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been hostile to Tamil nationalists, and particularly the LTTE. As a result, the US and India were both supportive of the Sri Lankan government. But the rivalry concerned bringing the Sri Lankan state into their respective orbits, and surfaced when the US through the agency of Norway began to play a dominant role in the 'peace process.'

Although India was not entirely sidelined in the peace negotiations and was briefed of all important developments by Norway as well as the Sri Lankan government, India resented losing its central role and, while declaring aloofness, did its best to undermine the peace process.

The love-hate relationship of India and the US in South Asian affairs again came to the fore after the collapse of the peace talks. The US acted to undermine the LTTE while the peace talks were in progress and was instrumental in getting the LTTE banned by the EU. India, not to be outdone, encouraged Sri Lanka to escalate its war against the LTTE. Both India and the US had provided the Sri Lankan government with logistical support since the escalation of the conflict; and from early 2006 India directly supported the war.

When the war rapidly evolved into a human tragedy affecting several hundred thousand people, India's handicap showed itself in the form of statewide protests in Tamilnadu against the carnage in Sri Lanka. The Indian government was caught at a bad moment when its parliamentary majority became fragile and a general election was just months away. But India stopped well short of calling for a ceasefire while the US and its allies prescribed a ceasefire and negotiations for a political solution. On the eve of the general election in May exigency of electoral politics made India call for a cessation of hostilities, a call which it knew will be ignored. The West, on the other hand, retreated from its earlier call for a ceasefire and negotiations.

Meantime, the situation has reduced to one where only humanitarian concerns are being discussed. But the rivalry is still there. The Sri Lankan government is seeking a massive injection of cash from the IMF to get over its immediate financial tightspot. Although the US government is threatening to link the IMF loan to human rights issues, what is likely is that the issues will be used to apply pressure on the Sri Lankan government. Whatever the outcome, US-India rivalry will remain a destabilising factor in Sri Lanka until the country is able to address its national question in a just and peaceful fashion, and without foreign meddling.

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# Conspiracy to Make Plantation Workers Bonded Slaves of Small Holders

*E Thambiah*

*(Translation of article in Puthiya Poomi, April 2009)16  
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A four-member Cabinet Sub-Committee headed by Minister DEW Gunasekara and with Anura Priadharsana Yapa, Jeevan Kumaratunga and Chamal Rajapaksha as members has recommended that plantation land should be taken back from plantation companies which are operating them on lease and be distributed among small holders. The CSC made its recommendations based on its investigation of the activities of the companies which had defaulted on payment of annual lease to the government and payments due to commercial banks. Workers have expressed concern that the consequence of the recommendations will be one of transferring the workers from the fry pan into the fire. Plantation workers employed by small holders are treated like bonded slaves without any trade union rights. Under these conditions transferring the workers from the plantation companies to small holders will subject the workers to bigger problems. It will also decimate the Hill Country Tamil nationality that has the working class of the plantations as a large component.

## History

Tea, rubber and coconut plantations were set up since the 1800s by British colonialists using plantation workers who were brought into the island as indentured labour from South India. Most of the plantations were owned by British companies and a smaller part by local capitalists.

Since land ownership was restricted to 50 acres (20 hectares) per person under the Land Reform Act of 1972, the government took over the plantations. The Plantation Development Board and the Sri Lanka

State Plantation Corporation took over the plantations in 1975. Plantations were also closed down and various projects were undertaken under government schemes such as Usavasama and NADSA. Schemes were set up to settle members of the majority nationality on plantation lands.

Until 1992, the plantations were managed by the Plantation Development Board and the Sri Lanka State Plantation Corporation. It was claimed that they were not being run profitably and, in line with the advice of the World Bank, the plantations were leased out to private companies, initially for 50 years and later for 99 years. Twenty-three companies, namely Agalawatta, Agrapatana, Balangoda, Bogawantalawa, Elpitiya, Hapugastenne, Horana, Kahawatta, Kegalle, Kelani Valley, Kotagala, Madulseema, Malwatte Valley, Maskeliya, Mathurata, Namunukula, Pussallawa, Hapugastenne, Talawakelle, Udapussalawa, Watawala, Kurunagala, Chilaw, and Elkaduwa were invited to become leaseholders of the plantations. Of the twenty-three, Kurunagala, Chilaw, and Elkaduwa were retained under the People's Plantation Development Board and the Sri Lanka State Plantation Corporation, while the others were run by private companies.

The twenty private companies were granted tax concessions besides inducements by the government. Yet, they defaulted on the payment of annual lease. The companies also handed over the management of the plantations to management companies. The plantation companies that have denied to the plantation workers many of the rights enjoyed by them imposed additional working on them and refused to award wage increases, have not paid the annual lease to the government. It is said that massive sums are outstanding.

### **Government Concerns**

Plantation companies, besides failing to pay the lease dues to the government, also claim to be running at a loss. They also talk about decline in production and export quantity.

Under these conditions, the government appointed a ten-member sub-committee headed by Neville Piyadigama to study these issues and submit a report. According to the sub-committee report, the sum outstanding as lease payable to the government was 291 million rupees. The report also recommended a reduction in the sum due as lease as well as in the management fees. The report stated that 200,000 workers were employed in the tea, rubber and coconut plantations.

The observations in the report submitted by CSC led by DEW Gunasekara were completely different. It recommended that the plantation companies should pay to the government the sum of 291 million rupees and the sum of 10.13 billion rupees due to the banks. It was 'discovered' that the companies, which had in the meantime received 10.059 billion rupees from the government for management, had not carried out proper rehabilitation and maintenance work in the plantations. During the last ten years, tea and rubber replanting was done in only 5000 acres of the 408,487 acres (nearly 102,100 hectares) in the hands of the companies. They take 20% of the profits for management. One company, despite not paying the lease due to the government for ten years had received 700 million rupees as management costs.

At the same time, the CSC reported that 400,000 workers were employed in the plantations. The findings as well as the concerns of the CSC may be correct.

### **Deception by the Companies**

Plantation workers have to launch mighty struggles to secure their biennial wage rise. When it is time for renegotiating wages, the companies claim that they are running at a loss. The companies claim that they run at a loss because of the high wages paid to the workers. The maximum daily wage of the workers is 265 rupees. But it is accused that, besides non-payment of the lease due to the government, the companies have, after making the deductions from the wages of the employees, defaulted on the payment of Employees Provident Fund and Employees Trust Fund owed to the departments concerned.

Also there are charges that the monthly trade union subscription (membership fees) deducted from the wages has not been remitted to the trade unions concerned. As there are several such accusations and criticisms about the companies, the plantations cannot continue to be left in the hands of the companies. Under the conditions, it is undisputable that the plantations and the plantation economy need to be rescued from the plantation company bandits.

### **Wrong Prescription by the CSC**

A committee of inquiry was appointed because the plantation companies defaulted on payment of the lease to the government. Malpractices by the companies have been exposed. But the CSC has failed to pay attention to matters concerning a fair wage scheme for

the workers and the protection of the plantation industry. The CSC has recommended that since that 76% of the production in the plantations is carried out by small holders, the 408,487 acres (in 461 estates) that are in the hands of the plantation companies should be distributed among the small holders.

