At the base of the structure were cells of five members regional and district committees, each headed by a Secretary.³³

The structure of the organisation above the district level is not clear. The district leaders comprised the Central Committee. One version says that the Central committee consisted of eleven members.³⁴ The body above the Central Committee, the Politbureau was never elected formally. There were plans to hold a party congress at the end of 1970 which was supposed to elect the Politbureau. However, due to fear of repressive action such a party congress was never held. Though there was no official

30. Kearney & Jiggins, n. 10, p. 53.

31. Swaroop Rani Dubey, *One Day Revolution in Sri Lanka: Anatomy of 1971 Insurrection*, (Jaipur: Aalekh Publishers, 1988), pp. 65-66.

32. A.C. Alles, *Insurgency 1971*, (Colombo: Colombo Apothecaries Co. Ltd., 1976), p. 32.

33. Kearney & Jiggins, n. 10, p. 53.

34. Kearney & Jiggins, n. 10, p. 53.

election for the Polit-bureau but it was understood that such a body consisting of twelve members did exist.³⁵ The first meeting of the Politbureau was held on 2nd April 1971 where the date of the insurrection was decided.³⁶ These facts are put to doubt, because while speaking before the CJC Wijeweera had denied the existence of a Central Committee or a Politbureau and claimed that he was the leader but did not have a formal title.³⁷ One thing was quite evident, that with or without the existence of the Polit-bureau, most of the decisions were taken by Wijeweera.³⁸

Recruitment of members was by means of an interview conducted by an important member of the district. After selection, a candidate had to attend the first four lectures. After assessing their trustworthiness they were allowed to attend the fifth lecture.³⁹ For recruitment of students to the organisation, the JVP obtained control of the Samajwadi Sisiya Sangamaya (Socialist Students Society). They also had a front to

Sisiya
Sangamaya

35. Alles, n. 32, p. 34.

36. Alles, n. 32, p. 34.

37. Kearney & Jiggins, n. 10, p. 53.

38. Alles, n. 32, p. 34.

39. Alles, n. 32, p. 32.

work with the Clergy known as the Deshpremi Bhikkhu Peramuna (Patriotic Monks Front)⁴⁰ No one knows for sure, how large the JVP is because its size fluctuates according to its needs.

There is not much information available on the organizational structure of the JVP after its proscription in 1971. But it seems till about 1977 it did not have a coherent and well-knit structure as most of its leaders had been jailed. After the release of the top leaders in 1977, the JVP built up its organisation again. Wijeweera provided the continuity. Most of the other leaders had dropped out. After 1977, the JVP was organised more on the lines of a traditional political party which had to contest elections as well. Their efforts at emulating traditional political parties did not last long because of their proscription in 1983 again. In their later phase, not much is known about the organizational structure. But, it is believed that it has a Politbureau of nine members and a Central Committee of eleven members.⁴¹

40. Dubey, n. 31, p. 68.

41. Mohan Ram, "The JVP has Arrived", *The Sunday Mail*, (New Delhi), 6-12 August 1989.

JVP AND ITS ARMED DIVISION

Almost all revolutionary movements which believe in the violent seizure of power have, either a separate armed military division, or the armed wing is integrated with the political structure of the organisation. The JVP did not have a separate armed division in 1971. All the operations during the insurrection in 1971 was carried out by what is known as "A class members" of JVP.⁴² It was only in 1987, after the signing of the Indo-Sri Lankan accord that the name of an organisation called the Deshpremi Janata ^{Vijāparaya} ~~Vijayaprayam~~ DJV (Patriotic People's Movement) having links with the JVP was heard about.

The DJV's origins, nature and its relationship with the JVP is still shrouded in mystery. It is not clear whether the JVP and the DJV, are separate entities overlapping in composition or the DJV is the paramilitary wing of the JVP. Reports indicate that the DJV was founded by soldiers from a disbanded regiment called Rajaratha Rifles, which was deployed against the Tamils in 1984-85.⁴³ The DJV has often claimed responsibility for

42. In 1971, the membership of the JVP was divided into two lists. List 'A' consisted of those members who had attended the fifth lecture and had shown their willingness to fight. The rest of the members were put in List 'B'. For details see Alles, n. 32, p. 32.

43. Eduardo Marino, *Political Killings in Southern Sri Lanka: On the Brink of Civil War*. (A Compilation and Report), (An International Alert Publication, 1989), p. 6.

abductions and killings publicly whereas the JVP has not. Wijeweera in an interview to "The Sunday Times" had claimed that "the DJV is not the armed division of the JVP". The JVP has still not set up an armed division but will do so when it is needed and is appropriate. However, he did not deny that there were members of JVP who were part of DJV also.⁴⁴ Possibly upto the end of 1988 the JVP claimed a separate identity from the DJV which they acknowledged that they were supporting but not directing.⁴⁵ Later the position changed and the JVP had given instructions to the DJV to punish its enemies. Strong suspicions that the DJV and JVP were operating together was discerned from a statement issued by the Joint Commanding Headquarters of the Patriotic Armed Troops, signed by the Chief Commanding Officer, Keerthi Wijebahu, giving eight conditions for a campaign to boycott Indian goods.⁴⁶

Classical Marxist theory makes a clear distinction between popular revolution in which the broad masses intervene to overthrow the existing State and all forms of coups and conspiracies in which an organised minority acts to take control of the State into its own hands. They also distinguish between

44. "Wijeweera Replies Readers," *The Sunday Times*(Colombo), 13 November 1988.

45. Marino, n. 43, p. 6

46. See Appendix - C.

the methods used in one or the other form of overthrowing the State. Popular participation, mass uprising are revolutionary forms. Explosion of bombs in public places, sabotage and assassination of individuals are considered as terrorist acts. The JVP/DJV violence in defence of the motherland and in favour of social revolution has been a mixture of terrorist acts against non-combatants, vendetta terror against unarmed political rivals and their families.⁴⁷ Walter Laqueur has observed, "one learns more about a 'terrorist group' by looking at its victims than at its manifestoes."⁴⁸ The JVP's victims after the accord does give us some idea about its support base.

whose accord? where? p

After the signing of the accord, all political parties like the UNP, all the Left parties and the United Socialist Alliance(USA) became targets. These killings were carried out not only against the ruling party, the UNP which had signed the accord, but all other parties with whom the JVP's support base did not coincide. Since these killings were done in the name of Tamil gains in the north, it appealed to the rural petty, bourgeoisie which is prone to chauvinist sentiments. Trade

47. Marino, n. 43, p. 8.

48. Quoted in Neil Livingstone, *The War Against Terrorism* (Massachusetts:Lexington Books, 1986), p. 41. When it comes to violence, it is difficult to distinguish insurgent groups from terrorist groups. Therefore, quite often both the terms have been used synonymously.

unions affiliated to the UNP like the JSS and the SLTB were also targeted.⁴⁹ The JVP was able to gun down some of the top leaders of the UNP like Harsha Abeywardhene and Nandlal Fernando. But the most prominent and perhaps the most celebrated victim of the JVP/DJV was the actor-turned-politician, Vijaya Kumaranatunga, the founder leader of Sri Lanka Mahajana Party, SLMP (Sri Lanka People's Party). When he was gunned down in February 1988 he was tipped to be the leader of the newly formed USA and its Presidential candidate. Kumaranatunga, the son-in-law of Mrs. Bandaranaike, had earlier on been with the SLFP. In 1984, he broke away from the SLFP, taking a sizable section of left-leaning members of the SLFP with him to form the SLMP. Kumaranatunga was immensely popular and stood for a just political solution to the ethnic question. Under his leadership, the USA could have become a formidable challenge, to the SLFP and the JVP. The reasons advocated by the JVP for his killing was his links with the Tamil militants. That may have been the apparent reason but the actual reason seemed to be the threat posed by Kumaranatunga who was gradually winning over the left-leaning youths from all other parties. The other possible reason could be that the assassination was carried out with the view to wreck the coalition being forged between the CP, LSSP, NSSP and the SLMP. The JVP wanted to destroy the effort of these

[Handwritten scribbles]

private source ?

49. For details of the killings carried out by JVP/DJV during the two years after the accord refer to Marino, n. 43, pp. 2-32.

parties to establish links with the more socialist-oriented EPRLF.⁵⁰

Initially, the SLFP members were exempt from the violent campaigns of the JVP. And the SLFP never condemned the JVP for the use of armed terrorism for political purposes. Possibly the SLFP had thought of using the JVP as its paramilitary wing. The physical elimination of Left and Trade Union leaders and the intimidations of the grass-root level workers was assumed to secure the SLFP victory both at the presidential and parliamentary elections.⁵¹ The JVP on its part had perceived that the SLFP was the only party with which it could form an alliance, because both the parties appeal to the same class. But when this alliance could not be formed due to some misunderstanding, after December 1988, the JVP targeted SLFP members as well. The efforts to form an alliance was only a strategy. The JVP perceives the SLFP as a major competitor, who have a large mass support amongst the Sinhala-Buddhists. In the last two years the JVP has steadily advanced from the

50. *Times of India*, 7 April 1989.

51. For details, see Chapter V.

petite-bourgeois support to a much wider middle-class support.⁵² It was to consolidate this support that the SLFP became the JVP's target.

Apart from political activists, the other groups which came under attack were the security personnel, human rights activists, etc. This was a grave mistake. The JVP undermined its social base by killing members of the security forces.⁵³ The average Sinhala soldier comes from the same lower-middle class Sinhala educated rural family as the JVP activist.⁵⁴ Their prejudices and frustrations are the same. When the JVP started indiscriminately killing members of the security forces, they attacked their own support base indirectly.

EFFORTS TO EXPAND THEIR SUPPORT BASE

After the Indo-Sri Lanka accord, the JVP is supposed to have widened its support base. Its composition remains the same. It is still very much a Sinhala party, made up basically of

52. Mervyn De Silva, "Premadasa's Bid to Outflank the JVP", *Times of India* 8 June 1989.

53. Dayan Jayatilleke, "Sinhala and Tamil Left and the Tigers", *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 12, no. 2, 15 May 1989, p. 16.

54. Mervyn De Silva, "Premadasa Makes a Desperate Move," *Times of India* 13 April 1989.

students, including school children and youths.⁵⁵

However, as in 1971, the JVP has not been able to make inroads into the working class. It has a few insignificant unions under its control and has infiltrated a few. It does not rely on the active support of the working class but ensures support through threats and terror tactics.⁵⁶ Matters of class interest has been diminishing for the JVP as it has adopted a Sinhala chauvinist tone. The idea being to create a support base on anti-Tamil feelings. The JVP propaganda today is aimed at recruiting members from any social class.⁵⁷ It is alleged, that the recent anti-Indian campaign and boycott of Indian goods could have been done in the interests of the Sinhala business-class.⁵⁸ After Wijeweera's capture and interrogation a lot of information about JVP activity and those assisting it had come to light and a list of persons involved was given to the President. In this list were names of several big businessmen.⁵⁹

55. Seema Guha, "Lanka's JVP Widens its Mass Base", *Times of India*, 10 March 1989.

56. Ibid.

57. Chandraprema, n. 27, p. 24.

58. S.D. Muni, "JVP and the IPKF", *Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 24 August 1989.

59. Suranimala, "The Last Days of Wijeweera", *The Sunday Times*, 19 November 1989.

IDEALISM

The JVP's appeal based on its idealism is also fading. At the initial stages some amount of idealism could be detected in their life styles. They conformed to an almost ascetic code of conduct. They shunned liquor and tobacco. Wijeweera had appealed to the cadres to discard western habits and fashions.⁶⁰ However, when Wijeweera was captured in 1989, he seems to have undergone a change himself. He was living in the guise of a proprietor planter called Mr. Attanayake in a 16 acre plantation area. He seemed to be enjoying the very best of life.⁶¹

This, along with their indiscriminate killings has gone a long way in negating the earlier appeal they had. There has been lot of resentment not only against the JVP's present acts by the common masses, but also from former leaders and members.⁶² It is not known what are the present recruitment methods of the JVP, on what basis it mobilises support. But one factor is becoming quite clear, that is, the support that it had earlier due to its appeal is now gradually waning away.

60. A. J. Wilson, "Ceylon: The People's Liberation Front and the Revolution that Failed", *Pacific Community*, vol. 3, no. 2, January 1972, p. 369.

61. Suranimala, n.59.

62. "Eschew Violence Call by Monk - Former JVP Member," *The Sunday Observer*, (Colombo) 19 November 1989.

Why did not you include the JVP strike area?

CHAPTER IV
THEORY AND IDEOLOGY

The whole phenomenon of the JVP - its class character, slogans and demands, forms of activities, insurrection can be viewed through its ideology. Moreover, if the JVP is distinct from the other left parties and groups in Sri Lanka, this distinction is mainly visible in the sphere of ideology. And it is this distinctive ideology that enabled the JVP to generate a tremendous appeal and command a large following among the youth, which in turn, shaped the nature and course of the movement.

A study of the social base of the JVP has already established that the social class to which the JVP belonged was the petty-bourgeoisie, primarily, consisting of youths and students.¹ In the Sri Lankan context, this petty-bourgeois ideology got radicalised due to the massive socio-economic crisis in which this class got trapped.²

The petty-bourgeoisie, once radicalised and seeking for immediate social changes, regards itself as the agent and catalyst of social revolution. The radical petty-bourgeoisie

1. For the social base of the JVP refer to chapter III.

2. Uyangoda, "Theory and Ideology of the JVP", *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 4, no. 5, 1 July 1981, p. 22.

believes that it is the sole agent of social change and transformation in a situation where the working class is believed to have abdicated its historical mission of overthrowing the ruling class.³ This is why such petty-bourgeoisie sections as youths and students usurped the historical role of the working class and believed that it was their historical destiny to play the vanguard role in social revolution. This self-deception on the part of the petty-bourgeoisie was the direct result of its false consciousness.⁴

It was because of the youthful, rural and Sinhala-educated character, the JVP developed its ideology less consistently that had only a superficial resemblance to Marxism-Leninism.⁵ Its leaders claimed to be Marxists, having derived their inspirations from Marx, Mao, Guevara, Ho Chi Minh, and have also emphasized the indigenous traditions derived from Sinhalese Buddhism. Apart from the international figures, the leaders referred to the nationalist Buddhist leaders like Keppetipola Adikarama,

3. Ibid p. 24.

4. Ibid, p. 24.

5. Ibid, p. 24.

One source: Adikarama, Keppetipola

Wariapola, Kudakapola, and Puran Appu.⁶

It is not clear what constitutes the ideological core of the JVP. It was eclectic and had borrowed from various sources. From the LSSP tradition it drew on Trotsky's criticism of Stalinism and from the Communist Party the "popular front" approach. From Maoism it drew on the assertion that the peasantry would be the backbone of the revolution.⁷ Further, influences of the ideas and experiments of Castro & Guevara are reflected in its rejection of formal Communist Party tactics based on the urban working class and its institutions and the belief that armed insurrection was the only means of bringing socialism.⁸ Though much was made of the North Korean links with the revolutionaries, yet there is no evidence that the JVP studied with any care Kim-Il-Sung's works, which were translated to Sinhalese by 1970.⁹ Doubts do exist whether the JVP leadership even read the basic texts of Marxism-Leninism seriously. There is an instance when a cadre after being captured and imprisoned confessed, "after several

6. "Wijeweera's Speech Before the CJC", *New Left Review*, no. 84, March-April 1974, p. 99. Also see, Urmila Phadnis, "Insurgency in Ceylonese Politics: Problems and Prospects", *IDSA Journal*, vol. 3, no. 4, April 1971 p. 596.

