



A Third World Concept: The Asian Socialist Conference

Ideologies of Neutrality, Development, and Anti-Imperialism in the laboratory of the 1950s.

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Introduction

After the Second World War, a wave of decolonization stretched over Asia, along with the idea that everything was possible for the new countries and their inhabitants. Intending for them to build a new world. South and Southeast Asia became a laboratory for socialist movements, where equal rights, freedom, and human dignity were within reach. All sorts of socialist organizations, like, feminists, labor, and equal rights movements, grew and established themselves as structured organizations with clear goals. The 1950s, therefore, became a decade of high hopes for a better future, for stronger nations and for a united Third World against imperialism and exclusion. The confident and optimistic attitude of the 1950s not only reached Asia, but later also Africa and other (de)colonized areas. The “Global South”¹ became a conscious region, where there was international and national awareness for self-determination and dignity of all humans.² Therefore, socialist movements and their ideas could transcend borders and even continents.

One of these movements was the Asian Socialist Conference (ASC), established in 1953. The ASC was an international social-democratic organization, which fitted well in the rise of socialist movements in the 1950s. Their main concerns were the well-being of the social-democratic political parties in the world, especially in Asia, Third Worldism, anti-imperialism, and the development of Asian countries. These topics had an international character and were discussed among a variety of movements, governments, and organizations. They appealed to larger groups and especially to (de)colonized people from all over the world.³

The ASC, located in Rangoon, Burma, was one of the organizations that fought for a better future for Asia. The transnational ASC fitted well into the dynamics of the 1950s, where solidarity among the (de)colonized countries and people played an important role. It was a decade where young and opportunistic men and women in the Global South tried to change their new nations into better and stronger ones and the members of the ASC took part in this. The words below of U Kyaw Nyein,

¹ ‘The phrase “Global South” refers broadly to the regions of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania. It is one of a family of terms, including “Third World” and “Periphery,” that denote regions outside Europe and North America, mostly (though not all) low-income and often politically or culturally marginalized. The use of the phrase Global South marks a shift from a central focus on development or cultural difference toward an emphasis on geopolitical relations of power.’ Definition by: Nour Dados and Raewyn Connell.

² See for example: Glenda Sluga and Patricia Calvin (eds.), *Internationalisms, a twentieth century history* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2017). Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People’s History of the Third World* (New York; New Press; 2007). Mark T. Berger, ‘After the Third World? History, destiny and the fate of Third Worldism’, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 1. (2004). Christoph Kalter, ‘From global to local and back: The ‘Third World’ concept and the new radical left in France’, *Journal of Global History*, Vol. 12, No. 1. (2017).

³ Literature about new voices during and after decolonization, see for example: Tuong Vu and Wasana Wongsurawat (eds.), *Dynamics of the Cold War in Asia, Ideologies, Identity and Culture* (New York; Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). Christopher J. Lee (ed.), *Making a world after empire, the Bandung moment and its political afterlives* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010). Leslie James and Elisabeth Leake (eds.), *Decolonization and the Cold War, Negotiating Independence* (London; Bloomsbury, 2013).

one of the key members of the ASC, spoken in 1952, showed the ambition of the organization, but it also displayed the threats they experienced in the world around them.

This is the common fate of slaves which we have shared together. This is also the tie of common suffering in our struggle for freedom, which binds us together. It is more or less in the course of this bitter struggle for Freedom against ruthless Western Colonial Powers and Japanese Fascism that our Socialist Movements are born and matured. It is therefore only natural that in the hour of our freedom also, and in the critical days of our growing up as newly Independent States, our Asian Socialist Parties should look up to one another for the solving of common problems. [...] But this is not all. The most important question is the grim and gloomy picture presented by the world. The world has now been divided more or less into two huge camps, one led by the Capitalist America and the other by Communist Russia, each putting full pressure on countries to line up with them. [...] It is for the Asian Socialist parties to head a Third Camp, and try their level best to save the world from the Third Great War while they still can. It is for the Asian Socialist Parties to offer an alternative to the Capitalist Democracy and Totalitarian Communism namely in the form of Democratic Socialism.⁴

The goal of the ASC expressed by U Kyaw Nyein was clear, namely to prevent another great war and to ensure that democratic socialism became the main political and social path for the decolonized nations, big plans for a relatively small and young organization. However, their plans for anti-imperialism, Third Worldism, and development were an interesting case to study their involvement in the turbulent and hopeful years of the 1950s. How did the members of the ASC relate to a bigger picture of the optimistic 1950s? How did they use the 1950s' environment to reach their own goals, for example, democratic socialism in Asia and neutrality? Furthermore, why did the Asian Socialists decide to form a transnational organization? Who were the members of the organization? And which obstacles did they meet along their way towards their ideal world. Considering that the 1950s were quite a challenging era in the postcolonial states, regarding social-, economic- or political aspects. By the means of a "thick description"⁵, their ideas and thoughts about the themes mentioned above, will hopefully lead to some new insights in the stirring 1950s.

Looking at the 1950s, how was it possible that so many (new) solidarity movements could develop? Closely connected with the rise of socialist movements was the struggle against colonialism. The fight for freedom and self-determination was an important element in the awareness of human rights of many colonized people. Another factor was the realization that the Western civilization had its flaws and was not the great civilization the colonizers had stated it to be. Japan played an important

⁴ International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, later referred to as IISH, Microfilm 5482, U Kyaw Nyein, 'Common ties that bind us together', in: *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, issued by the Preparatory Committee for Asian Socialist Conference, Vol. 1. No. 3. (Rangoon, September 16th, 1952), 1-3, see 2-3.

⁵ A concept by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, which will be discussed further in the introduction.

role in this recognition. Through a series of modernization, both industrial and military, Japan proved to be an equal opponent against the Western countries in the 20th century. The victory of Japan on these fronts became an inspiration for people from colonized areas that they too were able to be free and independent of the West.⁶

Moreover, the disillusion about the Western civilization, which emerged with of the horrors of the First World War, was one of the elements, which triggered an anti-colonial attitude. Initially around 1900, the anti-colonialist voices were spread by people from Asia and Africa who were well-educated, mostly in a European system. These elite men who were the leaders of the anti-colonial sentiments saw the injustice between the colonizers and the colonized people. After some years, they became more vocal and their ideas about anti-colonialism were also supported by an increasing number of the populations of decolonized areas. Expressed in all levels of society were feeling of self-determination and nationalism. After the Great War, the voice against the colonial regime thus grew from a select intellectual group to a proclamation supported by many layers of the population of colonized areas.⁷ The first voices of the freedom fighters were peaceful ones. During the war and especially after the encouraging statement about “self-determination for all” by Woodrow Wilson in 1917, nationalists believed that after the war, their call for freedom would be heard. However, when this belief shattered during the Peace Conference in Versailles in 1919 and in the following years, the tone of the nationalists became more radical.⁸

So, after the First World War, the call for independence continued. The Interwar period became a time in which the old balances shifted. The United States and the Soviet Union became new power players and challenged the European authority. In addition, Germany and Japan developed a new kind of imperialism. It was no longer one front, as was the traditional form of colonialism, because the Europeans lost their legitimacy and got opponents. More forms of imperialism made it easier to start doubting and to express critiques about colonialism and colonial rule in general.⁹ Simultaneous, solidarity movements expanded and became more popular in the colonized regions, both national and international, as a reaction to Western colonialism. Asian nationalists and revolutionaries formed

⁶ Kerstin von Lingen and Robert Cribb, ‘Justice in Time of Turmoil: War Crimes Trials in Asia in the Context of Decolonization and Cold War’, in: Kerstin von Lingen (ed.), *War Crimes Trials in the Wake of Decolonization and Cold War in Asia, 1945-1956, Justice in Time of Turmoil* (Heidelberg; Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 1-24, see 8-9. Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York; Columbia University Press, 2007), 71-92.

⁷ Michael Adas, ‘Contested hegemony: the Great War and the Afro-Asian assault on the civilizing mission ideology’, in: Prasenjit Duara (ed.), *Decolonization, Perspectives from now and then* (London; Routledge, 2004), 78-100, see 98.

⁸ Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-determination and the International Origins of Anti-colonial Nationalism* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2007), see Preface and Introduction.

⁹ Prasenjit Duara, ‘Introduction: the decolonization of Asia and Africa in the twentieth century’, in: Duara (ed.) *Decolonization, Perspectives from now and then*, 1-20, see 7. Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism*, 124-125.

networks and promoted Pan-Asianism. Japan, again, was an important place; it became a safe location where high-educated nationalists came together with a group of students and thought about the Asian identity. Hereby, the transnational awareness of Asia matured and this consequently, supported a consciousness of solidarity among the Asian countries.¹⁰

Together with the transnational solidarity, nationalism became more and more evident. Hereby the Asian solidarity was both national as international in identity. This sounds like an unusual combination, however, placed in this period of exploring politics, economics, culture, and ideologies, Asian solidarity as a whole indeed made sense.¹¹ On all fronts co-operation between a variety of countries, groups, and organizations became more common. First mainly between Asian countries, but later African, Middle Eastern, and Latin American countries were participating as well. An example of this co-operation were the congresses and conferences with “Asian” in their name, like the Asiatic Labour Congress that was established in the Interwar period. These initiatives showed great devotion to transnational Asian solidarity.¹²

During the Second World War, the independence and the Pan-Asian movements remained active and the freedom fighters believed that after the war, they would get their chance to freedom. This belief was stimulated by the occupation of many Southeast Asian countries by Japan, or as the Japanese called it: the liberation of Asia, which they did in the name of Pan-Asianism. National leaders, like Sukarno and U Nu, led the fight against the (former) colonial rulers.¹³ For example, under the Japanese regime Sukarno’s ideas about an independent Indonesia could spread further. In exchange, he had to convince local people to help the Japanese with their fight. The Japanese occupation turned out to be a disappointment; many people were suffering from hunger, violence, and captivity. When in 1945, the American forces dropped two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the Japanese army withdrew their troops back to Japan.¹⁴

In Asia however, there was no peace after 1945, because violence and brutality continued. Much literature on the Second World War is quite Eurocentric. Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper tried to change this one-sided point of view and focused on the impact of the war on Asia. The war in Asia

¹⁰ Sven Saaler and Christopher W.A. Szpilman, ‘Introduction: The Emergence of Pan-Asianism as an Ideal of Asian Identity and Solidarity, 1850-2008’, in: Sven Saaler and Christopher W.A. Szpilman (eds.), *Pan-Asianism a Documentary History, volume 1: 1850-1920* (Lanham; Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2011), 1-42, see 5-8.

¹¹ Glenda Sluga wrote a book about this phenomenon, where she explained this combination. In the second chapter of this thesis her findings will be further discussed and will be linked to the words of the members of the ASC. See: Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia; University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

¹² Carolien Stolte, ‘Bringing Asia to the world: Indian trade unionism and the long road towards the Asiatic Labour Congress, 1919-37’, *Journal of Global History*, Vol. 7. No. 2. (2012), 257-278, see 257-258.

¹³ Prasenjit Duara, ‘Introduction’, 7-8.

¹⁴ Wim van den Doel, *Zo Ver de Wereld Strekt, De geschiedenis van Nederland overzee vanaf 1800* (Amsterdam; Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2011), 306-328.

caused many casualties and did not stop in 1945. The drop of the atomic bombs was seen as a pause in the fighting. After this pause, colonial powers came back and wanted to regain their authority over the areas. Thus showing that the imperial drive of the Western countries was not over yet. Although, there were discussions in the motherlands about the discourse of decolonization, the nationalists and freedom fighters of the colonized countries wanted freedom immediately. They believed that the process of decolonization as envisioned by the Europeans went too slow and they kept fighting for their freedom.¹⁵ An example of the continued violence in Asia were the military actions in Indonesia. Sukarno declared the Republic of Indonesia independent in 1945. The Dutch however, did not agree with these terms and brutal military actions followed. Eventually, after four years of fighting the Dutch officially accepted the sovereign state of Indonesia. In India, Gandhi's Quit India movement of 1942, showed the demand of the nationalists towards the British colonial rule to leave India immediately. India became the first country to gain acknowledged independence in 1947. Thereafter more and more countries followed.

Immediately after the war and the independence struggles of the 1940s, another great world conflict emerged, the Cold War. The rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union were felt all over the world. Most of the existing literature about the Cold War describes the battle between the superpowers in a European setting. Recently, however, scholars argued that Cold War was fought in other places as well, like the Third World. No longer did they describe the happenings in the (post)colonial countries as an effect of the Cold War, but rather as a significant voice in that same war. The voices from the (de)colonized people combined with other struggles in these areas, like nationalism, social and economic development, and the search for their identity, made the (de)colonized countries an intriguing research subject.¹⁶

Third World Solidarity

In the search for own identities, the leaders of the new countries developed the concept of a Third World. A focus point in this ideology became the belief to take a neutral stance in the Cold War. Together with a strong notion of anti-colonialism and anti-Westernism, the Third World concept went well with independence movements. The Third World idea was not bound to a place; it was an ideology that lived in the minds of many intellectuals in the (de)colonized world. As Vijay Prashad stated in his book: "The Third World was not a place. It was a project."¹⁷ Well-known participants in this project

¹⁵ Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Wars, Freedom and Revolutions in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 2007), 1-13, 95-96.

¹⁶ Michael Szonyi and Hong Liu, 'Introduction: New Approaches to the Study of the Cold War in Asia', in: Zheng Yangwen, Hong Liu, Michael Szonyi (eds.), *The Cold War in Asia, The Battle for Hearts and Minds* (Leiden; Brill, 2010), 1-14, see 1-2.

¹⁷ Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York; New Press; 2007), xv.

were Sukarno, Jawaharlal Nehru, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Ho Chi Minh, Kwame Nkrumah, and Zhou Enlai. These men became the faces of the early and new Third World.¹⁸ Lesser-known figures were, among others, the members of the ASC, who also thought about the possibilities given by the Third World concept. This concept became a widely used ideology and many groups and organizations used the Third World for their own advantages.

How was it possible that the idea of a Third World became such a powerful concept? First, the Third World concept build further upon the strong sense of solidarity between the different (de)colonized countries and identities. Subsequently, the sense of solidarity gave the idea that a Third World was possible, wherein people from (de)colonized areas were able to express an own voice in the East-West conflict. On top of that, the concept also took a position in the North-South struggles as being anti-imperialist. The Third World movement took shape in the 1950s and over three decades the movement grew, changed, became more radical and eventually in the late 1980s declined. The end of the Cold War is usually given as the reason for the decline, because the neutral third voice lost its meaning. The large support, which the Third World movement once had, was gone, even though the anti-imperialist voice of the Third Worldists was still current.¹⁹ A question that should be raised is: was the idea of a third voice during the Cold War really the most important ideological feature of the concept of a Third World?

The history of the Third World concept, which started in the late 1940s and early 1950s, was a broad and border-transcending project. It gave many possibilities for many people to identify with, because it was a sanctuary where ideas like social revolutions, equality, and freedom could be expressed. Therefore, the Third World was a great formula for groups who fought for independence, against racism, for student's rights, and for better circumstances for the working class.²⁰ These conditions could be seen independently from the Cold War, so why was the tension between the East and the West of such a great importance? Evidently, the decision to take a non-aligned position connected the Third World countries. Just as the desire to choose a completely independent path after the colonial era. These aspirations were expressed during the Bandung Conference in 1955, and the Belgrade Conference of 1961. The Bandung Conference, especially, was not only a turning point for anti-imperialists, and freedom fighters, but also for socialists all over the world. Third Worldists, particularly, looked at Marxism to envision their ideas for their perfect societies.²¹ Therefore, with the

¹⁸ Mark T. Berger, 'After the Third World? History, destiny and the fate of Third Worldism', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 1. (2004), 9-39, see 12.

¹⁹ Berger, 'After the Third World?', 9-10.

²⁰ Christoph Kalter, 'From global to local and back: The 'Third World' concept and the new radical left in France', *Journal of Global History*, Vol. 12, No. 1. (2017), 115-136, see 116, 120-121.

²¹ Berger, 'After the Third World?', 11.

Bandung Conference, a new era arose, wherein the possibilities for the new and independent countries seemed endless.

Further, the Third World concept gave people their own voice. Not only in the Cold War conflict, but also in many other matters. It encouraged writers, politicians, unionists, and activists to speak for themselves. On a much larger scale people started to write their own histories, own policies, and own stories and they did so proudly and free of the being a subjected to the Westerners. Moreover, the reinforcements of voices happened all over the Global South and therefore the idea of self-dignity and self-determination of both the individual, nation, and even the Global South entirely, became a connector for this region and thus in the Third World ideology as well. The idea of self-dignity was one of the appealing characteristics of the Third World. Another factor was the growing gap between the capitalist consumer societies in the West and the still developing countries of the Third World. Resulting in a separation between the developed and the underdeveloped areas. Disturbing was the fact that the areas which were called underdeveloped where the majority of the world, development was only reserved for a small part of the population. The Third Worldists wanted to change these numbers and for that reason, development and modernization became an important characteristic of the Third World concept as well.²²

Mark Berger distinguished the Third Worldists in roughly two groups or generations as he called them. Among the first generation were the initiators and creators of the idea of a Third World from the 1950s until the 1960s, the men mentioned above, the so-called Bandung regimes. For them (re)building better nations was important, they did so with socialist plans as the “Guided Democracy” of Sukarno in Indonesia, or the Nehruvian socialism in India. Essential characteristics of the first generation were self-determination, human rights, anti-colonialism and a strong United Nations. Through the UN, the first generation tried to be heard. They saw the UN as an independent institution, which made the UN the perfect judge to oversee that the economic and technical aid, given by the developed countries, was given without ulterior motives.

The members of the ASC belonged to the first generation of Third Worldists. They matched the period; the ASC was active in the 1950s, similar to the first generation of Third Worldist. More importantly, they agreed with the main ideologies of the first generation. For the ASC members (re)building the independent nations was most important, thus themes neutrality, anti-imperialism and development were crucial to them. They also saw the UN as an institution that could make a difference for (de)colonized people and used the Marxist ideologies to envision their ideal world. Finally, the background and characteristics of the first generation and the ASC members matched. Members of both the Third Worldists and the ASC were well-educated, independence fighters, and

²² Kalter, ‘From global to local and back’, 116.

political active. Some of the ASC members were also involved in the independence negotiations of their countries together with the new leaders of these countries.²³ However, there were also differences between the majority of the first generation people and the ASC members. The Asian Socialists were, because of their social-democratic ideology more moderate and this reflected in their ideals as well. The following chapter will describe the similarities and differences further.

In the 1960s, criticisms began to rise against the plans of the first generation. The biggest critique was that they were not able to achieve their promises and goals, especially on the social and economic level. The Third World countries still struggled with their development rate. The second-generation regimes expressed their criticisms. Leaders this generation were among others, Muammar Qaddafi, Fidel Castro, and Patrice Lumumba; they followed the Bandung initiators with more radical ideas of how the Third World should be. Another criticism was the fact that they believed that Nehru, Sukarno, and Nasser were too much attached to either the Soviet or the American support. Even though the first generation claimed that, they wanted to be independent of these powers. According to the second generation the modernization, development and the (re)building of their new countries still had too many links to the West. They wanted these relations gone and were therefore much more anti-Western than the first generation had been.²⁴ The international attitude of the Third World concept changed with the second generation as well. The first generation had a cosmopolitan character, opposed to the national mindset of the second generation.²⁵

From the 1960 onwards, books and articles were written about the Third World. The concept of the Third World, however, was not a vast given. Mainly, because the concept was used by a variety of groups and by many different people for various reasons. Hereby, the different parties who took an interest in the idea of a Third World used the concept to their own merit and put in some of their own identity. As mentioned above, the two generations of Third Worldists showed that the concept could change into something more radical and could become more isolated. Therefore, to define what the Third World exactly was, proved to be quite a difficult task. B.R. Tomlinson tried to do so in the article "What was the Third World?" He acknowledged that the phrase Third World was widely used and had not a clear definition. However, the term had a powerful message for people from (de)colonized regions. He stressed that the establishment of a Third World, with shared ideas and ideals, awareness of a common history and recognition of an own identity were important factors, especially regarding the West. The identity and dignity, which the essence of the Third World concept gave to to these

²³ See chapter one for a short biography of the most active members.

²⁴ Berger, 'After the Third World?', 12-25.