When the plantations were handed over to private companies, the workers lost many of their rights. Although collective agreements are made, it is a difficult task to secure the biennial wage increase. Although 31<sup>st</sup> March, the date for determining the wage increase, has passed neither plantation companies nor the trade unions are prepared to initiate discussions.

M Sivalingam, a leader of the Ceylon Workers' Congress, which is said to be the biggest plantation trade union, and a government minister, has said that since tea prices have fallen, it is not right to demand a wage increase. He has also said that the CSC recommendation that the plantations in the hands of plantation companies should be distributed among the small holders is worrying. But he has no the courage to oppose it.

Since the plantations were handed over to private companies, the workers lost their trade union rights and the right to demand a fair wage. The plantation companies disregarded their obligation to provide infrastructural facilities such as housing, home garden, hospital, roads and water supply. The plantations have not been developed into villages or townships.

Under these conditions, handing over the administration of the plantations to small holders will affect the survival of hundreds of thousand workers. The proposed move, rather than rescue the workers from the plantation companies, will pave the way to make them bonded slaves of the small holders. Entrusting the plantations to small holders will subject the workers to a worse plight than the chauvinistic cruelty suffered between 1970 and 1977.

The small holders comprise a class that was created and came into existence after the nationalisation of the estates and the setting up of a land ceiling of 50 acres in the 1970s. They are a class of landlords who take no account of the rights of the workers and oppress and suppress the workers racially. To transform the workers freed from the clutches of the plantation companies into serfs of small landlords is no solution to the problems created by the plantation companies.

Handing over the plantations to small holders will pave the way for debasing the organised working class of the plantation workers, wrecking their existence, and arrest the development of the Hill Country Tamil nationality. Minister DEW Gunasekera who is the leader of the Communist Party of Sri Lanka cannot understand this. With his hand wrapped up in the sacred pirith thread, it is not possible for him to understand the problems of the plantation workers or the Hill Country Tamil people, because the stand of his party is to prop up capitalism in the name of a communist party.

### **Some suggestions**

The handing over in 1991 of the state-owned plantations to the private sector, on the pretext of adverse consequences for the economy and the plantation workers, was opposed on behalf of the working class as a reactionary move in the hill country. The chauvinistic, anti-working class move to hand over the plantations in the hands of plantation companies to small holders should likewise be opposed, and defeated. Until alternative economic programmes are put in place, the plantation economy, which is the livelihood of the workers, should be protected. The basic reason is that the question of existence of the 400,000 workers who depend on it cannot be denied or forgotten.

The proposal that the state-owned plantations should be handed over to the private sector, the move was helped by the studies and the recommendations of a handful of the so-called Hill Country Tamil intellectuals. It is significant that now, once again, a few persons who are said to be Hill Country Tamil intellectuals have come up with studies and recommendations prescribing the transfer of plantations from the plantation companies to the small holders. The recommendations put forward by their studies are detrimental to the existence of the workers and the Hill Country Tamil nationality.

The best possible immediate option for protecting the plantation sector and the workers will be to set up cooperative organisations comprising the workers, the private sector and the state to manage the plantations. How the cooperative administration should be run could be further researched. Cooperative structures with workers' participation could prove successful by averting the failures of foreign companies, state organisations and multi-national plantation companies. It is thus that the plantation industry and the workers could be protected.

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# The Plight of the People

*[Recent articles from Puthiya Poomi]*

## Murder of Sixteen Sinhalese Peasants

*(Translation of unsigned article, March 2009)*

Sixteen peasants including women and children were murdered by unidentified gunmen on 21<sup>st</sup> February in the village of Karamitiya in the Ampara District. These ordinary Sinhalese villagers had been killed in the most brutal manner. What was the offence of these innocent peasants? It is believed that the LTTE carried out these murders. It is said that the murders were carried out as an act of revenge or to divert public attention. What could be achieved by such deeds?

This is not the first time that Sinhalese peasants and people living in border regions have been murdered in this manner. Sinhalese people who left their homes as a result of such murders, attacks and threats on earlier occasions are living in refugee camps in various parts of the country. They too are people. They too face the same kind of misery and crises that are faced by Tamil people in refugee camps. The government and officials do not give them any special privilege because they are Sinhalese, since they are rural peasants and border villagers.

Such murders will be rationalised by some weird-minded people among Tamils. They would ask whether such things are significant when Tamils are being killed every day. They would emotionally declare that only by carrying out such acts that a lesson could be taught. It has been such weird, racist outlook that had been the cause of racially motivated murders and their continuation. It was this weird, racist outlook that enabled the development of a climate for the rejection of the just demands of the Tamil people and for the flourishing of chauvinism. Chauvinism thrived on narrow nationalism, and narrow nationalism thrived on chauvinism. Consequently, ordinary Tamil people and ordinary Sinhalese people have lost life, property and shelter to become refugees. Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims, who differ by ethnicity, language and religion, have suffered killings and cruelty. That pattern still continues.

The killing of sixteen ordinary Sinhalese villagers in the Ampara District is no less cruel than the daily killing of Tamil people by the chauvinist government by bombing from the land, sea and air. While a repressive capitalist government kills Tamil people in inhumane ways, any movement carrying out a liberation struggle cannot conduct itself in the same way as the government. If it does so, it cannot be a true liberation movement.

That is why the cruel act of murdering peasants including children in a Sinhalese village in Ampara should be denounced in the strongest terms. If the practice of acts of revenge that have been continuing for the past three decades is not changed, there can be no salvation for the Tamil people. Only destruction will remain.

## War and the Responsibility of Women

*(Abstract of article in Sinhala by KK Soonikaa, retranslated from Tamil, March 2009)*

The number of people killed by war during the past two decades should by now have touched 200,000. Over 1,400,000 people are displaced by war. Women too have died in large numbers by war. Women who are alive are affected by war, directly and indirectly, through the loss of a father, a brother, husband or children and through poverty and sexual abuse.

The members of the Sri Lankan armed forces who die in war are called *Ranaviru* and armed Tamil youth who die are called *Maavierar*. Both categories are not devoid of natural feelings of love, fondness and affection. Nor are their mothers, sisters and lovers devoid of natural human feelings.

It was only under conditions of the denial of the rights of the Tamils that contradictions were transformed into armed conflict between the Tamil youth and the armed forces of the government.

It is women who are most affected by the direct confrontation, abductions and disappearances that are going on today. Tamil women and Sinhalese women, as mothers, sisters and wives of the members of the armed forces, mothers, sisters and wives of those who have been

imprisoned for speaking up for the rights of the Tamil people, are still subject to various forms of adverse effects.

The “brown sahibs”, like the whites from whom they inherited the reins of power, have been ruling the country by dividing the people. What is important to their method of rule is the oppression of minorities on an ethnic basis.

Today’s war is the result of the denial on an ethnic basis of the right to share the resources of this small country and live as equals. Sinhalese youth, in the name of defending the country, and Tamil youth, in the name of the struggle for rights, are being sacrificed in this war.

The war is an obstacle for the entire people of the country to live in unity. The Sinhala ruling classes are hell bent on carrying forward the war and continuing to divide the people and nationalities. On both sides, narrow nationalists are obstructing the unity of the Tamil and Sinhalese people; and this war continues to have the support of the imperialists.