7. James Jupp, *Sri Lanka: Third World Democracy*, (London; Frank Cass, 1978), pp. 302-303.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 302-303.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 302.

years of parroting vulgar quasi-Marxist cliches as a full-time cadre, it was only in jail that I first read 'The Communist Manifesto'.¹⁰

The socio-political environment after independence was conducive to the growth of the movement and to mobilise support. In the initial phase after independence political power was still held by the elites who had ruled along with the British. The monopoly of power held by this urban based western-oriented elite which dominated the UNP was made to give way in 1956 to a coalition of parties which was more nationalist in orientation.¹¹ This was possible because of the heightened consciousness of nationalism and the revival of Buddhism. The resurgence of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism helped the JVP in its growth. Their claim was that they were patriotic Marxists.¹² They exploited such issues as caste, social and religious prejudices among the Sinhalese petty bourgeoisie. The JVP was, therefore, not much influenced by western radical thinking, though they might have been aware of it.

10. Quoted in "Metamorphosis of the JVP", *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 13, no. 36, 9 September 1978, p. 1552.

11. Howard Wriggins, *Dilemmas of a New Nation*, (New York: Princeton, 1960), pp. 326-366.

12. Politicus, "The April Revolt in Ceylon", *Asian Survey*, vol. 12, no. 8, March 1972, p. 267.

The basis of the JVP ideology prior to the 1971 insurrection, were contained in five lectures. These five lectures were used for indoctrination of cadres and were delivered by the senior leaders and the hardcore members. These five lectures have become a sort of legend partly due to the magnetic power believed to have contained in them and partly due to the varied interpretations given to them.

LECTURE NO. 1:THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

The first lecture contained JVP's diagnosis of the socio-economic crisis in Sri Lanka and the prescription that shows the way out.

The economic crisis in the country was because of the colonial and neocolonial capitalist system that was being transformed into a political crisis. Stress was on the problems of landless people, drought and water scarcity in the dry zone, and floods and soil erosion in the wet zone. While deposing before the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC), Wijeweera said that the peasants were rendered landless as a result of the exploitation by the capitalist class, particularly in the hill country where the capitalists consolidated the fragmented agricultural land owned by the peasants into tea-estates. In these areas the Indian immigrant population is in the majority

and the peasants cannot have higher wages because they cannot compete with the wages and service conditions offered by the estate owners.¹³

The JVP was particularly severe in its condemnation of the plantation sector. Wijeweera at a meeting in Kandy on 10 September 1970, said that the JVP would not depend on a plantation economy which was directly responsible for soil erosion, floods and droughts. The JVP's plan for economic revival would contain a programme for vast reforestation of the plantation areas.¹⁴ Further, the takeover and its distribution of the plantations was viewed as a solution to the landlessness of the Kandyan Sinhalese peasantry.¹⁵

The solution that the JVP offered was agriculture based. It believed tea plantations should cease to expand and that food should be grown on abandoned estates. Land tenure had become so unequal that collectivisation was the only solution. Rice imports would be stopped and the resulting foreign exchange used

13. For details see *Ceylon Daily News*, 10 November 1972 and Swaroop Rani Dubey, *One-day Revolution in Sri Lanka : Anatomy of 1971 Insurrection*, (Jaipur: Aalekh Publishers, 1988), p. 59.

14. As cited in A.J. Wilson, "Ceylon : The people's liberation Front and the Revolution that Failed", *Pacific Community*, (Tokyo), vol. 3, no. 2, January 1972, p. 372.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 372.

for capital development. Rivers would be harnessed for hydro-electricity as a basis for industrialization and water would be redirected into the Dry Zone for irrigation. Foreign aid was to be rejected.¹⁶

There was a specific reference to the education system also which was producing only arts graduates who were not being provided employment.¹⁷

There was nothing extraordinary or revealing about this programme. It mostly derived from the Marxist and SLFP analyses made over the years. Their economic programme was an outcome of the class basis of the JVP. Since the JVP consisted of the petty-bourgeoisie, it was logical that they would attack the national bourgeoisie for not reversing its links with foreign capital or in losing its wealth in land. The JVP programme which was based on agriculture, promised that it was capable of providing most of the future employment.¹⁸

The lecture on the Economic Crisis, was one of the lectures which did not have major modifications later. Infact, this stand

16. Jupp, n. 7, p. 305.

17. Ibid., p. 305.

18. Ibid., p. 305.

on the Sri Lankan economy had not changed at all. The stand that they took prior to the 1971 insurrection, was also adhered to before the 1982 Presidential elections. In their revolutionary policy declaration it was declared,

Action shall be taken to change the colonial economic structure based on an unitary commercial plantation system..... A fully planned socialist economic structure shall be established, and the existing capitalist mixed economy shall be completely abolished.¹⁹

As late as 1989, a JVP pamphlet spoke of the bankrupt Sri Lankan economy, criticising its policies of external borrowings and the predominance given to the private sector over the state sector.²⁰

This is one lecture, where the JVP has maintained a consistent line all through out since 1971 till 1989.

LECTURE NO. 2: INDEPENDENCE - A NEO-COLONIAL STRATEGEM

This lecture dealt with the question whether Sri Lanka is really independent. The dependence of Sri Lanka on the tea industry, World Bank, loans and foreign aid was well known. The

19. Quoted from The Revolutionary Policy Declaration of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People's Liberation Front of Sri Lanka), (A Niyamuwa Publication, n.d.), p.23.

20. According to Pamphlet made available by some Sri Lankan sources.

LSSP, twenty years ago had said that Sri Lanka's formal independence merely hid its total dependence on western markets, plantation owners and financial institutions. The Communist Party had equally stressed that the US had replaced Britain as the Centre of world imperialism and maintained that position by military pacts and the trading policies of MNCs. This critique was something akin to the SLFP's stand. Where the JVP differed was in pointing out that the coalition government of 1970 itself was part and product of neo-imperialism.²¹ They argued that the SLFP was the party of the national bourgeois class, having strong affiliations with the imperialists who had created them by replacing the feudal economic system by a neo-colonial capitalist economy. The 'middle-path' between capitalism and socialism espoused by Mrs. Bandaranaike was denounced as opportunism "a perfect example of the weak vacillating nature of the class."²²

The independence granted to Sri Lanka was only "a strategic manoeuvre on the part of British imperialism to protect its colonial property system from the rising waves of anti-imperialist liberation struggles".²³

21. Jupp, n. 7, p. 304.

22. Quoted in Jupp, n. 7, p. 304.

23. A.C. Alles, *Insurgency - 1971*, (Colombo : The Colombo Apothecaries Co. Ltd., 1976), p. 16.

The JVP believed that British institutions were not suitable to Sri Lanka and were only preserved because the classes which dominated the system also benefited from it. The multi-party system and alteration of parties interfered with planning for consistent development. The advantage of a one-party system with popular support was that it made such development possible. The JVP favoured a strong one-party rule, collectivisation of land and the centralisation of villages.²⁴

After the proscription on the JVP was lifted in 1977, they reiterated their stand on neo-colonialism during the 1982 Presidential elections. They said,

Temporary patchwork, minor changes and reforms, in short the perpetuation of the neo-colonial socio-economic formation and a persistent adherence to the bankrupt capitalist path of development will not help us to resolve this destructive crisis or to overcome it. It is pointless treating the symptoms of the disease ; it is the origin of the disease that requires attention. If this crisis is to be overcome, the neo-colonial socio-economic formation on which it is based should be driven out. Should be totally and effectively replaced by a new socialist socio-economic formation.²⁵

There is not much evidence on the JVP's stand on neo-colonialism at later stages. But after 1987, their focus has been more on Indian imperialism rather than neo-colonialism.

24. Jupp, n. 7, p. 306.

25. Revolutionary Policy Declaration of the JVP, n.19, p.3.

LECTURE NO.3: INDIAN EXPANSIONISM

This lecture painted a picture of what was perceived as the economic, political and cultural threat from India. According to this lecture, the thrust for "Indian Expansionism" in the region derived from the needs of Indian capital. Indian Capitalism was bound to look for more markets and this would lead to the colonisation of the neighbouring countries.

Speaking before the Criminal Justice Commission, Wijeweera said,

The Third class concerned the way in which Indian expansionism affected Sri Lanka. The idea of Indian expansionism was first put forward by the Chinese Communist Party. The editorial board of this party's daily newspaper "Renmin Ribao" published two articles entitled the "The Chinese-Indian Border struggle and the Nehru Doctrine." These gave a lengthy expose 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 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.²⁶

The perceived factors through which Indian capitalism operated was through trade, smuggling of goods, the Federal party, Indian cultural expansionism, illicit immigration and Indian plantation labour.²⁷ The argument was that Indian Capital dominated and even monopolised some sectors of the export-import trade. These capitalists had their bases in India and their exploitative activities in Sri Lanka were designed to contribute to the development of the Indian Capitalist class. These capitalists also engaged in contraband. The federal party was an extension of the Tamils in India and was seen as a fifth column. Cultural penetration was through the use of films, magazines, music etc.²⁸

The background to this lecture was a historical reference to South Indian invasions on Sri Lanka during the times of Sena, Guttika, Ellara, etc. The modern threat to Sri Lanka from Indian expansionism was seen as a continuation of ancient threats to the modern threat to Sri Lanka from Indian expansionism.
you accept a threat?

26. Wijeweera's Speech Before the CJC, n. 6, p. 96.

27. Kumari Jayawardena, "Sinhala Chauvinism of the JVP", *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 7, no. 10, 15 September 1984, p. 10.

28. Ibid.

whose ?

Sinhala people from South Indians.²⁹. The signing of the record in 1987 and subsequent placement of troops on Sri Lankan soil was perceived as an indirect invasion of Sri Lanka with the help of a puppet regime in the form of UNP government.

The crucial part of this lecture was the attitude of the JVP to plantation labour. The lecture on the Economic Crisis had already stated that they were against the plantation economy and it had to be destroyed in order to build-up a self sufficient economy in Sri Lanka. They even advocated burning-up the plantation crops and reverting the lands back to paddy and 'Chena' cultivation.³⁰. They alleged that the plantation workers who had been brought to Sri Lanka by the British to serve imperialist interests, lived in the best parts of Sri Lanka and enjoyed benefits like housing, education and health facilities, their conditions and living standards were superior to those of Sinhala peasants.³¹

Wijeweera argued that no evolutionary movement could succeed if it was heavily based on the support of minorities. He wanted

29. Ibid., p.9.

30. Ibid., p. 10.

31. A. Jayaweera, "The JVP and the Falsification of History", *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 1, no. 18, 15 January 1979, p. 15.

and had in fact tried to bring the plantation workers into their movement, but failed.³² This was a contradictory position that he was taking, against his earlier statements. Nevertheless, the reason why he was against the plantation workers was because they had no loyalties to Sri Lanka. They had relations in India and sent substantial earnings to their relatives in India. There were many stateless persons amongst the plantation workers who were not even sure they would get Sri Lankan citizenship. He admitted that according to Marxist theory all the workers --- rural, urban and plantation should work together for a successful revolution but he was convinced that the Indian plantation workers who were in the grip of Indian capitalists could not be trusted and, therefore, decided to exclude them from a role in the revolution.³³ However, after the revolution if these plantation workers became Sri Lankan citizens and did not oppose the closing down of the plantations, the party would welcome them. If not, they would be treated as counter-revolutionaries.³⁴

The approach of the JVP to the minorities was based on a chauvinist view which regards Tamil Capitalists, Tamil peasants and Tamil plantation workers as one homogeneous group with an

32. "Wijeweera's Speech Before the CJC", n. 6, p. 96.

33. "Wijeweera's Speech Before the CJC", n. 6, p. 96.

34. Jayawardena, n. 27, p. 10.

extra-territorial loyalty. In spite of professing to be Marxists, no attempt was made to distinguish Tamils on a class basis.³⁵. This approach revealed a strong commitment to Sinhala nationalism and was much more strongly evident in their solution for the ethnic problem. The party advocated the relocation of the population of the country so that Sinhalese and Tamils would be dispersed all over the island. It was claimed, that this would solve the ethnic problem which largely was a result of the occupation of geographical areas by different ethnic groups.³⁶ This solution was based on the theory of assimilation whereby the Tamil minority would be gradually absorbed into the majority.³⁷.

Following the insurrection and self-criticism during the subsequent period, the JVP changed its line on the ethnic question. The lecture on Indian expansionism was dropped from

35. Jayawardena, n. 27, p. 10.

36. Jayawardena, n. 27, p. 10.

37. Jayawardena, n. 27, p. 10. The Sinhala Chauvinist ideology expressed above proved to be a factor inhibiting in understanding the plight of the Tamil plantation workers and made it difficult for the JVP to attract Tamil youths. The membership of Tamil youths in the JVP was less than one per cent at the time of the insurrection in 1971. See also Gamini Samaranayake, "The changing attitude towards the Tamil problem within the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)", in Abeysekere Gunasinghe, ed., *Facts of Ethnicity in Sri Lanka*, (Colombo: Social Scientists Association, 1987), p. 279.

the programme of instruction.³⁸ The adherence to a nationalist tone was blamed on Stalinist and Maoist influences on their thinking. They accepted that the Tamil people were a nationality and were subjected to oppression as a minority. They condemned all forms of discrimination based on ethnicity, and believed that the Sinhala-only policy should be changed to one of equal status for both languages. They advocated that plantation workers and not the Sri Lankan State, should be allowed to make their choice of repatriation or citizenship.³⁹

However, the JVP view on the Tamil national question was not clear. In 1976 the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) gave the call for a separate state. Though the JVP recognised the right of self-determination for the Tamil people, yet it did not agree for secession or a separate state. They believed that the national question could be solved by solving the socio-economic problems and within the framework of democratic centralisation rather than arbitrary centralisation.⁴⁰ During this period there was the involvement of some Tamils in JVP activities. Some Tamils appeared on the lists of candidates put forward by the JVP

38. Jayawardena, n. 27, p. 10 and Samaranayake, n. 37, p. 283.

39. Samaranayake, n. 37, p. 284.

40. Samaranayake, n. 37, p. 285.

for district and municipal council elections.⁴¹ From 1980 onwards the Anti-Eelam stand taken by the JVP was more clear and precise. The JVP contested the Presidential elections in 1982 under the slogan of anti-Eelam.⁴² The moderate TULF and the Tamil Militant groups all have come under heavy attack for being imperialist stooges.⁴³ After the signing of the Indo-Sri Lankan accord, the JVP has violently protested against any kind of devolution of powers to the Tamils. According to Wijeweera a federal set-up could not bring unity in the country. He feared that these proposals were made to isolate communities, divide people. India is behind these proposals because of imperialist designs.⁴⁴ However, the main fear of Wijeweera seems to be that with the provision for a Provincial council about 33% of land will go to only 12% of Tamils.⁴⁵ In spite of repeated appeals to have discussions with the Sri Lankan government the JVP refused on the grounds that talks could be held only after the abrogation of the accord and the withdrawal of the IPKF. From the shifting positions of the JVP on the national question the JVP has

41. Jayawardena, n. 27, p. 11 and Dubey, n. 11, p. 171.

42. Samaranayake, n. 37, p. 287.

43. "Eelam Militants are all CIA says JVP", *Lanka Gaurdian*, vol. 18, no. 2, 15 May 1985, p. 4 and Mohan Ram, "The JVP has arrived", *Sunday Mail*, (New Delhi), 6-12 August 1989.