²⁵ G. Thomas Burgess, 'Mao in Zanzibar, Nationalism, Discipline, and the (De)Construction of Afro-Asian Solidarities', in: Christopher J. Lee (ed.), *Making a world after empire, the Bandung moment and its political afterlives* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 196-234, see 196-219.

countries and people, were crucial aspects as well.²⁶ Hereby, the ideological factor, the Cold War, and the colonial background were seen as important characterizations of the Third World concept. Therefore, the Third World concept could be used as a tool to understand the cultural, political and social situation in the postwar era in the (de)colonized regions.²⁷

Christoph Kalter argued that the post-development thinkers introduced new perspectives in the question what the Third World concept was, especially regarding development. In the last chapter of this thesis, the ideas and criticisms of the post-development thinkers will be discussed. The changes these thinkers brought from about the 1980s onwards was the fact that they no longer tried to confirm the concept of the Third World into a Western model, but instead studied how the social and political sciences had given form to the concept of the Third World. Thus, they critically looked back to the fields that already discussed the Third World, especially regarding to the field of development.²⁸ Just as the Third World concept, the idea that development was open for changes. From the 1980s onwards new interpretations of the Third World and development appeared.²⁹ Hence, the concept and description of the Third World is still an ongoing subject in the historical and social field.

Where the well-known faces of the Third World already had quite some coverage in the historical literature, smaller groups of Third Worldists might not have. Kalter noticed: "In short, we know that the Third World was a powerful global concept for social and political movements throughout the long 1960s. But we are only beginning to understand how exactly this potent, yet somewhat abstract and 'thin' global concept became anchored in a variety of settings where activists put it to concrete and 'thick' local uses."³⁰ Therefore, a group of people like the members of the ASC can be an interesting subject to look at the Third World concept from another point of view. Moreover, the ASC and its members will represent the groups of people which Berger called the first generation of Third Worldists. Therefore, the era of the first generation will be the main concern of this thesis. Through better understanding of the Asian Socialists, another story of Third Worldists can be added within the optimistic time of the 1950s.

²⁶ B.R. Tomlinson, 'What Was the Third World?', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 38, No. 2. (2003), 307-321, see 307-308.

²⁷ Tomlinson, 'What Was the Third World?', 307-310. Christoph Kalter, *The Discovery of the Third World, Decolonization and the Rise of the New Left in France, c. 1950-1976* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016), 9.

²⁸ Kalter, *The Discovery of the Third World*, 9-11.

²⁹ Chapter 4 will mention the new interpretation of development. Tomlinson, 'What Was the Third World?', 310-311.

³⁰ Kalter, 'From global to local and back', 116.

Method and Structure

Why the ASC? Talbot Imlay mentioned in “Socialist Internationalism after 1914”, that the ASC received little scholarly attention.³¹ The organization was mentioned in a couple of articles and books, but never got to be the star of the story. The ASC was mostly used for explanatory purposes.³² Therefore, this time, the Asian Socialists will be the star in this thesis. In order to gain some understanding about their organization, their ideals and their struggles, a “thick description” of the ASC will be given. The concept of “thick description” came from the anthropologist Clifford Geertz. In order to understand people or a group of people, he thought it was necessary to see people in their ordinary lives and to study them from their own perspectives. The writer became an observer, he gave an interpretation of what he saw, and thereby making the text, he wrote an interpretation on itself. However, Geertz believed that it was “possible to think not only realistically and concretely *about* them, but, what is more important, creatively and imaginatively *with* them.”³³ This could be achieved to focus on small facts and really explore one small facet to understand larger matters. The depth in small facts, Geertz called “thick description”, after studying these small facts; larger conclusions could be drawn from them.³⁴

Especially the sentence of Geertz about thinking *about* and *with* them, suits the research to the Asian Socialists well. The members with their dreams, ideas, and ideologies for better futures, deserved to be looked at from a bird’s eye view, but also from within, because only then their choices can be understood. Therefore, a thick description will be a good method to do both. To really look at the organization and its members and subsequently place the ASC in a broader context to draw a bigger conclusion. By doing so the ASC and its members can be identified within a larger world, in time, but also in the history of the Third World.

The book by Saul Rose from 1959, already told the story on social-democratic ideas in South and Southeast Asia. Rose focused on the individual countries, but also described the ASC to gain a more general picture of social-democratic movements in this region. Special was that he truly merged himself with this topic, because he lived in India and Malaya during the years of Second World War, but most of all, he attended both of the ASC conferences, in 1953 and 1957.³⁵ The story he told therefore proved to be helpful in expanding the knowledge and experiences of this time and the ASC. However, because Rose was involved in the social-democratic circles in Asia and because he wrote

³¹ Talbot Imlay, ‘Socialist Internationalism after 1914’, in: Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin (eds.), *Internationalisms, a twentieth century history* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2017), 213-244, see 234.

³² See the books and articles of: Saul Rose, *Socialism in Southern Asia* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1959); Peter van Kemseke, *Towards an Era of Development, The Globalization of Socialism and Christian Democracy 1945-1965* (Leuven; Leuven University Press, 2006). Talbot C. Imlay, ‘International Socialism and Decolonization during the 1950’s Competing Rights and the Postcolonial Order’, in: *American Historical Review*, Vol. 118, No. 4. (October 2013), 1105–1132.

³³ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures, selected essays* (New York; Basic Books, 1973), 23.

³⁴ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 14-15, 23, 26, 28-29.

³⁵ Saul Rose, *Socialism in Southern Asia* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1959).

from personal experience, it is necessary that the ASC and its members will be studied from a new and objective point of view. Moreover, more than fifty years later, the ASC will be looked at in a bigger picture, that includes the Third World movements, the Cold War, decolonization, and development programs. Hereby, the new story of the ASC will provide a different and additional understanding of the organization and its members.

The bulletins are the main source from which the efforts and goals of the ASC will be described. During the years the ASC was active, there were four different sets of bulletins or newsletters. The first three, *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*; *Asian Socialist Conference – News Letter*; and *Asian Socialist Conference Information Bulletin*, were published in Rangoon. The last bulletin, however, the *Asian Socialist Conference Newsletter*, was published in Jakarta. In the early years of the 1950s, these bulletins were published every month, sometimes even more often. This changed after 1955; from then on, the bulletin would appear quarterly. The decision was made because it gave the editors more time and opportunity to compile the newsletters.³⁶ Another change in 1955 was the division of the bulletin into a general *Asian Socialist News Letter*; a bulletin of the ASC Planning Information Bureau, the *Economic Bulletin*; and an *Anti-Colonial Newsletter* of the ASC. A year later, the general *Asian Socialist News Letter* changed to *Asian Socialist Conference Information Bulletin* because that had a better ring to it.³⁷ Only to be replaced in 1959, with the *Asian Socialist Conference Newsletter*. Published from this last newsletter were only a few editions, not even mentioned herein were the months of publication. Therefore, over the years the editions and details of the ASC bulletins were declining.

The newsletters or bulletins were sent to friends of the Asian Socialists all over the world. The numbers contained news and information about the activities of the Secretariat of the ASC, as well as on member parties and fraternal organizations. There was also room for discussion in the bulletins, on issues like the Third Camp ideology or imperialism for example. The bulletins were the vehicle of information between social democrats all over the world and especially in Asia.³⁸ As a source, the bulletins gave a good impression of the opinions and occupations of the members of the ASC. However, the articles, and thus the sources for this research, were written by the members themselves and mostly showed their own perspective and own point of view. Hereby, the articles did not only represent the members but also their organization. Taking into consideration that these elements are

³⁶ IISH Microfilm 5482, 'Message from the editors', *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 4. No. 3&4. (Rangoon, November, 1955 and February, 1956), 1.

³⁷ IISH Microfilm 5486, 'Message from the editor', *Asian Socialist Conference Information Bulletin*, no.1. (Rangoon, July, 1956), 1.

³⁸ IISH Microfilm 5487, 'Introduction of the Secretariat', *Asian Socialist Conference – News Letter*, no. 1. (Rangoon, May 24th, 1955), 1. 'Message from the editor', 1. IISH Microfilm 5488, ASC Secretariat (C. Tatebayashi), 'About this Bulletin', *Asian Socialist Conference - Economic Bulletin*, no. 1. (Rangoon, June 20th, 1955), 1.

connected to the sources, the method of Geertz provides a method where there can be looked at the ASC from the perspective of their own members, in order to build up the analyzes of this organization. Through the Asian Socialists words, their motives and ambitions can be described. It is necessary to do this from their own viewpoint, because the words of the members are the only sources available to find answers as to why these men decided to start the ASC in the 1950s, or what they thought about concept like the Third World, imperialism, neutrality, and development. Therefore, the bulletins of the ASC will serve as the main source of information. Nevertheless, combined with additional literature and information about the 1950s, the Third World idealism, Cold War, development, and anti-imperialism, the ASC will be analyzed in a broader range too.

This will be done in the following order. The first chapter will cover the start of the ASC and describe who the most important members of the ASC were. Then, divided into the following three chapters the three topics, Cold War, decolonization, and development will be discussed. Starting with the Cold War and the effects the two-bloc attitude of the world had on the ASC. Where the Asian Socialist able to form a third bloc and were they strong enough to refrain from joining either one of the sides? Second, the attitude of the ASC regarding colonial struggles. In the 1950s, many anti-colonial and freedom movements were active; the ASC was one of them. Where the Asian Socialist able to express their needs and wishes about colonialism? Moreover, where they heard, by other countries, the Socialist International, or the UN? Third and last, the topic of development will be covered. Herein, the focus lays on the ideas of the ASC about economic, social, and political development. How did the members feel about the aid given and what were their plans to develop the Third World?

These three topics are very much related to one another. A growing number of historians wrote about the entanglements of decolonization, the Cold War, and development. The work edited by Leslie James and Elisabeth Leake, *Decolonization and the Cold War*, recognized the fusion of these happenings in the Global South. They believed that the Cold War had “blurry edges” and therefore could not only be looked at with a Soviet and/or American focus. They saw the Cold War as a period of global ideological struggle. Next to this, in the decolonization processes, varieties of people were involved. All these different people had other interests in the decolonization of a country. For example, colonial powers could use their colonies to undermine processes of the Cold War, but also social and economic reasons were taken into consideration in decisions about the colonies.³⁹ Leong Yew also believed that the idea of Communism versus Capitalism could be challenged by terms and ideas like socialism, imperialism, the Third World, neutrality, the geographical East versus the ideological East, and non-alignment. All of these terms brought something new to the framework of the Cold War.

³⁹ Leslie James and Elisabeth Leake, ‘Introduction’, in: Leslie James and Elisabeth Leake (eds.), *Decolonization and the Cold War, Negotiating Independence* (London; Bloomsbury, 2013), 1-17, see 1-5.

Leong Yew thought that the Cold War, therefore, had an uncertain and changeable ideological nature.⁴⁰ Christopher J. Lee edited the work *Making a World after Empire*, wherein he saw the events in the Global South of the 1950s as alternative additions to the chronology of historical narratives of that time. Especially the Bandung Conference of 1955 was such a pivoting moment because it was the moment between an era of colonialism and the era of post-colonialism. On top of that, it took place within the period of the Cold War and European modern imperialism.⁴¹

The fifties, thus, were an eventful period. In the line of these works, regarding the blurry lines around the framework of Cold War, and de-colonialism, this thesis will bring the topics of Cold War, anti-imperialism, Third Worldism and development together by using the words of the ASC members. It would be almost impossible to look at the topics without seeing them together, because the Asian Socialists linked the topics constantly in their articles. This all will be done to add another historical narrative, the narrative of the ASC, to the chronology of the events in the 1950s and to show the Third World concept as the ASC members had envisioned it.

⁴⁰ Leong Yew, 'Relocating Socialism: Asia, Socialism, Communism, and the PAP Departure from the Socialist International 1976', in: Tuong Vu and Wasana Wongsurawat (eds.), *Dynamics of the Cold War in Asia, Ideologies, Identity and Culture* (New York; Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 73-92, see 91.

⁴¹ Christopher J. Lee, 'Introduction: Between a Moment and an Era: The Origins and Afterlives of Bandung', in: Lee (ed.), *Making a World after Empire*, 1-44, see 9.

Chapter 1. - The start of the ASC -

The members of the ASC were men who were all active within local as well as international politics, social and labor movements, and organizations. During the Asian Relations Conference in Delhi, March 1947 the founding members from Burma, India, and Indonesia⁴² talked about an umbrella organization for the social-democratic parties in Asia. These men met each other again during the Asian Regional Conference and the ideas of a transnational organization were further discussed. During these discussions it was decided that the ASC headquarter had to be placed in Rangoon. Furthermore, they settled on some of the manifesto points, which were the liberation of all Asian people; opposition towards the feudal system; and adequate conduct for economic and politic improvement.⁴³

A few years passed and in March 1952, the initiators came together in Rangoon for the first preliminary meeting. Members of social-democratic parties of Burma, India, and Indonesia thought about the identity of the ASC. From here, they made the next step towards the formation of a transnational social-democratic organization. They published their first bulletin on August 16, 1952. Written down herein where the preparations of the ASC and the aspired identity of the ASC. It started with which other parties were going to be involved with the ASC, and how the ASC defined social democracy for Asia.⁴⁴ Consequently, these themes were returning subjects in the bulletins of the ASC. During the 1950s, the ASC published actively and the members were engaged in the Asian politics and socialist organizations.⁴⁵

However, it was important to point out that Asia for the ASC members was more comprehensive than the geographical map nowadays would point out to be, for example, social-democratic parties of Egypt, Israel, and, Syria were also members of the ASC. Meaning that defining Asia was not as simple as just looking at the geographical borders. In the *Myth of Asia*, John M. Steadman wrote about how to understand the concept of Asia. He described that first, Asia should not be generalized as a whole, and especially not when someone only knew something about one particular Asian country. Secondly, he asked himself if Asia really existed or if it was only the idea of Asia that lived in our imagination. Thirdly, he warned not focus too much on the differences between Asia and Europe. He gave as an example, when "Asia is 'spiritual', then Europe must be necessarily 'materialistic'".⁴⁶ To use the terms Asia and Europe, in the same manner, therefore, was inaccurate

⁴² Shrimati Kamaladevi and Dr. Rammanohar Lohia prepared for a preliminary meeting with the goal to convene a world socialist conference one day.

⁴³ Rose, *Socialism in Southern Asia*, 4-5.

⁴⁴ IISH, Microfilm 5482, *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, issued by the Preparatory Committee for Asian Socialist Conference, Vol. 1. No. 3. (Rangoon, September 16th, 1952).

⁴⁵ See the paragraph about the members and their political and social activities.

⁴⁶ John M. Steadman, *The Myth of Asia* (Macmillan and Co Ltd, 1969), preface 13-15.

because the terms were not balanced equally. Therefore, when the ASC invited countries from West Africa to be members, this did not mean that the organization was less “Asian”.

Nonetheless, next to the ideological and thus open international attitude of the ASC, there were also more practical reasons for expanding their membership. More members meant more foundation and support for their organization. If countries from West Africa wanted to join the ASC, it thus worked in the advantage of the organization. If the ASC acquired more members, they could spread their ideas further, and thus internationally their organization gained more support.

These elements of pragmatism were useful for the ASC as an international and socialist organization, which followed the global ideology of the Third World. Therefore, the ASC was much more open to inviting countries, which were strictly not located in the geographical border of Asia. Moreover, the ASC was not the only Asian organization inviting a great variety of countries to their conferences. Other Asian socialist organizations included countries from outside the geographical Asian margins as well. Furthermore, this was something that happened for quite some time. The Asia Labour Congress of 1934, for example, also had the Federations of Jewish Labour in Palestine joining their congress.⁴⁷ The same applied for the Asian Relations Conference of 1947, here Egypt, Israel, Mongolia, Iran and many more countries had delegates present during the conference in New Delhi.⁴⁸ In respect to the ASC, their interpretation and their concept of Asia will be used, meaning the perspective will come from a global and cosmopolitan point of view, rather than a geographical one.

Even with their internationalist point of view, establishing a non-European organization was important for most of the members of the ASC. They could have joined the Socialist International (SI), the social-democratic organization founded in Europe in 1951. The SI was an organization with a long history⁴⁹ and therefore had lots of experience regarding organizational structures and as a transnational organization.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the founding members of the ASC decided to create an organization independent from the SI. Reasons for doing so were described in the first *Fortnightly Bulletins*. The ASC members thought the western European countries, which were mostly imperialist democracies, showed only interest in the national and socialist revolutions of their own motherlands. Besides, it would be difficult for the Socialist Democratic parties of Europe to support a strong anti-colonial agenda, because of their own position in local government. On top of that, most of the West-European countries had a history of being the colonizer, making the subject of anti-colonialism

⁴⁷ Carolien Stolte, ‘Bringing Asia to the world’, 271.

⁴⁸ Shankar Sharan, *Fifty Years after the Asian Relations Conference* (New Delhi; Tibetan Parliament & Policy Research Centre, 1997), 10-11, 14.

⁴⁹ The SI followed the Internationalist organizations and Comisco, see: *Britannica Academic*, s. v. "Socialist International (SI)," accessed February 18 2017.

⁵⁰ Peter van Kemseke, *Towards an Era of Development, The Globalization of Socialism and Christian Democracy 1945-1965* (Leuven; Leuven University Press, 2006), 49.

controversial for them. Moreover, the ASC wanted to remain neutral in the Soviet-American conflict. For some of the European countries this was more difficult, Europe was divided by the Iron Curtain and therefore divided between the two blocs. Most of the countries on the west side of Europe depended on Marshall Help, so they had no other choice than to support the United States. The countries on the east side of the Curtain, on the other hand, were under the control and pressured by the Soviet Union. So naturally, the European nations had to favor one particular side in the conflict.⁵¹

The relation between the ASC and the SI was, for all of these reasons, a slightly tense one. During the Second Congress of the SI in October 1952, M.S. Gokhale spoke as a representative of the ASC and here he expressed a slight disappointment about the somewhat arrogant attitude of the SI. He did so in the following words:

The attitude of many of the European Socialists is governed by the assumption that the European Socialists strengthen themselves and solve their own problems first, the rest will follow and the Far East will be attracted towards the Socialist International. To this my reply is no. Such an attitude is entirely wrong. You are not alone, and cannot remain in your little world.⁵²

However, the wish to establish an international social-democratic ideology was a shared factor of the SI and ASC.⁵³ Moreover, there were more entanglements, Japan for example, was a member and India was an observer of the SI. Their agendas were just too dissimilar to be one organization. One of those gaps were the level of development in the two areas. Asian social-democratic parties had to face a dense population, a population with a lower standard of living. Therefore, it felt more reasonable for the ASC members to work with countries that faced similar problems.⁵⁴

The social-democratic parties of Asia started working together by setting up a preparatory committee in Rangoon and here a small group of ASC members took the lead. Tasks of these men were the organization of the first ASC Conference and keeping the other members informed about their progress.⁵⁵ The men planned to start in May 1952, but due to circumstances, the representatives of both India and Indonesia were not able to be in Rangoon until July.⁵⁶ The start of the ASC thus started

⁵¹ IISH, Microfilm 5482, 'Asian Socialist Conference Background', *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol.1. No.1. (August 16, 1952.), 1-3.

⁵² IISH Microfilm 5482, M.S. Gokhale, 'Asian Socialists and the Socialist International', *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 1. No. 7. (Rangoon, November 16th, 1952), 9-12, see 9.

⁵³ M.S. Gokhale, 'Asian Socialists and the Socialist International', 12.

⁵⁴ Paragraphs based on IISH Microfilm 5482, Author unknown, 'Asian Socialist Conference Background', *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 1. No. 1. (Rangoon, August 16th, 1952), 1-3. Rammanohar Lohia, 'Foreign issues before Asian Socialists', *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 1. No. 8. (Rangoon, December 1st, 1952), 11-16, see 14 -15.

⁵⁵ The committee members were Imam Slamet from Indonesia, Prem Bhasin from India, Kyaw Nyein and Tu Win from Burma. The secretary was Hla Aung, from Burma as well.

⁵⁶ IISH Microfilm 5482, Author unknown, 'Preparatory Committee', *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 1. No. 1. (Rangoon, August 16th, 1952), 6-7.

with a small bump. However, this one small delay exposed more obstacles. Like the travel distance, but also the need of the members regulate their affairs in their own countries. They were all members of social-democratic parties in their motherlands, which meant that they had their obligations there as well.

1.1. The Rangoon Conference of January 1953

After some small delays, the first Conference of the Asian Socialists took place in the City Hall of Rangoon from 6 till 15 January 1953. From all over the world, around 200 delegates, fraternal delegates, observers from various socialist parties, freedom movements, international socialists, and anti-imperialists came to the capital of Burma.⁵⁷ The Asian Socialist themselves described this event as “a milestone in the history of freedom and socialist movements in Asia and Africa.”⁵⁸ Early in the morning on the first day of the conference, U Kyaw Nyein welcomed everyone to Rangoon. The fact that the ASC was such a young organization caused some problems with the accommodation for some of the participants in Rangoon. The Reception Committee simply did not have that much experience organizing such a grand event. Nevertheless, the participants did not seem to have any problems and were grateful for the ASC to organize this conference. Encouraging words expressed by delegates demonstrated the gratitude towards the city of Rangoon, the Socialist Party of Burma and the ASC.⁵⁹

U Ba Swe was chosen as the chairman of the conference, he was the leader of the Socialist Party of Burma and was well appreciated by the participants. In addition, U Ba Swe was chosen because the Socialist Party was the leading party in Burma; therefore, the party and her members were seen as an inspiration for other Asian countries.⁶⁰ During the Chairman’s Address, U Ba Swe mentioned the challenges the ASC had to face. These challenges became the subjects and the focus points of the ASC, both during and after the conference. The challenges expressed by U Ba Swe were the threat of another great war; freedom for the colonies; supporting national revolutions fighting for freedom; economic development in Asia; and cooperation between the ASC and the SI.