Under these conditions, women affected by this cruel war should, rather than believe that the ruling classes will find a solution to this conflict, come forward to intervene and contribute to find a political solution to the to the problem that is the cause of this war. It will be useful to initiate discussions to that effect.

## **War Destruction and Electoral Victory**

*(Translation of article by Vehujanana, March 2009)*

“War to end terrorism and political solution for the national question” has been the theme of the policy of the Mahinda Chinthanaya government during the past three years. However, of the two aspects, only the war is being carried forward with vehemence. Political solution has been referred to on occasion for appearances. The All Party Representatives Committee that was appointed by the President has met and dispersed several times. Professor Tissa Vitharana, president of the APRC, is there only for mere appearance. He secured a cabinet position in the government on behalf of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, an old party of the left. Such persons have only the duty to carry out what they have been instructed to do. They lack the courage to utter a

word transcending that limit. This minister is one among the so-called ‘leftists’ who think that it is a great blessing to hold a ministerial post as long as it lasts. On an occasion when he dared to overcome his state of silence to present to the President a document comprising a set of proposals for the resolution of the national question, the President furiously rejected them. That is the plight of political solution. It is said that, under these conditions, an additional committee has been appointed under Indian pressure to make further changes to the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, relating to land alienation and police powers.

At the same time, the war is being carried forward with speed and ferocity. It is being rationalised as a humanitarian task of liberating the Vanni and freeing the people there from the clutches of the terrorists, following the liberation of the East. The war has reached its final phase on this basis and is concentrated in Puthukkudiyiruppu. The LTTE has been cornered into a small area in Puthukkudiyiruppu and its combat strength is at its lowest. At the same time it is believed that there are one hundred and fifty thousand people in that area. (It is not possible, however, to know the correct number as the figures given by the parties to the conflict are conditioned by their respective propaganda purposes). People are killed and seriously injured in the attacks that take place each day. The people are also suffering unbearable pain and sorrow without adequate food, clothing, shelter, medicine and medical treatment.

The people entrapped in Puthukkudiyiruppu are witnessing cruelty unknown before in the history of the island. The government is not willing to cease its fierce attacks. The LTTE is not willing to let the people leave freely. There have been attacks on people who fled and some have been killed or badly injured. Although it has been pointed out that it is in breach of international humanitarian laws to forcefully detain a people, the LTTE appears to take no notice of it. It appears that the LTTE hopes for pressure from India and the ‘international community’ resulting in a ceasefire, and are detaining the people so that, in the event of a ceasefire, it will need a small territory and people to ascertain its continued survival. Also the presence of these people is essential for its own defence.

Under these conditions, the government, which claims to be carrying forward a “humanitarian war”, declares that it is making advances in the war while protecting the people. Each day, news reports are that people are being destroyed by attacks from land, sea and the air.

Anyone who observes the condition of the injured people taken to Trincomalee can see the cruelty of the war.

The president and his government have made a highly saleable commodity of this war. The government is intent on securing votes for an electoral victory from the Sinhalese people intoxicated by military victory. Already, the government has won the provincial council elections in the Eastern, Sabaragamuwa, North Central, Wayamba (North-western) and Central Provinces through marketing the war. The government persuaded members of allied parties to contest under its election symbol, the betel leaf, in all provincial council elections, including that in the Eastern Province. It is doing the same in the elections to the Western Provincial Council. One has to wait and see how it would conduct itself in the North.

The ulterior motive in making all participants in government contest under the betel leaf symbol is to secure a two-thirds majority in the forthcoming parliamentary election for the party with that registered symbol. Beyond that, an electoral battle formation has taken shape in the background of this war for Mahinda Rajapaksa to secure the presidency for a second term as done by JR Jayawardane and Chandrika Kumaratunga before him.

It can be seen that a war has been waged against the Tamil people in the name of "war against terrorism" to subject a section of the people of this country to destruction, and show the military victory thus scored as a great achievement and thereby remain in power. At the same time, the military victory is used to deflect attention from the economic crises and other problems that are growing to giant proportions. Denial of demands for wage increases and increases in prices and fares are carried out behind the curtain of war. The Sinhalese and the Muslim people are being fooled by electoral success. Military success is being put on display from street to street to ensure electoral success. Huge cut-outs showing the president and electoral candidates standing gleefully amid soldiers with modern weapons have been put on display at important junctions. Militarization is being embedded in the minds of the people through the elections. It is said that there is no chance for the ordinary people to appreciate the future dangers of this. They will learn about it in practice when the very militarization turns against them. They have once experienced it already, but propaganda in today's environment prevents them from looking back at it.

## **Jingoism and Denial of Political Solution**

*(Translation of article by Shanmugam, April 2009)*

Intense war is raging between the Sri Lankan armed forces and the LTTE in the east of the Vanni region beyond Puthukkudiyiruppu in the Mullaitthivu district. The LTTE which had retreated from all parts of the Vanni has a small stretch of land outside Puthukkudiyiruppu as its last hold. The "Safety Zone" declared by the government adjoins this area, and comprises a 12 km long stretch of barely 2 km width, running along the coast from Vattu Vaaikkaal in the north of Puthukkudiyiruppu town to Puthumaathalan. It is said to be 20 square kilometres in area. Its importance and tragedy is that it is within this small stretch of land that between 150,000 and 200,000 people are living amid misery, struggling between life and death.

The LTTE is also in this safety zone. Hence the government is accusing the LTTE of using the people in this zone as a human shield for its protection. UN agencies have confirmed this in their reports, and the people who have escaped from the zone too have given information to that effect. They have also said that people are prevented from leaving and referred to instances when those who left in defiance have been fired upon. The LTTE which has denied all of this, claims that the people are there of their own accord.

The government forces are, however, seeking to get the people out of that area and take them to welfare camps. Meantime, the LTTE by forcefully detaining the people there is seeking to defend itself like fish inside water. Up to hundred thousand people caught up in this dilemma are living a life of daily death and resurrection.

The Safety Zone is also referred to as a No-Fire Zone because there should be no firing aimed at this area. But missile and artillery attacks go on. Both sides are accusing each other. The number of people killed and the state of the injured who have been transferred to hospitals in Pulmottai and Trincomalee bear ample evidence to the attacks.

The life of the people in the Safety Zone is one of life in bunkers, where they come out to scamper for food. At the same time, the people have been compelled to live in a state of misery where they are unable to fulfil their essential needs of food, clothing, shelter, medicine and medical treatment.



The government is treating this battlefield in Mullaitthivu as the scene of its final war and has taken a militarist position of unwillingness to make any concession. It has frequently and emphatically said that there is no question of a ceasefire. At the same time, the LTTE, out of fear that losing hold of the last stretch of land and the people detained there by force means risking its existence and historical continuity, is actively resisting and making diplomatic moves in every possible way. It is as a result of that it is repeatedly calling for ceasefire and negotiations. The LTTE is persevering with campaigns in support of it in Tamilnadu and in countries with a significant Tamil Diaspora as well as making every effort to create a climate in which the Sri Lankan Tamil question will be discussed in the United Nations. The government is tirelessly carrying out its diplomatic counter offensive against the LTTE on every front.