44. Wijeweera's Speech Translation from Sinhalese Transcripts of Taped Speech, April 1988.

45. Ibid.

actually shown its inability to present a definite solution to the ethnic problem. This stand has alienated them from the minorities as well as the Left movement.

LECTURE NO. 4: THE LEFT MOVEMENT IN SRI LANKA

The JVP lecture on the left movement in Sri Lanka was an indictment of the existing left parties as well as the established parliamentary framework. The leaders of the left parties came under heavy criticism as they had no revolutionary experience, being members of the upper middle-classes who talked about revolution while participating in the parliamentary process.⁴⁶ Wijeweera left the pro-Chinese Communist party criticising the party for concentrating more on urban work and for ignoring the Sri Lanka peasantry in the non-plantation sector. The critique of the pro-Chinese communist party by the JVP was based on two premises. One, that there was no independent national bourgeoisie in Sri Lanka, and two, that the non-plantation peasantry were the 'main force' of the Sri Lankan revolution. They argued that there were three basic revolutionary forces in Sri Lanka, one, the urban proletariat, two, the plantation proletariat, and three, the non-plantation peasantry.⁴⁷ The urban proletariat was the best organized but it

46. Jupp, n. 7, p. 306.

47. Fred Halliday, "The Ceylonese Insurrection", *New Left Review*, no. 69, September-October 1971, p. 76.

was degenerate as it was controlled and organized under reformist leaders. The Tamil plantation proletariat served the interests of the imperialists and no revolutionary movement would succeed if it was based on them. It believed that the main force of Sri Lankan revolution was the peasantry in the non-plantation sector. The left parties had not analysed the problem of the peasantry scientifically and accurately, and had made no attempt to establish a worker-peasant alliance nor any move to unite the entire oppressed class and work towards socialist revolution.⁴⁸

The Left parties came under criticism at a later stage also, for various other reasons. Immediately after the proscription on the JVP was lifted in 1977 and its leaders released, the Left parties came under a scathing attack. First, they derided the left parties for having supported the coalition government in suppressing the JVP insurgency. Secondly, some of the Marxist leaders were criticised because of certain policies carried out by them as members of the coalition government. The support given by the Left parties to the CJC act was also heavily criticised.⁴⁹

48. Ibid., p. 77.

49. "The JVP", *The Tribune*, vol. 22, no. 22, 19 November 1977, p.21.

Since 1977, the JVP has stuck to the position that the Left parties in Sri Lanka can never come to power, except in a coalition government.⁵⁰

LECTURE NO.5: THE PATH TO SOCIALISM IN SRI LANKA

This lecture dealt with the necessity of an armed struggle and its military strategy was discussed, as well. Speaking before the CJC Wijeweera said,

After the publication of Che's Guerrilla Warfare certain sympathizers as well as members, 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 thought that the Sri Lankan revolution should be a repeat of the Chinese revolution with protracted war moving from the countryside to the towns. There were others... who advocated the example of the Russian revolution. It was these factors which led to the preparation of the fifth class.⁵¹

This class was intended to make a fundamental analysis of the experience gained by the international working-class movement in their class struggle starting from the Paris Commune of 1871. The difference between social reform and social revolution was explained and pointed out that reforms serve the capitalist class

50. "Wijeweera Replies Readers", *Sunday Times*, 13 November 1988.

51. "Wijeweera's Speech Before the CJC", n. 6, p. 96.

and revolutions the proletariat. The path a revolution had taken in a country under certain conditions were bound to differ from the course in another. Revolutions do not follow a single uniform path but vary in their paths depending on the time, the place and conditions peculiar to each occasion. In this way the Chinese revolution was different from the Russian and the Cuban different from both. Therefore it was possible to build a model different from previous living experiences.⁵²

The founding members were convinced that power could not be captured without a successful armed revolution. Because no capitalist force in power would like to hand over power peacefully, without resistance. Quoting from Engel's treatise on the "Principles of Communism" before the CJC Wijeweera said that though violence is not essential but violence was unavoidable in a revolution. Revolution could not be brought about by democratic process and by peaceful means.⁵³

That armed insurrection and not guerrilla warfare was the appropriate form of revolutionary struggle in Sri Lanka was developed while the JVP was still clandestine. This developed partly from an analysis of the geographical and demographic

52. Ibid., p. 97.

53. Dubey, n. 13, p. 62.

structure of the island, a small densely populated area with relatively weak security force.⁵⁴

Their stand on armed revolution and extra-parliamentary struggles changed at a later stage- but the goal was still the establishment of a proletarian government. After 1977 they proclaimed their belief in the parliamentary process. Lionel Bopage, while writing in an article wrote,

We must, while being conscious of our revolutionary strategies and formulating the appropriate methods of action, learn to use such institutions, including parliament, which is current in the life of the people at any given time and thus further the best interests of the proletarian struggle.⁵⁵

The decision to contest elections and become a part of the parliamentary process was taken. But it was made clear that the bourgeois parliament was being used to support the class struggle. In spite of their adherence to a Parliamentarist line, there were veiled reference to what one can construe as being armed struggle at a later stage if the parliamentarist strategy failed. In their policy declaration during the 1982 Presidential elections they said,

54. Halliday, n. 46, p. 77.

55. Lionel Bopage, "Local Government Elections: The JVP View", *Tribune*, vol. 23, no. 45, 19 May 1979, p. 19.

The eternal struggle against the capitalist class should not be by any means restricted to the electoral arena. Why? Because the capitalist class does not restrict its struggle against the proletariat to the electoral arena, how can the proletariat limit its struggle against capitalism to the same electoral arena? If the proletariat defeats the capitalist class on the electoral battlefield the capitalist class will direct its power into another sphere to smash the proletarian victory. The proletariat should be always watchful and aware of such a possibility.⁵⁶

It seems that the JVP, even in 1982 perceived that the government would take measures to suppress them. It is possible that even while they were speaking of a parliamentary line, they were preparing themselves for an armed struggle. Even at a later stage, after the Indo-Sri Lankan accord was signed they did not make any direct reference to armed struggle. But again, it was quite evident from what Wijeweera said in an interview. He said, "to build socialism, one must achieve state power by defeating the exploiting classes. But we know that the bourgeoisie does not handover power peacefully. They remain in power by force using violence. In such circumstances, the poor class has to make a valid response".⁵⁷ Elections were rejected as being fraudulent. Thus, armed struggle was the only way to lead the people to a victory.

56. The Revolutionary Policy Declaration of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, n. 19, p. 11.

57. "Wijeweera Replies Readers", n.50.

Anti-Marxist Orientation

In spite of its professions of being a Marxist Leninist organization the JVP has several aspects which can be questioned as being against Marxist-Leninist philosophy. Though they spoke of the working class and the establishment of proletarian government, the role of this class in revolutionary transformation was denied both in theory and in practice.⁵⁸ Again, they spoke of the non-plantation peasantry as being a revolutionary class but this class also had no overt support for the JVP. Its influence was limited to the petty-bourgeoisie, youth, students and unemployed. Its appeal to Sinhala nationalism and its stand on the national question is also against the principles of Marxism-Leninism. On the other hand, its patriotic socialism, anti-Indianism and communalism show signs of fascist tendency. In addition, the cult of personality,⁵⁹ blind obedience to orders of the leadership, secret oaths, uniforms, badges and military training were also aspects of fascist tendencies rather than a

58. Politicus, n. 12, p. 270.

59. Wijeweera is the only leader who has survived the 1971 insurrection and led the organization till 1989. Little information is available about the organization (this aspect has been dealt in chapter III) and about the intermediary and lower ranking leadership. Whereabouts of the top leadership is also kept a secret from their own cadres. *wjwmg, ?*

leftist socialist organisation.⁶⁰ At a later stage "its intolerance of opponents and abhorrence of competitive politics"⁶¹ resulted in its eliminating some of the top leaders of the other parties like Vijaya Kumaranatunga of SLMP and Harsha Abeywardhene of UNP. Analysts have found it difficult to classify the JVP in ideological terms. Bruce Matthews, writing recently has described the JVP as "anarchic rather than classically Marxist, nihilistic and as violently anti-Indian as they are anti-government."⁶²

N. 13 Refer Political Murders ...
for Lanka, vol 1 & 2
(Colombo, 1982, 1984)
by ANURA HURGAS.

It gives detailed account of
the above killings of
the UNP.

60. Politicus, n. 12, p. 271.

61. Mohan Ram, n. 43.

62. Bruce Matthews, "Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), and the Politics of Underground", *Round Table*, (Surrey), vol. 78, no. 312, October 1989, p. 425.

AREAL SUMMARY OF THE INSURGENCY (1971)

- MAJOR CENTRES OF GOVERNMENTAL STRENGTH
- POLICE STATIONS STORMED
- POLICE STATIONS ABANDONED
- ▨ AREAS CONTROLLED BY INSURGENTS
- AREAS CONTESTED

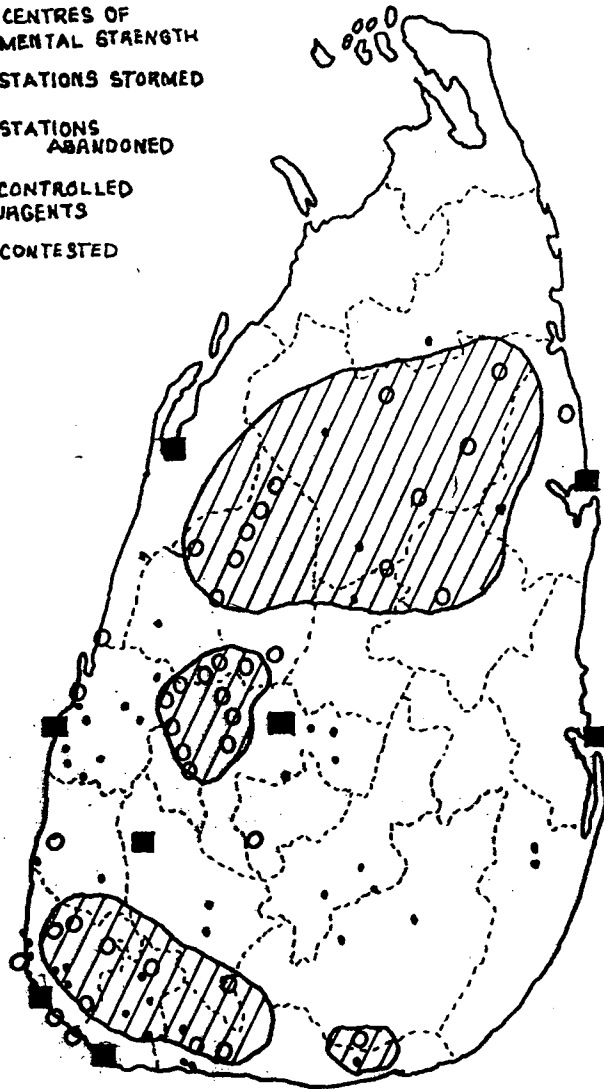


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0 25 50 km

SOURCE: Bernard Swan, Sri Lanka Kossic: Environment, Man, Continuity and Change (Colombo: Marga Institute, 1987) p. 525.

CHAPTER V

STRATEGY AND TACTICS

While discussing the strategy and tactics of the JVP, it can be clearly divided into three phases. The first phase was since its inception in the late 60s till it was proscribed in 1977. It was during this phase, the JVP launched the insurrection in 1971. The second phase starts from 1977, when the proscription on it was lifted till 1983, when it was again proscribed on charges of complicity in the anti-Tamil riots of 1983. The Third phase is from 1983 to the end of 1989, when the JVP leader Wijeweera along with few other top leaders were eliminated by the security forces. These phases will enable us to analyse the evolution of the JVP's strategy from 1971 to 1989.

THE INITIAL PHASE

Though the JVP originated from the Left parties yet it differed dramatically in its strategy and tactics from them. The established lefts' tactics were concerned with mass mobilisation through trade unions, strikes, rallies and electoral campaigns. The working class was to be the spearhead, suitably led by trained Marxists. They were to build their institutions including unions and parties.

The JVP rejected these tactics as reformist, revisionist and as diverting the masses from their true tasks. After reading some Latin American revolutionary literature the members of JVP believed in the Latin American experience that revolutionary violence is necessary at some stage in the process of transferring political power to the hands of the people. It did not believe in using parliament as a platform, it rejected parliamentary methods totally.

There seems to be a debate on this point, whether, according to its professions, the JVP was against the parliamentary framework or it changed its tactics when this did not suit their strategy. Urmila Phadnis writes that initially the JVP thought in terms of a peaceful change within a parliamentary framework.² However, James Jupp's and A.J. Wilson's views are that the JVP never entertained the thought of parliamentary politics. Wijeweera is reported to have said once that the reason for the JVP to support the UF in the 1970 election was to prove to the masses the futility of the parliamentary system.³ Wilson

1. "Wijeweera's Speech Before the CJC", *New Left Review*, no.84, March-April 1974, p.93, and James Jupp, *Sri Lanka : Third World Democracy*, (London: Frank Cass 1978),p.308.

2. Urmila Phadnis, "Insurgency in Ceylonese Politics : Problems and Prospects", *IDSJ Journal*, vol. 13, no. 4, April 1971, pp. 604.

3. *Ceylon Daily News*, 28 February 1971.

observes that though the JVP was called 'Che Guevarist', yet it did not follow one of the basic tenets of Guevara. It ignored the possibility of exhausting other means before resorting to armed struggle.⁴ Guevara had stated

where a government has come into power through some form of popular vote, fraudulent or not, and maintains at least an appearance of constitutional legality, the guerrilla outbreak cannot be promoted, since the possibilities of peaceful struggle have not yet been exhausted.⁵

Guevara's strategy of armed struggle originally relied on a general strike to overthrow the Batista dictatorship.⁶ Only after the general strike of April 1958, failed did he begin to stress primarily a military confrontation with Batista. Yet the importance of such a strike should not be underestimated. The general strike called during the first days of January 1959 paralysed the economy and permitted the Rebel Army to seize power directly, without a negotiated settlement with representatives of the regular army.⁷

4. A.J. Wilson, Ceylon : The Peoples Liberation Front and the "Revolution" that failed,"*Pacific Community*, vol. 3, no. 2, January 1972. pp. 366.

5. Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969),pp. 13-14.

6. Donald Hodges, *The Legacy of Che Guevara : A Documentary Study*, (London, 1977) p. 19.

7. *ibid.*

Guevara's strategy of exhausting other means of struggle was not an ideological belief but a tactical necessity. Wijeweera, at least in the UF coalition, could have seen that it was confronting a legitimately elected democratic government.⁸ Wijeweera did behave like a conventional Marxist during the general elections of 1970. But this was limited only to the support of the UF coalition in the election campaign.

Concept of the One-Day Revolution

By late 1970 Wijeweera is supposed to have gained support for a strategy which was followed even after his imprisonment. This strategy was completely outside the strategy of a long-term struggle. Wijeweera rejected the latter strategy its applicability on the grounds that the specific conditions in Sri Lanka make it impossible to stick to a long-term struggle.

Wijeweera's strategy of an overnight takeover or a one-day revolution was necessary because it was impossible for any of the classical models to be followed in Sri Lanka. The urban proletariat was degenerate and in the clutches of the reformist Marxist parties. Its social base was limited only to a minority of the population mainly centered around Colombo.⁹ Hence the

8. Wilson, n. 4, p. 366.

9. Refer to Charles Blackton, "Sri Lanka's Marxists", *Problems of Communism*, vol. 22, no. 1, January-February 1973, pp. 29-34.