For each of these themes, one committee was appointed to think and discuss the subject and to put their findings into resolutions that were submitted during one of the three plenary sessions.⁶¹

⁵⁷ See appendix 1 for a list of all the delegates, observers and organizations present at the ASC conference Rangoon.

⁵⁸ U Hla Aung, *Report on the First Asian Socialist Conference Rangoon, 1953* (an Asian Socialist Publication, April 8th, 1953), preface.

⁵⁹ Concluded out of the printed opening speech of U Kyaw Nyein and other delegate speeches, *Aung, Report*, 1-2, 10-30.

⁶⁰ *Aung, Report*, 1-10, 29-31.

⁶¹ The committee subjects were: Principles and Objectives of Socialism; Asia and World Peace; Permanent Machinery of the Asian Socialist Conference; Agrarian Policy for Asia; Economic Development of Asian Countries;

The sessions and committees formed the core of the conference, but delegates could also visit public seminars and there was a mass rally on 11 January.⁶² Discussed during the plenary sessions was, among others, the relation between the ASC and the SI. As described above, the differences between the SI and the ASC were substantial. However, the opinions were quite divided, Pakistan and Egypt wanted as little as possible to do with the SI Japan, on the other hand, assumed that the ASC was going to be a component of the SI. Delegates of other countries were able to nuance these differences and there was decided that the ASC had to be a separate and individual body from the SI, but that regular contact between the two organizations was maintained, as well as with other socialist organizations.⁶³

In addition, the subject “Asia and World Peace” caused different opinions; here the neutral stance in the Cold War was discussed. How to be neutral, therefore, remained a much-discussed question that in many articles of the ASC bulletin.⁶⁴ A similar outcome applied to the question about economic development. To decide what the best policy was to develop the ASC countries, more information was needed. Therefore, all of the ASC countries got the assignment to submit a note on their economies. Hereby, a list of the common factors of Asian development could be made and there would be an inventory of what needed to be done for each country.⁶⁵

Another difficulty were the differences between the ASC member countries. Japan and Israel were most divergent from the other ASC countries they were, for example, much less agricultural and delegates from Egypt and Lebanon expressed that they could not recognize Israel in this Conference.⁶⁶ Saul Rose, who was present as a delegate from the SI noticed these tensions between the Israeli delegates and the representatives from the Arab countries too.⁶⁷ Despite the differences, most of the resolutions were accepted unanimously and without any difficulties. Most importantly, Jayaprakash Narayan, Sutan Sjahrir, and U Kyaw Nyein drafted the Joint Statement of the ASC.⁶⁸ Points of the Joint Statement were freedom, equality, individual dignity, improvement of the standard of living, universal culture, and peace.⁶⁹ These topics were returning and much discussed in the ASC bulletins. During the conference, the ASC as an anti-imperialist organization pleaded their support to nations, which were currently struggling against colonialism.⁷⁰ The first ASC conference in Rangoon set the direction

Freedom Movements in Colonies; and Common Asian Problems. See appendix 2 for a list of members of committees during the first ASC conference.

⁶² Aung, *Report*, 29-31.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, 33-37.

⁶⁴ See chapter 1 about the Third World ideology, especially page 37 where neutrality was discussed regarding the Korean War.

⁶⁵ Aung, *Report*, 50-62.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, 28.

⁶⁷ Rose, *Socialism in Southern Asia*, 129.

⁶⁸ Aung, *Report*, 41-47.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, 41. And see appendix 3 for the whole Joint Statement of the first ASC conference.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, 50-62.

towards the future of their organization. Their plans and resolutions were made, so they could start as a new organization.

1.2. Members of the ASC

In the ASC, there were a few members who carried the greatest responsibilities and who were most active. They were the foundation of the organization. Who were these men? What were the similarities and differences between the members of the ASC from Burma, India, and Indonesia? Some were well known in their own countries, but also abroad. Others were active in multiple political parties, organizations, and movements but not so much outside of the Asian political and activists field. Therefore, the information available about the Asian Socialists differed quite a lot per person. Nonetheless, a profile of the members who were most active for the ASC will be given. They were the ones who were the presidents, the secretaries and the project leaders of the organization. Moreover, their names can be familiar from the descriptions above. These are the men whose names will return throughout this whole thesis. They were the ones who wrote about the Third Camp, imperialism, and development. Obviously, these members were not the only ones who were active for the ASC. However, they were the men who were most involved with the specific subjects that were relevant for this thesis.

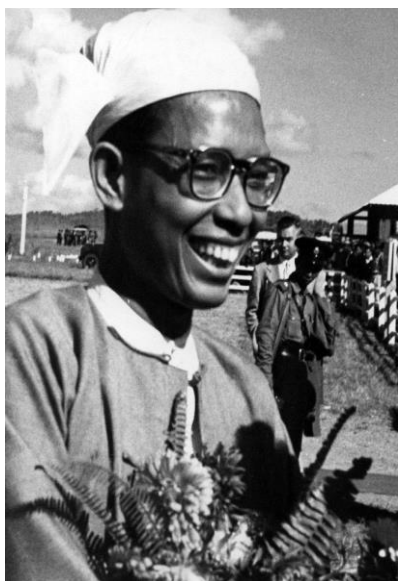
Burma

Burma the country where the headquarter of the ASC was located. Two Burmese members of the ASC stood out, these men being U Kyaw Nyein and U Ba Swe. In the 1950s, Dr. Maung Maung a Burmese journalist had extensive interviews with these men and sketched their youth and their early careers. These essays about the “leading figures in Burma” were reprinted by Robert H. Taylor and were of big help in characterizing U Kyaw Nyein and U Ba Swe’s earlier years. Notable was the fact that Maung Maung thought, without any doubt, that both of these men had the character and career to become future Prime Ministers of Burma.⁷¹ These interviews from 1955 and 1956, showed the prominent position which the two Asian Socialists held in Burma.

U Kyaw Nyein born in Pinyinmana in 1915 came from a well-established family. His father was a lawyer, but he was also active in the local politics as the leader of the General Council of Buddhist Associations. At the age of 15, U Kyaw Nyein went to high school in Mandalay to study science. However, the library with all its literature and the debating hall attracted him more. Already in high school, he stood up against the authorities in order to prevent the college from shutting down.

⁷¹ Robert H. Taylor, Dr. Maung Maung, gentlemen, scholar, patriot (Singapore; ISEAS Publishing, 2008), 144, reproduced from Maung Maung, ‘U Kyaw Nyein’, *The Guardian* Vol. 2, No. 5. (March 1955), 9-19. Taylor, Dr. Maung Maung, 200, reproduced from Maung Maung, ‘U Ba Swe’, *The Guardian* Vol. 3, No. 5. (March 1956), 27-31.

Speaking against the authorities was highly unusual in the 1930s in Burma, nevertheless, he was successful in his escapades and the school remained open. Maung Maung wrote that this was the moment where the agitator in U Kyaw Nyein was born. Hereafter, he went to the university in Rangoon, he studied literature and completed his degree in English. However, studying was not his priority during these years; his first concern was the students' union where he became very active. Not surprisingly, he was one of the leaders during the student strike of 1936, which expressed protests against the leadership of the nation. The students' union promoted nationalist ideals and fought against colonialism, for U Kyaw Nyein these subjects became his ideals too.⁷²



U Kyaw Nyein⁷³



U Ba Swe and his wife Nu Nu Swe⁷⁴

U Kyaw Nyein joined the *Thakin Movement*, a movement that was appealing for many young people, workers, and progressives. In the late 1930s, the Burma Revolutionary Party (BRP) was established, a party which focused on students and the fight for independence. When Aung San, the leader of the party and later the facto prime minister of Burma, had to go into hiding because of the British, U Kyaw Nyein and U Ba Swe took over the organization of the BRP. During the years leading up to and during the Second World War, U Kyaw Nyein was at the center of the action, fighting against the established powers and for an independent Burma. At the end of the war, important figures in the national movements formed a political alliance between the Communist Party, The Burma National Army, and

⁷² Taylor, Dr. Maung Maung, 125-130.

⁷³ Kyaw Nyein, Portrait Wikimedia Commons, accessed 1 November 2017.

⁷⁴ Ba Swe, former Deputy Prime Minister of Burma and wife Nu Nu Swe, Portrait Wikimedia Commons, accessed 1 November 2017.

the BRP, this alliance was called the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL). Aung San became the leader of the AFPFL. The alliance revealed as a strong force against the Japanese occupation and the British colonial power.⁷⁵

Internal there were tensions between the communist and the social democrats. Therefore, U Ba Swe and U Kyaw Nyein decided to reform the BRP into the Socialist Party of Burma, hereby they formed a counteract party against the communists. Within the AFPFL, the socialists gained the upper hand. In January 1947, the AFPFL delegation went to London to discuss the future of Burma with Clement Attlee from the Labour Party. U Kyaw Nyein was the secretary and advisor of this delegation. Agreed was that Burma would gain full independence within one year, the so-called Aung San-Attlee agreement. Hereafter, U Kyaw Nyein became the Minister of Home Affairs of Burma. This proved to be a heavy post because there were unrests, uprisings, and rebellions in the country. These unrests climaxed with the assassination of Aung San on 19 July 1947, and a little later with the communist rebellion of March 1948. On the January 4 1948, Burma became officially independent and U Nu became the first Prime Minister. U Kyaw Nyein got the post as his deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister.⁷⁶

Tensions between the communists and socialists remained a problem during the early years of independent Burma. During the interview, U Kyaw Nyein looked back on those turbulent years and said, "The communists were killing people, blowing up railway trains in the name of a holy revolution. But if we, the government, put a few people in custody it was suppression and ruthless dictatorship. And, of course, I was the dictator."⁷⁷ U Kyaw Nyein was also the man who warned against the "new imperialism", where he expressed his concern about the rising power of the Soviet Union, chapter two would mention these opinions more explicitly. Moreover, his years in government changed U Kyaw Nyein, as he said himself: "A revolutionary at twenty, a reactionary at 40, that's what I am, I suppose".⁷⁸ These words showed the change from being the one who fought against the ruling power into someone who was the ruling power himself.

U Ba Swe was also born in 1915, on October 7 in *Onbinkwin* near Tavoy. He was confronted with injustice against Burmese people from a young age. He grew up in a miner's village, where only white or people blessed by the British had the privilege to wealth. The interview with Maung Maung stated that he did not even have to read Marx to know what injustice in the social order was. During his years in high school, he loved literature and poetry, but politics appealed to him too. When the student strike of 1936 happened in Rangoon, students from other cities organized strikes too. U Ba

⁷⁵ Taylor, Dr. Maung Maung, 130-141.

⁷⁶ Ibidem, 141-145.

⁷⁷ Ibidem, 142.

⁷⁸ Ibidem, 143.

Swe organized the strike in Tavoy. Hereby, he met the other strike leaders and they invited him to come to the University of Rangoon. He also went to study in Rangoon and his priority was, just as U Kyaw Nyein, not with studying alone. However, his love for poetry and literature remained and he was very active in the book club. It was here, that he read Marx and he became interested in his ideologies, but also learned ideologies of Lenin and Stalin. Later in his life, he sought his ideology within the Marxist and Buddhist ideologies.⁷⁹

When the BRP was established, U Ba Swe was placed in charge of the military operations. This proved to be quite a difficult task because there were barely arms. There was one revolver, without any munitions. U Ba Swe who was described shy in the essay by Maung Maung did have some activist years. For example, he tried to rob someone on behalf of the BRP but the information was wrong and the man did not have any money. After this incident, U Ba Swe and his gang apologized to the poor man and they both went their own way. During the Japanese occupation, U Ba Swe had to go into hiding, was eventually arrested and released after a short period of time. After the Japanese left Burma in a hurry, U Ba Swe took on some of the administrative tasks of Rangoon. Just as U Kyaw Nyein, he was active in the AFPFL; he was their general-secretary and then vice president of the organization. He was also the Minister of Defense, a socialist leader, and president of the Trade Unions.⁸⁰

His character was described as a “strong silent man, whom his comrades call – with a touch of affection – “Tiger” [...] Always relaxed, he could enjoy his game of poker and give his decisions and directions of vital matters after the game. Many a weighty decision was thus made at the card table or a billiards; but the decision would usually be the right one.”⁸¹ Maung Maung was right about the future Prime Minister position for U Ba Swe; he was Prime Minister of Burma from the short period of June 1956 until March 1957.⁸²

U Nu, U Kyaw Nyein, and U Ba Swe all believed in a “positive neutral” stance. This was the idea to remain independent from the communist Soviet or Chinese bloc and to lead the country with a socialist agenda.⁸³ Another change was the more open attitude of the nation, under U Nu the Burmese foreign policies shifted from a mainly “neutral isolationist” towards a more open, international and solitary position. A more internationalist approach was considered good in order to develop their worlds.⁸⁴ Although U Nu shared quite a lot of ideologies with U Ba Swe and U Kyaw Nyein, he was not

⁷⁹ Taylor, Dr. Maung Maung, 200-205, 209.

⁸⁰ Ibidem, 200, 205-209.

⁸¹ Ibidem, 200, 209.

⁸² Harris, M. Lentz, *Heads of States and Governments, a worldwide encyclopedia of over 2,300 leaders, 1945 through 1992* (London; Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 567.

⁸³ Richard Butwell, *U Nu of Burma* (Stanford (CA); Stanford University Press, 1963), 152.

⁸⁴ Renaud Egreteau and Larry Jagan, *Soldiers and Diplomacy in Burma: Understanding The Foreign Relations of the Burmese Praetorian State* (Singapore; National University of Singapore Press, 2013), 83-86. Hugh Tinker, *The Union of Burma, a study of the first years of independence* (London; Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1957), 337, 342.

as involved in the ASC as U Ba Swe and U Kyaw Nyein were, even though he wrote a few articles for the ASC bulletins.⁸⁵ There were differences between these men, these showed in 1958 when the AFPFL split into the Clean AFPFL led by U Nu and the Stable AFPFL led by U Ba Swe and U Kyaw Nyein. U Ba Swe and U Kyaw Nyein, who led the Socialist Party, broke with the other groups in the AFPFL, from this moment the AFPFL changed forever. U Nu appointed General Ne Win as temporary caretaker of the government. In 1960, U Nu won the election again with his Clean AFPFL. Two years later, Ne Win took over the Burmese government with a coup and he implemented “The Burmese Way to Socialism”.⁸⁶ Because of this takeover, the days of politics for U Ba Swe and U Kyaw Nyein but also for the ASC were over; the shift from the first generation of Third Worldists to the second generation was visible here. There was no more room for the moderate and optimistic tone of the ASC members, which fitted the character of the first generation; instead, a more radical form of socialism was implemented on Burma. Hereby, the ASC members could no longer keep their headquarters in Rangoon functioning. This defeat in Burma was therefore also a setback for the ASC in general.

U Ba Swe and U Kyaw Nyein were both ambitious men, who started their careers during their years as students. Both had love for literature, but they had even more interest in the students unions where they became familiar with socialists ideologies. Their young years, therefore, contained quite some elements of activist undertakings. Hereafter, they both became active in the Burmese politics. First, they attained administrative tasks; the administrative character of these occupations matched the active writing for the ASC bulletins. Eventually, they became ministers, vice presidents, and in case of U Ba Swe even president of Burma. In the early 1950s, these men were representatives of the Burmese government, which was not an easy duty. They both got opportunities that were not available for everyone, they went to colleges, studied, and thrived in politics. Ultimately, they served the interests of the common people, the laborer; however, they themselves were not these people.

India

In India, Asoka Mehta, Rammanohar Lohia, and Prem Bhasin were most actively concerned with the organizational and secretary tasks of the ASC. Jayaprakash Narayan was present during the first ASC conference and led one of the committees there as well. However, in opposition to the three men mentioned above he did not actively write for the ASC bulletins. In the Indian socialist political landscape, J.P. Narayan was of great importance; nevertheless, for the ASC he played a smaller role. Therefore, the other members will be described more explicitly. However, because the national

⁸⁵ Tinker, *The Union of Burma*, 348-349.

⁸⁶ Donald M. Seekins, *Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar)* (Lanham; Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), xxvii, 73.

political careers of the four men were so intertwined and because Narayan played an important role in the national politics, he will still be mentioned quite a lot.



Rammanohar Lohia⁸⁷



F.I.t.r. Yamaguchi, Sato, and Asoka Mehta⁸⁸

Just as the members of the ASC from Burma, these men had rich political and activists careers in India. Starting with the fight for independence from the British, which was achieved in 1947. Hereafter, rebuilding India into a stronger and better nation. In the struggle for independence, multiple of these men were imprisoned more than once. For participation in independence movements, the British imprisoned Asoka Mehta five times, for example. Not only he, but also J.P. Narayan, Rammanohar Lohia, and much more Indian freedom fighters ended up in prison.⁸⁹ The imprisonment, however, did not keep these men from continuing their fight. It was in the Nasik Jail near Bombay where the idea for the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) took shape, in the early 1930s. Here a friendship grew between J.P. Narayan, Minoo Masani, Achyut Patwardhan, Rammanohar Lohia, Yusef Meharally, and Asoka Mehta. Their time in prison was used to discuss and evaluate history and develop plans for the future.

⁸⁷ Edited portrait of Rammanohar Lohia, original can be found on: Dr Ram Manohar Lohia, Mani Ram Bagri, Madhu Limay, S M Joshi, Portrait Wikimedia Commons, accessed 1 November 2017.

⁸⁸F.I.t.r. Yamaguchi, Sato and Mehta, International Institute for Social History, file IISG BG B9/893, <http://hdl.handle.net/10622/30051000555042?locatt=view:level3>, accessed on November 1 2017.

⁸⁹ Author Unknown, 'The International League for the Rights of Men, the violation of human rights in India' in: *Case Studies on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom* (The Hague; Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), 473-532, see 514.

They considered themselves Marxist-Leninists and joining the Communist Party of India seemed a good fit at first. However, the social democrats were much more focused on the fight for freedom in India. Therefore, they were disappointed that the communist party followed the Communist International instead of focusing purely on the independence struggles internal. Therefore, an individual socialist party was necessary.⁹⁰

The CSP was a party where membership was quite exclusive; to be a member one had to be a member of the Indian National Congress (INC) as well. The most important ambition of the party was to exclude any form of exploitation, with this objective the party tried to attract all kinds of people, but also trade unionists for example.⁹¹ Prem Bhasin, Asoka Mehta, and Rammanohar Lohia were all members of J.P. Narayan's CSP. Mehta and Lohia were responsible for the editing of the weekly-published *Congress Socialist* and Prem Bhasin published for the CSP as well.⁹² During the years of the Second World War, the ideas of J.P. Narayan, Asoka Mehta and Rammanohar Lohia became more revolutionary, since they thought a revolution was the only way to escape colonialism. Resulting in the imprisonment of Lohia and Narayan in the 1940s, when they were both released in 1946 they remained freedom fighters.⁹³

After India's independence, the socialist party changed quite a lot. In 1948, the CSP split from the INC into the Socialist Party. In 1951, a group from the INC formed the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party and in 1952, these two merged into the Praja Socialist Party (PSP). Only a few years, in 1955, later Rammanohar Lohia and his followers disengaged from the PSP and formed a new Socialist Party.⁹⁴ The PSP existed until 1972. Additional to these quick changes was the fact that there were more socialist parties in India, such as the Bihar Socialist Party, the Punjab Socialist Party, and the Bengal Labour Party. Moreover, the socialist parties of India were minority opposition parties in comparison to the INC of Jawaharlal Nehru and the Communist Party of India (CPI). In India, the CPI formed the strong opposition party. Furthermore, the communists saw many members of the Socialist Party as "Indian Bourgeoisie", because they started their political careers at the INC.⁹⁵

What was the background of the men mentioned above? Rammanohar Lohia was born in Akbarpur on 23 March 1910, to a family of merchants. His father already expressed nationalists' feelings; as a result, Lohia grew up in a house surrounded by nationalist influences. Lohia went to the

⁹⁰ Allan and Wendy Scarfe, *J.P. His Biography* (First Edition: India; Orient Longman Limited, 1975. Used edition: a shorter and revised edition, Orient Longman Limited, 1998), 48-51.