Both sides could have made use of earlier opportunities to put forward far sighted policies based on the interests of the country, the people and their future and to act with understanding and without rejecting each other. But each side took its extreme position and sought to achieve its own goal. As a result, neither side showed the slightest interest in the people. A liberation struggle which started out as one for Tamil liberation with the support of the Tamil people, after a stage, refused to duly understand the mood of the people and became one concerning the survival and dominance of individual organisations, and started to go along harmful routes. Its adverse consequences are witnessed today. That is not to argue that the struggle should have surrendered to chauvinist oppression. The point is that the LTTE failed to sense the wishes and the pulse of the people who remained on this soil and participated in struggle to the extent that it heeded the advice and financial resources of the foreign forces and the comfortably off sections of the Tamil Diaspora.

Meantime, the chauvinistic, oppressive governments of the ruling classes, in order to preserve their upper class elitist interests, are not willing to agree to the minimum possible solution for the national question. That the cause of the war, the dreadful destruction and the economic failures are a result of the failure to resolve the national question is denied and concealed. Instead Tamil militancy is being shown as the cause. The Mahinda Chinthanaya government has continuously portrayed the national question as terrorism and deflected the attention of the Sinhalese. That was facilitated by LTTE attacks on Sinhalese civilians.

Now the war has reached its climax. The president and the ministers are predicting that terrorism will be defeated in the next few days. But there is no willingness to talk of a political solution. Already, the government has indicated unwillingness to act in spirit the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment introduced in collaboration with India or to devolve the powers as set out there. What seems amusing and strange is that the government is keen on elections to the other provincial councils established under the same 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment and capturing power.

Mahinda Chinthanaya emphasises a unitary state. Its partners, the JNP led by Wimal Weerawansa and the JHU, as well as its former partner the JVP are bitterly opposed to devolution of power. The UNP has not taken an unambiguous stand on devolution. The All Party Representatives Conference has been mere eyewash. India, which has wholeheartedly backed the pursuit of war, is prescribing the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment as the solution. But the Mahinda Chinthanaya government is politely indifferent to it. The stand adopted by the government is one of rejecting a political solution. Even amid the present war, the government should have put forward a just political solution that is acceptable to the Tamils. Neither India nor the 'International Community' is prepared to persuade the Sri Lankan government to do so. The democratic and civil society organisations among the Sinhalese are not willing either. A climate of fear persists in which the denial of the freedom of expression, suppression of the media and violation of human rights have silenced the forces that should speak out.

In this situation, the government is speaking aloud about terrorism, war and the elimination of the LTTE, and carrying out tasks that ensure its survival and serve its future. It is deflecting attention from the mounting economic problems in the South. At the same time, it announces that it will do in the North what it had done in the East. The conduct of the government appears to be based on the premise that the national question in the North-East will be resolved if local government and Provincial Council election elections are held in the North as well. It has intensified its search for appropriate persons in the North for the purpose. It was with that in mind that the president had recently invited the Tamil parties for discussions. The Tamil National Alliance abstained. The TNA in its response explaining its abstention pointed that a conference or meeting in which a political solution could not be discussed was meaningless. Caught in a quandary, there was little else that the TNA could do. Yet their letter had an opening for the future.

The ferocity of the current war initiative of the government could lead to the capture of the remaining LTTE territory in Mullaitthivu. It is possible to claim that the LTTE has been defeated and that terrorism has been destroyed and to celebrate it. They relate to a military solution, and have little connection with a just political solution, since the military solution concerns the LTTE bearing arms. But the political solution concerns the rights and aspirations of the Tamil nationality of the country.

The policy of denial of the rights of Tamils, with origins in the early 1920s, has continued to expand to this day. That has not been put to an end and no just political solution has been put forward or implemented. In this, the mistakes of the chauvinistic ruling classes are fundamental. At the same time it is undeniable that the upper class elite Tamil parliamentary leadership too erred. The extremist Tamil organisations which followed them and emphasised armed struggle too carried forward the arrogant political line of the “descendants of the Tamils who once ruled” in the name of liberation struggle. Their approach was not correct in its global outlook, or its political stand, or its assessment of international forces or making allies of the Sinhala masses.

The above observations should be viewed on a political basis as a sincere pro-people criticism. They should be widely debated among the Tamil people. There should be democratic opportunity among the people for free opinion and debate. The people cannot silently tolerate any more the implementation of a culture of armed violence, either openly or in disguise. Replacement of one form of dominance by another cannot bring a new dawn or salvation to the Tamil people.

Hence, the Tamil people should come forward to mobilise as a mass movement demanding a just political solution. Sinhalese democratic, progressive and left forces should join hands with them. They should emphatically present to the Sinhalese people the case for the democratic rights due to the Tamils and the case for devolution of power. Only the granting of autonomy for the North-East based on the principle of the right to self-determination within the framework of a united Sri Lanka could be a proper political solution. Only that could be the path for the journey to build a free and prosperous Sri Lanka based on the unity of its nationalities.

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## Alien Concerns

*[Recent articles from Puthiya Poomi]*

### Co-Chairs and India

*(Translation of unsigned Article, March 2009)*

The US, India and the EU have on various occasions taken conflicting positions on the war and the national question in Sri Lanka. When India points to the responsibilities of the Sri Lankan Government, its statements would also impose responsibilities on the LTTE.

Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee, who used to say that Sri Lanka is a sovereign state and it is not possible to ask it to bring its war against the LTTE to an end, says now that Sri Lanka should stop the war and negotiate with the LTTE to find a political solution to the national question.

Since Pranab Mukherjee issued his statement, the US and the EU, which until then called for a ceasefire, gradually toned down their call. They have now limited themselves to issuing statements calling for steps to be taken for the people to leave the battle zone safely.

The statement by John Holmes of the United Nations, described as a White Tiger by Sinhala chauvinists, issued after returning to the UN following his recent visit, unlike earlier statements, did not cause much of a sensation. His statement did not exert pressure to avert the human tragedy caused by military action, to end the war or to find a political solution.

Charges have originated from India that India has been providing direct and indirect support to the Sri Lankan government to carry out its military activity. Besides, the recent statement issued by Pranab Mukherjee calling for a ceasefire is an outcome of the pressure of the campaigns in Tamilnadu against the military campaign in Sri Lanka.

In Sri Lanka, which is suffering the cruelty of war, no popular movement has been initiated against the war. A mood supportive of

the war has been built up among the majority community. A sense of intimidation has been created among Tamils through planned action. Violations of human rights and democratic rights are now daily events.

Under the state of emergency one may be detained in one of two ways. One may be arrested and detained for committing or on suspicion of committing an offence against national security. One may also be arrested and detained on suspicion that he/she may endanger national security. Recently several arrests have occurred on the latter basis. Countries of the EU that waxed eloquent about human rights violations are now on a low key, when violations are at their peak.

When the “peace process” was in progress with facilitation by Norway, the Indian ruling classes acted against it. India maintained good relations with the JVP which opposed moves towards peace. Once the peace process was wrecked, the Indian government started to act openly against the struggle of the Tamil people.