Russian model of a socialist takeover of the cities followed by the gradual expansion to the countryside was made impracticable. The Chinese model of establishing liberated zones in the countryside and encircling the cities was made impossible by the good communications network and small size of the island. Any such liberated zone would be easily accessible to the government forces who with timely intervention could crush it. The Cuban model of protracted warfare from sparsely inhabited or uninhabited forest hideouts was not possible because such a forest hideout did not in fact exist in the island.¹⁰

Popular perceptions and even the press labelled the JVP as 'Che Guevarist'. Some writers have even written about a strong Guevarist contingent in the insurrection of 1971. But Wijeweera's strategy had nothing much in common with Guevara's strategy. Three points of difference can be noted. Guevara had talked of exhausting all other means of struggle before undertaking a military confrontation.¹¹ Wijeweera did not abide by the principle. Secondly, Guevara's experience as a guerrilla had made him aware for the need to incorporate the working class and not only the peasantry in the overall struggle for liberation. Guevara had in fact organised the workers in their

10. C.A. Chandraprema, *Putschism, Ethnic Chauvinism and Social Revolution*, (Colombo: Independent Students Union, 1989), p. 6.

11. Hodges, n. 6, p. 19.

centres of production for the purpose of helping the rebel army.¹² Wijeweera had denounced the working class in Sri Lanka as renegade and evolved a strategy which could exclude the role of the working class. Thirdly, there was a difference in the way Guevara and Wijeweera mobilized the peasantry. Guevara concentrated on mobilizing the peasantry through a programme of agrarian reform.¹³ Wijeweera had no such programme. Further, the one-day strategy had no resemblance to the Cuban strategy of 1959 which was the culmination of a long guerrilla war that was waged over several years.

Wijeweera's strategy was a deviation from not only the Cuban but also the Chinese model. According to Wijeweera these strategies could not be applied since the geographical conditions rule out such a possibility in Sri Lanka. So the revolution should start both in the city and villages simultaneously aiming at the seizure of power through a sudden and very short sharp attack throughout the country. He was convinced that due to the geographical size of the island it was possible to capture it in

12. Hodges, n. 6, pp. 17-18.

13. Hodges, n. 6, p. 22.

"a single blow".¹⁴ He was also aware that Sri Lanka had one of the weakest armed forces¹⁵ which was also very unpopular. Informants within the army had advised that these forces had insufficient ammunition to resist an island-wide uprising taking place simultaneously.¹⁶ Wijeweera's plan was that at an opportune moment, the JVP would rise on the same day and at every place where it had a following. It was a plan to be executed with lightning speed and all institutions of state power captured before the state could take effective counter-measures. This was the reason possibly why the JVP, in the execution of this strategy, at the first instance, attacked police stations.

At that time this strategy seemed quite novel.

Timing of the Insurrection

There are reasons to believe that the uprising was premature, that it did not go according to plan. The original plan was to carry out the insurrection on 14th April 1971, when

14. Jupp, n. 1, p. 30.

15. The total strength of the defence forces in 1971 was 22,900. The divisions were police 12,500, army 7,000, navy 1,900. airforce 1,500. See Phadnis, n. 2, p. 610. According to Robert Kearney and Janice Jiggins the strength was 23,700.

16. *Statesman*, 6 May 1971.

the country would be deeply involved in travel and celebrations of the Sinhalese New Year.¹⁷ But for some reasons action was initiated early on 5th April.

Various reasons are ascribed to this. According to one version the insurgents were forced to act sooner than they had intended because the government measures were getting tighter day by day during the last few weeks.¹⁸ The other version is that in their enthusiasm, one group of insurgents, who were instructed to attack a police station near Colombo, initiated action earlier and launched an unsuccessful attack on the 4th instead of the 5th.¹⁹ Another reason possibly could be that action was initiated earlier because of defections and information leaks.²⁰

The April Insurrection

The insurrection started off with an attack on a rural police station and a small police party in the early hours of 5th April. That night simultaneous attacks were made on at least 74

17. Blackton, n. 9, p. 36.

18. Phadnis, n. 2, p. 607.

19. Phadnis, n. 2, pp. 607-608.

20. Blackton, n. 9, p. 36.

police stations at widely scattered points across the island. This was stated in the parliament on 20th July 1971 by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Bandaranaike. However, in April, the army commander had stated that about 100 police stations had been attacked and 20 were captured. The Inspector-General of Police, in a subsequent report to the CJC, said that 93 police stations were attacked between 5th and 11th April.²¹

Government security forces were, in 1971, ill-prepared to meet a major challenge. Even if the Sri Lankan intelligence had anticipated the uprising they had failed to assess its intensive and extensive character.²² Mrs. Bandaranaike herself stated on 24th April 1971 that on the 5th of April the government was militarily unprepared for the kind of concentrated armed attacks that the terrorists launched.²³ It was not surprising that the government found itself unable to cope up with the unprecedented situation. The total strength of the police and defence forces was about 23,700 and was much less than the estimated figures of the insurgents. The police forces in 1970 had numbered 10,605. They were assigned to 266 police stations, of which 171 were

21. Robert Kearney and Janice Jiggins, "The Ceylon Insurrection of 1971", *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1 March 1971, p. 61.

22. Phadnis, n. 2, p. 609.

23. *Ceylon Daily News*, 25 April 1971.

staffed by 20 or less policemen. Police stations were supplied with fifty year old bolt - action rifles and very small quantities of ammunition. The military services had remained small, generally poorly armed and equipped and without experience in military campaigning.²⁴

In their initial attack the insurgents overran a few small police stations and forced the abandonment of others. They seized or destroyed a number of public buildings, and cut major roads and railroads. Virtually isolating Kandy and severing communications between Colombo and most provincial areas.²⁵ They set-up road blocks at Warakapola and Kegalle on the main Colombo-Kandy road. Rail lines were wrecked and telegraph lines cut. Major efforts were concentrated on attempts to control the towns of Kegalle, Kurunegale, Maho and Moneragale, which control the roads leading from the main areas of the island to the port of Trincomalee.²⁶ Road traffic was blocked by the felling of trees and the damaging of bridges. The areas surrounding these towns remained amongst the most stubborn centres of insurgent activity. In some of these towns police and public servants were

24. Kearney & Jiggins, n. 21, p. 41.

25. Kearney & Jiggins, n. 21, p. 42.

26. Blackton, n. 9, p. 37.

besieged in public buildings, while the insurgents moved freely through the remainder of the town.

However, the insurgents couldn't keep these towns under control for long. It was Elpitiya, some outstation regions of south, the Kandy area, and the Dry zone north-ward to the southern limit of Tamil settlements that remained under the control of the JVP for a longer period of time.²⁷

By the end of April, the insurgents offensive power was spent. Village vigilance committees helped government forces. With the insurgents yielding ground, the Prime Minister proclaimed, on the Radio and by leaflets air-dropped, an open period for surrender, which began on 1st May and was kept open till 10th June. In the first few days some 4,000 surrendered while the hardcore ones fell back into the Sinharaja forest in the South, the Ritigale range near Kurunegale, the steep hills around Kegalle, and the vast jungles of the ~~V&I~~ ~~pattu~~ National park.²⁸ By mid-June the government announced that had arrested no less than 14,000 rebels and were holding them in detention camps. The death toll was estimated at 1,200 including 60

27. Blackton, n. 9, p. 37.

28. Blackton, n. 9, p. 37.

fatalities amongst armed forces and police.²⁹ A few deaths occurred amongst the civilian population also.

External Involvement

The possibility of external involvement or instigation was the subject of much speculation. The developments which led to these speculations are still shrouded in controversy. Differences of opinion exist on the level of external help and its nature. It is not known to what extent the Chinese and the North Koreans assisted the insurgency in anyway, though wild rumours to that effect floated around Colombo for months.³⁰ Suspicion of Chinese involvement followed the allegedly mysterious departure from Colombo harbour of a Chinese Ship, said to be carrying a cargo of arms bound for Tanzania.³¹ While the Sri Lankan government was seeking the permission of both the Chinese and Tanzanian government for some of the arms to be unloaded in Colombo, the ship left in a hurry.³²

29. Kearney & Jiggins, n. 21, p. 42.

30. For detailed reports on the rumours refer to *Ceylon Daily News*, 18 April 1971; *Times of Ceylon*, 22 May 1971, and *Ceylon Daily News*, 26 April 1971.

31. Kearney & Jiggins, n. 21, p. 42.

32. S. Arasaratnam, "The Ceylon insurrection of April 1971: Some causes and consequences," *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 45, n. 3, Fall 1972, p. 365.

The North Korean embassy too came under suspicion. It was closed on 13th April and the entire staff was ordered out from the country. The North Koreans, Mrs. Bandaranaike related, had been told that the effect of certain activities carried on by them was giving strength and support to the JVP, and they were ordered from the country when they failed to comply with her request that those activities cease. The activities that led to their expulsion were not described. The North Korean embassy staff had been engaged in disseminating revolutionary propaganda. The thoughts of Kim-Il-Sung, together with literature on guerrilla warfare, had been available in abundance. The North Koreans had also sponsored some more than forty 'friendship societies' across the island. The government appears to have had evidence, though it has not revealed all of it, of North Koreans training of Sri Lankan insurgents and perhaps even of financing them.³³ From the left parties came the argument that the JVP was sponsored and the insurrection instigated by the American CIA.

In spite of all these speculations and accusations the insurrection seems to have been a home-grown affair even though it was reported that JVP supporters had been made to believe that armed assistance from sympathetic foreign powers would arrive at

33. Ibid., p. 365.

the appropriate time and that there would also be defections among the ranks in the armed forces.³⁴ The question of possible external incitement or encouragement seems unlikely to be completely resolved.

On the other hand the Sri Lankan government obtained arms ammunition and equipment from various countries. Mrs. Bandarnaike sought aid from India and several other countries on 6th April 1971. By 13th April, 1971, all assistance sought by Sri Lanka had arrived from India. This included equipment for 5,000 combat troops, five frigates which sealed off the Sri Lankan coastline to prevent any outside aid from reaching the insurgents. Six helicopters along with pilots arrived in Colombo on 14th solely for reconnaissance purpose and 150 Indian troops to guard Bandaranaike airport. Air Ceylon flew in 9 tons of military equipment which the USSR made available from supplies in Cairo. Also obtained were American Bell Helicopters through the British, 2 Pakistani Helicopters and a Warship, 6 Mig-17s, some of these were fitted for US type ammunition, as well as 10 armoured cars. The UAR, Yugoslavia and Malaysia sent non-military

34. Wilson, n. 4, p. 367.

assistance.³⁵

Thus, with the major international powers on the side of the government and effective military assistance to the insurgents from abroad, having become impossible the JVP fought a losing battle from the beginning itself.

Failure of the Insurrection

The insurrection was launched in conditions and in a form that limited its chances of success and validated the strict Leninist insistence on the necessary preconditions for a successful insurrection.

At the political level two factors seemed to have played a major role in the failure of the insurrection. Firstly, it was the timing. The insurrection might have had greater success if it had been staged against a UNP government instead of the UF government.³⁶ Secondly, the JVP seemed to have a loose and unsystematized organizational structure. It was not a Leninist party. There were loosely co-ordinated factions within the

35. For details refer to Blackton, n. 9, p. 37. and Jayantha Somasunderam, "An Insurrection Remembered", *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 3, no. 6, 15 July 1980, p. 20.

36. Blackton, n. 9, p. 37. The urban working class might have supported the JVP against an UNP government. Whereas when the insurrection took place against the UF government, the working class helped the government to suppress the revolt.

leadership, reflecting different groups that had fused in the JVP at the beginning.

On the military level, the JVP was also at a disadvantage. The rapid despatch of military assistance by external powers undermined the JVP's calculations of arms and ammunition stocks of the security forces. It is hard to believe how the JVP leadership never considered the fact that external help would be more forthcoming to the government rather than the JVP itself. Moreover, its work among the armed forces, an essential Leninist precondition, had been hampered since August by careful government screening. Thus, there was no significant weakening of the police or army during the uprising. There were reports of individual desertion from the army but this was not enough. There was no mass desertion or mutiny, as the leadership made the cadres believe.³⁷ Further, the JVP seems to have been weakened by its lack of independent arms supplies. Their efforts were to get their weapons from their enemy. But this was not enough in the kind of insurrection led by the JVP.

The JVP did not have the necessary social base for an island-wide insurrection. Its geographical base was limited to the low-country and Kandyan Sinhalese peasantry of the central

37. Fred Halliday, "The Ceylonese Insurrection", *New Left Review*, no. 69, September-October 1971, p. 88.

and south-west provinces. There was not much support amongst the Tamils in the north and east. The mass of urban workers in and around Colombo stood by the UF government. When the insurrection broke out, the JVP quickly found itself confined to the South-central foothills and the north-central dry zone, where the bulk of the actual fighting took place.³⁸

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The belief that the insurrection was sabotaged from within the organisation cannot be totally ruled out. The bomb-explosion at Mars Hall, Peradeniya campus, the attack on the US embassy, and the premature attack on the Warakapola police station have not been explained fully. These could have the work of disgruntled elements or agents within the organisation .

THE SECOND PHASE

Post-1971 JVP

After the failure of the 'one-day revolution' in 1971 the JVP became a proscribed political organisation. Their politics became largely confined to the prison cells. But in the jails, the task of reconstituting the JVP had taken place. The JVP was completely reorganized within the prisons, and the organisational

38. Ibid., p. 89.

weaknesses were identified as those aspects which needed the most urgent rectification.³⁹ Various individuals who composed the then leadership had powerful cliques under their own command and these internal divisions had led to a whole series of errors during the April insurrection.⁴⁰ Political unity was welded together within the prison walls and clandestine political work was resumed while the party was still proscribed.

Many of the young people were motivated to study politics in depth during their enforced stay in the prisons. They began to read Marxist literature seriously, and began to become aware of the non-Marxist elements of their politics before 1971.⁴¹

Repeal of the CJC Act

According to the UNP manifesto in the 1977 election, on 2nd November 1977, the cabinet took the decision to grant pardon to all those convicted under the CJC and soon after Wijeweera and 136 others were unconditionally released.

39. Jagath Senaratne, "In defence of Wijeweera," *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 5, no. 8, 15 August 1982, p. 9.

40. Refer to Halliday, n. 37, p. 88.

41. H.N. Fernando, "The JVP - Then and Now", *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 4, no. 3, 1 June 1981, p. 18.

Soon after being released Wijeweera in a press conference said: "We of the JVP will not resort to any armed struggle in order to usher in socialism."⁴² He announced a major shift in the policy of the party. While still professing Marxism-Leninism, they claimed to have learned the lessons of the April 71 experience and to have abandoned the concept of seizure of power through an armed insurrection or through the development of "armed struggle". He declared that the party would utilise the electoral process available to them under the present capitalist regime and constitution of Sri Lanka. The famous five classes, that provided the educational premises for the pre April '71 movement were suitably revised, especially the fifth class.⁴³

It seems that the parliamentarist strategy adopted by the JVP was some kind of a detente with the government in order to build up its strength. They did not want this to be disrupted.⁴⁴

^{4/10} Jayawardene had, in fact, given a warning in 1977 that if the JVP returns to extra-parliamentary struggle as envisaged earlier by

42. *Ceylon Daily Mirror*, 3 November 1977.

43. Bala Tampoe, "The JVP - Then and Now", *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1 May 1981, p. 12. Refer to chapter IV for the revisions.

44. Dayan Jayatilleke, "JVP - The Need for Self-criticism", *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 4, no. 11, 1 October 1981, p. 23.

the JVP leaders, they would best find a place to hide.⁴⁵ JVP began open political work only towards the end of 1977. It confined its struggle only to the electoral arena, and excluded all others forms of struggle like Trade Union activities such as strikes, picketing and demonstrations which are also considered legitimate forms of struggle.