⁹¹ Scarfe, *J.P. His Biography*, 51-53.

⁹² Rose, *Socialism in Southern Asia*, 17, 25.

⁹³ Scarfe, 90-102.

⁹⁴ Myron Weiner, *Party Politics in India, the development of a multi-party system* (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 1957), 4, 223.

⁹⁵ David Lockwood, *The Communist Party of India and the Indian Emergency* (New Delhi; SAGE Publication India, 2016), 1-8.

University of Calcutta and got his Bachelor degree there. His doctorate he earned in 1932, at the University of Berlin. Thereafter, he went back to India and he became active in politics and anti-colonial movements, especially as a member of the CSP. In the PSP, he fulfilled the role as general-secretary until he left the PSP in 1955, and set up a new Socialist Party. There, Lohia was chairman, but also an editor of *Mankind*, the bulletin of the party. In 1963, he became a member of the lower house of parliament.⁹⁶ Lohia's character was described as "something of a loose cannon – eccentric if brilliant, self-righteous in his honesty, acerbic and unrestrained in his speech, flamboyant and disjointed in his ideas."⁹⁷ He was remembered as someone who did not always agree with his colleagues and was not afraid to criticize, but also as a man who questioned the caste system and the man who wanted to ban the English culture and language, in order to regain the Hindu culture of the country. Besides being a politician, Lohia was a thinker too.⁹⁸

Asoka Mehta born in 1911, in Bhavnagar was active in first the CSP, the Socialist Party of India and later the PSP. During the years of India's freedom struggles Mehta wrote and edited the newspaper of the CSP. Moreover, his writing and publishing activities did not stop here, throughout his life he wrote and published multiple articles and works. For the PSP he started as a general-secretary and eventually he became the chairman of that party. In 1954, he became a Member of Parliament. He was also involved in the formation of the policy of the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) in 1947; chairman of the Foodgrains Inquiry Committee in 1957; and chairman of the Planning Commission in 1963. Idealistic, Mehta was a real democratic socialist opposed to an authoritarian socialist; he believed that Asian countries needed democracy to develop their nations. Socialism for him was integral to democracy.⁹⁹

Prem Bhasin was less visible than his colleagues mentioned above were, however, also he was active in socialist parties, within freedom movements, and he was imprisoned in the 1940s. Another corresponding feature he shared with Mehta and Lohia was being a writer, he wrote and published multiple articles and books, mostly about socialism.¹⁰⁰ The People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) published a character sketch and a summary of his activities when he passed away in 2003; he was over 85 years old. He was one of the first members of the PUCL and they remembered him as "an

⁹⁶ 'Ram Manohar Lohia', *Britannica Academic*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 6 Feb. 2013. academic.eb.com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/levels/collegiate/article/Ram-Manohar-Lohia/599207, accessed 14 Jun. 2017.

⁹⁷ Yogendra Yadav, 'On Remembering Lohia', *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. XLV, No. 40 (October 2, 2010), 46-50, see 47.

⁹⁸ Yadav, 'On Remembering Lohia', 46-50, see 48.

⁹⁹ Weiner, *Party Politics in India*, 50, 51. N. Jayapalan, *Indian Political Thinkers, modern Indian political thought* (New Delhi; Atlantic Publishers, 2003), 313,314. Bipan Chandra, Mridula Mukherjee, Aditya Mukherjee, *India since independence* (New Delhi; Penguin Books, 1999, edition used is the revised edition from 2008), 252-256.

¹⁰⁰ For example, *Socialism in India* from 1968.

ardent defender of civil liberties".¹⁰¹ His posts were joint secretary in the early 1950s and again from 1954 until 1963, and he was a general-secretary for the Nasik Conference of the Socialist Party that in 1952 became the PSP. Moreover, he was an involved man in Indian politics and he remained active until 1980.¹⁰²

The main representatives from India for the ASC were ambitious politicians who published and wrote many books, articles, and newspapers for their political parties. Not surprisingly, they also fulfilled the tasks as secretaries of the ASC. As members of parliament, committees, and organizations Asoka Mehta, Prem Bhasin, and Rammanohar Lohia were all men who moved in the higher social circles of India. However, being social democrats they represented the ordinary Indian people, they tried to do so by defending among others, their civil liberties, by forming trade unions, and by questioning the caste-system.

Indonesia

The members of the Partai Sosialis Indonesia (PSI) who were active for the ASC were Imam Slamet, Prof. Dr. Sumitro Djojohadikusumo, and Dr. Sutan Sjahrir. They were, however, in comparison to their Burmese and Indian colleagues less active in writing about the Third Camp, imperialism, and development. The Indonesian members tended to publish more about the situation of democratic socialism in Indonesia and about PSI, than about the more transnational subjects, which are covered in this research. Therefore, their names will not return so often in this thesis. However, they were the most active members from Indonesia. Imam Slamet was a member of the preparatory committee of the ASC. As an economist, Sumitro Djojohadikusumo wrote about development plans for Asia and Sutan Sjahrir was a well-known political figure throughout Asia and beyond.

Accordingly, all three were important figures within the PSI in the 1950s. First, Sutan Sjahrir as the leader of the PSI. Sjahrir was born on March 5, 1909 on Sumatra. As the son of a public prosecutor, Sjahrir got the chance to receive Dutch education and to go to Leiden to study Law. In his years as a student, he joined a socialist student group, called Perhimpunan Indonesia. This group attracted many students who became prominent figures in Indonesia's political environment later in their lives. In the 1930s, he returned to Indonesia (the Dutch Indies) and became an active participant in the independence movement. Together with Sukarno and Mohamad Hatta, Sjahrir formed the Triumvirate. They were the men who guided the nationalist movement, which led to the Republic of Indonesia. However, even though Sukarno and Sjahrir were mentioned together in the Triumvirate,

¹⁰¹ Y.P. Chhibbar and Surendra Mohan, 'Prem Bhasin passes away', *PUCL Bulletin* (2003), <http://www.pucl.org/Topics/Human-rights/2003/bhasin.htm>, accessed 14 Jun. 2017.

¹⁰² Chhibbar and Mohan, 'Prem Bhasin passes away'.

they did not always agree with each other. Especially their attitude towards the Japanese occupation was contradictorily; Sukarno welcomed the Japanese in the beginning, while Sjahrir ran underground resistance movements against the Japanese.



Sutan Sjahrir¹⁰³



Sumitro Djojohadikusumo¹⁰⁴

Nonetheless, after the Second World War, Sjahrir became the first prime minister of the Republic in 1945. Furthermore, he discussed the situation and future of Indonesia during the Linggadjati Agreement of 1946. Here was agreed, that the islands of Indonesia had to be separated between the independent Republic of Indonesia and the part still under control by the Netherlands. For many people, his supporters included, Sjahrir was too indulgent in meeting the demands of the Dutch, causing his popularity to decrease. In this period, Sjahrir had formed the Partai Sosialis (PS), which fell shortly after. However, in 1948, Sjahrir again formed a socialist party, namely the PSI. The PSI functioned as an opposition party against the communist party, but it never managed to become one of the big parties in Indonesia and in 1960 Sukarno banned the party. Two years later, Sjahrir was arrested for conspiracy. Without trial, he was held in custody until 1965 when he got a stroke. Thereafter, he was permitted to go to Switzerland for medical treatment; he died there on April 9, 1966.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Sutan Sjahrir speaking at PSI election rally in Bali, 1955, Portrait Wikimedia Commons, November 1 2017.

¹⁰⁴ Indonesian writer Sumitro Djojohadikusumo, Portrait Wikimedia Commons, November 1 2017.

¹⁰⁵ 'Sutan Sjahrir', *Britannica Academic*, Encyclopædia Britannica, <http://academic.eb.com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/levels/collegiate/article/Sutan-Sjahrir/68055>, accessed June 28 2017.

Robert Cribb and Audrey Kahin, *Historical Dictionary of Indonesia* (Lanham, The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2004), 328. H. Rosihan Anwar, *True Democrat, Fighter for Humanity* (Jakarta; PT Kompas Media Nusantara, 2010), 5, 144-175.

Second, Sumitro Djojohadikusumo he was born in Central Java, 1917 and lived until 2001. He was the son of a high public servant for the Dutch Indies administration. Therefore, he could also go to Dutch schools and he too went to the Netherlands to attend university there. Only he did not go to Leiden, but he went to Rotterdam to the School of Economics (later the Erasmus University). He took a year off from Rotterdam and from 1937 until 1938; he studied philosophy and history at the Sorbonne University in Paris. In 1943, he achieved his doctorate in economics in Rotterdam. Thereafter, he became an active advocate for independence for Indonesia. He joined the PSI and in 1949, he became Minister of Trade and Industries. Subsequently, he was Minister of Finances from 1952-53, and from 1955-56. In 1957, he joined the rival government in Sumatra, the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia, the Permesta Rebellion (PRRI). For this government, he became the Minister of Communication and Shipping.

When the PRRI was defeated in 1958, he had to go into exile abroad, together with his wife and four children. Abroad he worked as a private economic consultant in a variety of countries. His exile ended in 1968 when President Soeharto called him back and asked him to become Minister of Trade in his first “development cabinet”. In the second “development cabinet” of Soeharto, Djojohadikusumo had a place as Minister of State for Research. He held this post until 1978. Apart from an active politician, Djojohadikusumo is also remembered as the man who shaped the modern economic studies in Indonesia. He achieved this as a teacher, but even more as the dean of the Faculty of Economics at the University of Indonesia from 1951 until 1957. Additionally Djojohadikusumo wrote many books concerning economics and the development of Indonesia.¹⁰⁶

Third, and final, Imam Slamet who was connected to the PSI and hesitant in dealing with the Japanese during the occupation.¹⁰⁷ However, the information available about Slamet was much less than about his fellow PSI members. This did mean that he did not have other functions and occupations. Sutan Sjahrir and Sumitro Djojohadikusumo were both sons of privileged families, whereby they could attend good schools and universities. In order to achieve blooming careers later in their lives. Although they were both well known in Indonesia and beyond, they also both had to flee the country because of internal turbulences. The national turbulent political environment might have been one of the reasons why the Indonesian members were less active for a transnational organization like the ASC. They had problems closer by that needed their attention.

¹⁰⁶ Thee Kian Wie, ‘In Memoriam: Professor Sumitro Djojohadikusumo, 1917-2001’, *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2, (2001), 173-81. Cribb Kahin, *Historical Dictionary of Indonesia*, 328.

¹⁰⁷ Suhario Padmodiwiryo, *Student Soldiers, a Memoir of the Battle that Sparked Indonesia’s National Revolution*, translated by Frank Palmos, (Jakarta; Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2015), 18.

Similarities and differences between the members, parties and their countries

One of the big differences were the positions which the social-democratic parties held in national government. The Socialist Party of Burma was leading party in Burma, in contrast to the parties from India and Indonesia, which were minority opposition parties. There were, however, much more similarities than differences between the men described above. Starting with the fact that they all came from acceptable families and therefore could attend good schools and universities. During their years as students, almost all of the ASC members were exposed to student unions and all then developed strong feelings for nationalism, but also for Marxism. Another correspondence was their love for literature and writing, this would explain their enthusiasm to write for the ASC bulletins too.

The years on the universities and during the Second World War could be described as the activist years of the members of the ASC. They were active in liberation and resistance movements, for this they ran operations and even ended up in prisons. After the Second World War, quite a lot of these men attended the negotiations about independence for their countries. These negotiations were not always favorable for their popularity; there was indeed quite a lot of criticism on the agreements made to achieve independence. Especially the communists expressed criticisms, because they felt betrayed by some of the agreements. Even before the independence negotiation, the relation between the communist parties and the social-democratic parties had been tense. Hereafter, the tensions only grew further. One of the accusations of the communists was that the social democrats were still too much the elites of the new countries, with their high education and their contact with the former colonizers.¹⁰⁸

After the independence the new governments needed to build their nations, most of the members of the ASC were actively helping to rebuild these new countries. They did so in the post as ministers and teachers. A difficulty all of them had to face was the quite unstable political situation in Asia. There was a lack of financial resources for most new governments, who desperately wanted to develop. Furthermore, there were internal struggles within the parties. In the first years; these were the imprisonment of their members. Later on, separations and changes of the political parties caused some unrest. However, the attitude of most of the Asian Socialists remained a very positive one throughout the 1950s. They worked as ambitious and active members of governments and/or organizations who served the interests of the working class and to try to improve their countries. However, as men who, mostly, came from an elite background and who got the change to study and build up a political career there was a gap between them and their followers who did not have these opportunities.

¹⁰⁸ Lockwood, *The Communist Party of India*, 1-8.

The gap between the common people and the new elites was one of the criticisms of the communists, but it was also an accusation expressed by the second generation of the Third Worldists against the first generation. This happened as critiques towards the new governments and their leaders, such as Nehru and Sukarno, but also to other members of the administration. The representatives of the new countries, were not anti-Western enough, had not achieved what they had promised, and there were still too many links to the big powers regarding the development of the countries.¹⁰⁹ The ASC members, whom most were members of government in their countries, were thus criticized by this new generation. On top of this, the members of the ASC led a transnational organization, in contrary the second generation of Third Worldists who were much more nationalist. Hereby, the Asian Socialists could no longer count on the support of the Third World concept as much as they did in the early 1950s. Because of the obstacles and difficulties mentioned above, some of the members of the ASC were not able to continue their political careers in their own countries after the 1950s. Others on the other hand, they had still successful and long careers in politics.

¹⁰⁹ Berger, 'After the Third World?', 12-25.

Chapter 2. - A Third Bloc in a Divided World -

The present government under Nehru advocates the Third Camp idea of neutrality and he is backed up by public opinion in India. Then there is Indonesia. The public of Indonesia want to avoid both the blocs and want to build up a Third Force. At least they want peace. That is how we understand the public opinion of Indonesia. Of course we know very little of Siam, and Siam is a different category: and we know very little of the Philippines. Even judging from our immediate neighbours there is a strong public opinion in favour of avoiding the two blocs, in favour of trying to prevent the war, and in favour of maintaining neutrality. Judging from our knowledge there is a yearning for peace in the middle East and Eastern countries also. There is yearning for peace in England. Positive desire for neutrality and the Third Force in these countries is growing; and I therefore think it is possible. Even though we are not economically and militarily strong we can create a world opinion first in Asia and later on in the whole world.¹¹⁰ U Kyaw Nyein (1952)

The statement of U Kyaw Nyein made clear that he had confidence in the concept of a Third World because he described that it was widely spread and supported by many people. Not only was the idea of a Third World interesting because of the promise of a better world, it also guaranteed peace and therefore, would be the means to prevent another war. A perspective that was especially appealing to the members of the ASC, because of the increasing threatening Cold War. Another element that came forward from U Kyaw Nyein' comment was his positive attitude towards change. Which meant accomplishing neutrality and building a Third Force. An ideology, which he eventually wanted to spread even beyond Asia.

More members spoke about the concept of the Third World and the neutrality that accompanied this belief. Not only did they use the term Third World, but also terms like the Third Camp, a Third Force, and a Third Way. Even though the terms indicated essentially the same concept, the Asian Socialists used them in a slightly different setting. For example, when the term Third Force was used it pointed out to the more ideological mentality, meaning that they wanted to be independent of both the Communist and the Capitalists way of thinking. The phrase Third Camp was used to show that they did not fit within one of the two blocs, but that they formed a third one. Finally the Third Way, which was used by the members when they described how they wanted to form a Third World. An obstacle to the formation of a Third World was the question where the line of neutrality had to be drawn. During the Conference in Rangoon, the Egyptian delegation made a remark about the danger of crossing this line, because once crossed the ideal of the Third Force was threatened.¹¹¹ This question returned in the bulletins of the ASC and will be discussed further in this chapter.

¹¹⁰ IISH Microfilm 5482, U Kyaw Nyein, 'How to look at the Third Forces', in: *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 1. No. 7. (Rangoon, November 16th, 1952), 12-16, see 16.

¹¹¹ Saul Rose, *Socialism in Southern Asia* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1959), 11.

U Kyaw Nyein described how he became so positive about the concept of a Third World. He based his trust on an experience during the UN conference in Paris in 1948, where he attended on behalf of Burma. He observed that there were certain states and groups of people¹¹² who tried to work together and mediate between the United States and the Soviet Union when these two big powers did not agree with each other. The fear of another war was so considerable, that these groups set aside their differences and joined forces. Although not always successful, the fact that they tried to work together gave U Kyaw Nyein a positive input in the belief that neutrality could be achieved. A year later, during the UN conference of 1949, U Kyaw Nyein met more people who shared the same hope for strong neutral middle states who could function as a mediator between the two blocs. Dr. Evatt, the Foreign Minister of Australia, who said about the mediator states: “even if we fail, it is worth trying”.¹¹³ In addition, American Social Democrat, John Loeb, was positive about the idea of a Third Camp, just as the majority of the other American Social Democrats according to Loeb.¹¹⁴ For U Kyaw Nyein, these conversations and observations were a great inspiration for his thoughts about the Third World.

The words from U Kyaw Nyein seemed to be written in a very positive manner. Rammanohar Lohia was more moderate and therefore, probably a little bit more realistic in describing neutrality. He saw some fractures between the Asian countries and he wrote about them. He observed the pulling strength of the influences from the Atlantic and Soviet forces. Thailand and Japan followed America; and China, Mongolia, and Tibet acted in accordance with the Soviets. Then there were Korea and Vietnam, who were both being torn between the two blocs. This process went on rapidly and Lohia stressed the importance of Asian Socialists and other progressive groups to bring peace and stability. To achieve peace and stability, he underlined the importance to emancipate Asia and other countries from their colonial burden.¹¹⁵

A question, which was asked by the ASC members, was what to do when one of the Asian countries would be absorbed by one of the two big powers? Lohia asked “Would it be enough for the Asian Socialists to deny general usefulness of such an attempt or would it be necessary for them to point out concrete policies which would defeat such attempts?”¹¹⁶ One of the concrete policies that Lohia suggested was the mutual assistance pacts for protection and security. Countries like India, Burma, and Indonesia would support and protect each other in the case one of them would be invaded

¹¹² Especially the Arab group, Latin American group, South East Asia, Western Asia, the Middle East group and Burma.

¹¹³ U Kyaw Nyein, ‘How to look at the Third Forces’, 12-16.

¹¹⁴ IISH Microfilm 5482, John Loeb, ‘American Socialists and Third Camp’, in: *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 2. No. 3. (Rangoon, July 1st, 1953), 3.

¹¹⁵ IISH Microfilm 5482, Rammanohar Lohia, ‘Foreign issues before Asian Socialists’, in: *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 1. No. 8. (Rangoon, December 1st, 1952), 11-16, see 11-12.

¹¹⁶ Rammanohar Lohia, ‘Foreign issues before Asian Socialists’, 11-16, see 12-13.

by America or the Soviet Union. Another policy was on a more ideological basis, governments were recommended to start initiating ideological support against the dogmas of the two blocs. The task of the ASC was to get countries to start promoting these beliefs of neutrality. The difficulty, here, was the fact that quite a lot of these countries were ideological, economic and social not strong enough to promote these beliefs. Thus, the task of the ASC went further, essentially to also help countries with their developments. However, the question arose: “how are we to have adequate agricultural improvement, industrial improvement and so on and so forth?” Lohia wondered.¹¹⁷

The fact that the issue of the Third Camp and neutrality was so intertwined with the subject’s development and anti-colonialism came forward out of the words of Lohia and U Kyaw Nyein. Without one of the three elements, they thought progression was not possible. The difficulty, however, was that all of these elements brought more questions and obstacles. It seemed to be a vicious circle, where a Third Camp was difficult to achieve because of a low development rate. This rate was low because colonial regimes had left their mark on the territories and new governments were still figuring out their approach towards the economic and social problems. Subsequently, the threats of the Cold War were influential for government policy, for example regarding neutrality. In reality, these entanglements were even more complicated, which proved the ambitious position the ASC members put themselves trying to solve and help create a Third World ideal.

2.1. Issues of Neutrality

One of these difficulties was the issue of neutrality, for example, what position would the ASC take in the Korea crisis? For instance, the Asian Socialists regretted that there was no Third Force present in Korea, but they did take a position by voting for South Korea against North Korea. So as an organization, which tried to remain neutral, why did they chose a side regarding this matter? The issue of neutrality raised some concerns, Lohia asked “would the Third Camp be justified in taking up such an attitude or should it keep quite?”¹¹⁸ Moreover, he wondered what would happen when the Third Camp really took shape. He believed that for a third system to work, both economic and ideological support was necessary, only then it could really become a civilization.¹¹⁹

In the Bulletin of August 1953, an anonymous reviewer¹²⁰ also discussed the policies and goals, which the Asian countries faced regarding a Third World ideal. He spoke against colonialism, imperialism, and totalitarianism, but he mentioned possibilities for an Asian ideology and suggested

¹¹⁷ Ibidem, 13-14.