One cannot forget that India had from the outset aided the initiation and development of armed activities of the Tamil youth. When the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment was imposed on the Sri Lankan Constitution, the amendment failed to ensure a minimum degree of autonomy.

Today the Sri Lankan Tamil people have two questions. One is whether peaceful life and security have been assured or will be assured not only in the North-East but also outside it. The second is whether a political solution will be put forward that is based on power sharing or autonomy, and be implemented.

Will the political solution be a political act that admits to the injustices that have been committed against the Tamil people and guarantee that such injustices will not be committed in the future? Will it be empty words for bartering with an armed struggle? Under conditions in which the government has shown no interest in a political solution it seems clear that, for the Sri Lankan government, political solution is just empty words. The feeling that the Tamils have no security is very much explicit.

What are referred to as the “international community” and the “co-chairs” comprising the US, EU, Japan and Norway only talk about getting the people out of Mullaitivu. That is pointed out here not to seek their help to bring about peace and to achieve a political solution but because they are answerable for the present tragic situation.

On the other hand, although Pranab Mukherjee is now calling for a ceasefire, the current situation has been created with India’s blessings. Anyone who fails or knowingly refuses to recognise the agenda of the imperialist and regional hegemonic powers cannot be one who correctly understands the demand of the Tamil people for their rights.

The claim that the “international community” and India will protect the Tamil people has been refuted time and again. The tactic prescribed by ‘Tamil intellectuals’ of pitting India against China or Pakistan to persuade India to intervene on behalf of the Tamils in Sri Lanka cannot be worth more than the lives of those self-immolating themselves in protest of Indian policy. Will an India not moved by the acts of self-immolation fall for their tactic? The toil and investment of the Tamil Diaspora too will not persuade the US or EU to intervene.

The chauvinists do not have different agendas in the national question. The Tamil people too cannot have different agendas. The US, EU and India have agendas that change frequently. Although they are together under the agenda of globalisation, they do not have a permanent agenda. But there is a permanent purpose.

## Foreign Intervention

*(Translation of unsigned Article, March 2009)*

Whether US troops would arrive, whether Indian troops would arrive, and who would arrive first is a matter currently under discussion. Supposedly in whose interests they will arrive is not a matter worth discussing, but that too is discussed. Current military actions in Sri Lanka are being discussed at governmental level in the UK, US and India, and statements are being issued. Such statements are being interpreted as favourable to the Tamils by the Tamil media, and as favourable to the Sinhalese by the Sinhala media. Likewise, Sinhala chauvinists and Tamil narrow nationalists describe foreign intervention in ways that suit them. But any intervention in the name of humanitarianism will be of no good to the Tamil nationality or the country. It should be realized that, instead, only the interests of the interventionists will have prominence and importance.

It has been reported that the US is to take measures to evacuate people affected by military action from Mullaitivu and that it is

negotiating with India about it. A medical team of the Indian armed forces has come to Sri Lanka following the military action. Its first activity started in Pulmottai. A second team is scheduled to arrive. This is claimed to be a humanitarian medical pursuit.

At the same time, it has been said that US troops are to help in the rescue of people from areas with military conflict. US officials responsible for activities in the Asia-Pacific region have been talking about rescue operations. It has also been reported that there have been discussions with the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister about the US troops carrying out rescue operations in Sri Lanka. But the Foreign Ministry has denied making any such request to the US. There were also reports that a US vessel was anchored outside the Colombo harbour to carry out rescue operations. That too was denied subsequently.

The JVP claims that under the conditions any foreign intervention will be helpful to the LTTE. The JHU also expresses the same view. They claim that India and the US should not be allowed to have a share of the military victory of the Sri Lankan armed forces. Besides, they claim that Indian and US intervention will only be to protect the LTTE.

On the other hand, the Tamil people are aware that Indian and US intervention will in no way help to bring to an end the ongoing military offensives or to find a political solution to the national question. The Tamil people through experience realise that such interventions will not bring relief from their sufferings. As far as the government is concerned, it cannot be said that it has ever opposed any foreign intervention which served its military agenda.

In the current global order, Indian intervention has been excessive. There has been too much of Indian domination over the Sri Lankan government. Even in the war, India's contribution has been large. The UN too has issued statements to assert its control. Intervention in Sri Lanka is being done through the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations. Countries of the EU too have sought to exercise control over Sri Lanka. Japan also has acted in a similar manner.

Interventions by the US, India, the EU and Japan still continue. Earlier, such interventions took advantage of a situation where the LTTE was militarily strong to bring the Sri Lankan government to its knees. Now they are exercising control over the Sri Lankan government without hindering, and implicitly supporting, its military activities.

Such intervention, on the one hand, is based on hegemony over the sovereignty of Sri Lanka. On the other hand, it is of a nature that

belittles the rights of the Tamil people. Even if the Sri Lanka government succeeds in establishing its military domination, such intervention will persist.

As long as there is no negotiated solution to the national question, not only cannot there be a lasting peace but also there will be continued intervention by foreign hegemonic and imperialist forces. Foreign interventions always divert the issues and make them more complicated. In today's global order, it is referred to as transforming one problem into another, i.e. rather than solve a problem convert it into another.

Political solution for the national question has now been transformed into one of rescuing people from major human tragedies. Like countries such as the Sudan, Congo, Ethiopia and Somalia being pointed to as examples of countries with unresolved or prolonged civil war, Sri Lanka too may become yet another example.

Under such conditions, foreign intervention and pressure can visit the country on the pretext of humanitarian intervention. Such events will not bring any salvation to the people of the country, and especially to members of the oppressed nationalities. At the same time, a situation will be created in which the sovereignty of the country will be lost to foreign forces. Foreign intervention, on whoever's behalf it may be, cannot be healthy.

Thus, humanitarian intervention, be it through the agency of the US and the West, or India, or the UN will only push the country towards further ruin, and not help to solve its problems. The government of Sri Lanka and the president should take note of it and find a political solution to the national question and bring the war to an end.

**It should be remembered that the struggle for self-determination in its full sense means a struggle not merely against chauvinism but also against imperialism. Thus the struggle for self-determination of the Tamil people should embody uncompromising opposition to imperialism. At the same time it is important to note that the very self-determination for the people, for which there is struggle, has embodied in it democracy, freedom and human rights for the people.**

*[From the Report of the Central Committee of the New Democratic Party to the Fourth National Congress 8-9, November 2002]*

# The Sri Lankan Tamil Tragedy and the Politics of Tamilnadu

*Narasimha*

*(Translation of article in Puthiyapoomi, March 2009)*

The stench of the politics of the State Assembly of Tamilnadu would overwhelm that of the Couvam 'river' and the Buckingham canal in Chennai. If there is the will the waterways could be dredged and cleaned up. But nothing of the kind is possible with the State Assembly of Tamilnadu. Yet the Sri Lankan Tamil newspapers and magazines give undue publicity to the political manoeuvres in Tamilnadu.

The concern of Tamilnadu political parties for the Sri Lankan Tamils is not based on an understanding of the Sri Lankan national question. There is no reason to expect that from the political parties of Tamilnadu which say different things at different times. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the parties and the newspapers of Tamilnadu had for long ensured that the people of Tamilnadu were not correctly informed of the tragic plight of the Sri Lankan Tamils.