Concentrating more and more on electoral politics several JVP candidates were fielded at the 1977 general elections. They however, did not succeed. Again, at the Galle and Anamaduwa by-elections the JVP put forward its own candidates. They contested local government elections too. ^{when?} It was only at the District Development Council (DDC) elections held in July 1981 that the JVP achieved a breakthrough in terms of electoral politics.⁴⁶ The JVP fielded candidates in 8 districts and captured 13 seats in 6 districts. They polled 10% votes in most districts and in some between 18% to 23%. Of course, this performance was possible because the SLFP, CPSL, LSSP did not contest and most likely most of the votes of the left parties

45. "Rohana's Third Crisis" *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 5, no. 14, 15 November 1982, p. 14.

46. J. Uyangoda, "The JVP since 1977", *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 4, no. 12, 1 November 1981, p. 19.

went to the JVP.⁴⁷

JVP and Trade Unionism

Throughout its history, the JVP has not understood the role of the working class, nor the linkage between reform and revolution. In the pre-1971 period, working class struggles were dismissed, as these detracted from the main task of nationwide armed insurrection. The contempt of the JVP for reformist trade unionism made them ignore the tactics of mobilisation of unionists for strikes or hartals. The organised working-class, therefore was alienated and did not participate in the armed struggle. Further, the youth component of the JVP membership and its high level of unemployment and student status made it very weak in the organised trade union movement.⁴⁸

At a Press Conference given immediately after Wijeweera's release from Jail he expressed willingness to enter into "United Actions" in defence of democratic rights. The JVP was ready to coalesce with any political group prepared to work uprightly for building socialism. The November 1979 issue of "GINISILUWA" warned that the UNP was attempting to concentrate all powers by

47. Swaroop Rani Dubey, *One-day Revolution in Sri Lanka: Anatomy of 1971 Insurrection*, (Jaipur: Aalekh Publishers, 1988), p. 182.

48. Jupp, n. 1, p. 309.

enacting some repressive legislation against the working class. So, the immediate task of the JVP was to shoulder the responsibility of safeguarding the human and democratic rights of the masses. Here, the JVP realized that it would not be possible for it to do this alone, since bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties were holding the majority of the working class in their trade unions. Under these circumstances the JVP thought it better to initiate a campaign of united action together with five other left parties.⁴⁹ The October 1979 issue of "RATHU LANKA" announced the formation of an action bloc, the Joint Trade Union Action Committee (JTUAC). Not long afterwards, however, this 'action bloc' broke up. Soon by early 1980, the JVP had declared war on the JTUAC. The reasons forwarded by the JVP for having left the 'action bloc' were that it found that the 'action bloc' comprised of all anti-proletarian, anti-JVP elements whose sole aim was to attain their own ulterior motives rather than secure the treasured rights of the proletariat.⁵⁰ They tried to convince the workers that they were being misguided by their trade union leaders.

49. These details have been given by Lionel Bopage the then acting general secretary of JVP in an interview. Refer to "JVP- The current situation", *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 3, no. 18, 1 February 1981, p. 11. Bopage who was a graduate in engineering served six years in imprisonment after the Insurrection. Later, he was purged in 1983.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

The July 1980 General strike

As a revolutionary proletarian party the JVP should have supported the July 1980 general strike for their just economic demands and democratic rights. The JVP failed to identify with the working class struggle against capitalism as a system. The JVP kept away from the July 1980 strike and even denounced it. This was a tactical blunder on the part of the JVP leadership that resulted in their total isolation from the working class.⁵¹

The two major reasons advocated for the JVP not supporting the strike were that the strike was organised to bring SLFP back to power and to obstruct the development of the JVP.⁵² It stuck to its stand that the old left parties were treacherous and class collaborationists and therefore no United Front can be entered into with them. Thereafter the JVP waged a war on the trade unions affiliated to the LSSP, CPSL, MEP, NSSP etc.⁵³ Wijeweera in fact, advocated a theory that all the workers in Sri Lanka should not engage in strikes till the entire working class was organised under the leadership of their party.⁵⁴ The two major

51. J. Uyangoda, "Coming Few Years Crucial for JVP", *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 4, no. 13, 15 November 1981, p. 21.

52. S.C. Fernando, "Wijeweera and Trade Unions", *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 4, no. 2, 15 May 1981, p. 20.

53. "JVP: A turn to the Class," *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 3, no. 12, 15 May 1980, p.4.

54. Uyangoda, n. 51, p. 21.

tasks before them was to relieve the proletariat of the petty-bourgeois, opportunist leadership and then to make it rally round a truly revolutionary party of its own.⁵⁵ The JVP would continue to struggle until the proletariat was completely emancipated. The above proposal which was a veiled proposal for a "One Trade Union" did not go along with trade union democracy, where it is believed that the right of workers to organise into unions is one of the fundamental basic rights of the working class.⁵⁶

The strategy of the JVP did not coincide with the political needs of the working class. Moreover, this was not a clearly marked out strategy of revolution. The main strategy was to undermine the established left parties by exposing their opportunist and reformist errors thus becoming the largest left formation in the island. The second projected stage seemed to be to undermine the SLFP and become the largest opposition party. The final stage would have been a confrontation with the UNP.⁵⁷

How the JVP would have gone through these stages is difficult to perceive as subsequent events made the JVP play an

55. Bopage, n. 49, p. 10.

56. Chintaka, "Is the JVP a Proletarian Vanguard Party", *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 5. no. 11, 1 October 1982, p. 17.

57. Chandraprema, n.10, p.11.

altogether different role. But soon, they were able to emerge as the largest left formation in the country in the polls.

The Presidential election of 1982

Wijeweera contested in the presidential elections held on 20th October 1982. His objective was to emerge as the major anti-UNP force.⁵⁸ He failed in this objective. Nevertheless, the JVP clearly emerged as the major left-wing formation in Sri Lanka.⁵⁹ Wijeweera was placed third securing 4.19% of the votes, after Jayawardene and Kobbekadu wa the SLFP candidate.¹ The JVP did well in the south-western low lands, the established base of Marxist electoral support. It polled well in the districts of Matara and Hambantota. However, it was only in six districts that they were able to poll more than 20,000 votes. The JVP's performance in Kurunegale, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Moneragala, Kegalle and Digamadulla was far below their expectations, and in

58. C.R. De Silva, "Plebiscitary, Democracy or Creeping Authoritarianism? The Presidential Election and Referendum of 1982," in James Manor, ed., *Sri Lanka in Change and Crisis*, (London & Sydney : Croom Helm, 1984), p.43.

59. Ibid.

some of these districts the party had been active since 1971.⁶⁰

The JVP never got a chance again to test its electoral strength as the UNP regime had extended the life of parliament by six years on the basis of a referendum held in 1983.⁶¹ The JVP issued statements alongwith various parties like the SLFP, SLVB,⁾ etc., asking the UNP to dissolve parliament on August 1983 and hold elections.⁶² But Jayawardene stuck to his ground. This was one of the biggest mistakes that Jayawardene committed and helped the JVP to gain strength again.

1983 Anti-Tamil Riots

On 30 July 1983 the government decided to proscribe three political parties ---- the Moscow-oriented CPSL, NSSP and the JVP following severe anti-Tamil riots. Even though there was no hard evidence of the JVP's involvement yet orders went out for the arrest of some of the Politbureau members of the JVP. Some Politbureau members were arrested but Wijeweera escaped. The

60. Warnapala and Hewagama, *Recent Politics in Sri Lanka: The Presidential Election and the Referendum of 1982*, (New Delhi:Navrang, 1983), p. 67.

61. Ibid.

62. See "JVP-SLFP Detente ?" *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 5, no. 22, 15 March 1983, p. 6 and "JVP-SLVB call for Non-Violent Campaign", *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 5, no. 22, 15 March 1983, p. 6.

police sealed the JVP branch offices at Slave Island, Wellampitiya and Dematagoda. The reasons forwarded by the government for these actions was that police intelligence had reported that these events were the final stage of a united left-wing plot to overthrow the government.⁶³ However the JVP's own contention was that they were proscribed because they went to the courts for the referendum which they considered to be a fraud. The UNP knew that it would lose the case and therefore did not want the case to proceed, consequently it proscribed the JVP. Wijeweera had to go into hiding, as they felt that there was a conspiracy to eliminate him, and could not appear in court.⁶⁴

Soon, the CPSL and the NSSP regained their legality but not the JVP. Driven underground, the JVP's attention was focused on extra constitutional methods. Sri Lanka did not have elections in 1983. This disillusioned the JVP with parliamentarism. This factor along with the proscription made sure that there was a change in the JVP's strategy.

define the term?

63. For details see Sinha Ratnatunga, *Politics of Terrorism: The Sri Lankan Experience*, (Melbourne: International Fellowship for Social and Economic Development, 1988), p.42, and Mohan Ram, *The Fractured Island*, (New Delhi : Penguin, 1989), p. 99.

64. Wijeweera's Speech, Translations of Transcripts of Recording of Wijeweera's Speech, April 1988.

A few developments around this time also helped the JVP. The ethnic conflict had flared up in the north of Sri Lanka. This gave a respite to the JVP cadres from the onslaught of the Sri Lankan security forces. After going underground it started collecting weapons and infiltrating the armed forces.⁶⁵

During this period an anti-Eelam line was followed. Even before the 1983 anti-Tamil riots the JVP had followed this line for electoral reasons. The JVP had not been able to take a correct stand on the Tamil nationality question. After 1977 it was the electoral orientation of the JVP that kept it away from the struggle of the Tamil people and their national rights. If they would have followed Marxist-Leninist principles and supported the Tamil people then they would have lost a sizable share of Sinhala votes.⁶⁶

Prove

After the riots the leadership of the JVP and Wijeweera realised the enormous power of Sinhala racial chauvinism for the mobilisation of the masses.⁶⁷ The ^{old line ?} new line was to denounce all the Tamil militant groups. Even though they believed in the right of the Tamil people to self-determination, yet the whole

65. Chandraprema, n. 10, p. 73.

66. Refer to chapter 4.

67. Chandraprema, n. 10, p. 13.

separatist demand of the Tamils was seen as the result of a bourgeois plan to divide and rule. They believed that none of the Tamil militant organizations were Marxist-Leninist. They even severely criticised the tactics employed by the militants, for any form of terrorism would drive the masses away from the revolutionary movement.⁶⁸ The JVP never saw the need to collaborate with the Marxist groups among the Tamil militant groups. The reason could be, the JVP did not want to align itself to any group which was separatist. This would have affected their Sinhala support base. Contact with the Tamils was avoided.⁶⁹

Another reason for the JVP's hostility to armed struggle for Tamil Eelam is plain political jealousy.⁷⁰ The Tamil Militant Organisations after having studied the JVP's experience in 1971 have evolved a more successful military strategy. Whereas Wijeweera's strategy in 1971 resulted in defeat, the Tamil militant organizations had managed to keep the Sri Lankan security forces at bay with their guerrilla warfare methods. The strategy was to hit and run, typical urban guerrilla operations

68. "JVP on the LSSP, CP", *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 3, no. 19, 15 February 1981, p. 14.

69. Chandraprema, n. 10, p. 15.

70. Jayatilleke, n. 44, p. 22.

AREAL SUMMARY OF INSURGENCY (1988-89)

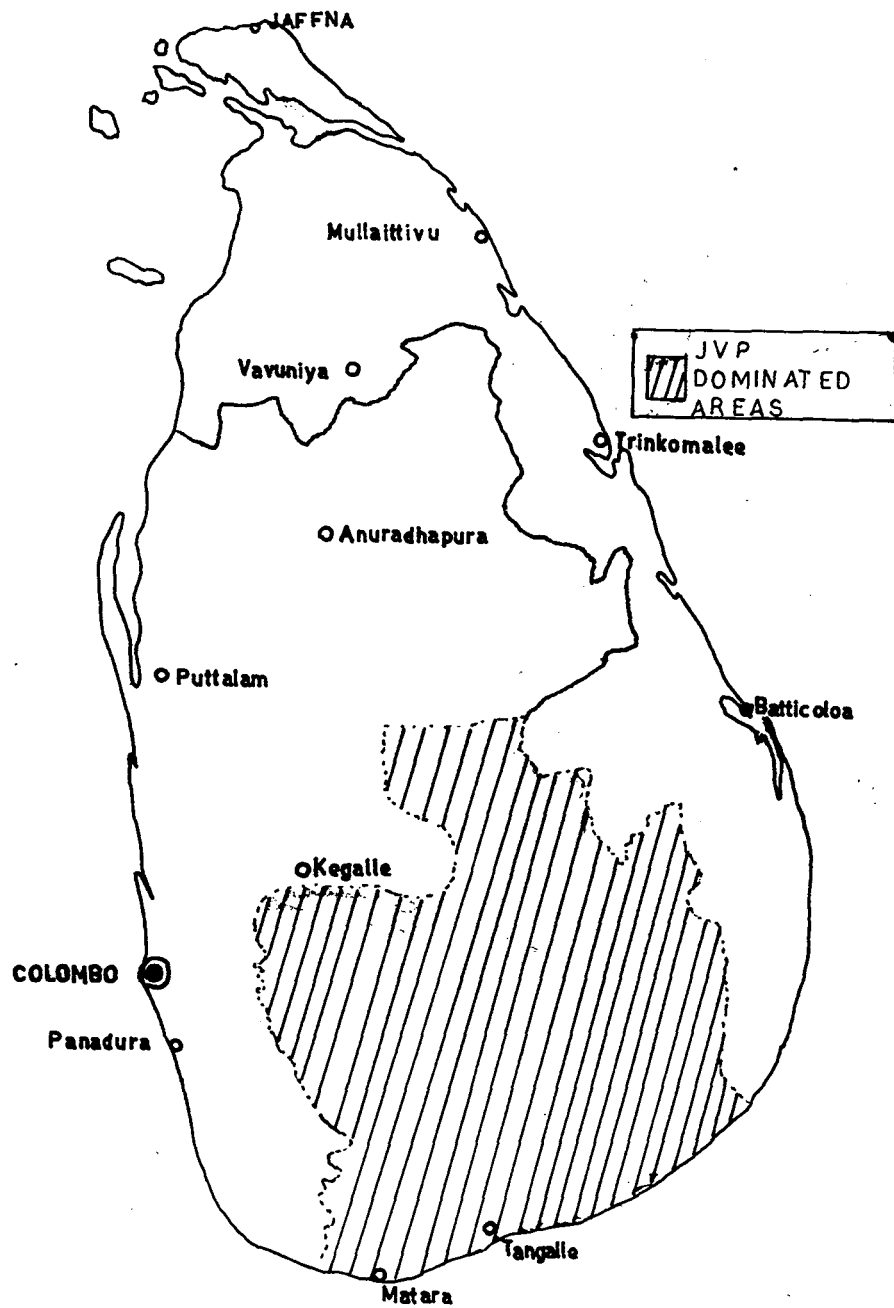


Fig- 4

SOURCE: Adapted from INDIA TODAY
30 September 1989, p. 25.

rather than a mass uprising. The selection of targets was done carefully with a consciousness not to antagonise the public.

THE THIRD PHASE ^{when?}

In the third phase the JVP theoreticians visualised the revolution in three stages. It was to begin with individual terrorism, killing members of the UNP and the left parties. At the second stage the SLFP would be the main target and would be broken up easily with the elimination of its leaders. The final stage would be between the UNP leadership, and the masses backed by the JVP and patriotic force in the security forces. The outcome of this struggle would result in power to the people and victory for the JVP.