¹¹⁸ Ibidem, 13.

¹¹⁹ Ibidem, 15-16.

¹²⁰ This unknown author published under the name ‘a reviewer’ in a discussion about Asia in the Cold War struggles.

policies that could go with it. In accordance with Lohia, he talked about big obstacles that withheld achieving these policies. For example, the problem that the Asian leaders were not able to find solutions for concrete issues and tensions within Asian politics. Problematic was that since the independence, the Cold War issues occupied too much time from the Asian governments. Valuable time, which the political leaders could have used to develop strategies and policies to improve their governments and nations.

Another concern the reviewer expressed, was the lack of a stable ideology. For quite some time, the Asian countries had relied on a combination of the American democratic ideology and the Sino-Russian communism ideas. Now, the Asian countries had to think about their own identity and about the ideological path, they wanted to follow. However, here too the Cold War tensions were a distraction. He advised that Asia would need an own ideology, in order to become a morally strong and economically developed player in the world politics.¹²¹ Nation-state building, development of social- and economic life, and the construction of an Asian identity were challenges which Asian countries faced internal. However, this did not mean that the Cold War could be seen independent from these events. The Cold War tensions, as mentioned above, intervened these internal struggles and developments, preventing the Asian countries to focus on their national issues.¹²²

The fear for another war was substantial; people from all over the world were in a constant state of a crisis, wrote U Nu in 1953. The two blocs, the Anglo-American and the Sino-Soviet, were obsessed with destroying the other camp. U Nu described the situation as a nightmare and condemned the bloodthirsty attitudes of both blocs.

There is an old Burmese saying: 'I don't care whoever dies, so long as I live'. But the present state of tempers seems to be, 'I don't care if I die too, as long as the other fellow dies.'¹²³

To the Western countries, he said that the Westerners blood did not have to be shed in South East Asian regions if these countries were strong. Therefore, he pointed out that the Asian countries had to be able to defend themselves. In order to do that, he made some statements. First, the countries had to be free. Second, there had to be leaders whom the people trusted. Third, these trusted leaders needed to make plans that suited the demand and needs of their country. Fourth and final, there

¹²¹ IISH Microfilm 5482, A Reviewer, 'Asia and the new world', in: *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 2. No. 4. (Rangoon, August, 1953), 17-20, see 17, 19, 20.

¹²² Tuong Vu, 'Cold War Studies and the Cultural War in Asia', in: Tuong Vu and Wasana Wongsurawat (eds.), *Dynamics of the Cold War in Asia*, 1-16, see 7-9.

¹²³ IISH Microfilm 5482, U Nu, 'A policy for Asia', in: *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 3. No. 4. (Rangoon, August, 1954), 3-5, see 3.

needed to be enough material and technical support to develop these countries. However, the aid given had to be favorable for both the receiving and the giving parties.¹²⁴

There were however also sounds of restrained about co-operation between Asia and Europe. Even though a union between Asian and Europe could bring some advantages, it could also be artificial and a continuing of the Western dominance in Asia. However, movements that acted in the name of Asia for Asian could also be dangerous. The anonymous writer reminded his readers of Japan and its “co-prosperity in East Asia” and of the Soviet Union’s attempts to win the hearts and minds of the colonized people.¹²⁵ Relying on help or support during the Cold War was even more complicated. Not only was there a national interest, but also an international one. This meant that even more strings were attached when receiving and giving aid.¹²⁶

2.2 International Expressions of Solidarity

A few years later, the same ideas about a Third Camp, freedom, and development were expressed during the Bandung Conference. In 1955, 29 African and Asian countries came together to discuss the futures and the possibilities of their nations to create a better world. It was the “first occasion of the ‘Third World’ solidarity”¹²⁷. The term Third World was used in a positive manner by the Asian and African countries who tried to break free from any form of imperialism. Later this moment was marked as the Bandung moment or the Bandung spirit. Unfortunately, the idealized co-operation between the Asian and African countries was tested by the Vietnam War and was eventually proved not strong enough. The countries were not able to be the mediator between the two blocs as they had imagined they would. Another setback was the fact that China, India, and Pakistan obtained a nuclear arsenal, even though all the participating countries of the Bandung Conference promised to refrain themselves from obtaining such weapons. The second Asian-African conference, which was planned in Algiers in 1965, therefore never happened.¹²⁸

However, in the 1950s there were still serious and hopeful plans to form a neutral and unaligned front. The ASC members thought the Third World ideology would win from both capitalism and communism. Not only the Asian Socialists were convinced of this, but also other socialists from all over the world shared these beliefs.¹²⁹ Especially because it was in their self-interest to prevent Asian

¹²⁴ U Nu, ‘A policy for Asia’, 4.

¹²⁵ Author unknown, ‘Asia and the new world’, 17, 19-20.

¹²⁶ In the fourth chapter about development, this issue will be further discussed.

¹²⁷ Christopher J. Lee, ‘Introduction: Between a Moment and an Era, 1-44, see 2.

¹²⁸ Lee, ‘Introduction’, 2, 15-18. Mark T. Berger, ‘After the Third World?’, 12.

¹²⁹ IISH Microfilm 5487, Oscar Waiss B., ‘Socialist Revolution’, in: *Asian Socialist Conference News Letter*, No. 3. (Rangoon, August, 1955), 1-2.

countries to become communist. In 1955, a statement from the American Socialist G.D.H. Cole was published by the ASC. His words showed his fear of communism and he thought a strong and united social-democratic front could be a strong opposition to the communist ideology. Nonetheless, he was not particularly confident that the Asian countries and people were able to resist the communist temptation, his words below showed his hesitation.¹³⁰

In countries which are ruled by imperialist empires, the Socialist parties have been unable to take wholeheartedly the side of the dependent peoples and have acquiesced in or even abetted the holding down of the colonial nationalism by imperial force. It has been left to the communists, from whatever motive, to appear as the champion of the oppressed peoples in the world.¹³¹

The Asian Socialists did publish these hesitant words of non-Asian socialists, because the ideal of international democratic socialism was an important one. Moreover, it was not uncommon for the ASC and the SI members to discuss various themes. In the joint May Day newsletter of 1959, the chairman of the ASC and the SI wrote a message about the developments of their organizations. Herein, the similarities and differences between the two movements were expressed.

Alsing Andersen, the chairman of the SI and the vice-chairman of the Danish Social-democratic Party, praised the international, even "universal", character of the social-democratic movement and the celebration of the first of May. Hereafter, he talked about his two concerns. The first one was the ongoing Cold War, which produced worldwide tensions. The second one was the fact that many colonized and dependent people were denied their rights, especially in African countries. Independence for these countries was, therefore, an important goal. Andersen saw the UN as the perfect instrument to reach peace in the Cold War, but also to achieve independence for the colonized countries. Moreover, the UN was an organization that could provide equality, both for human dignity as for development resources. Finally, Alsing Andersen looked at the relation between the SI and the ASC; he thought that there was always room for improvement, but that the cooperation between the two organizations had developed steadily in the past years.¹³²

U Ba Swe, chairman of the ASC and general-secretary and Leader of the Burma Socialist Party, had a slightly shorter message. His message was a more pessimistic one; he thought that the idea of a May celebration was to remind socialists and workers all over the world, that their goal, socialism, was not yet reached. He summed up all sorts of things still wrong with the world. For example, there was

¹³⁰ IISH Microfilm 5487, G.D.H. Cole, 'A new Socialist program', in: *Asian Socialist Conference News Letter*, No. 3. (Rangoon, August, 1955), 6-8.

¹³¹ Cole, 'A new Socialist program', 7.

¹³² IISH Microfilm 5486, Alsing Andersen, 'May-Day 1959, Message from Alsing Andersen', in: *Asian Socialist Conference Information Bulletin* (Rangoon, May, 1959), 1-2.

still exploitation and oppression, which meant that there was not yet peace and no international solidarity yet. He thought there was “lack of international solidarity among the Workers and oppressed people all over the world.”¹³³ However, U Ba Swe recognized that there was still place for improvement and he repeated that the only hope for humanity was in democratic socialism.¹³⁴

Although the chairman of the SI, Andersen, talked about the “universal” ideology of democratic socialism, many social-democratic leaders from Asia and Africa felt that the SI did not give enough attention to the problems their parties and countries had to face. This belief was expressed during a meeting between social-democratic leaders in Haifa, in 1960.¹³⁵

The Socialist ideas are a common heritage of mankind. You and we, the European nations, the Americans, the Asians, and, I hope, before long the Africans, share many ideas and perhaps some experiences also. But though the ideas may be the same, in implementing them we have to take into consideration the circumstances that exist in different countries. By large, I must say, they are very different in Asia from those of Europe.¹³⁶ Ashoka Mehta (1960)

There were many differences but the cooperation between the SI and the ASC was still appreciated. Asoka Mehta talked about the different histories of democratic socialism in the two areas. Asian countries were fortunate that socialism went well with nationalism and religion, this was different in Europe, he thought. The two socialist organizations thus had a different background. Socialism in Asia was born out of liberation movements, while in Europe socialism emerged out of a working-class background. Mehta described European socialism, as being a “product of the Renaissance”. There was already an outline on which the European Socialists could build. In Asia, there was no such thing, which meant that setting up an organization was much more difficult. An additional difference was the state of development in the member countries of the ASC. Communism in Asia, therefore, could spread more easily and this made it more difficult for the Asian Socialists to spread their ideas. To overcome these obstacles, Mehta asked the SI for help, for example mapping out possible organizations, which could attract more people from Asia and Africa towards a democratic socialist movement.¹³⁷

Even though the members of the ASC and the SI tried to work together on the shared subject democratic socialism in the word, there were tensions between the two organizations. The different opinions and points of view became visible especially regarding the themes neutrality and anti-

¹³³ IISH Microfilm 5486, U Ba Swe, ‘May-Day 1959, Message from U Ba Swe’, in: *Asian Socialist Conference Information Bulletin* (Rangoon, May, 1959), 3.

¹³⁴ U Ba Swe, ‘May-Day 1959, Message from U Ba Swe’, 3.

¹³⁵ IISH Microfilm 5486, U Hla Aung, ‘Peoples and Nations of the world, greetings from the ASC’, in: *Asian Socialist Conference Information Bulletin*, No. not available. (Rangoon, June, 1960), 1-2.

¹³⁶ IISH Microfilm 5486, Ashoka Mehta, ‘Development of Social Democracy in Asia’, in: *Asian Socialist Conference Information Bulletin*, No. not available. (Rangoon, June, 1960), 2-7, see 2.

¹³⁷ Mehta, ‘Development of Social Democracy in Asia’, 2-7.

imperialism. Where neutrality for the ASC members was an idealistic goal, for many of the SI members it was merely a way to prevent communism to spread in Asia. When the issue of imperialism was discussed, the tensions only increased. However, in order for the ASC to reach their goal for a strong, free, and neutral Asia, they needed the Asian countries to develop socially and economically. For this, material and technical support was needed from the Western countries. Moreover, the democratic socialist parties were in many Asian countries small opposition parties. To make a real difference they needed to grow. To improve the situation of democratic socialism in Asia, the ASC asked the SI for help. Therefore, the tensions and differences between the two organizations were complicated matters. As much the ASC aspired to change the situation in Asia all by themselves, they kept encountering obstacles where they needed help from the outside.

Chapter 3. - The struggle against colonialism -

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the process of building new nations and forming new identities was often undermined by the Cold War. Decolonization, development and the Cold War were very much entangled with each other.¹³⁸ The members of the ASC not only engaged in these motions but they were also observers of this period. They took a special position in the Cold War, as a neutral player, however they were aware of the significant impact of the two-bloc struggle on their position and on the position of other Third World countries and organizations. In their bulletins they wrote about the activities of the 1950s, this showed that the themes decolonization and anti-imperialism were of great importance to them. The articles written by the Asian Socialists that will be used in this chapter will prove this significance.

Talbot C. Imlay even argued that the desire to end colonialism was the factor, which united the ASC as an organization and not a policy of neutrality and non-alignment. To support his argument he used the following phrase of U Kyaw Nyein: “the common ties that bind us together, the bonds of common suffering and exploitation that we have experienced in our struggle for freedom against the colonial Powers.”¹³⁹ However, this phrase came from a larger piece and U Kyaw Nyein wrote “But this is not all. The most important question is the grim and gloomy picture presented by the world. The world has now been divided more or less into two huge camps, one led by the Capitalist America and the other by Communist Russia, each putting full pressure on countries to line up with them. [...] It is for the Asian Socialist parties to head a Third Camp.”¹⁴⁰ Therefore, it was too easy to just point out anti-imperialism as the main goal for the ASC. Both the anti-imperialist and the Third Camp concepts were of importance according to the words of U Kyaw Nyein.

The colonial struggles, however, were a much-discussed subject. De-colonialization was not only a process of gaining freedom, but it was also a search towards new identities. As Leslie James and Elisabeth Leake said: “decolonization did not just end with the transfer of political power from colonizer to colonized. It was a process of political, social, economic and cultural transformation. Newly independent governments needed not only to feed their countries but also provide jobs, revenue, education and health services. In these areas, circumstances were not necessarily disconnected from the imperial past. From China to Egypt and Cuba, national leaders had to develop local resources and differentiate themselves from foreign influence.”¹⁴¹ This transition period and these developments

¹³⁸ Leslie James and Elisabeth Leake, ‘Introduction’, 1-17, see 1.

¹³⁹ Talbot C. Imlay, ‘International Socialism and Decolonization during the 1950’s Competing Rights and the Postcolonial Order’, 1105-1132, see 1110.

¹⁴⁰ U Kyaw Nyein, ‘Common ties that bind us together’, 1-3, see 2-3. See introduction page 3 and 4 for the whole quote.

¹⁴¹ James and Leake, ‘Introduction’, 3.

were exactly what the members of the ASC spoke of in their discussions. However, detachment from European powers did not go without difficulties, this again, caused frustrations among the Asian Socialists.

3.1. Frustrations and Gaps between East and West

The ASC held quite close ties with the SI, however, their frustration about their relationship, especially regarding colonialism, was made clear on multiple occasions. Prem Bhasin, for example, wrote about the hypocrisy of policies from European politician. He believed that he and those politicians needed a “goody goody talk”, because “the colonial powers did not seem to have freed themselves of the proverbial white man’s burden”.¹⁴² Bhasin’s biggest disappointment was the fact that the British politician did not see the contradiction of what they were saying. For instance, the British Labour Party wrote a document about “Labour and the Colonies”, which consisted out of two major principles where the white men’s burden thinking came forward. First, dependent areas had to be administered as a trust for their inhabitants, whereby the focus was on welfare, education, and development. Second, in order for the dependent territories to govern independent, there had to be training available for the inhabitants. The French Socialist Party on Tunisia and Morocco maintained similar policies. Even though Bhasin saw that these documents were made out of good intentions, he reminded the readers: “let us not forget that the road to hell is not very unoften paved with good intentions”.¹⁴³

Bhasin meant the benefits, which the British Labour Party gained from maintaining control. Even more, he judged the ease of their justification regarding the continuance of their influence on these areas. Especially because the Western European politicians advocated very strongly against the expansion of the communist, who in their turn expanded their ideology by occupying countries to “liberate” people living there. Bhasin thought that the Europeans, therefore, used two standards, namely one to judge their own actions and another to judge similar actions by the communists. Another example, Bhasin gave, was the reaction of disappointment that the British Minister of State and Colonial Affairs, Mr. Hopkins, expressed after the ASC released the news of the establishment of their Ant-Colonial Bureau. Hopkins disappointment came forward out of his belief that the actions of the British government were helping people in the colonial areas.¹⁴⁴ The gap between the members of the SI and the ASC was big; the difficulty for the ASC members was that they had to convince the

¹⁴² IISH Microfilm 5482, Prem Bhasin, ‘Meeting ground for Asia and Europe, struggle against colonialism’, in: *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 2. No. 5. (Rangoon, September 1st, 1953), 7-9, see 7.

¹⁴³ Bhasin, ‘Meeting ground for Asia and Europe’, 8.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, 7-9.

European politicians of their ideas about decolonization. Politicians who strongly believed that they were doing the right thing and therefore a clear dialogue between the two groups could be difficult.

The SI members thought the best solutions towards independence was a gradual one, wherein they wanted to support the (de)colonized powers in economic and social development. However, the gradual approach of the SI was the opposite of what the ASC had in mind, who wanted independence as quickly as possible.¹⁴⁵ In 1953, when the Rangoon Conference took place, there were still a lot of countries that were still subject to colonization. The ASC members saw the decolonization of these countries as something fundamental. The establishment of the UN gave an impulse to the battle against colonialism for the ASC members. They saw the UN not only as an important institution to mediate between the two blocs in the Cold War, but also as an opportunity to make themselves, and other (de)colonized people, heard.¹⁴⁶

In 1953, U Ba Swe wrote a press statement about the opening of the UN General Assembly. He stated that over 350 million people were still under colonial rule and were therefore overlooked by the Charter of Human Rights, which he saw as a disgrace for everything the UN stood for. He believed that the colonial people needed a voice within the forum of the UN. In order to do so they needed support from the Western powers. U Ba Swe expected that social-democratic countries from Europe like Sweden would support the vote from the colonized countries. However, Sweden's vote went in accordance with other Western countries and not in the favor of the colonized states. Most of the time the Western powers supported each other and this frustrated the Asian Socialists.¹⁴⁷ The ASC members appreciated the UN because they believed it brought an opportunity for them to communicate their wishes. However, it remained difficult for the members to be heard as much as they aimed for.

Furthermore, the members of the SI feared that the ASC would not be strong enough to resist the temptation of the communist ideology. The biggest fear was that the countries associated with the ASC would fall for the communist bloc. Therefore, the SI members chose to handle the decolonization process with many precautions. On the other hand, the SI desired a global social-democratic movement and therefore they needed international partners. Especially the German democratic socialists wanted more cooperation with non-European countries and therefore expressed their confidence in the ASC. Hereafter, more SI members changed their minds. In the late 1950s, an increasing number of SI members supported the notion that direct independence was a good policy. So, in a few years, the general SI opinion switched considerably. In 1953, for example, the SI members

¹⁴⁵ Imlay, 'International Socialism and Decolonization during the 1950's Competing Rights and the Postcolonial Order', 1111.

¹⁴⁶ IISH Microfilm 5482, Harris Wofford, 'Revision of the UN Charter and trends in US foreign policy', in: *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 2. No. 9. (Rangoon, January, 1954), 1-5, see 1,3.

¹⁴⁷ IISH Microfilm 5482, U Ba Swe, 'Rangoon Tracts', in: *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 2. No. 6. (Rangoon, October, 1953), 20-23, see 20.

still believed that they had to “enlighten the Asian Socialist Conference”.¹⁴⁸ Even though the SI distanced themselves from that statement, later on, the statement showed the arrogant attitude of the SI, when they talked about a non-European organization.¹⁴⁹ Therefore, especially during the early years of the ASC, it was difficult for its members to make themselves heard in a Western dominated UN, but also in a social-democratic organization like the SI.

3.2. Thinking about Imperialism

Nevertheless, the members of the ASC were actively thinking about how they should approach the themes colonialism and imperialism. Therefore, they thought about the definitions and the meanings of these terms. In the introduction of the Anti-Colonial Bureau, U Kyaw Nyein said the following words, which were reprinted in the ASC bulletin:

I need not remind you also, friends, that when we analysed the origin and development of colonialism at our Rangoon Conference we included in our definition of colonialism, not only that typical 19th and 20th century form of colonialism or imperialism, which is the consequence of the growth of capitalism, but we also included colonialism in another form. We may call it neo-colonialism or new-imperialism. I refer to the Soviet form of imperialism. To my mind, both types of colonialism are dangerous. In fact the Soviet type of imperialism is, perhaps, even more degrading and even more dangerous, because it is more ruthless, more systematic and more blatantly justified in the name of world communist revolution.¹⁵⁰

These words showed that the Asian Socialists very much aware of the imperialist and neo-colonialist motions which were going on worldwide. Moreover, they even expressed warnings about the dangers these imperialist movements carried. In the same bulletin, a discussion between Rammanohar Lohia and U Kyaw Nyein was published about the different forms of imperialism. They compared two models of imperialism, namely the Soviet and the capitalist or democratic one.

