

Since the collapse of the USSR, there has been a worldwide trend among Stalinist and centrist parties to amalgamate into big parties, whatever their ideological base. In Bangladesh, this trend has recently had a major triumph.

On 31st October several thousand young militants gathered in the capital, Dhaka, at the re-launching of the National Socialist Party (JSD), formed through an unprincipled, three party alliance.

The president of the new JSD is A.S.M. Rob, who currently holds a ministerial post in Hasina's Awami League government and whose party, JSD(R), warmly supported General Ershad's dictatorship from 1983 to 1990. The new secretary is Hasanal Haque Inu, one of the leaders of the Left Democratic Front, an alliance formed in 1994 of 10 Stalinist parties which had previously led the opposition against Ershad under a common banner with the Awami League for a number of years.

The JSD was originally founded in 1972 by former youth members of the bourgeois nationalist Awami League, who had turned to socialist ideas during the 1971 war of liberation. The JSD, which swallowed up the League's entire youth section, was in the forefront of the battle against the autocratic Awami League government between 1972 and 1975.

The staunchly anti-communist Awami League had begun persecuting and executing left-wing activists during the liberation war, and upon coming to power unleashed a campaign of right-wing terror. Thousands of people were imprisoned, tortured, killed or simply disappeared during the period referred to as the 1,365 nights-long nightmare.

The JSD was very successful in mass recruiting radical petty bourgeois youth who were deeply disillusioned by the established left parties. Maoist parties had dismissed the separation war as a "war between two dogs", while Mao opined that it was an internal

matter of Pakistan. Indeed China, together with the USA and the Islamic nations of the Middle East, didn't recognize the Bangladeshi state until several years after its formation. The East Pakistan Communist Party - Marxist Leninist, stood for the unity of Pakistan until 1976, even attempting to enlist the assistance of then prime minister of Pakistan, Bhutto, to overthrow the Awami League government. During the war the Khrushchevite CP simply aligned itself with the bourgeois Awami League and continued its support after the League had formed the first, barbarous government of Bangladesh. The CP in fact liquidated itself into the Awami League, thereby creating a one-party dictatorship.

This action was cynically termed "the second revolution - the path to socialism".

Large numbers of youth also joined the JSD between 1972 and 1975 when the country was ravaged by famine and state repression. The JSD and many other left parties were banned by the Awami League government under Mozib.

From its inception, the JSD called for socialist revolution rather than the Stalinist theory of two-stage revolution. For this reason, JSD was wrongly and maliciously labelled "Trotskyist" by Maoist and Khrushchevite parties.

In August 1975 Mozib was assassinated in an army coup which included members of his own party. In the ensuing months there were several more coups and counter-coups, each involving a seemingly more unlikely alliance of political and army forces than the last. General Zia ended up with the state power in his hands, thanks in part to the cooperation of the JSD under the leadership of Taher, a retired army colonel, who had fought closely with Zia and been left a cripple during the 1971 war.

To celebrate his victory, Zia began arresting and court marshalling soldiers suspected of sympathising with the JSD. The total number of soldiers put to death is unknown, but believed to be in the thousands. Zia himself was killed in an unsuccessful coup attempt against his rule,

but not before he had hanged Taher for his troubles and sent large numbers of JSD and other left parties' members to trial at martial courts and thence to their death or long years in prison.

Zia's power was relatively stable because it went largely unchallenged. His predecessor, Mozib, had overseen the almost total destruction of the left and the sorry remnants of the adventurist left were demoralized and put up little fight.

Zia's dictatorship was even perhaps slightly less unpopular than Mozib's regime before it. For the left, the only noticeable difference between the two was that while the Awami League sent its activists out to attack and kill the left opposition, Zia stuck to his morals and subjected them to the rule of law in his military courts. Zia also made a virtue of friendly behaviour toward former enemies, allying to himself the Islamist forces that had fought on the side of Pakistan in 1971 or courting opponents with large sums of money, which proved a popular and rewarding tactic. One Maoist group flatteringly dubbed Zia a "patriotic nationalist".

After Taher's demise, the JSD was virtually immobilised, its main leadership languishing behind bars between 1976 and 1979. During 1979/80 disagreements arose within the JSD regarding the evaluation of the party's past and also about its future tactics. The leading circle were in favour of joining in the national government and proposed the creation of a chamber of parliament consisting of representatives of professional groups and associations, a sort of petty bourgeois house of deputies.

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The next layer of leadership in the JSD were inspired to create a revolutionary working class party. Most of these, who were chiefly from the student milieu, were expelled or resigned from the JSD and in 1980 formed the Socialist Party of Bangladesh (BSD). BSD considered itself the embryo of a revolutionary party, and unlike the JSD, its leadership had no common theoretical agreement on either national or international questions. BSD's activities were similar to JSD's, though the language of its propaganda was more radical.

In 1983 the 'embryonic revolutionary party' split in two parts on the question of which revolutionary Marxist strategists the BSD ought to follow. BSD (M) claimed adherence to the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao. BSD (K) wished to add to this list the Indian Stalinist-idealist Shibdash Gosh, thus creating the "six pillars of Marxism".

After the split which gave rise to the BSD, the JSD was broken up by several right-wing splits during the first half of the 1980's. The founding president of the JSD made a total break with socialism and formed a pro-Islamic party. Two minor splits created the Awami League, and the Janata Mukti Party, which subsequently merged into the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). JSD (S), which merged into the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). JSD (R) also emerged from a split, offering its support to Ershad's military government.

The remainder of the JSD, considered the main part of the party, became known as JSD (I). In 1994 JSD (I) entered the Left Democratic Front, an alliance of 10 parties which had all strongly opposed Ershad's rule. Both BSD splits were among its member parties.

* INSERT (SEE PAGES). The formation, splits and now the reunification of the JSD show that history of the petty bourgeois revolutionism often follows the path of adventurism before eventually bowing down its head to opportunism.

The Left Democratic Front, a hotch-potch of Stalinist parties, didn't make any public comment about the departure of one of its largest sections, JSD (I), to form a new JSD. The silence and avoidance of expelling the JSD (I), indicating its

meek tolerance of the unprincipled alliance forming the new JSD, is proof of the Front's own political bankruptcy. It's role as an opposition movement has not prevented the Front, ^{previous or} member parties, from reaching "understanding" with the ^{government} of Khaleda Zia and ^{an} agreeing to support the "good works" of the present government of Hasina. The Front is very conscious of the benefits of having its programme approved by the ruling parties. Whatever the ideological differences between both BSD splits and JSD (I), all three have followed the same political path of alliance with the bourgeoisie during the past decade and a half.

At the press conference announcing the reunification of the JSD, Rob declared the past was the past. Treacherous leaders are never interested in looking back over the past, and try to hide the past from the workers and peasants whose interests they have betrayed time and again. But for the toiling masses of Bangladesh, it's imperative to look back:

and learn the lessons of the past in order to build a genuine revolutionary party in the spirit of Lenin and Trotsky, as part of the international proletarian movement.

The workers and peasants of Bangladesh, who have only ever had the choice of joining organizations more or less degenerated by strains of Stalinism, need a real Bolshevik-Leninist party to lead the fight against the horrors of capitalism, as well as the ruinous Stalinist policies of socialism in one country and alliance with the bourgeois classes. The soldiers, too, need to be armed with the revolutionary theory of Lenin and Trotsky, instead of the useless prattle of traitors and capitulators like Rob and Inu, or Taher before them.

INSERT ON PAGE 4: The Front declared its belief in the progressive role of Bengali nationalism and profound illusion in the role of the United Nations!