This strategy seems quite reminiscent to the strategy in the parliamentary phase. The only difference being the violence part. It seems what the JVP could not do through the parliamentary method, it now was trying by means of terrorism. It is not known when exactly the JVP was planning to execute their plans. But it is commonly accepted that the Indo-Sri Lankan accord provided it the opportune moment for a vigorous course of action.

THE INDO-SRI LANKAN ACCORD AND THE JVP

The Indo-Sri Lankan accord to settle the Tamil ethnic problem was signed on 29th July 1987 between Rajiv Gandhi and J.R. Jayawardene. One of the compulsions for Jayawardene to sign the accord was that he feared a revolt in the South. In an interview to 'London Times' Jayawardene is reported to have said that he decided on the accord when intelligence reports alerted him to a growing JVP-led revolt in the south. Knowing very well that he could not control both the JVP and the Tamil militant groups simultaneously, he sought India's help in settling the Tamil problem,⁷¹ hoping that this would have an indirect effect on the JVP or if the Indians could take care of the Tamils, he could take care of the JVP in the South.

The immediate reaction to the accord was one of violent protests, demonstrations, etc., in Southern, Western and Central Sri Lanka. Many buses and other vehicles were burnt and considerable property was damaged. The government rushed 3,000 Sri Lankan troops from Jaffna to the South. It is believed the

71. Reported in *Lanka Guardian*, 15 November 1988.

JVP was at the forefront of these protests and demonstrations.⁷² The accord served as a catalyst and soon saw a resurgence in the activities of the JVP. Soon the JVP carried out a campaign of terror and launched attacks against all individuals and institutions that supported the accord.

In fact, the JVP campaign of terror had started long before the accord was signed.⁷³ The accord only gave a boost to the activities of the JVP. Following an unusually violent May Day rallies, Jayawardene had warned that the JVP was planning another insurrection along the lines of the 1971 insurgency. The UNP government had taken the threat seriously. After a wave of student unrest, the government closed six of the country's nine universities, which were believed to be recruiting grounds for the JVP.⁷⁴ Much before the July accord, the JVP had raided the Katunayake airbase and Pallakelle army base and made away with some weapons.

72. Bhabani Sen Gupta, *South Asian Perspectives: Seven Nations in Conflict and Cooperation*, (Dehi: B.R. Publications 1988), p. 252.

73. Bryan Pfaffenberger, "Sri Lanka in 1987: India's Intervention and the Resurgence of the JVP", *Asian Survey*, vol. 28, no. 2, Feb. 1988, p. 139.

74. Ibid.

Change in Strategy

Jayawardene's fears were unfounded. As believed by him, the JVP was not planning to launch an insurrection of the 1971 kind. The JVP had learnt their lessons from the negative experiences of the failure of the 1971 insurrection. The "once and for all revolution" had been crushed and most of the JVP cadres captured over a period of three months. In a comparative study of the methods of the JVP in 1971 and at this stage, shows tremendous differences. In their recent campaigns the JVP had become more conscious and was not making the same mistakes that it made in 1971 by frontal attacks and self-destructive methods by launching attacks on police stations, military camps and other well-gaurded installations as airports.⁷⁵ They had emulated a few of the tactics of the successful Tamil militant groups. A multi-front protracted war was launched on the Sri Lankan state. Initially a selective assassination of personalities who were supporting the accord was carried out. Their main target was the UNP though members of the other political parties, bureaucracy and the security forces were not exempt. On 18th August 1987 they got very close to assassinating a whole lot of UNP leaders including the President, when a grenade was lobbed into the room in the parliament building in which the cabinet was discussing

75. Shekhar Gupta, "The Opposition Within", *India Today*, 5 January 1988, p. 75.

implementation of the accord. Jayawardene escaped but the assault killed a minister and injured Prime Minister Premadasa and the minister for National Security, Lalith Athulathmudali.⁷⁶ The responsibility for this attack was claimed by the DJV, supposedly the militant wing of the JVP.⁷⁷ Later, on 23rd December 1987, Harsha Abeywardene, Chairmen of UNP and three others were killed in Colombo by unidentified gunmen, suspected to be JVP men. The JVP had sidelined the UNP for attacks because it had conceded devolution to a minority at the periphery. The intention behind this method was to destroy the UNP morale and terrorising politicians who support the accord.⁷⁸

JVP AND THE EFFORTS TO REVIVE THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

The JVP had earlier tried to disrupt the Provincial Council elections held on 2nd June and 9th June 1988. There were some suspicion and uncertainty regarding the Presidential elections. In December 1982, the UNP had not held the parliamentary elections and instead a referendum was held to prolong the life of parliament.⁷⁹ This was a potent factor in the revival of the

76. Sen Gupta, n. 72, p. 258.

77. Sen Gupta, n. 72, p. 258.

78. Gupta, n. 75, p. 75.

79. For details see Hewagama and Warnapala, n. 60, pp. 126-200.

JVP. Even in 1970, the rise of the JVP is related to the suspicion that the UNP would not hold elections.⁸⁰ For weeks before the presidential elections of 19th December 1988, it was felt that the JVP might be in the process of capturing power.⁸¹ However, it was the JVP which was responsible to an extent in reviving the electoral process. Initially, it was the JVP's gun that forced Jayawardene to hold the Presidential elections and later, the same gun threatened the holding of elections.⁸²

The announcement of the holding of the Presidential elections, brought the contending forces together. Around this time, most of the political parties were trying to win the support and collaboration of the JVP. This was partly due to fear and partly due to prospective electoral gains. The accord and the subsequent developments brought two bitter enemies, the JVP and SLFP together also. Wijeweera had agreed to joining the electoral process in 1988 under the fulfillment of certain

80. Bruce Mathews, "The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and the Politics of Underground", *Round Table*, vol. 78, no. 312 October 1989, p. 426.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 425.

82. Arun Weerasuriya, "Back Drop to Presidential Election", *Mainstream*, vol. 27, no. 13, 24 December 1988, p. 8.

conditions.⁸³ Around August and October, there emerged an anti-UNP political alliance with the JVP at the focal point. The other members were the SLFP, ELJP, MEP, Liberal Party, Tamil congress, SLMC, and the Democratic Workers Congress, the Inter University Students Federation.⁸⁴ This alliance was amenable to the anti-Indian political line of JVP.

This alliance was not to last long. In the first week of November 1988 the JVP withdrew from it. The rift was between the JVP and the SLFP over the selection of a common candidate for the presidential election and subsequent demands for the allocation of parliamentary seats among the constituent members of the alliance, in the parliamentary election which was to follow.⁸⁵ The JVP wanted 25% of the seats while it wanted the SLFP to retain only 60%. They also demanded that in case of breaking up of the alliance once a government was formed, that government should automatically stand dissolved and fresh elections be called immediately. These demands were unacceptable to the SLFP because such a distribution and the other demands would weaken

83. "Wijeweera Replies Readers" *Sunday Times* (Colombo), 13 November, 1988.

84. Weerasuriya, n. 82, p. 8.

85. Weerasuriya, n. 82, p. 8.

them.⁸⁶ The other reason for the rift could have been the composition of the future cabinet. It is reported the JVP bargained for two key portfolios - Defence and Foreign Affairs. On 6 November 1988 Bandarnaike announced that she would contest for the presidential elections as the candidate of the SLFP.⁸⁷

Some observers have perceived these developments as positive. Otherwise this strange alliance could have developed into a frightening political combination. The JVP could have very easily swallowed up the SLFP and dictated terms to them. They could have possibly used the SLFP to come to power, transforming an elected alliance government into a form of Sinhala nationalist authoritarianism.⁸⁸

After the JVP and the SLFP parted ways before the presidential elections, JVP was determined to disrupt the elections because it wanted to weaken the SLFP. On the other hand, the strategy in the 1988 elections seems to have been to destroy the presidential elections. Had they succeeded, the breakdown of law and order would have accelerated, and a subsequent

86. Weerasuriya, n. 82, p. 33.

87. Weerasuriya, n. 82, p. 33.

88. Weerasuriya, n. 82, p. 34.

shaky authoritarian rule would have been easier to challenge and overcome.⁸⁹ However, when the presidential elections were held, the JVP's violent campaign helped UNP defeat Mrs. Bandaranaike. Later, the JVP branded the presidential poll "fraudulent" and the presidency "illegal",⁹⁰ It renewed its call for a patriotic war and overthrow of the "puppet regime". It also gave a call to boycott the parliamentary elections and called on the armed forces to join the patriotic people to defeat fascists.

JVP and the IPKF

Under the terms of the accord an Indian peace keeping force was to supervise the surrender of arms by the Tamil militants and maintain law and order in the north and east. The induction of Indian troops was interpreted as an advance of their earlier thesis on "Indian Expansionism". Even some mythical facts were used to draw analogies to influence the minds of the common man.

Two probable reasons can be attributed to the JVP's violent campaign for the abrogation of the accord and the withdrawal of the IPKF. First, it used the IPKF in its propaganda war. This

89. Mathews, n. 80, p. 427.

90. Mervyn De Silva, "Time Bomb Ticks Away in East Lanka", *Times of India*, 29 February 1989.

position helped it to mobilise support amongst various sections of the Sinhala society.⁹¹ Second, the Indian role in Sri Lanka has effected the JVP's strategy to capture power. The accord along with the presence of the Indian troops had altered the balance of military forces for the JVP.⁹²

In spite of its repeated verbal assaults on the IPKF, the JVP did not come to a situation of direct confrontation with the IPKF. Those who felt that the JVP would provoke the IPKF to go down south on into a direct confrontation to gain political advantages, ignored the fact that this would have been strategically a blunder. The JVP leadership understood, this constraint and refrained from attacking directly the Indian troops, citizens or even businessmen of Indian origin.⁹³

Anti-India Campaign

Along with its campaign for the abrogation of the accord, Wijeweera, set a deadline 14th June 1989 for a total boycott of Indian goods, departure of all Indians of Sri Lanka and Indian

91. S.D. Muni, "JVP and the IPKF", *Hindustan Times*, 24 August 1989.

92. Ibid.

93. For details see Muni, n. 91, and Majed Ali Sayed, "Peace Prospects Still Obscure", *Pakistan and Gulf Economist*, (Karachi), vol.8, no. 41, 14-20 October 1989, p. 52, and Silva, n. 90.

origin and the pullout of the IPKF. He said, "since we are engaged in war against Indian imperialism to gain our national liberation we request all patriotic citizens to boycott all Indian goods, terminate all transaction with Indian banks and insurance institutions, keep away from trade and other economic activities with India".⁹⁴

This call was to have a devastating effect on the economy and bring the country to a standstill. Not only is Sri Lanka dependent on India for certain essential goods, there are also mainly 18 private and public sector companies operating in Sri Lanka including (SB), (IOB), (IA), (AI) Pugoda Textiles, Bombay Dying, and Taj group of hotels.⁹⁵ The JVP picked up the transport sector first which was the hardest hit bringing the country to a standstill.

President Premadasa's 'Jan⁹Saviya' programme had triggered off a strike in all the sectors. Twelve key trade unions had announced that they would launch agitations to seek Rs. 2,500 as basic minimum wages which amount was being offered to the 'Jan⁹

94. Wijeweera, "Boycott India Campaign", *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1 June 1989, p. 5.

95. Seema Guha, "JVP asks Indians to Quit", *Times of India*, 24 May 1989.

Saviya' families.⁹⁶ Employees of the government road transport service had been on strike since 12 June 1989 demanding higher wages. They were later joined by the private run mini-buses and railways completely crippling the public transport.⁹⁷ Over 70% of the State Transport Board buses are of Indian make and the Sinhala drivers could not defy the JVP boycott call.⁹⁸ This coupled with the Sri Lankan Transport Board Employees Union Strike for wage revision resulted in the transport service being paralysed. This caused a lot of inconvenience to the common man.

The transport strike was followed by several token and one-day strikes. On 26 June 1989 the JVP called for a 24 hour general strike for sympathizing with the 52,000 striking transport workers.⁹⁹ On 15 August 1989, the JVP called for a total island wide general strike on Indian independence day. Some 90,000 tea plantation workers in the southern Ratnapura district went on a week-long strike from 7 September 1989 in

96. Seema Guha, "JVP's General Strike Today", *Times of India*, 26 June 1989.

97. *Times of India*, 3 July 1989.

98. "JVP : The Unseen Influence", *Money Matters*, July 1989. p. 14.

99. Guha, n. 96.

response to a JVP call.¹⁰⁰

Neither the imposition of emergency nor the threat of dismissal had any effect on the workers. This could be possible because of the terror that the JVP inspires and secondly they were able to mobilise the trade unions because of the weakness established union leaders.¹⁰¹ The striking workers also could not be dismissed as it would have resulted in a wave of sympathy strikes in other sectors.¹⁰² Telecommunications and postal workers had walked out of their posts in support of the bus workers demands, port workers and state sector workers staged a wildcat strike that once again paralyzed the island.¹⁰³

The JVP's strategy of hitting the key sectors in the economy was taken seriously by the authorities. Tea gardens in the Uva Badulla areas and coconut and rubber estates in the south were badly hit. Over 209000 kg. of tea was destroyed by the JVP in the central provinces. Tea exports is one of the main foreign

100. *Times of India*, 9 September 1989.

101. Mervyn De Silva, "The Phoney Peace is Over - Protracted war Begins", *Lanka Guardian*, vol. 12, no. 5, 1 July 1989, p. 3.

102. Guha, n. 96,

103. Shelton Kodikara, "The Continuing Crisis in Sri Lanka, The JVP, The Indian Troops and Tamil Politics", *Asian Survey*, vol. 29, no. 7, July 89, p. 717 and *India Today*, 15 August 1989, p. 60.

exchange earners of the country, which earned Rs. 12.29 billion in 1988.¹⁰⁴ Both the state-owned and private tea gardens were effected by the JVP. They also continued to set fire on sub-post offices and agricultural centres and land record offices in rural areas.¹⁰⁵ They were able to paralyse various sectors of the economy and life in general including civil administration, transport, telecommunications, business, industry, banks, universities and schools as was done by the Tamil militants in the north and east earlier.¹⁰⁶ They also wanted that the 'Jan Saviya' programme should not succeed because this poverty alleviation programme had a potent appeal to the poor, which was the main support base of the JVP. They tried to disrupt the implementation of this programme by assassinating key officials in the implementation programme.¹⁰⁷

This violent campaign caused lot of inconvenience to the common man. It was losing their sympathy day by day. The only section from where the JVP got support, though not vocal, was from the Sinhala business-men who had business links with

104. Seema Guha, "No JVP Indication About Ceasefire", *Times of India*, 25 September 1989.

105. Ibid.

106. Gamini Navaratne, "JVP's Firm Hold over Sri Lanka", *Times of India*, 1 August 1989.

107. Seema Guha, "Lanka's JVP Marks An Anniversary", *Times of India*, 5 April 1989.

countries other than India. These businessmen had always resented the role played by the businessmen of Indian origin in the Sri Lankan economy.¹⁰⁸

Premadasa Tackles JVP

Premadasa took a softer line towards the JVP than his predecessor Jayawardene. Premadasa tried to appease the JVP by launching an anti-India rhetoric. He called for the withdrawal of the IPKF. Though the reasons forwarded for this was the holding of the SAARC meeting in November 1989 but the actual reason it seems was an effort to pre-empt the JVP.¹⁰⁹ Soon after coming to power Premadasa had withdrawn the emergency. But when these didn't have much effect on the violent campaigns of the JVP who were determined in its efforts to cripple the country and pull down the government. It started delegating more powers to the security forces.¹¹⁰ The government gave the security forces orders to shoot at sight, arrest or detain those engaged in sabotage, inciting people to strike or damaging public property.