Lohia thought that as an Asian Socialist he should refrain from choosing one over the other. It would be best for the members of the ASC not to compare the two and not to choose between them because it would be a choice of the lesser evil. Therefore, he talked about “equal rejection”. Rejecting both ideologies was a hard task, especially because the ideologies of both camps were pulling on one’s willpower to remain neutral. This meant that it would take a strong mind of the Asian Socialists, so he predicted.¹⁵¹ U Kyaw Nyein on the other hand made a clearer distinction between the two forms of imperialism. He saw the Soviet model as more dangerous, as described above. Especially because it

¹⁴⁸ Imlay, ‘International Socialism’, 1113.

¹⁴⁹ Ibidem, 1121-1124.

¹⁵⁰ IISH Microfilm 5482, Rammanohar Lohia and U Kyaw Nyein, ‘Third Force – two attitudes’, in: *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 3. No. 2. (Rangoon, June, 1954), 8-11, see 9.

¹⁵¹ Lohia and U Kyaw Nyein, ‘Third Force – two attitudes’, 8-9.

was a new form and many people did not see the dangers of this new imperialism. However, he agreed with Lohia that it was better not to choose one over the other and to reject all kinds of imperialism. Furthermore, U Kyaw Nyein agreed that it would take strong-minded people to see the danger of imperialism.¹⁵²

Ashoka Mehta praised U Kyaw Nyein about the initiating of the discussion on imperialism within the ASC. He too tried to understand the phenomenon of imperialism. For this, he referred to four works in his article, which he believed were necessary in understanding imperialism. First, Mehta used the work of Dr. E.M. Winslow, "The patterns of Imperialism", in which Winslow argued that classical imperialism suffered from "unself-consciousness". Mehta, however, faced a different form of imperialism, as he was aware of imperialism. Second, he talked about the work of Eckert' "Older and Newer Imperialism". Eckert made a distinction between elite and popular imperialism. Hereby, Eckert meant that the classical form of imperialism was mainly interesting for the elites, while the newer imperialism gained a popular interest as well. In the previous pages, the ASC members talked about the newer form of imperialism, which was the emerging, and rapidly spreading in all layers of society. The work of the Austrian Socialist, Otto Bauer, was used as the third example; Bauer noticed a relationship between imperialism and nationalism. The relationship between these two elements was that they became integral to the social life of people. He also argued that capitalist expansion was merely a matter of policy, not a necessity. Another Austrian Socialist, Karl Renner, described this as a form of "socialist imperialism". Mehta did not agree with both of these Austrian writers. The last work he described was "La Philosophie de l'Imperialisme", by Earnest Seilliere. Seilliere wrote that the imperialistic impulse was an urge, which was traceable to every individual. Even though, Mehta did not agree entirely with this writer, although he did agree that imperialism was mostly fed by a hunger for power.¹⁵³

After reviewing these works on imperialism, Mehta disclosed his own opinions on how to place imperialism in his world. He compared two types of imperialism. The form of imperialism, which the Asian and African countries had faced, with the newer form of imperialism, namely, communism and fascism in the form of totalitarianism.

The activities of imperialist powers in the colonies in Africa and Asia are undoubtedly brutal and repressible. Every Asian socialist must work tirelessly for their liquidation. The fact, however, remains that in the century of imperialist occupation of our country we never saw the horror of slave labour camps, of deaths in gas-chambers, never experienced the unspeakable characteristics of totalitarian rule that Stalin and Hitler forged though their respective regimes. [...] India, or Burma, under British rule generally experienced the rule of law; there were at

¹⁵² Ibidem, 9-11.

¹⁵³ IISH Microfilm 5482, Ashoka Mehta, 'To distinguish is not to choose', in: *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 3. No. 4. (Rangoon, August, 1954), 6-8, see 6-7.

least some fences round power; under totalitarianism power becomes absolute and an end in itself. Soviet imperialism poses new problems because to the familiar economic hunger is added a terrible urge for power.¹⁵⁴

However, many people whom lived in (de)colonized areas still faced a form of this “economic enslavement”, where Mehta talked about. The Indonesian Socialist Party wrote an article wherein they analyzed colonialism from the nineteenth century onwards; they covered the World Wars and the economic depression. Although most Asian colonies had gained independence by 1954, when this article was published, the “sacred mission”, as the Indonesian Socialist called it, was still actively pursued by Western powers. Colonial powers saw freedom movements in their colonies as a big threat. After the independence of colonies however, the idea of “sacred missions” took over. The idea that the people from these areas still needed development, guidance, and aid. Former colonizers used the “sacred missions” to “help the underdeveloped people”, but at the same time they were looking after their own interests. The (de)colonized areas became sources for war materials, military bases and a meeting ground between the two blocs in the Cold War. For the writers of this article, this meant that the struggle against imperial powers and colonialism continued.¹⁵⁵ In 1956, a reviewer of the second ASC conference noted yet another form of imperialism:

Colonialism has frequently been declared as already dead and if neo-colonialism has arisen in current history then it is mostly referred to as Communist expansion, but actually the same would apply to “teachers of democracy” who generally dislike the progress of their “students” and brand them “not being fit for independence” to prolong the paternal ties for the benefit ofeconomic interests. The leaders of power politics want to take advantage of the so called “under developments” of Asian States to carry out their objectives than to give real aid to them.¹⁵⁶

The quote above showed that two years after U Kyaw Nyein initiated the discussion about imperialism, the topic of imperialism and colonialism was still high on the agenda of the ASC. The tone, however, was now also skeptical about the motives of Western powers. The discussion whether the Soviet expansion, with its control over Eastern Europe, could be compared to the colonization processes of Western European countries over Asia and Africa was also explored during the Bandung Conference of 1955. It was here decided that all forms of colonialism were wrong and they distinguished three forms of imperialism. First, the traditional form where Western Europe colonized Asia and Africa and in some cases were still doing so. Second, also Soviet expansion was being condemned as imperialistic. Third and last, the informal form of colonialism, which the USA was expressing. The Bandung

¹⁵⁴ Mehta, ‘To distinguish is not to choose’, 7 -8.

¹⁵⁵ IISH Microfilm 5482, By the Indonesian Socialist Party, ‘Analyzing colonialism’, in: *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 3. No. 6&7. (Rangoon, October-November, 1954), 10-13.

¹⁵⁶ IISH Microfilm 5482, Reviewer, ‘About the 2nd Asian Socialists’ Conference’, in: *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 5. No. 2. (Rangoon, August, 1956), 1-3, see 2.

Conference used the term neo-colonialism as another term for informal colonialism.¹⁵⁷ Thus, the phenomenon of imperialism was discussed on a larger and international scale. Herein, the members of the ASC participated and they tried to find their own discourse and definitions on imperialism.

Noteworthy was that the ASC members from India were more vocal concerning the topic of anti-imperialism than the other members, especially regarding knowledge of literature about imperialism, as Mehta showed. The strong position, which India took in the world after her independence in 1947, made India an example for many other (de)colonized countries. Thus, India was a very important player in the formation of the Third World and the non-alignment movements.¹⁵⁸ The leading role India took in the anti-imperialism dialogue, Third Worldism, and non-alignment could be connected to why the Indian members of the ASC were more involved with the imperialism discussions.

3.3. Making their Voice Heard

Unprovoked and cynical intervention by the British and French forces in the Arab-Israeli dispute, their aggression against Egypt and their attempt to seize the Suez Canal is in defiance of world public opinion. Such a flagrant violation of peace and of solemn agreements entered under the UN charter by the two Big Powers shakes the very foundation of the edifice of international co-operation, peaceful negotiation, and blights the prospects of the emergence of world community.¹⁵⁹

The Second ASC Conference in Bombay, from the first until November 10, 1956, gave another opportunity to condemn practices of colonialism that were still happening.¹⁶⁰ Topics such as the freedom movements in Algeria, Kenya, Cyprus, and Goa; the situation in West Asia; the conflict between the Arab States; and Israel occupying Egyptian territory were discussed. Moreover, the delegates expressed their disappointment of how some of the European forces were acting and again the Asian Socialists turned towards the UN for support for their cause. They demanded that all of the troops withdrew from these areas.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Mark T. Berger, 'After the Third World? History, destiny and the fate of Third Worldism', 9-39, see 12.

¹⁵⁸ A. Martin Wainwright, *Inheritance of Empire, Britain, India, and the Balance of Power in Asia, 1938-55* (Westport; Praeger Publishers, 1994), 1-9. B.R. Tomlinson, 'State-building India, 1930-1960: A Global History Perspective', *Colonialism and Decolonization in Asia Reconsidered*, Working Paper of Global History and Maritime Asia, No. 15 (2009), 11-18, see 13, 17-18.

¹⁵⁹ IISH Microfilm 5486, Author Unknown, 'Resolution on West Asia', in: *Asian Socialist Conference Information Bulletin*, No.4. (Rangoon, November, 1956), 1.

¹⁶⁰ IISH Microfilm 5486, Author Unknown, 'Release of national leaders', in: *Asian Socialist Conference Information Bulletin*, No.4. (Rangoon, November, 1956), 7.

¹⁶¹ Author Unknown, 'Resolution on West Asia', 1.

The topic of the Algerian War and the Suez crisis was yet another example of how and where the ASC and SI differed from point of view. One of the main differences was the fact that the ASC believed that nationalism and democratic socialism were a good combination. The SI, on the other hand, did not trust in this combination.¹⁶² The ASC members took every possibility they had to ask the SI to support the freedom movements and stop aggressive practices against national leaders from colonized areas. Not only did the ASC address the SI, they also turned towards Asian countries and warned them about developments in their nations.¹⁶³

I should like to warn them (governments of India and China) that a blind imitation of European or American civilization is dangerous. To desire to create Europe in India or China or any other Asian country is not only impossible it is also undesirable. But this desire of the Governments of India and China is one aspect of the present crisis of human civilization, which is also the cause of crisis in foreign policy: and it can be overcome only if the coloured peoples of the world develop a new system of thought and action and also a new way to expand their agriculture and industry. [...] To the achievement of the third system and increase of its power, the Governments of India and China have so far done nothing. I hope they would, in future, work towards such a policy.¹⁶⁴ Rammanohar Lohia (1954)

In trying to make their voice heard, they turned towards international organizations like the UN and the SI, but they also addressed Asian governments. The formation of postcolonial states was a new, interesting, but also difficult process. One of these difficulties was the origin of the constitution and their state model, this basis was heavily influenced by the former colonial powers. The impact of these influences was implemented in the new ideas about the formation of a state. Besides, immediately after independence the colonial people, especially the new leaders, could not wait to have their own governments. Resulting in that the state models were written as fast as possible. On top of this, the government models were drafted by the elites of the new countries, people who were usually educated in the motherlands of the former colonies. Therefore, they were most familiar with that specific form of politics.¹⁶⁵ Developing a new system, like the ASC suggested, was therefore, a difficult responsibility.

The Bandung Conference was a moment where the new leaders of the post-colonial states expressed a confidence in their abilities to form new and strong nations.¹⁶⁶ Representatives from Asia and Africa collectively expressed their aversion against imperialism. Therefore, anti-colonial thought

¹⁶² Imlay, 'International Socialism, 1105-1125.

¹⁶³ IISH Microfilm 5482, Rammanohar Lohia, 'Co-existence', in: *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 3. No. 4. (Rangoon, August, 1954), 5-6.

¹⁶⁴ Lohia, 'Co-existence', 5-6.

¹⁶⁵ Julian Go, 'Modeling States and Sovereignty, Postcolonial Constitutions in Asia and Africa', in: Christopher J. Lee (ed.), *Making a World after Empire*, 107-139, see 107-111.

¹⁶⁶ Lee, 'Introduction: Between a Moment and an Era', 1-44.

became a binding factor for these countries.¹⁶⁷ The phenomenon to use anti-imperialism as an alliance was not only used by the ASC members but throughout the whole Global South, the ideology of a Third World peaked. Hereby, internationalism became an important theme. In the post-colonial states, the concept of internationalism went well together with the building of nation states, so with nationalism. Glenda Sluga called these two “twinned liberal ideologies”, in her book *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*. Moreover, they carried some of the same ambitions, like modernity, democracy, political idealism, and both were shaped to embrace freedom and peace. In the twentieth century, these ideas grew and flourished. The establishment of (international) organizations and institutions stimulated the two ideologies. The UN, as a transnational organization, which served the interest and the human rights of all its members. Even bigger, some people started believing in world citizenship and a world government.¹⁶⁸

Furthermore, this age of internationalism, but also nationalism, was carried on the beliefs of working-class revolutionaries who dreamed to live in a peaceful and united world. Sluga reminded her readers, that the internationalist movements were mostly very peaceful groups. It was not a history of radicals.¹⁶⁹ The ASC members fitted in the group of people Sluga described in her book. They strived towards peace, freedom, and equality for everyone. Moreover, the ASC members were not radicals at all; on the contrary, it was a peaceful group. The ASC tried to change their nations and Asia through the ideology of democratic socialism and communication with international organizations like the SI and the UN.

3.4. ASC on Asian sentiment

The Asian Socialists expressed quite a lot of emotions in their articles to make their goal of anti-imperialism clear. The ASC Conference held in 1953 in Rangoon was an embodiment of the Asian sentiment, according to Sutan Sjahrir, the chairman of the Social-democratic party of Indonesia.¹⁷⁰ The Asian sentiment was found in numerous places; in politics, socialist organizations, and in anti-imperialist movements. Therefore, an organization as the ASC, where politics, socialism, and anti-imperialism were combined, was of great importance to express this sentiment, according to Sjahrir. Obviously, any member of the ASC would think his organization was of importance, but Sjahrir explained his feelings about the ASC regarding colonialism and he talked about the significance of the

¹⁶⁷ Dipesh Chakrabarty, ‘The Legacies of Bandung, Decolonization and Politics of Culture’, in: Lee (ed.), *Making a World after Empire*, 45-68, see 51.

¹⁶⁸ Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia; University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 2-3.

¹⁶⁹ Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, 2-3.

¹⁷⁰ The Partai Sosialis Indonesia.

Asian sentiment. The piece he wrote in 1954 could be used as a summary of the opinions of the ASC towards multiple topics. One of the reasons was the arrogant and patronizing attitude (de)colonized people faced every day:

It has grown together with the consciousness of the colonial peoples in Asia, who were looked down upon as inferior by the White. Asian sentiment, furthermore, is one of the as many kinds of expressions of a will reawakened among colonized and underdeveloped nations in Asia, to change their present conditions into better ones, and at the (right?) time assuring equality to other nations particularly to the white colonizer.¹⁷¹

The struggle for freedom was a long and difficult one; moreover, it was different for every Asian country. In 1954, when Sjahrir wrote this piece, Vietnam was still fighting for independence. Hereby, multiple other big powers interfered in this conflict. In China, the communists were taking over and isolating themselves from the rest of the world and Asia. Nonetheless, Sjahrir saw these developments as an “Asian Revolution”. As a symbol for the people of Asia to gain freedom and catch up with the “developed” world. Meaning that the “poor” world was on the rise to be equal to the “rich” world. The hope to create a balanced world was already expressed in 1947, during the Asian Relations Conference, in Delhi. Asia countries expressed their hope to develop in order to become equal to the rest of the world.

Not long after, however, the “hope dwindled” Sjahrir wrote. Setting up a Third Camp proved to be more difficult than anticipated. Again, Western political parties used Asia to gain power in their own countries, but they also used Asian countries as pawns in various political power plays. Asia was in a state of development, which was being hindered by all the foreign powers trying to gain influence in the Asian states. Countries and their citizens were constantly being pulled on, from either the Western or communist side. Sjahrir saw the ASC as a new order of hope for the Asian countries, to spread the Asian sentiment as a turning point for anti-imperialism. Although, he did acknowledge that it was a difficult task, especially making concrete policies and agreements to achieve the goals of a strong and independent Third Camp.

To fight and resist both the capitalist and the communist bloc, development, and independence for the Asian countries were needed. Sjahrir thought Asian people themselves could only achieve this; therefore, it was important to show the rest of the world that a bloc of people with the same ideas and goals supported the ASC. This was essential because the SI and even the Japanese Socialists were looking down on the Asian Socialists and saw them as “inferior people”. The task of the ASC members was to prove them wrong and to show that the social-democratic path was the only

¹⁷¹ IISH Microfilm 5482, Sutan Sjahrir, ‘Significance of the Rangoon Conference’, in: *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 2. No. 10. Socialist Asia Anniversary Number (Rangoon, 1954), 5-8, see 5.

path to the future of Asia.¹⁷² The words of Sjahrir showed that Asian sentiment, the feeling that the (de)colonized people stood strong together against imperialism, the arrogant attitude of the West, and against the two blocs in the Cold War, was so emotional because it gave people from the (de)colonized areas a voice of dignity and self-determination. Hereby, the people were motivated and believed in the possibility of a Third World. Therefore, the Asian sentiment proved to be a great motivation for the ASC members to keep believing in their ideologies and goals.

¹⁷² Paragraphs based on: Sjahrir, 'Significance of the Rangoon Conference', 5-9.

Chapter 4. – Thinking about Modernity, Development, and Foreign Aid -

Another important method for the ASC members to reach their goals was through development. After the Second World War and during the decolonization processes, nationalist leaders, such as Nehru, Sukarno, and Nasser, tried to modernize and develop their countries. They saw themselves as guides to lead the movements of modernization in order to overcome the label of being “underdeveloped”. Moreover, the ASC members saw development as a way to break free from imperialism and to choose their own paths. They wished to be neutral in the Cold War conflict. Development, therefore, became a valuable concept for anti-imperialists, nationalists, and the ASC members in the 1950s. In the entire (de)colonialized region a wave of development and modernization processes were visible, it became an international phenomenon. However, eventually the international character faded away because people started to focus more on their own culture, nation, and national identity. Similar to the Third World movement, which shifted from an international to a nationalist attitude.¹⁷³

At the same time, people from the West started to think about development. From the 1950s, onwards modernization theories were being developed. Especially in the United States, the development discourse grew quickly first with the focus on Europe. A few years later, however, this shifted towards Asia and Africa. In the 1960s, there was a general belief among social scientists and American policymakers, that through their framework of development they could help the underdeveloped countries to improve the situation in those areas and repel communism.¹⁷⁴

Not only Americans thought about development policies, so did the European governments. In the 1960s, they too increased their programs for social and economic development. The 1960s were, therefore, as Imlay called it the “development decade”.¹⁷⁵ However, thinking about development already happened before the Second World War. Benjamin Zachariah wrote a book about the development tendencies in India in the 1920s and ‘30s. In these decades, development was used by the colonizing powers to determine where the colonized countries stood in order to gain self-government and independence. The level of development, standard of living and welfare of the people and country, became measurement methods. To improve these factors, and thus to come closer to independence, the “intellectual bourgeoisie”¹⁷⁶ of India began to think about how to develop India, and how to “construct the nation”. Economic successes from all over the world were used as examples to think about planning commissions and political policies. The concept of development was therefore

¹⁷³ Dipesh Chakrabarty, ‘The Legacies of Bandung, Decolonization and Politics of Culture’, 53-59.

¹⁷⁴ Simon Toner, “The Life and Death of our Republic’: Modernization, Agricultural Developments and the Pleasantry in the Mekong Delta in the Long 1970’s’, in: Leslie James and Elisabeth Leake, *Decolonization and the Cold War*, 43-84, see 34, 44.

¹⁷⁵ Imlay, ‘International Socialism’, 1125.

¹⁷⁶ Academics, economists, scientists and “socialist scientists”.

already in the 1920s and 30s and important discussion point in the political and academic field in India.¹⁷⁷

After the Second World War, and thus in the ASC period, development got a slightly different meaning. Most countries in Asia had gained independence and the Cold War influenced the usage and context of development. The wish to raise the standard of living and welfare remained. However, in the context of the Cold War, the idea of development became a tool for both the capitalist and the communist bloc. Both sides set up plans and programs to provide aid to the “underdeveloped” countries.¹⁷⁸ The context wherein development was used therefore changed, when the ASC members talked about development this meant development in the post-war context. They tried to improve their countries standard of living, welfare, employment rate, and skillset, but they also encountered the limits and stipulations of development, especially regarding aid programs from abroad.

Development discourse grew from the 1960s, Imlays “development decade” onwards. Discussed were matters as “what is development”, “why is it given”, and “is development good”? Thinking about development became more and more common. This discussion was interesting because it exposed some of the limits and concerns of development. The development discourse combined with the words and thoughts of the ASC members can provide a better understanding of what the concept of development meant in the 1950s and for ASC, but also how the words of the Asian Socialists related to later discussions about this topic.

4.1. Development Discourse

The question what development was, how it should be used, or whether it should be deployed at all, was something also social scientists started thinking about in and especially after the 1960s. Development discourse emerged and questions like what defined development, were asked. Answering these questions was not easy and in the literature, writers used multiple definitions of development. From the very simple “development is good growth” and “improvement” to more complex interpretations given by social scientists. James Ferguson, for example, tried to explain development by looking at three different angles from which the questions: when would someone say “that is a developed country or society?” could be answered.¹⁷⁹

The first option was when there was a healthy economy, industrial production, and taxes that were paid in order to build schools, hospitals, roads, etc. The second view was looking at the standard

¹⁷⁷ Benjamin Zachariah, *Developing India, An Intellectual and Social History, c. 1930-50* (New Delhi; Oxford University Press, 2005), 1-8.