Since the later months of last year, there have been many awareness campaigns including processions, rallies and hunger strikes to draw attention to the plight of the Sri Lankan Tamils. Yet there is a lack of consensus about what the crisis faced by the Sri Lankan Tamils is or about the long term measures needed to resolve it or about what is feasible in the short term. Not even the two major left parties referred to self-determination. The Communist Party of India has spoken about regional autonomy with more powers than the states in the Indian union. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has referred to devolution and autonomy. The general tendency is to see the national question of Sri Lanka purely as a Sinhala-Tamil conflict.

Many take the view that a solution could be found on the basis of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987. No one has the slightest idea about the contribution of that accord to the current tragedy. To be frank,

the interest of the main political parties of the state is an outcome of the anger among the people of Tamilnadu about the plight of the Sri Lankan Tamils, and not the result of any genuine concern.

It is not just M Karunanidhi but his entire family that is play-acting. There is little difference between the interest shown by Karunanidhi in the 1980s and that shown by him today. He would say anything that will not offend Delhi as well as not offend Tamil nationalists, and help him to enrich himself and retain him and his family in political power. He knows that not just his words but those of anyone in Tamilnadu will not fall on the ears of those in power in Delhi. Others know it too.

Unless there is a mighty political storm in Tamilnadu that could destabilise the Indian government, Delhi will not stir. But none of the parties that are jockeying for position in State Assembly politics and baiting for posts and positions in Delhi are ready for such an event.

An observation of the events of the past six months will show the true intentions of the parties. The DMK will do nothing in defiance of Delhi; it would not say anything that my even embarrass Delhi. A 48-hour deadline that President Rajapaksha gave the LTTE earlier this year to let the Tamil people leave the territory under LTTE control was hailed by the DMK and the Tamilnadu Congress leaders as a ceasefire resulting from the visit of the Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee, when even the Central Government made no such claim.

The human chain in pouring rain, the relief fund for Eelam Tamils and other forms of theatre were desperate efforts by the DMK to save itself from the embarrassment caused by the stand taken by the Indian government on the Sri Lankan problem. Some may have thought that this was because the DMK would suffer at the by-election for the Thirumangalam seat in the State Assembly held in January, if the truth became known that Delhi was party to the genocidal attacks against Sri Lankan Tamils and that the DMK cooperated with Delhi, especially at a time when there was much dissatisfaction in Tamilnadu about the performance of the DMK state government. The truth was otherwise.

There are many ways to win elections. The DMK's leading family which is well versed in them demonstrated its ability to win elections by splashing money and abusing state power in Thirumangalam. Victory in Thirumangalam was important, and awareness campaigns about Sri Lankan Tamils were needed to secure that victory, because attracting attention to the Sri Lankan Tamil question helped to divert attention from the real issues at home.

The Paattaali Makkal Katchi and the Viduthalai Chiruthaikal Party, both allies of the DMK, perform a different kind of theatre. They act in ways that present them as supporters of the LTTE, but do nothing that would topple the DMK government in the state or the Congress-led government at the centre. The PMK switched loyalties very recently in view of the forthcoming parliamentary elections. It should be noted that, besides the strong sympathy of a sizeable part of the vote bank of these two minor parties towards the Sri Lankan Tamils, the support bases of these two parties, which have exploited Tamil nationalist sentimental politics in the recent past, are entirely caste based.

Parties like the Dravidar Kazhagam and individuals like Pazha Nedumaaran have matched the performance of the PMK and the VCP in presenting themselves as supporters of Sri Lankan Tamils and friends of the DMK. Although V Gopalasamy (also known as Vaiko) has never concealed his sympathy for the LTTE, he needs an alliance with the DMK or the ADMK for the survival of his party, the MDMK. That was a lesson that he learned from the MDMK's electoral debacle a decade ago. Besides, the links that he had forged with the powers in Delhi have identified him closely with Indian hegemonic interests. He is perhaps the most vociferous of Tamilnadu politicians who talk about the 'Chinese threat' to India, revealing his affinity for US imperialism.

Important political leaders who have been explicitly anti-LTTE have been those of the Congress and Jayalalitha, the unchallenged leader of the AIADMK. Besides them, the powerful media establishments have been anti-LTTE. Jayalalitha has spoken about self-determination for Sri Lankan Tamils, but has not clarified what she meant by self-determination. Yet, that is something that no other party has called for. On the other hand, she has not missed an opportunity to accuse the Congress and the DMK of compromise in opposing the LTTE, or to urge firm action against Karunanidhi for his support for the LTTE. Her stand tends to deny freedom of expression to the extent that it makes it a treasonable offence to speak in support of the LTTE.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadhera, with the blessings of her mother Sonia, visited Nalini, the woman found guilty of conspiracy to kill her father Rajeev Gandhi, in prison in 2008. This and other forms of Indian political theatre were subjectively interpreted by Sri Lankan Tamil politicians and the Tamil media, each according to his prejudice. Consequently, among supporters of the Tamil nationalist cause, there was a softening of attitude towards the Indian state and the Congress

leadership. Amid this the Indian state strengthened its military cooperation with the Sri Lankan state.

Some members of the Tamil National Alliance have of late sought to develop ties with the Bharatiya Janatha Party. But, could the sympathy shown by the BJP leadership in Tamilnadu be expected to prevail among those who could come to power in Delhi? The attitude of the BJP when in power was not one which was supportive of the Sri Lankan Tamils. This piece of play acting cannot be anything more than a trick to attract those who have been disenchanted with Jayalalitha and Karunanidhi over the Sri Lankan national question, since the champions of Hindutva in Tamilnadu like "Cho" Ramasamy despise not merely the LTTE but Tamil nationalism as well.

The interest shown by the two parliamentary left parties is welcome, when compared with their earlier positions. It is also notable that the respective positions adopted by the parties at the state level are accepted by the parties at the national level. Yet, the tendency to confuse the right to self-determination with the act of secession and the resultant reluctance to talk about self-determination is a negative feature. Besides, since the two parties seek to win elections by means of all sorts of electoral alliance calculations, there is not much that they can do concerning the problems of Sri Lankan Tamils even if they are in an alliance that captures power or are a major force in keeping a government in power, except by way of campaign in Tamilnadu.

The Tamil nationalists are repeatedly relying on Tamilnadu political parties and personalities with little influence among the people and who, despite all their bravado, are stuck to Jayalalitha or Karunanidhi.

Why the members of the LTTE's permanent support base in Tamilnadu were unable to arouse public opinion in Tamilnadu and organise demonstrations all the way up to Delhi in support of the Sri Lankan Tamils in the way the Communist Party of India was able to do is a question worth considering.

It is an important fact that the parliamentary left parties, although they are revisionists, function at mass level. It is also important to note that the Marxist Leninist revolutionary forces are likely to be more reliable allies than the parliamentary left. The former, who function at the mass level, have consistently and continuously spoken up in Tamilnadu in support of the Sri Lankan Tamils, and have exposed the play acting by the stooges of imperialism like the DMK, ADMK, MDMK and PMK. Such campaigns could prevent the Karunanidhi clan

and Jayalalitha from using mass uprisings to keep themselves in power, and use the uprisings to bear direct pressure on Delhi. Such mass campaigns by the genuine Marxist Leninist parties are not given prominence but blacked out and blocked from the view of the public by the mainstream media in Tamilnadu as well as in Sri Lanka.