108. Refer to Muni, n. 91, and Gamini Navaratne, "Quit Lanka, JVP Tells Indian Traders", *Times of India*, 12 June 1989.

109. Kodikara, n. 103, p. 717.

110. Seema Guha, "JVP Men May Lay Down Arms", *Times of India*, 24 March 1989.

Simultaneously, Premadasa kept the doors open, willing to talk to the JVP if they were willing. He had a secret meeting with JVP leaders on 1 August 1989. The demands put forward by them, of course, could not be conceded. They asked for the pull-out of the IPKF, dissolution of parliament, dropping of three ministers Ranjan Wijeratne Lalith Athulathmudali, and Gamini Dissanayake, and to revoke the emergency.¹¹¹ Later, the JVP was also invited to the all party conference held on 13 September 1989 which they never accepted. A ceasefire against the JVP was declared from 27 September 1989 for 72 hours. Within twenty four hours thirty five cadres surrendered - 29 in north central Anuradhapura and six in the southern Matara districts.¹¹²

However, the party did not give any indication whether it would accept the ceasefire. The security forces onslaughts had weakened it to a considerable extent, though it was still in a position to organise strikes and hit out at key industries and sectors. But its potential to face the security forces was gradually ebbing away. Around this time there was a debate within the leadership on the future course of action. One

111. Seema Guha, "Premadasa, JVP Hold Secret talks", *Times of India*, 2 August 1989.

112. For details see, Seema Guha, "Ceasefire Begins in Sri Lanka: 35 JVP Men Surrender", *Times of India*, 28 September 1989.

section believed that it should have a dialogue with the government and after ensuring the dissolution of the parliament, try its luck once move in the electoral process. But there were a large number of younger cadres who were opposed to this.¹¹³

JVP and the Tamil Militant Groups

Even though the JVP made use of the experiences of the Tamil militant groups in fighting the security forces, their relationship with these militant groups is unclear. Wijeweera's animosity to the militants stems from chauvinistic reasons than strategic. The war carried out by the militant groups arising due to the ethnic conflict was never perceived as the opening of a second front.¹¹⁴ The engagement of the Sri Lankan security forces in the north and east between 1983 and 1987 had provided a breathing-space to the JVP to regroup and reconstitute and embark on a new strategy which was more likely to succeed in the changed circumstances. Under the new conditions when the struggle in the north and east was at its height, with most security personnel deployed there, the JVP never thought of launching an attack on the Sri Lankan State. It is difficult to verify the evidence that Jayawardene had to fear an insurrection in the south before

113. Ibid.

114. Jayatilleke, n. 44, p. 22.

July 1987. However, after the signing of the accord it was not an insurrection that followed but guerrilla warfare, most of the tactics having been picked up from the Tamil militant groups, and maybe some from Latin American Guerilla organisations.¹¹⁵ Imitating in some ways its Tamil counterparts, the JVP made the deep south, a traditional leftist stronghold, its chief base hoping to convert it soon into a "liberated zone".¹¹⁶ Its tactics of terrorising politicians, killing informers and policemen, collecting weapons, conducting hit-and-run raids on police stations and camps, raising funds and imposing taxes on the rich and crippling the civil administration through death-threats, all were borrowed from the experiences of the Tamil militant groups.

The mystery of the sources of arms supply to the JVP has not totally been resolved. Some observers believe that after the signing of the accord, some Tamil militant groups sold their arms to the JVP, to make some hard cash, instead of surrendering them to the IPKF. PLOTE and the LTTE were reported to have sold arms

115. Mervyn De Silva, had in article written that the JVP tactics has some resemblance to a guerrilla group called the "Sendero Luminoso" (shining path) in Peru. Mervyn De Silva, "Pullout of Capital and Brain Likely, *Times of India*, 4 August 1989.

116. Mervyn De Silva, "Things Fall Apart, But Some into Place", *Mainstream*, 1 January 1988, p. 5.

to the JVP.¹¹⁷ Unlike Wijeweera, it is believed, that the LTTE made arms available to the JVP to create a second front against the Sri Lankan armed forces.¹¹⁸ It is possible that the JVP gets a cut on the LTTE's arms unloaded in the Southern ports and Colombo.¹¹⁹ There may even have been communication and transfer of information and explosive technology between the two groups. This is reinforced by the fact that the JVP had started to use the same powerful landmines that the LTTE had successfully used in the north since 1983.¹²⁰ Some even reported that the JVP and the LTTE would get together to oppose Indian intervention. This never happened. Surprisingly, in spite of its anti-Tamil and Anti-Indian rhetoric the JVP never attacked the Tamil tigers or the IPKF.

JVP and the Armed Forces

After 1977, the JVP had been able to infiltrate all important institutions including the defence services. This has been possible due to the expansion of the armed forces and poor

117. Shekhar Gupta, "The Opposition Within", *India Today*, 15 Jan 1988. p. 76.

118. Mohan Ram, The JVP has arrived, *The Sunday Mail*, 6-12 August 1989.

119. See Muni, n.91.

120. Matthews, n. 80, pp. 430-431.

recruitment procedures. It has managed to get arms training and weapons from this method. Some of the attacks on defence installations and the Katunayake air force base could not have been possible without inside connivance. The JVP's supposed military wing the DJV (Patriotic People's Movement) is supposed to have been manned largely by army deserters.¹²¹ These deserters also trained the JVP cadres which carried out more successful military operations. Quite a few defence personnel had been discharged from the services on suspicion of being JVP activists.

In a last bid effort, the JVP appealed through its posters and leaflets to the patriots within the armed forces to rise up and overthrow the UNP regime. Infact Wijeweera had always been claiming that patriotic sections of the armed forces were with the JVP.¹²² However, when there was no mass uprising/desertion as expected they gave a deadline to police and security forces to resign, by 20 August 89 which was later extended to 28 August 89,

121. Mervyn De Silva, "Premadasa Makes a Desperate Move", *Times of India*, 13 April 1989. Wijeweera's Speech, Translations of Transcripts of Wijeweera's Taped Speech, April 1988.

122. Wijeweera's Speech, Translations of Transcripts of Wijeweera's Taped Speech, April 1988.

or have their families killed.¹²³ This was a big strategic mistake committed by the JVP. The army's method of dealing with JVP was to combat the violence unleashed by the extremist by counter-brutality. On 19 August posters were put up by the security forces all over the country warning the extremists that if one person on the side of the authorities was killed, they would retaliate by exterminating ten on the other side. The posters were signed by the People's Revolutionary Red Army (PRRA). It is believed that the PRRA like "Green Tigers" and "Black Cats" are the unauthorised killer gangs of the government. Most of these groups belong to the elite forces like the Special Task Forces (STF), who operate in civilian clothes wearing masks.

124

The JVP did not heed to the threats given by the security forces. Their tactics was marked by a certain over confidence. One popular JVP poster warned the army, "Remember, we will take

123. Seema Guha, "Lankan PM holds Out Olive-Branch to JVP", *Times of India*, 21 August 1989.

124. Green Tigers, Black Cats, Yellow Scorpions and People's Revolutionary Red Army (PRRA) - These emerged as a counter to the DJV's own death squads and have claimed responsibility for the death of dozen of suspected JVP/DJV members. Their real identity is unknown, but there is little doubt that they have the state's tacit approval, though the government denies rumours that they consist of members of some security units operating under cover. See Rohan Gunasekera, "Sri Lanka's Security Nightmare", *International Defence Review*, (Geneva), vol. 23, January 1990, p. 42.

blood for blood, life for life, parents for parents, property for property. One day someplace, somewhere, we will get you, do not forget".¹²⁵ The security forces task was made easier by the fact that JVP cadres and supporters were identifiable in the villages, retaliation was swift. An example of this was, a young woman recruit of the Sri Lankan army was shot dead at her house in Panadura division. Her two brothers and parents were also killed. The retaliation of the security forces was so swift that 14 persons were shot and burnt in the area the next day. Unfortunately, later it was found that the woman recruit had been killed by a relative and not JVP men.¹²⁶ The most disturbing part of the counter-violence unleashed by the security forces is that they did not distinguish between members, supporters and family-members. Some civil rights lawyers and human rights activists were also murdered. The execution methods adopted were gruesome. Bodies were beheaded or burnt and found riddled with bullets along the roadside or floating in rivers. This was a familiar sight from the kelaniya bridge in Colombo.

The JVP was not able to counter the counter-violence of the security forces. Its main problem has been a lack of regular

125. Guha, n. 123.

126. Seema Guha, "Lanka's River of Horror", *Times of India*, 6 September 1989.

supply of sophisticated arms¹²⁷ and sufficient manpower, without the firepower to take on the military they had no chance of winning in the short term. There were no large-scale desertions from the armed forces as expected. The security forces were gaining the upperhand. By July 1989 Ranjan Wijeratne, defence minister, had mapped out his plan of action.¹²⁸ By 27 August security forces were optimistic that they would achieve a breakthrough. With the JVP refusing to accept the olive branch people in the upper echelons of the administration believed that the only way to deal with the terrorists was to eliminate them.¹²⁹ Within three months, the government forces were able to penetrate the JVP and eliminate the leadership. Shanta Bhandara, the third ranking leader of the JVP was the first to be killed. In the early hours of 13th November 1989 Wijeweera was arrested at his house at Ulapane in the central hills and later shot dead. Soon, Upatissa Gananayake, the second in command was apprehended

127. However, intelligence reports indicated that the frequent use of landmines by the JVP/DJV showed that it was receiving regular supplies of explosives from overseas. See, Gunasekera, n. 124, p. 41.

128. Seema Guha, "Lanka Army's Peace Offensive", *Times of India*, 11 May 1990.

129. Seema Guha, "Sri Lanka Confident of Crushing JVP", *Times of India*, 28 August 1989.

and killed.¹³⁰

With Wijeweera's killing the long war of attrition to destabilise the government came to an abrupt end. But this is not an indication of the end of the JVP insurgency. There is no doubt that it has taken a beating but it is not totally knocked-out.

In its struggle to capture power the JVP used three different strategies. Initially, armed insurrection with the hope of capturing power in a single day. When this method failed, the JVP stuck to a parliamentary method. Even in this strategy the JVP failed to make inroads to the electorate and thus power was not within reach as long as the JVP followed this method. Finally, in the third phase after having learnt from their previous experiences, the JVP resorted to armed struggle or protracted guerrilla warfare. For immediate purposes one can conclude that this method has also failed.

130. For details see, *Times of India*, 14 November 1989 and Suranimala, "The Last Days of Wijeweera", *The Sunday Times*, 19 November 1989.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The JVP's last bid to capture power seems to have been over with the elimination of its top leadership, along with Wijeweera. The Sri Lankan state is exuberant with the success that it has met with, in its campaign against the leaders and cadres of the JVP. There has been a perceptible lull in the violent acts of the JVP. But from this it must not be concluded that they have been totally finished. Soon after Wijeweera's death, the JVP carried out certain acts¹ which seemed to be more in the nature of signalling to outside observers that inspite of the loss of Wijeweera, they had ample strength to carry on.

For the time being it can be concluded that the JVP has been militarily defeated. The government has still not found a solution to the socio-economic factors which gave rise to such a movement as the JVP. To wish away the JVP would not be in tune with reality. Secondly, the capture or elimination of leaders of a movement is not a sufficient condition to terminate that movement.

1. Few were killed and six buses were set on fire by JVP activists in *Teldeuriya* and *Welleto*. even after Wijeweera's killing.

But, then, how is the JVP to be tackled? This question must be intriguing most experts in the Sri Lankan government and the bureaucracy. Counter-insurgent methods to tackle the JVP would fail and have failed in the past. The 1971 insurgency was crushed militarily, but that did not stop the JVP from regrouping and reorganising at a later stage. The nature of the movement points out to one fact and that is because of its amorphous nature and varied composition, it has to be tackled or countered on several fronts.²

To understand the strength of the JVP, one has to look at the socio-economic forces which have sustained the growth of the organisation. The socio-economic crisis of the 60s was one of the main objective conditions for the birth of the JVP. The factors which contributed to these were the demographic explosion, expansion of education, mass unemployment, rural landlessness and indebtedness.³ The Political factors which were responsible for the growth of new left tendencies were due to the stagnation of the traditional left movement.⁴

2. Bruce Matthews, "The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna and the Politics of the underground in Sri Lanka", *Round Table*, vol.78, no.312, October 1989, p.430.

3. For details refer to Chapter-II.

4. H.N. Fernando, "The JVP - Then and Now", *Lanka Guardian*, Vol.4, no.3, 1 June 1981, p.17.

The present JVP also seems to be an outcome of the social and economic policies adopted by the UNP since it took office in 1977. The new economic strategy of import liberalisation and export-oriented industrialisation did not augur well with the socio-political development of the country. To attract foreign capital, the Sri Lankan state emphasised political stability and labour discipline, etc.⁵ Nevertheless, these policies did not contain the economic issues which have been instrumental in the appeal of the JVP. Even in 1989, as in 1971, 20% of the workforce in Sri Lanka was unemployed.⁶ 70% of those unemployed were youths between ages of 15 to 20 years. Particularly, in the south unemployment is high, as high as 40% in Tangalla.⁷ Inflation has been as high as 12% in 1987.⁸ Agriculture has not got the thrust that it should have got because of the emphasis on industrialisation. This has resulted in poverty and landlessness among peasants around the Uva and ^{district} Hambantota provinces.⁹ According to Bruce Matthews, the result of this is the failure of

 5. Arun Weerasuriya, "Backdrop to Presidential Election", *Mainstream*, vol.27, no.13, 24 December 1988, p.7

6. Matthews, n.2, p.427. According to A.S. Abraham, unemployment in 1987 was 21%. Refer to A.S. Abraham, "Sea of Troubles in Lanka: Time for Delhi to Think Again," *Times of India*, 22 January 1988.

7. Matthews, n.2, p.428.

8. Abraham, n.6.

9. Matthews, n.2, p.428

many low-country Sinhala Buddhists in the rural areas to participate in the open economy and by extension, in the democratic political life of the country.¹⁰

The controversial referendum of 1982, which extended the life of parliament, with a UNP majority, by six years resulted in a distorted representation in parliament of the political forces.¹¹ There is no way of unearthing what would have happened if elections to the parliament would have been held in 1982. But at least, it would have offered the JVP an opportunity to test its strength. The referendum was a crucial factor in the JVP losing its faith in the parliamentary process.

These are a few social factors which attracted the people to the JVP. Underprivileged sections from the lower class and lower castes perceived the JVP as a possible medium to create a better and egalitarian society. And as long as the petty-bourgeois youth exists within a crisis-ridden economy, it can always give rise to a movement like the JVP.

The present government of Premadasa, along with its military onslaught, simultaneously has initiated certain economic

10. Matthews, n.2, p.428.

11. Weerasuriya, n.5, p.7.

programmes like the *Jansaviya* and *Gam Udawa* programmes. If these programmes do succeed to an extent in bringing down economic disparities then he would have succeeded in keeping away those discontented sections from the JVP, who have been swelling its rank-and-file.¹² But it is highly doubtful, whether these programmes would be a complete success.