¹⁷⁸ Zachariah, *Developing India*, 3.

¹⁷⁹ James Ferguson, *Far from paradise, an introduction to Caribbean Development* (London; Latin America Bureau, 1990), 4.

of living of all the people from a country. Here, industrial development was less important because through industrial development, only a small fraction of the society benefited and the idea of a developed society was that the lives of all citizens improved. In the third and last option, the control, which people (also the poor), had in the organizations in their societies was examined. The idea, here was when everyone's voice was heard, that said something about the level of development. Ferguson concludes with another important question and statement: "When talking about development, it is therefore important to ask the question: development by whom and for whom?"¹⁸⁰ This last question was relevant to the members of the ASC, in the Cold War and anti-imperialist context they were constantly aware where aid was coming from and why it was given.

One of the first social scientists to disclose critique on development was Ivan Illich in the early 1960s. Especially in this time, development aid was seen as something untouchable. Questioning the relevance and impact development had on Third World or "underdeveloped" societies was a taboo. In the years that followed more scholars followed Illich example and started to question development. These scholars called themselves post-development thinkers.¹⁸¹ Illich's main critique was the fact that rich and developed countries saw industrialized societies as the ideal society and tried to implement this model all over the world. Hereby, the Third World countries became too dependent on mass-market goods. He thought that there was no proof that the industrialized way of living was the key to improved life. Mass goods and services even could become a danger to people and their environment, Illich believed.¹⁸² In Illich's footsteps, scholars like Arturo Escobar, Serge Latouche, Gilbert Rist, and Theodor Shanin followed in expressing critiques on development.

Theodor Shanin believed that the mindset of the Westerners, to always want progress and modernity, was linked to two events in the early 19th century. These events were the expansion and discovery of the world by the European travelers, whereby, new countries, new cultures, and new people were found. The second issue was the shift of perception by the Europeans, the idea of time changed from a cyclical to a linear perception. Combined these two made the idea of progress look appealing, because it made it easier to place different societies somewhere else on the timeline. On the linear timeline, there was only room to move forwards, when societies and cultures were compared with each other their places on the timeline were compared as well. How further along, how more progressed and modern a society was. To determine the level of progress, classifications followed. One of the criteria was to look how "modern" a state, culture, or society was. Western

¹⁸⁰ Ferguson, *Far from paradise*, 4, 7.

¹⁸¹ Majid Rahnema, 'Introduction', in: Majid Rahnema and Victoria Bawtree (eds.), *The Post-Development Reader* (London; Zed Books, 1997), ix-xix, ix.

¹⁸² Ivan Illich, 'Development as Planned Peverty', The text is reproduced from Chapter II of *Celebration of Awareness* (Marion Boyars, London, 1971), in: Majid Rahnema and Victoria Bawtree (eds.), *The Post-Development Reader*, 94-101, see 95.

concepts like the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, urbanization, and colonialism all played a part in the formation of this classification system. The so-called advanced societies acted as the natural leader and saw themselves as the example of a modern and developed state. This belief in progress caused the arrogant behavior of the so-called developed states.¹⁸³

Gilbert Rist also talked about progress and modernity and how this related to the arrogant attitude of the West. He believed that modernity was the new religion of the West and that development was used as an element within this religion. He argued that the Western societies behaved in an arrogant manner because they believed that their modern societies based on ration and secularity made them superior and where the example for the rest of the world. The Westerners condemned the so-called traditional societies because they did not follow the standards of the modern society. When the Western world became more secular from the Christian church, the religious element continued in another form, namely that of social beliefs. Rist argued for the similarity with religion because the idea of modernity was presented as a collective certainty and as the truth. Moreover, there was not much room for an open discussion about the idea and the effectiveness of development, modernity, and progress. The idea that societies could possibly develop and grow after a Western example, kept the belief in modernity alive. As a ritual of the new religion of modernity, Rist mentioned the many political, economic, and social summits where political leaders, economists, and other experts talked about the situation and the development in the world.¹⁸⁴

Serge Latouche brought the westernizing character of development forward, which he believed came also from the 19th century with industrialization and urbanization. Hereby, a feeling of superiority of white men was established and spread all over the world together with expansions and colonialism. During the colonial period, when white men controlled large parts of the world, they tried to spread their ideas about modern civilizations. This mission started in the early 19th century, during the First World War, some limits of the civilization mission came to the surface. Subsequently, the economic crisis of the 1930s showed the failure of the Western liberal economic model and finally with the decolonization of the colonies Europe lost its hegemony over a big part of the world. Latouche argued that one might think that the modernization mission would end here as well. However, after the de-colonialization, the civilization mission continued and Westernization emerged in the form of neo-colonialism. Progress became the new agent that expressed the supremacy of the West. Science, technology, development, and economics were used as tools to accomplish a modern civilization.

¹⁸³ Theodor Shanin, 'The idea of Progress', in: Rahnema and Bawtree (eds.), *The Post-Development Reader*, 65-71, see 66-70.

¹⁸⁴ Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development, from western origins to global faith* (London; Zed Books, Third Edition, 2008 (first edition 1997)), 21-24.

Again, this meant that the west dictated the best way to live and to form a society. Therefore, Latouche believed that the characterization of being underdeveloped was a judgment of the West.¹⁸⁵

Arturo Escobar asked the question: why the West or the industrialized nations of North America and Europe were seen as the appropriate models of post-World War 2 societies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Escobar explained that this perception could emerge because development and progress were seen as sacred ideologies, which leaders from all over the world preached. Elites from both the First and the Third Worlds accepted a heavy burden of poverty, by selling Third World resources to any bidder, by neglecting nature and human dignity, by killing and torturing, and by condemning their indigenous populations. Escobar argued that, hereby, people of the Third World started to feel inferior, underdeveloped and ignored and subsequently these people started to question their own culture. The doubt about their culture and history made room for the idea of progress and hereby the wish to be modern was born. Escobar described that development first destroyed traditions and cultures, to fill this gap with the promise to become a developed country.¹⁸⁶

Shanin feared that the process of progress would simplify and unify the social world, cultural differences and the “real” human history would disappear.¹⁸⁷ Likewise, Rist and Latouche saw danger in the westernization because it alienated people from their own culture, making everyone more or less the same. Latouche called the West an anti-culture, which de-cultured the world and destroyed ethnic diversity in the Global South. He thought that “Neo-colonialism, with its technical assistance and humanitarian giving, had contributed much more to deculturation than did colonialism in all its original brutality.”¹⁸⁸ A common concern of the post-development thinkers was the belief that development into modern societies, which happened almost all over the world, was destroying the authenticity of people, cultures, and histories.

However, there were also critiques on the post-development discourse. The main critique was the fact that post-development condemned all forms of development, without giving any alternative. Moreover, it also rejected the development that happened on the terms of the Global South itself because all forms of development were seen as Westernization. The post-development method carried a quite strong anti-western sentiment and anti-modernism ideal; however also in the Global South, there were many voices who wanted (technical) modernization. Another critique was that development, modernity, and progress were much more complex than the post-development thinkers

¹⁸⁵ Serge Latouche, *The Westernization of the World: The Significance, Scope and Limits of the Drive Towards Global Uniformity* (Polity Press, 1996), x-xv, 2-59.

¹⁸⁶ Arturo Escobar, ‘The Making and Unmaking of the Third World Trough Development’, in: Rahnema and Bawtree (eds.), *The Post-Development Reader*, 85-93.

¹⁸⁷ Theodor Shanin, ‘The idea of Progress’, 70.

¹⁸⁸ Latouche, *The Westernization of the World*, 28.

explained. The reality was not as black and white and the processes of modernization, development, and progress intertwined with people, cultures, and societies.¹⁸⁹

4.2. Need for Foreign Aid?

In the prevailing circumstances to look for the solution of our food problem or unemployment through economic development 'à la' USA or USSR is meaningless. Such developments will go on in certain areas, like the river valley schemes, and the selected industrial zones and enterprises.¹⁹⁰ Asoka Mehta (1952)

For the ASC members development was necessary because they saw people in their countries suffer from poverty. Food production was declining, which led to recessions in the economic development and because there was no economic development social life could not grow either. The social and economic system, was of course, much more complicated, but even this simple list of consequences demonstrated a domino effect and showed the major problems the governments of Asia had to face.¹⁹¹ The economic and social difficulties led to the question whether foreign aid was necessary to develop the new nations. Asoka Mehta, already published the first article about this theme in 1952, titled: 'Alien Aid Cannot Feed Us'. He talked about the problems India faced and about possible solutions. As the quote above mentioned the ASC countries needed to find their own development processes.

Mehta was hesitant about accepting financial aid from abroad, because such aid was not a constant factor and it only had limited effects. Besides, it was not a fundamental transformation. To achieve long lasting change, the difference had to be made by their own people. Therefore, Mehta wanted to bring India, and the rest of Asia, to a higher level of development. His ideas to achieve these aspirations were as follows. The first step was "set moving", meaning that (industrial) resources had to increase and had to be stimulated, à la Keynes. Secondly, "capital resources" needed to grow, the national income had to increase and a certain amount of money had to be saved each year. However, the calculated amount of Rs. 2.000 crores were far from being achieved, only a mere ten percent was saved the year Mehta published this article. Mehta saw the solution to this problem in an impulse of local resources, which created opportunities for local men to work and earn wages. Once this was achieved, they could start developing industries. Consequently, this would cause a motion in the complete economic development and then there would be no need for foreign aid.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, 'After post-development', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 21. No. 2. (Taylor & Francis, 2000), 175-188, see 187.

¹⁹⁰ IISH Microfilm 5482, Ashoka Mehta, 'Alien aid cannot feed us', in: *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 1. No. 6. (Rangoon, November 1st, 1952), 5-9, see 7.

¹⁹¹ Mehta, 'Alien aid cannot feed us', 5-6.

¹⁹² *Ibidem*, 5-9.

Dr. Sumitro Djojohadikusumo wrote a series of articles about economic development and social progress in Asia. In the first one, he asked how to transform the Asian system fundamentally:

How to bring social change, to transform a feudal system based on an agrarian economy into a modern social system based on the organization of production with application of modern skills and technology in the interest of the masses of the community?¹⁹³

Furthermore, he emphasized that the economic development and social progress had to come from a social-democratic direction and, therefore, it should defend and strengthen the human rights and equality. There were, however, structural problems in Asia, which caused delays in achieving development. For example, although most countries had gained independence, the economic system did not change very much. Subsequently, a very small group of people controlled the economic processes. On top of this, there was instability in export, which was problematic because the Asian countries were too dependent on foreign trade. Finally, Djojohadikusumo mentioned the lack of skills, on a technical, an organizational, and on a management level. The unemployment in Asia caused the problems that he mentioned.¹⁹⁴

Djojohadikusumo believed that these problems could only be solved if structural changes were made. He gave four points how to do so. First, Asia needed a balanced economic development on both agricultural and industrial production. Second, unemployment had to be tackled by an increase in industrial development. Third, to improve technical and organizational skills investments were necessary. Fourth and last, it was necessary to look critically towards the existing distribution of wealth and poverty and subsequently this system had to be changed.¹⁹⁵ The governments had the task to provide the foundation for the requirements he mentioned above. Industrial development needed focus. However, it was important not to forget agriculture. Progression and improvement in agriculture were almost equally important.¹⁹⁶

In his third article, Djojohadikusumo returned to his fourth point. He believed the governments of Asia critically had to look at the group of people who controlled the finances and economies in Asia. These groups could be native or alien but because most had their own interest in mind, they would not help to improve the economic and social situation for all Asian people. In his article, Djojohadikusumo looked at the research of a group of UN experts who analyzed the economic position of the Asian nations. The result showed that if the Asian countries wanted to grow their national

¹⁹³ IISH Microfilm 5482, Sumitro Djojohadikusumo, 'Economic development and social progress in Asia', in: *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 2. No. 6. (Rangoon, October, 1953), 9-13, see 9.

¹⁹⁴ Sumitro Djojohadikusumo, 'Economic development and social progress in Asia', 9-12.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, 9-12.

¹⁹⁶ IISH Microfilm 5482, Sumitro Djojohadikusumo, 'Economic development and social progress in Asia', in: *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 2. No. 7. (Rangoon, November, 1953), 1-5, see 1-4.

income and their foreign capital had to increase. Djojohadikusumo empathized that if Asian governments accepted any kind of foreign aid, they had to be critical. They could only accept help from abroad if it was truly helping their own people.¹⁹⁷

U Kyaw Nyein also agreed that the Asian governments had to start by developing balanced economies, agriculture, industry, and raising the capital per income. He pointed to the colonial exploitation as the reason why people in Asia were living in poverty and why the welfare of the post-colonial states were so low.¹⁹⁸ More members of the ASC shared this belief and all saw the importance of development. However, they also underlined the difference between the Asian “underdeveloped” regions and the “developed” areas, because the circumstances for development were not similar. Therefore, Asian countries had to think about own methods to improve their agriculture, industries, and economies.¹⁹⁹

For this goal, the ASC set up the Planning Information Bureau (PIB), which gathered data about the development plans of the member states of the ASC. The information that was found was sent to the Asian Economic Council and was published in the *Economic Bulletin* of the ASC.²⁰⁰ The PIB would be a time consuming new task for the members, however the Asian Socialists believed that the PIB would be essential for the improvement and development in Asia. In order to support the PIB, a few members of the Secretariat of the ASC needed to learn a couple of things about finances and economic structures.²⁰¹

Published in one of the first editions of the *Economic Bulletin* in 1955, was speech given by U Kyaw Nyein, at the Colombo Plan Consultative Committee Meeting in Singapore. He talked about the obstacles the eight-year plan of Burma from 1952, had met, like the decline of the price of rice. The goal of the plan was to reach a higher standard of living by 1960, than what had been the standard before the war. Envisioned was that once the standard of life was improved, political stability would increase and this, subsequently, would be beneficial for the democracy in Burma. However, because of the emerging problems and obstacles, to reach the goal would take double the time they calculated. Therefore, U Kyaw Nyein turned to the Chairman of the Colombo Plan and asked for help. After this statement, he quickly added, “Mr. Chairman, I would hasten to add that the above statements do not imply that we have decided to rely solely on the external aids to retain the rate of development we

¹⁹⁷ Sumitro Djojohadikusumo, ‘Economic development and social progress in Asia’, in: *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 2. No. 8. (Rangoon, December, 1953), 7-10, see 10.

¹⁹⁸ IISH Microfilm 5482, U Kyaw Nyein, ‘Industrial Development of Burma’, in: *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 3. No. 5. (Rangoon, September, 1954), 15-17, see 15.

¹⁹⁹ IISH Microfilm 5482, Author Unknown, ‘Planning Information Bureau of the Asian Socialist Conference’, in: *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 3. No. 8. (Rangoon, December, 1954), 11-12, see 11.

²⁰⁰ IISH Microfilm 5488, ASC Secretariat (C. Tatebayashi), ‘About this Bulletin’, in: *Asian Socialist Conference - Economic Bulletin*, No. 1. (Rangoon, June 20th, 1955), 1.

²⁰¹ Author Unknown, ‘Planning Information Bureau of the Asian Socialist Conference’, 12.

have achieved. We have taken other measures as well.”²⁰² With the help of the Colombo Plan and their own measures, he was convinced that Burma would still reach a better standard of living by 1960.²⁰³

Comparably, the Indonesian government showed that on one hand, they were open to foreign capital, but on the other hand quite protective about their own industries, enterprises, and people. The law that only allowed foreign investments to go up as high as 49 percent of the shares, for example, demonstrated the protectionist measurements from the government.²⁰⁴ To keep as many political interests out of the aid programs, the ASC members were hoping that all economic and technical help went through the UN. Especially with the Cold War tensions, the UN ensured some idea of transparency in foreign aid. The plan of the UN to form a division, SUNFED, which monitored the aid given to the underdeveloped nations, was therefore warmly welcomed by the ASC members.²⁰⁵ Other parties also confirmed their confidence in SUNFED. During the openings session of the twelfth meeting of ECAFE²⁰⁶ in Bangalore, Premier Nehru of India said that he: “hoped that future foreign aid would be channeled through the UN since financial aid to underdeveloped countries would lose its value when connected with political considerations.”²⁰⁷

The members of the ASC expressed their wish to develop, to be independent, and to be equal all through the 1950s. However, foreign aid and assistance seemed to be necessary and inevitable. Nevertheless, the Asian Socialists made clear that they were aware of the attachments to foreign aid and therefore stressed the importance of an independent organization as the UN and SUNFED. Already during the first ASC conference, the members noticed parallels between the colonial times and the 1950s. The following phrase from the Joint Statement of the ASC demonstrated these feeling: “The scarcity of capital and skill has to be made up by external assistance. Such assistance is at once a right and a claim created by the past and present exploitation of the Asian countries by the developed countries.”²⁰⁸ Continuities were the facts that foreign aid was given because of a sacred mission and because of political interests, which led to exploitation.²⁰⁹

²⁰² IISH Microfilm 5488, U Kyaw Nyein, ‘Burma’s Economic Development Plan’, in: *Asian Socialist Conference - Economic Bulletin*, No. 5. (Rangoon, December, 1955), 1-3, see 2.

²⁰³ U Kyaw Nyein, ‘Burma’s Economic Development Plan’, 1-3.

²⁰⁴ IISH Microfilm 5488, Author Unknown, ‘Economic News’, in: *Asian Socialist Conference - Economic Bulletin*, No. 6. (Rangoon, January, 1956), 12-14.

²⁰⁵ IISH Microfilm 5488, U Ba Swe, ‘Economic News, June 1956’, in: *Asian Socialist Conference - Economic Bulletin*, No. 11. (Rangoon, July, 1956), 6.

²⁰⁶ ECAFE was the UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, established in 1947. Purposes of establishment were to encourage economic co-operation in these areas.

²⁰⁷ IISH Microfilm 5488, Author Unknown, ‘Economic News, February 1956’, in: *Asian Socialist Conference - Economic Bulletin*, No. 8. (Rangoon, March, 1956), 6-8, see 6.

²⁰⁸ IISH Microfilm 5482, Author Unknown, ‘Joint Statement Adopted by the Fourth Congress of the Socialist International and the Asian Socialist Conference’, in: *Socialist Asia – Fortnightly Bulletin*, Vol. 4. No. 2. (Rangoon, August, 1955), 26-27.

²⁰⁹ Author Unknown, ‘Joint Statement Adopted by the Fourth Congress of the Socialist International and the Asian Socialist Conference’, 26-29.

In correspondence with the post-development thinkers, the ASC members expressed some of their doubts about development, especially regarding foreign development aid. A summary of the hesitations about foreign aid expressed by the Asian Socialists were, the attachments that came with foreign capital, the history of exploitation, and the arrogant attitude of the West. The “civilization mission” and later the “Westernization” as Latouche called it, was described by the ASC members as the “sacred mission”. The Asian Socialists were aware of the arrogant attitude of the Western countries and that foreign aid could be a continuance of their influence in the post-colonial countries. From this point of view, the ASC members disapproved foreign aid programs.

However, the ASC members were not opposed to the idea of becoming a developed and modern society. In contrary, it was something they aspired. They hoped that the UN would provide a solution to develop their nations on a fair and trustworthy manner. Here, the Asian Socialists and the post development thinkers disconnected. Even though the Asian Socialist wanted to reach development on their own terms, they did pursue a model of industrial growth, modernity, and progress. Escobar examined the question why the West was seen as the correct model for a modern society. He blamed the elites from the First and the Third Worlds, who sold the Third Worlds resources at the expense of the indigenous populations. Subsequently, a response to the post development thinkers was that they did not offer any alternative to development, where in reality there might be middle grounds. The ASC members offered such an alternative, because they did wish for the Asian countries to become developed, economically independent and socially equal, but because of their social-democratic identity, they were also strong defenders of human rights, equality, and freedom. Sumitro Djojohadikusumo pointed out the problems with the economic processes; small groups of elite people controlled these processes, he on the other hand, wanted to see these patterns changed into a social-democratic direction and towards people who could be trusted to improve the social and economic situation for all the people in Asia.²¹⁰

²¹⁰ Sumitro Djojohadikusumo, ‘Economic development and social progress in Asia’, Vol. 2. No. 6,7,8.