What is more important than the inability of Delhi to impose a ceasefire or a just solution on Sri Lanka is that it has maintained an anti Sri Lankan Tamil attitude which is related to Indian expansionist designs. Hence, what the movements supporting the Sri Lankan Tamils should emphasise is not Indian intervention. On the other hand, their main demand should be that Delhi should stop meddling in Sri Lankan affairs and stop collaborating with the chauvinistic regime in Sri Lanka.

Nevertheless, whenever a nationality or a national minority is subject to oppression and genocide, all countries have a duty to voice their protest against such acts. But, given the growth of India's political, military and economic investments in Sri Lanka, to call for Indian intervention will not be in the interest of the Sri Lankan Tamil nationality or any other nationality of Sri Lanka. It will do no good for the people of Tamilnadu either.

It is only through the strengthening of the hands of those who are capable of opposing all acts of national oppression by the Indian state that the duplicity of those in power in India could be overcome.

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## NDP Statement to the Media

### May Day 2009

27<sup>th</sup> April 2009

The following is the text of the May Day declaration issued by the Central Committee of the New-Democratic Party.

The on-going cruel war in the North has plunged the Tamil people into an unprecedented human tragedy. As attacks continue incessantly, tears and blood flow like rivers. The people who have emerged from the besiegement of war have been herded into camps in Vavuniya and the Jaffna peninsula under conditions lacking in basic facilities. The scenes in the Vanni are much like those obtaining in countries such as Somalia and Sudan. At the same time, the financial and economic crisis that has developed in the South has badly affected the workers, peasants and other toiling masses and severely burdened their lives. India on the one hand and the US and the West on the other are seeking to use the war conditions and the economic crisis to strengthen their respective hegemonic holds on the country. Neither the ruling Mahinda Chinthanaya government nor the UNP, which is striving to come to power, have the ability to rescue the country and the people from this dangerous situation and solve the problems faced by them. Military victory and electoral success based on it will help to strengthen state power but not serve to provide solutions for the political and economic problems heading towards an abyss. The reality is that there will be no change for the better until the entire workers, peasants and other toiling masses are ready for alternative political thinking and action.

The forthcoming May Day, the day of revolutionary struggle of the workers of the world, is to be celebrated in a new environment in which the workers and oppressed people are launching fresh uprisings. Hence the New-Democratic Party calls upon the people to resolve to mobilise along the path of mass political struggle to urge a just political solution to the national question, which is identified as the main problem facing the country, and to win the rights of all workers including the plantation workers.

The Mahinda Chinthanaya government, since it came to power, has not proposed a solution to the national question which has been transformed into war. At the same time, with Indian backing, it is intent

**Bookshelf**

**A Study of the Sri Lankan National Question**

***The Sri Lankan National Crisis and the Search for Solutions***,  
S Sivasegaram, Aakar Books, Delhi, India, [www.aakarbooks.com](http://www.aakarbooks.com), 2009

This book traces the historical development of ethnic and national consciousness in Sri Lanka, the development of the contradictions and their transformation into national conflict, oppression and war. It identifies the respective roles played by ethnicity as well as class interests and ideology. It also deals with the different class and ideology-based approaches to the solution of the national question and touches briefly on the role of forces of foreign domination in aggravating the problem and prescribing solutions that serve their interests.

on its pursuit of war. To this day the government has shown no interest in putting forward a political solution. Likewise, it is preserving indifferent silence on the question of wage increase for plantation workers and matters affecting the livelihood of the people. Besides, the Cabinet Sub-Committee has proposed a scheme just as disastrous as the Upper Kotmale Scheme, namely that of redistributing large plantations to private smallholders. Through this scheme, the Hill Country Tamils will face severe problems as a class and a nationality and be forced into a dangerous situation in which they could lose their entire livelihood. Therefore, it is essential to introduce an alternative program and make the plantation workers part of the program.

Also, the climate persists in which democratic, trade union and human rights are being violated and the freedom of the media is being threatened under the State of Emergency. Besides the rejection of demands for wage increases by workers and other employees, security of employment too is being denied. Although much is spoken about a national economy, liberalisation and privatisation are being carried out in the name of development under the agenda of Globalisation. The country will not see real development or prosperity through them. The war will not be brought to an end. Until a just political solution is put forward for the national question, it will be deception to talk of peace and development for the country.

Hence, on this May Day the New-Democratic Party emphasises that the oppressed working people of the country and the repressed nationalities should mobilise along the path of mass political struggle for the people.

*S.K. Senthivel*

General Secretary, New-Democratic Party

## May Day Rallies of the NDP

The New-Democratic Party held well attended May Day rallies in Hatton and in Jaffna on 1<sup>st</sup> May. Comrade E Thambiah (National Organiser, NDP) chaired the rally in Hatton, which was addressed by Comrades S Thevrajah (Member, NDP Politburo), S Panneerselvam (Member, Walapane Regional Council), V Mahendran (Editorial Board, Puthiya Malayakam), K Sivarajah (Proletarian New Democratic Union) and other comrades. Comrade K Kathirgamanathan, Northern Regional Secretary of the NDP chaired the rally in Jaffna which was addressed by Comrades SK Senthivel, (General Secretary, NDP), R Thavarasa (Teachers' Union), K

Thanikasalam (Member, NDP Politburo), K Panchalingam (leader of NDP trade union front), P Murugesu (NDP Youth Front), K Mahadevan (President, Kalaimathy Sports Club), Mrs U Latha (teacher, Kalaimathi Pre-school) and other comrades. Both May Day programmes included revolutionary literary and cultural activities.

### *NDP Statement to the Media*

## Western Provincial Council Polls

*6<sup>th</sup> April 2009*

“It will be meaningless to vote for the ruling United People’s Freedom Alliance or the United National Party or to those contesting in alliance with them in the forthcoming elections to the Western Provincial Council. None of the problems that continue to affect the people will be resolved by doing so. The New-Democratic Party calls upon the people to instead come forward to vote for the left candidates, in particular the Left Front candidates contesting under the ‘Table’ symbol who have been emphatic in their opposition to their rise in cost of living and the war, defence of democratic, trade union and human rights, and insistence on a political solution to the national question” said Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Party in a statement issued by him on behalf of the Politburo of the Party.

The statement added that “the New Democratic Party has disagreements with the position taken by the Left Front led by Vickramabahu Karunaratna contesting under the “table” symbol. We have pointed them out to the leadership of that party in a recent discussion between the two parties. Yet the position taken by the party, in view of the need to build the solidarity of a strong alliance of left and democratic forces in the current climate, is to reject the two ruling class alliances and call upon the people to vote for the Left Front.

“The people will not benefit in any way by voting for the ruling United People’s Freedom Alliance or the United National Party or those contesting in alliance with them in the forthcoming elections to the Western Provincial Council. Both sides have over the past thirty years conducted the country and the people along the path to disaster. They are only seeking to come to power in turn, secure posts and positions, accumulate wealth and enjoy comforts; and are not ready to solve the problems faced by any section of the people.