After the ~~death~~^{killing} of Wijeweera, it would not be wrong to presume that the JVP would undergo a reorganisation and a reevaluation of its strategy and tactics. If it were to make a more rational analysis of the objective situation in Sri Lanka, it would try to expand its social base beyond the petty-bourgeoisie and align with the organised urban working class. Too much of exclusive reliance on the support of the youth and the unemployed has hindered it from becoming a mass movement.^{*} It must understand the linkages between reform and revolution. It is this factor, which the JVP has not taken into consideration in the formulation of its tactics. In spite of its proclamations of being a party of the proletariat, it has not worked in the interest of the proletariat. Unless it sheds its Sinhala Chauvinist ideology, it cannot broaden its social base. A more broadened social base would only help it in becoming a

12. Matthews, n.2, p.431.

mass movement. It must bring out a clear and consistent line on the plantation proletariat.¹³

In the final analysis, one has to come to an understanding of what went wrong with the JVP's strategy. In 1987, it was close to taking over the reins of power but within two years time it had faced significant reverses so as to give up its concerted bid. The JVP's strategy during the 1983-1989 phase took a course which in the ultimate run back-fired on it. The course it took was due to a basic failure in understanding the difference between a revolutionary war and outright terrorism. One can recall the characteristics of terrorism as laid down by Paul Wilkinson here. Only three points need be discussed here. First, terrorism is indiscriminate. Second, it denies recognition of all rules and conventions of war. It does not distinguish between combatants and non-combatants and third, it rejects all moral constraints.¹⁴ According to these characteristics, it becomes hard to believe that the JVP was working towards a revolution in the interest of the masses. Though terrorism and

13. In a recent statement by the acting President of the JVP *Somawanse Amarasinghe*, which appeared in *The Island*, said that the Tamils were "second class citizens and victims of social and sectarian policies". This might be an indication of a reevaluation of their earlier thinking on the Tamils. For the report see, *Times of India*, 14 May 1990.

14. Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism and the Liberal State*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1977), pp.52-53.

insurgency are not the same concepts, yet at times it becomes difficult to distinguish between the two. But the revolutionary character of an organisation can be preserved only by discriminating between what amounts to terrorism¹⁵ and the need for violence in the course of a revolutionary war. An organisation cannot terrorise the masses and yet look for support amongst the mass. This strategy was bound to fail in the long run. But before the masses could protest against violence perpetrated against them, the state was able to immobilise the organisation by strong counter-insurgents methods. Some of the methods used were, no less, worse than the JVP's methods.

By early 1990, the focus had shifted from the South to the insurgency in the north-east. The JVP, in the meantime, might be using this period, when the security forces are engaged in the north-east, to take a breather and reorganise themselves. As long as Wijeweera was alive, he was able to evolve strategies for the organisation according to the circumstances. Not much is known about the new leadership. One has to wait and watch how the new leadership would guide the organisation and what would be their next strategy.

15. Some have considered the acts of the JVP/DJV to be terroristic and criminal under the law of war and human rights laws. See, Eduardo Marino, *Political killings in Southern Sri Lanka: On the Brink of Civil War*, (A Compilation and Report) (An International Alert Publication, 1989) pp.4-5.

SOME OF THE SLOGANS, POSTERS, LETTERS AND PAMPHLETS
RELEASED BY THE JVP AFTER THE SIGNING OF THE ACCORD

Courtesy- Sources in Sri Lanka who would not like to be
identified.

APPENDIX - A

POSTER CAMPAIGN OF THE JVP TO BOYCOTT GEN.ELECTION

SLOGANS:

- * Stop Massacre of People While Preaching Sermons.
- * Government Preaches Vedi-Bana About Peace.
(Veddas live by killing. Therefore any preaching by them
against killing is Vedi-Bana)
- * Dead Bodies Pile Up on Highways in the South.
- * Stop Gajaba Regiment-EPRLF Killings in the South on Indian
Advice.
- * Do Not Use the Army to Paste Mud-Posters Against Patriots,
To Massacre Them and to Do Dirty Government Politics.
- * This Election is a Fraud - Don't Let India in.
- * To Protect Sri Lanka,
To Defeat India,
Boycott Elections.
- * Despatch of IPKF is a Hoax,
Dixit Unaware of IPKF Numbers,
Align Forces to Drive IPKF Away.
- * Lankans, Drop Joint Ventures With Indians, Immediately.

* Send Away Immediately

- All Indian Military Men,
- Racketeers,
- Soldiers,
- Intelligence Officers.

(J.V.P.)

APPENDIX - B

PATRIOTIC PEOPLE, DO NOT BE FOOLED; DO NOT BE AFRAID:

BE BRAVE & MARCH FORWARD TO VICTORY

Another conspiracy, another election fraud perpetrated jointly by J.R. Jayewardene, Sirima Bandaranayake and all other vassals of Indian Imperialism on orders of Indian Imperialists has ended. The second step of that conspiracy is to be worked out on 15th February.

Only the vassals of the Indian Imperialists got the opportunity to contest the Presidential Election. Anti-Indian Imperialists were prevented from contesting. And amidst this election fraud a massacre of patriots opposed to Indian Imperialism was set in motion by the extreme reactionary hired killers of the Armed Forces on the advice of Indian Imperialism and orders of Jayewardene with the active participation in every field of the pro-Indian UNP, SLFP and USA.

Despite the use of all available powers of Ministers and MPs of the illegally extended Parliament of members, Ministers and CMs fraudulently elected to so called PCs, of President Jayewardene who remained in office without vacating it, of invading Indian Armed Forces, SL Army Officers who have won promotions purely on servility displayed than on merit, of UNP

thugs, of SLFP thugs and the powers of Indian Fifth Columnists like the USA, TULF, EPRLF, TELO etc. only 55.3% cast their votes. If all corruption unlawful methods and impersonations are discounted only about 30 1/2 voted for the three agents of Indian Imperialism. The rest truly boycotted this election fraud. Jayewardene's Agent polled much less than he polled in 1982. That despite an increase of 1.2 million in the total number of registered voters.

JVP warmly salutes the patriotic general public, patriotic youths who truly boycotted it having realised the fraudulent, farcical nature of the election, and pro-Indian nature of the contestants.

JVP also extends its warm revolutionary salute to patriotic people who at the risk to their lives through strikes etc. did their best to prevent the election fraud.

Jayewardene's Agent, now declared elected obtained only 2.5 million of a total of 9.4 million - that is only 27% of the total registered. 73% are not supportive of him. They have either voted against him or boycotted the election entirely. Once the number of votes cast under pressure of armed forces is discounted these statistics will appear far more worse. Now a Puppet President has been installed collectively by Indian imperialists,

Jayewardene, Sirima Bandaranayake, Ossie Abeygunasekara, K.P. Silva, Vasudeva, Colvin, Amirthalingam, Thondaman, EPRLF and TEL0. Puppet because he has the support only of 27% and is opposed by 73%.

This will not solve any burning problem of Sri Lanka. Nor will it pull out national independence of Lanka, protect its territorial integrity, stabilise its democratic system, bring in law and order or bring honour to the country. It was Sirima Bandaranayake, Anura Bandaranayake and their Ratwatte Family that extended useful support to Rajiv Gandhi and the Indian Fifth Columnists here like the USA and others to bring about this situation.

They first sabotaged efforts to set up an anti-Indian, anti-Jayewardene common front to save the country and then conspired with Jayewardene to make Gamini Dissanayake the PM if Sirima wins and form a national government and to wipe out the JVP using JR's fascist primitive forces in collaboration with reactionary sections of the SLFP. Sirima in her election campaign also used the name of the JVP first and then of the DJV later in most fraudulent manner. Through all these conspiracies they paved the way for the victory of the JR's Agent. They refused to fight for an election held with JR completely out of

power and expected to win through conspiracies and took part in the election.

Ossie Abeygunasekara of the four party USA vying to be the pet of Indian Imperialism did the same thing having got support of Indian Imperialists and 18.5 million Rupees from the UNP. He went round slinging mud at patriots.

Now Indian Imperialists and their overt and covert allies are getting ready for another election fraud. Sirima who says the Presidential Election was a fraud is also taking part in it. USA is also trying to get a grip on her Sari-fall. UNP has reduced the cut off ratio to 5% to encourage the USA friends. Now declaring it is to clear the way for the election UNP, SLFP, USA and all reactionary sections have jointly launched a massacre in the south through primitive reactionary sections of Armed Forces and EPRLF Tamil terrorists trained by Indian Forces. Today youths killed and torn to pieces by them are a common sight in the south. All above mentioned groups are responsible for this massacre.

Fascists who have taken refuge in Indian Imperialism expect to create fear and fright in people and there by suppress their protests. This is their last trump. They are playing it on the advice of Indian Imperialists. It was Jayewardene who ordered

it. These orders were given prior to the election. JR's Agent wanted it postponed until after the Presidential Election and he delayed taking oath of office to allow room for it to be put into effect. Information for this was supplied by Bandaranayake - Ratwatte Group of the SLFP and USA.

Now the situation is very clear. People will have to punish those who are guilty of these crimes.

Patriotic people,

Are you going to betray the country by taking part in a fraudulent election? Or are you going to fight for the Independence and liberation of your motherland?

True patriots in the SLFP, are you going to be misled again? Bandaranayakes and Ratwattes can never come to power again. Don't be deceived by them. Get away from them and join us to form a patriotic united front to save the nation.

Just and law abiding men of the armed forces, join the patriotic people to defeat fascists; to drive away the Indian Puppet Government. If you cannot do that, give up armed service immediately.

PATRIOTIC PEOPLE, BOYCOTT THE ELECTION.

FIGHT FOR A TRUE ELECTION.

FIGHT FOR INDEPENDENCE AND LIBERATION OF MOTHERLAND.

01.01.1989

Janata Vimukthi Peramuna.

APPENDIX - C
ORDER TO BOYCOTT THE PSEUDO INDEPENDENCE DAY OF FEB.4TH AND
THE COMMEMORATION CELEBRATIONS.

1. What is the independence that the Sri Lankans are enjoying since the handing to the Indian Imperialists in terms of the Secret and Treacherous Peace Accord?
2. What is the Independence when Indian Army and their secret agents are killing the people, torturing them, driving them out of their habitats?
3. What is the Independence when the country has been divided at the behest of India?
4. What is the Independence when the Police/Army/murderers at the behest of India, are murdering and torturing citizens?
5. What is the independence when marauders under various titles are detailed to exterminate people.
6. What is the Independence when state murderers like Udugampola, Algama are exalted for their actions?
7. What is the Independence when Acts like 'Prevention of Terrorism' and '..... of responsibility' which toll the death knell to citizens, are enacted?
8. What is the Independence when there is an unlawful Govt. which has assumed power by fraudulent election practices and a President steeped in all injustices, although mouthing democracy.

In these circumstances, February 4th is not a day that Mother Lanka got Independence. Further it is meaningless to celebrate when we are living as a vassal state under India.

Our Commanding Headquarters re-iterate and order that this day and its celebrations should be boycotted by all sections of the citizens that black flags should be hoisted all day in a show of protest.

We have directed our field forces to take strong action against those who violate these orders.

Sgd. Keerthi Wijebahu.
Chief Commanding Officer
Joint Commanding Headquarters of the
(Deshapremi) Patriotic Armed Troops.

28/1/89

APPENDIX - D

JOINT COMMANDING HEADQUARTERS OF THE PATRIOTIC
PEOPLES' ARMED TROOPS

Orders issued on all Sri Lankans on declaring 21st February 1989
a National Day of Protest.

1. To protest against the election held and to reject the results thereof as it was held by having pre-prepared ballot boxes filled with marked ballot papers in favour of UNP candidates getting people who did not want to cast their votes to do so through force, of Army, Police and thugs.
2. To protest against massacres continually committed.
3. To protest against daily increasing Indian interference and against the traitors UNP government which encourages it.

The following orders are made by our Joint Commanding Headquarters. Effective from mid-night of 20.02.89 to midnight of 21.02.89 a curfew is imposed.

- (a) All employees of state/private sectors except those in Hospital Service should not report to work. They must strike work to protest against the traitors govt.

- (b) All transport state/private must stop. People must stay indoors without going out.
- (c) All state/private sector institutions must remain closed.
- (d) All petrol sheds and servicing stations should remain closed.

Our armed forces have been instructed to impose heavy punishments on those who do not obey these orders as they will be considered to have accepted this Rogue President of the Rogue Parliament.

Kirthi Wijebabu
Chief Commanding Officer
Patriotic Peoples Armed Corps.
Joint Commanding Officer

APPENDIX - E

The Chairman,
The United Nations Human Rights Commission,
thro' The United Nations System ,
Colombo.
Sri Lanka.

Hon.Sir,

The mass killings of unarmed innocent people of Sri Lanka by the Sri Lankan Security forces and state sponsored death squads are well known to the whole world.

The Amnesty International and other human rights organisations the world over repeatedly appealed to the 'President" and the 'Government' of Sri Lanka to take immediate steps to stop crimes against innocent people.

Despite these appeals the killings and other crimes by the security forces and the state sponsored death squads are on the increase.

The circulars annexed, issued by the Commander of the Sri Lankan Army regarding the alarming increase of crimes committed by

officers of the security forces are further evidence to prove that the security forces are responsible for the killings and other crimes.

These crimes are being committed by the officers on orders given to them by their superiors and 'Ministers' of the Cabinet.

The 'President' and the Cabinet Ministers of Sri Lanka on several occasions denied the fact that mass killings and other crimes are being carried out by the Sri Lankan Security forces and the state sponsored death squads.

We appeal to you on behalf of the people of Sri Lanka to interfere into this state of affairs and to compel the 'Government' of Sri Lanka to take firm actions to stop committing crimes by the Sri Lankan security forces and the state sponsored death squads immediately,

Thanking you,

Signed by Upatissa Gamanayake

General Secretary

Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (J.V.P.)

APPENDIX - F

CONSULTATIVE PAPER PRESENTED BY THE JVP

In March 1990 the IPKF withdrew from Sri Lanka. The presence of the IPKF and the signing of the Indo Sri Lanka agreement soured relationship between JVP and other Tamil parties. The other Tamil parties ie EPRLF PLOT EROS have all renounced a separatist struggle and pledged towards working for a united one Sri Lanka. They have replaced the separatist demand with a demand for greater autonomy and devolution in the Northern and Eastern provinces.

The JVP position has always been to improve relations with all Tamil parties opposed to separatism. They have had contacts and discussions with EPRLF EROS and PLOT at various times. With the withdrawal of the IPKF the renunciation of a separatist struggle the way is now clear for a more closer and cordial relationship between the JVP and EPRLF EROS and PLOT.

The JVP in its party declaration and at its first Congress supported self determination. It has always supported devolution as opposed to separatism.

In their opposition to the present government they see Tamil parties as potential allies, especially these parties who are not

fooled that victory will only come through parliamentary election. JVP will continue its policy of armed struggle until the present government is toppled and replaced with a democratic government.

The JVP is actively seeking the cooperation of all democratic parties Tamils and Sinhalese that will fight towards establishing a democratic Sri Lanka. JVP is fully aware that they are the only Sri Lankan party presently pursuing a policy of armed struggle but that should not deter a democratic front of all democratic forces fighting the government. We are not seeking united fronts or coalitions but simply to be part of democratic movement to replace a tyrannical non-democratic government.

We are conscious that in seeking allies amongst the Tamil parties we have to define our position with regard to devolution. The definitions can only take place as confidence grows against all parties. However there can be doubt as to the JVP commitment towards devolution.

There are several problems that have to be resolved.

- (a) The forms of a broad democratic movement against the present government
- (b) The form of armed struggle against the government and how the various parties can contribute and cooperate

This is a consultative document and therefore would be open for discussion amongst all parties.

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