Conclusion

The members of the ASC told the story of a small group of social democrats who fitted in the dynamics of the optimistic 1950s. The Asian Socialists were well-educated men, freedom fighters, social democrats, writers, activists, negotiators, nationalists, internationalists, and politicians. In the ASC bulletins, they presented themselves as architects and builders of a better world, the Third World. The concept of the Third World was strengthened by the solidarity between the (de)colonized nations and the Cold War. This made the 1950s the ideal period to establish constructive and ideological transnational organizations. The ASC, established in 1953, used these favorable conditions of the 1950s to build further upon the idea of the Third World. The leading members were U Kyaw Nyein, U Ba Swe, Asoka Mehta, Rammanohar Lohia, Prem Bhasin, Sutan Sjarhir, Sumitro Djojohadikusumo, and Imam Slamet. The words of these men formed the basis of the ideology of the ASC and therefore determined the following findings.

Considering the Third World concept and the ASC, there can be said that these two supported each other. Small organizations, like the ASC, used the idea of the Third World to gain purpose and significance. However, because so many people used the concept, the image of the Third World grew and gained value. Moreover, from the 1950s onwards the Third World concept became an icon for (de)colonized people. The connectivity between the user and the concept caused interaction, whereby both the users and the concept were open for changes. The dialogue between the Third World concept and its users created and added another dynamic in the 1950s. The ASC members therefore, were exemplary to use as analysts of their time, to see the 1950s through their eyes and subsequently place these findings in the larger context of events in the post-colonial areas.

The Asian Socialists were active men, both in international and national political organizations. They formed the ASC to contribute to the rebuilding of Asia but also to strengthen the international ideology of democratic socialism. To achieve these goals the ASC needed international factors as stability, peace, freedom, and equality but also national successes for the social-democratic parties. The Asian Socialist published articles regarding global issues, as neutrality, the Third Camp, imperialism, and the development in Asia. However, they published about national elections and developments as well. The combination of internationalism and nationalism was common for the (de)colonized people in the 1950s, the two ideologies shared ambitions of freedom and development.²¹¹ The ASC welcomed the social-democratic organizations from Asia but also from other (de)colonized countries to become members. The open attitude was partly an expression of Third World solidarity; however, it was also a pragmatic consideration to increase the membership of the

²¹¹ Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, 2-3.

ASC. Nonetheless, the international aspect of the ASC was an important element of the organization. The cooperation between the SI and the ASC was another factor that showed the global connectivity of the social democrats, who pursued international democratic socialism.

Furthermore, the relation between the SI and the ASC showed another important factor of the 1950s, namely the increasing awareness of self-dignity and self-determination. The ASC members showed that they were internationalists and pragmatists; however, they choose not to join the bigger and already established SI. Instead, they established an independent Asian organization. Reasons for this decision could be placed within the recent decolonization processes and in the dynamics of the Cold War, moreover in the Third World concept. The idea of the Third World was a reinforcement for (de)colonized people to express their own voices, to write their own histories, to make their own choices, and, thus, to establish their own organizations. As Vijay Prashad said, the Third World concept was a project rather than a place.²¹²

The members of the ASC participated in this project; they were supporters of the Third World concept. However, the concept of the Third World was used by many people in the (de)colonized world and it was, therefore, accessible for changes and own interpretations. Mark Berger even demonstrated that there were two generations of Third Worldists who were quite dissimilar from each other. The first generation, which existed roughly between the late 1940s until the 1960s, was much more moderate, cosmopolitan, and optimistic than the second generation, which Berger described as more radical, anti-western, and nationalist.²¹³ The ASC fits with the first generation, not only period related but more importantly, the beliefs of the ASC members corresponded with most of the ideas of the first generation. The ASC used the Third World concept to express the need to form a neutral alliance in the Cold War, to fight imperialism, to create a strong UN, and to develop their countries. Furthermore, the first generation was hopeful about the future and the developments of the Third World and expressed international solidarity, the ASC members reflected the same optimistic and cosmopolitan attitude. However, the ASC did not share anti-western thought and therefore their concept of the Third World was more moderate than that of most Third Worldists.

For most Asian Socialist their membership and their tasks at the ASC were one of their many activities. The ASC was a small organization located in Rangoon that organized two conferences, set up an anti-colonial and an economic planning bureau, and published numerous bulletins. However, the ASC existed less than 10 years and did not leave a big footprint in the world. In terms of organizational relevance and contribution to the Asian political environment, the ASC was a marginal organization. Nevertheless, in terms of embodiment of the Third World concept the ASC showed us

²¹² Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, xv.

²¹³ Berger, 'After the Third World', 11-25.

the dynamics of the 1950s. The ASC was an example of how the strong and the powerful first concept of the Third World emerged in the 1950s, changed, and after the 1960s declined which led to the downfall of the first generation of Third Worldists.

The members of the ASC tried to develop their countries, but they seemed unavoidably to end up in a vicious circle. The Asian Socialists saw freedom and independence as a necessity for development and neutrality. These were all important aspects to build the Third World. However, the development rate of most Asian countries was too low to start making real economic and social differences. Although the ASC members wrote about solutions, they also acknowledged the fact that whole systems had to change in order to distribute wealth in an honest manner. These substantial changes were hardly possible without foreign capital, the problem with foreign capital were the strings attached to it. The capitalist or communist bloc in the Cold War pulled strings but the strings could also express themselves in the form of "sacred missions", where aid was continuance of exploitation in disguise. Hereby, neutrality was difficult to reach, but likewise was absolute freedom without any form of imperialism.

The ASC members tried to break free of this circle but none of their plans, programs, or resolutions seemed to be affective enough to avoid foreign aid or to create a strong enough stable ideology for Asian states. The members believed that Asian countries needed strong governments who could promote the ideology of neutrality and who could solve the internal problems. However, the tensions of the Cold War constantly needed attention from these governments, causing disregards to national issues. The Asian Socialists demonstrated that the 1950s was a period where the Cold War, anti-imperialism and development were so closely connected that they could not be seen apart from each other. Moreover, the Cold War period for the ASC members was much more than a time of capitalism versus communism. The 1950s was a period of new beginnings, freedom, goals, and opportunism that encountered numerous setbacks.

Throughout the articles, the optimistic and passionate tone of the Asian Socialist remained and until the end of the organization, the idealistic members believed in their international social-democratic Third World. The coup of Ne Win in Burma, in 1962, made it impossible for the ASC to remain located in Rangoon. However, the ASC did not reestablish themselves somewhere else in Asia. Reasons why there was no reestablishment of the ASC, was first, the change from the first to the second generation of Third Worldists. The modest and international character of the concept of the ASCs Third World lost its meaning around the same time as the coup, which was no coincidence. A more radical voice emerged and got more and more support, at the expense of the first concept and the first generation. Second, Burma had been the only ASC country where the social-democratic party had the largest support in the country, therefore, Burma had always been the logical location for the ASC headquarters. In India and Indonesia, the social-democratic parties were small opposition parties,

which moreover faced internal difficulties and banishments. Thus, the reestablishment of the ASC was not a priority but also not a possibility for the Asian Socialists. The ASC quietly dissolved in the early 1960s.

Nevertheless, the history of the ASC was an addition to works about the “blurry edges” of the Cold War in Asia, as Elisabeth Leake and Leslie James described this period.²¹⁴ As a small organization, the ASC represented the complicated dynamics of the 1950s and the struggles of decolonized people and nations. The members showed their awareness of different forms of imperialism and their optimistic goals to form a better world. Moreover, the ASC revealed how all of their goals and obstacles came together in the Third World concept, which proved to be of importance for the survival, or in this case non-survival, of their organization. Many more organization, movements, and people used the global concept and put it into “thick local uses”.²¹⁵ The ASC was one of these organizations and, therefore, their narrative can be used for better understanding of the depth of the Third World concept.

²¹⁴ James and Leake, ‘Introduction’, 1-5.

²¹⁵ Kalter, ‘From global to local and back’, 116.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: List of Delegates Rangoon

List of delegates and organizations during the first Asian Socialist Conference in Rangoon, January 1953. Adopted from the Report on the First Asian Socialist Conference.²¹⁶

Delegates:

- **Socialist Party of Burma:**
 1. U Ba Swe
 2. U Kyaw Nyein
 3. Thankin Tin
 4. Bo Khin Mg Gale
 5. Bo Hmu Aung
 6. U Win
 7. U Kyaw Myint
 8. Bo Min Gaung
 9. U Than Aung
 10. Thakin Tha Khin
 11. Thakin Kyaw Tun
 12. U Tun Win
 13. Thankin Chit Mg
 14. Thakin Pan Myaing
 15. U Tin Nyunt
 - **Partai Socialist Indonesia:**
 1. Dr. Sjahrir
 2. Mr. Soebadio Sastrosatomo
 3. Mr. Djoeir Moehamad
 4. Mr. Soedarsono
 5. Mr. Imam Slamet
 6. Mr. Soedjatmoko
 7. Mr. Hamid Algadrie
 8. Mr. A.K. Loebis
 9. Mr. Tandiono Manu
 10. Mr. Soemitro Djojohadikoesoemo
 - 11. Mr. Listio
 - 12. Mr. M. Tauchid
 - 13. Mr. Tan Boen Aan
 - 14. Mr. Makmoen
 - 15. Mr. Tan Po Goan
 - 16. Mr. Kwee Thiam Hong
 - 17. Mr. Djohan Sjahruzah
 - 18. Mr. Soegongo Djojpoepito
 - 19. Mr. A.Z. Abidin
 - 20. Mr. Maria Ulfah Santoso
 - 21. Mr. Baharmus
 - 22. Mr. Safaroeddin Ahmad
 - 23. Mr. Riekerk
 - 24. Mr. Amirr Hussein
 - 25. Mr. Takdir Awsjahbana
 - 26. Mr. Rauf
- **Praja Socialist Party of India**
 1. Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan
 2. Mr. Asoka Mehta
 3. Mr. N.T. Schroff
 4. Mrs. V. Shroff
 5. Mrs. Dandekar
 6. Mr. V.S. Dandekar
 7. Mrs. Prabhavati
 8. Mr. O.N. Sharma
 9. Mr. Ramnarayan
 10. Mr. B. Sahu
 11. Mrs. R.P. Didge
 12. Mr. P. Mantri
 13. Mr. B.C. Ghose
 14. Mr. Ragnath
 15. Mr. H. Goswami
 16. Mr. B.P. Dass
 17. Mr. H.H. Singh
 18. Mr. M.A. Veerappa
 19. Mr. K. Kannam
 20. Mr. H.J. Nanavati
 21. Mr. P.S. Chinnadurai
 22. Mr. V.S. Ramaswamy
 23. Mr. S.N. Dwivedy
 24. Mr. D.P. Pattnayak

²¹⁶ U Hla Aung, *Report on the First Asian Socialist Conference Rangoon, 1953* (an Asian Socialist Publication, April 8th, 1953), 111-112.

25. Mr. G.S. Sikand
26. Mr. Suryanarayan Sharma
27. Mr. G.L. Oza
28. Mr. Teja Singh Tiwana
29. Mr. Adhyatma Tiwari
30. Mr. Ugrasen Singh
31. Mr. Rishang Krishing
32. Mr. L.A. Singh
33. Mr. B. Dikshit
34. Mr. A.K. Chakravarti
35. Mr. C. G.K. Reddy
36. Mr. S.K. Saxsana
37. Mr. B.M. Toofan
38. Mr. Khalilul Rahman Khan
39. Mr. B.C. Verghese
40. Mr. S.R. Mohandass
41. Mr. B. Islam
42. Mr. M.N. Desai
43. Mr. V.N. Verma
44. Mr. N.G. Gore
45. Mr. Jai Gopal
46. Mr. Jaswant Singh
47. Mr. Rajahans Balkrishn Narasinh
48. Mr. S.D. Baji
49. Mrs. Sumati N. Gore
50. Mrs. Lila Alvares
51. Mr. Sakti Bose
52. Mr. C.S. Rajappa
53. Mr. S.A. Rahim
54. Mr. G. Rajaram
55. Mr. B.S. Mahahdev Singh
56. Mr. G.S. Bhargava
57. Mr. K. Subramunam
58. Mr. Jagdish Gupta
59. Mr. Brahmadeo Prarashad Singh
60. Mr. Gita Prarashad Singh
61. Mr. Mahbir Prarashad Singh
62. Mr. Jagdish Singh
63. Mr. Basawon Singh
64. Mr. B. Pandit
65. Mr. Babulal Doshi
66. Mr. S.S. Varde
67. Mr. Nishamoni Khuntia
68. Mr. P.C. Chordiya
69. Mr. Shingwan

70. Mr. K.S. Gore
71. Mr. Prem Bhasin
72. Mr. M.S. Gokhale
73. Mrs. Kamala Bhasin
74. Mrs. P.V.G. Raju
75. Mr. Phoolan Parshad Verma
76. Mr. Balwan Singh
77. Mr. D.P. Singh

- **Socialist Party of (Mapai) Israel:**

1. Mr. Moshe Sharett
2. Mr. Barkat
3. Mr. Shiloava

- **Social-democratic Party of Japan (Left):**

1. Mr. Mosaburo Suzuki
2. Mr. Seiichi Katsumanda
3. Mr. Shozaburo Araki
4. Mr. Morito Morishma
5. Mr. Fusao Yamaguchi
6. Mr. Tomomi Narita
7. Mr. Orinishin Tanaka
8. Mr. Kohei Kobayashi
9. Mr. Minoru Takano
10. Mrs. Chieko Tamamota
11. Mr. Tokuij Kameda
12. Mr. Miksuaki Ohara
13. Mr. Jiichiro Matsumoto
14. Mr. Eichi Matsumoto
15. Mr. Kenji Asakawa
16. Mr. Tenrei Ohta
17. Mr. Toshiko Hoshino (Buddhist Priest)
18. Mr. Gyoryo Maruyama (Buddhist Priest)

- **Social-democratic Party of Japan (Right):**

1. Mr. Komakichi Matsuoka
2. Mr. Kanju Kato
3. Mr. Haruji Tahara
4. Mr. Eki Sone
5. Mr. Setsuo Yamada
6. Mr. Ikko Kasuga

7. Mrs. Satoko Togano
8. Dr. Ryoichi Oka
9. Prof. Kenjin Matsuzawa
10. Mr. Takeshi Togano
11. Prof. Kaoru Matsumoto
12. Mr. Kumazo Nakaji

- **Progressive Socialist Party Lebanon:**

1. Mr. Nassim Majdrlany

- **Pan Malayan Labour Party:**

1. Mr. Mohamed Sopiee
2. Mr. Lee Moke Sang
3. Mr. C.Y. Choy

- **Socialist Party of Pakistan:**

1. Mr. Mubarak Saghu
2. Mr. M.Y. Khan

- **Socialist Party of Egypt:**

1. Mr. Ahmed Hussein

Fraternal Delegates:

- **Socialist International:**

1. Mr. Clement Attlee
2. Mr. Andre Bidet
3. Mr. Kai Bjork
4. Mr. Saul Rose

- **International Union of Socialist Youth:**

1. Mr. Donald Chelsworth
2. Mr. William Worthy

- **Communist Party of Yugoslavia:**

1. Mr. Djilas Milovan
2. Mr. Alles Bebler
3. Mr. Blazovic Anotelko

- **Congress of peoples Against**

- **Imperialism:**

1. Miss Margaret Pope

Observers:

- **Algerian People's Party:**

1. Mr. Said Farni

- **Kenya African Union:**

1. Mr. I.K. Musazi

- **The Nepali Congress:**

1. Mr. B.P. Koirala
2. Mr. Subaran Syumsher
3. Mr. Upadhay
4. Mr. Krishna Prasad

- **Tunisian Destour Party:**

1. Mr. Tayeb Slim

- **Uganda National Congress:**

1. Mr. E.N.K. Mulira

Appendix 2: List of Committees

List of members of committees during the first Asian Socialist Conference in Rangoon, January 1953. Adopted from the Report on the First Asian Socialist Conference.²¹⁷

Committee A: (covered the topics: “Principles and Objectives of Socialism”; “Asia and World Peace” and “Permanent Machinery of the ASC”.) Names of delegates:

Chairman:

1. Jayaprakash Narayan

Reporters:

1. M.S. Gokhale
2. Djoeir Mohamed
3. Moshe Sharett

• **Burma:**

1. U Ba Swe
2. U Kyaw Nyein
3. Boh Khin Mg Galay
4. Thakin Chit Mg

• **India:**

1. Sri Jayaprakash Narayan
2. M.S. Gokhale
3. Keshaw Gore
4. Mrs. N. Schroff
5. Binpin Pal Das

• **Nepal:**

1. Sri B.P. Koirala

• **Japan (Left Wing):**

1. Katsumada
2. Araki
3. Takano

4. Morishima

• **Japan (Right Wing)**

1. Sone
2. Matuoka
3. Togano

• **Malayan:**

1. Mohamed Sopiee

• **Pakistan:**

1. M. Saghar

• **Israel:**

1. Moshe Sharett

• **Indonesia:**

1. Soetan Sjahrir

• **Lebanon:**

1. Nassim Majdrlany

• **Egypt:**

1. Ahmed Hussein

²¹⁷ U Hla Aung, *Report on the First Asian Socialist Conference Rangoon, 1953* (an Asian Socialist Publication, April 8th, 1953), 113-114.

Committee B: (covered the topics: “Agrarian Policy for Asia”; and “Economic Development of Asia”.) Names of delegates:

- **Chairman:**
 1. T. Manu
- **Reporters:**
 1. U Than Aung
 2. Barkat
- **Burma:**
 1. Thakin Tin
 2. U Kyaw Myint
 3. Thakin Tha Khin
 4. Thakin Pan Myaing
 5. Thakin Kyaw Tun
 6. U Than Aung
- **India:**
 1. Asoka Mehta
 2. N.G. Goray
 3. S. Dwivedy
 4. M. Singh
 5. R. Kesingh
 6. B.M. Toofan
 7. N. Khuntia
- **Nepal:**
 1. Shri R.P. Upadhyay
- **Japan (Left Wing):**
 1. Tanaka
 2. Kobayashi
 3. Kameda
- **Japan (Right Wing):**
 1. Matsugawa
 2. Kasuga
 3. Matsumoto
 4. Tahara
 5. Jokeshi Tokano
- **Malayan:**
 1. C.Y. Choy
- **Pakistan:**
 1. M. Saghar
 2. M. Yusuf
- **Indonesia:**
 1. T. Manu
 2. Sistio
- **Israel:**
 1. Barkat
- **Yugoslavia;**
 1. A. Bebler

Committee C: (covered the topics: “Freedom Movements in Colonies”; and “Common Asian Problems”.) Names of delegates:

- **Chairman:**
 1. Reikerk
- **Reporter:**
 1. C.G.K. Reddy
- **Burma:**
 1. U Win
 2. U Tin Nyunt
 3. Bo Hmu Aung
 4. Bo Min Gaung
 5. U Tun Win
- **Nepal:**
 1. Shri R.P. Upadhyay
- **Japan (Left Wing):**
 1. Narita
 2. Ohara
 3. Yamamoto
 4. Yamaguchi (observer)
- **Japan (Right Wing):**
 1. Yamada
 2. Nakaji
 3. Mrs. Togano
 4. Mr. Togano
 5. Oka
- **Malayan:**
 1. Lee Moke Sang
- **Pakistan:**
 1. M. Yusuf
- **Tunisia**
 1. T. Slim
- **Congress of People’s against Imperialism:**
 1. Miss Pope
- **Socialist Youth:**
 1. Chelsworth
- **Uganda:**
 1. Moosajee
- **Socialist International:**
 1. A. Bidet
- **Communist Yugoslavia:**
 1. A. Blaievic
- **Israel:**
 1. Renven Shiloah
- **Indonesia:**
 1. Djohan Sjahruzah
 2. Reikerk
 3. Soegonds Djojopus Pito
 4. Sjarfoeddin Ahmat
 5. Amir Hossein
- **India:**
 1. Surendre Saxena
 2. Busawon Linha
 3. C.G.K. Reddy

Appendix 3: Joint Statement of the ASC

Joint Statement as decided on the first Asian Socialist Conference in Rangoon, January 1953. Adopted from the Report on the First Asian Socialist Conference.²¹⁸

1. Freedom from economic, political and social exploitations;
2. Equality and the well-being of all;
3. Co-operative living in the civic, economic and political spheres;
4. Civil liberty, personal freedom, dignity of the individual.
5. Direct and effective participation of the people in the management of the political, economic and civic affairs;
6. Full employment and steady improvement in the standard of living;
7. Universal culture (as opposed to class culture) based on universal moral values and aiming at the elimination of cupidity, dishonesty, cruelty and violence from individual and social life;
8. An international community of nations living in peace and in cooperation with one another.

²¹⁸ U Hla Aung, *Report on the First Asian Socialist Conference Rangoon, 1953* (an Asian Socialist Publication, April 8th, 1953), 41.