“Both sides are responsible for the miserable economic crises created by globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation. Besides, it is these two groups of the ruling classes that have carried forward the cruel war, without thus far putting forward a fair solution to the national question. Also, both ruling class parties have been responsible for violations of democratic, trade union and human rights. They have enjoyed from time to time the support of Tamil sections who are content with posts and positions.

“Thus the New-Democratic Party appeals to the people, especially the Tamil people, to avoid voting for the ruling class forces, namely the United People’s Freedom Alliance or the United National Party or to those contesting in alliance with them. Likewise, the people should also reject the JVP with continues to uphold a chauvinistic position. At the same time, it appeals to the voters for the Western Provincial Council that they should cast their votes for the Left Front and its election symbol the ‘Table’ in order to add strength to the left forces who speak up on behalf of the suppressed workers, the oppressed Tamil people; resist the denial of human rights and the rising cost of living; and speak up from the side of the people”.

*S.K. Senthivel*  
General Secretary, New-Democratic Party

### ***NDP Statement to the Media***

## **Call to Release Comrade Pradeepan**

**12<sup>th</sup> March 2009**

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Party issued the following statement on the arrest and detention of Comrade Nicholas Anton Pradeepan.

On 7<sup>th</sup> March Nicholas Anton Pradeepan, member of the Vavuniya Regional Branch of the New-Democratic Party was taken in for inquiry by the Police in Vavuniya and detained. He is now detained at the Police Station, Grandpass, Colombo. The copy of the Police Record issued states that he has been arrested on suspicion of terrorist activities. But there cannot be any connection between him and the above charges, since he has been a member of our party. Our party has always been a Marxist Leninist party that never endorsed secession or terrorist activity. Pradeepan, who is under detention, has served the people in accordance with the policies of our party which are

supportive of the people. Selfish individuals and hostile political forces disliked him for that reason. The New-Democratic Party is of the view that it was why charges had been cooked up against him, and sees his arrest and detention as acts of political victimisation. Hence the NDP emphatically urges the Inspector General of Police to expedite the inquiry concerning him and enable his early release.

*S.K. Senthivel*  
General Secretary, New-Democratic Party

### ***NDP Statement to the Media***

## **Call to Release Editor of Sudaroli**

**1<sup>st</sup> March 2009**

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Party on behalf of the Politburo of the New-Democratic Party issued the following statement on the arrest and detention of N Vidhyatharan, Chief Editor of the newspapers Sudaroli and Udhayan.

The act of abducting and arresting N Vidhyatharan, Chief Editor of the newspapers Sudaroli and Udhayan is yet another aspect of a series of measures to crush the freedom of the media. Anyone who respects the freedom of expression and the freedom of the media cannot accept such irregular manner of arrest, and the New-Democratic Party emphasises that, if there are charges against him, inquiry should be expedited and if there are no charges he should be released.

Vidhyatharan is the chief editor of two newspapers. The views and attitudes of the newspapers may not be acceptable to the government. But it is not acceptable under any condition to deny the democratic right to the freedom of expression and to the freedom of the media that are enshrined in the Constitution. One has to conclude that the arrest of Vidhyatharan is an act of revenge at an opportune moment. When one considers what has happened so far to Tamil, English and Sinhala media personnel, one finds a continuity of those acts in the arrest of Vidhyatharan. The New-Democratic Party urges his immediate release.

*S.K. Senthivel*  
General Secretary, New-Democratic Party

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## *Sri Lankan Events*

### **Claim or Confession?**

Following the defeat of the UNP in the elections to the Western Provincial Council, the leader of the UNP has become particularly assertive about his claims to be the biggest contributor to the defeat of the LTTE. He claimed that he had secured the co-operation of India and the West during the period when he was Prime Minister. He had earlier claimed that the armed forces are using the military hardware procured during his tenure as Prime Minister to defeat the LTTE. That is interesting, since the procurement took place at a time during which a ceasefire was on and, despite the LTTE walking out from the talks, there was no sign of recommencement of hostilities.

More interestingly, when two of the UNP leader's associates, both with the UPA government now, on the eve of the Presidential Election of 2005 November gave him the credit for organising the split in the LTTE in 2004 with help from a foreign power, the leader seemed very modest and maintained an embarrassed silence.

### **UNP Blues**

The leadership dispute in the UNP has now descended to the level of public squabbles. Desperation and frustration, which have little to do with policy, are persuading many in the UNP leadership to think that the UNP should explicitly identify itself with Sinhala chauvinism.

Rivalry between the UNP and the SLFP lost most of its political meaning after the UNP swept to power in 1977. Unable to combat the systematic attack on democratic politics by the UNP regime, the SLFP and its 'old left' allies were only concerned with returning to power: opportunism decided election pledges and electoral alliances. The Mahinda Chinthanaya government built on the UNP's assault on democracy by inducing splits in every important political party including the ruling party. The 'end of party politics' as seen today is perhaps the logical conclusion of a process initiated by the constitution of 1978.

With no effective leader in sight and virtually every potential leader's loyalty and credibility in question, any shortcut that the UNP may take to recapture power is bound to backfire badly; and, even if the UNP succeeds, the kind of compromises made in the process cannot lead to a UNP-led government any better than the one it promises to replace.

## **Tilting at Windmills**

The government has been over-reacting to international criticism of its conduct of the war in the North. Self-appointed spokespersons for the government do not hesitate to hurl abuse at any critic, be it a human rights organisation, a news medium or a spokesperson for a foreign government. Where it is not possible for a member of the government to be seen to be associated with the abuse, the government stops with a denial and the job of abusing is undertaken by minor partners of the government and the mainstream media.

The anti-imperialist tone in which politicians and papers denounce imperialist meddling and question the moral right of imperialist countries to criticise Sri Lanka would in other circumstances have been convincing. Refusal of entry to representatives of foreign governments, in some instances with no understandable purpose, have added glamour to the image of Sri Lanka standing up to the entire western world, and even on occasion India, in its valiant struggle to save the country against terrorism and all its apologists.

But the sincerity of this new-fangled anti-imperialist brigade has become questionable, with the government desperately seeking an IMF bailout to keep afloat amid the economic disaster to which the war has contributed in no small measure. These 'patriots' will not warn the government against falling into the IMF trap with tragic consequences for the country.

## **Politics of Desperation**

The Tamil National Alliance, an opportunist alliance of four Tamil parties, had lost its credibility long ago. It won its parliamentary seats owing to the backing of the LTTE; but each partner ceased to function as a political party and lost touch with the electorate. Rather than be with their electorate and encourage the people to stand up collectively for their rights, they looked up to foreign countries to resolve the national question. Although loyalties have been divided, most of them counted on India despite being often let down and even snubbed by the Indian government. Even after Tamils in India had lost faith in Indian intentions, some of the TNA MPs were lobbying in India as recently as April, in the hope that 'something will turn up'. But nothing did.

Rather than build principled alliances with potential allies among other nationalities, they stubbornly stick to their cloudy Tamil nationalist agenda. The TNA is now deeply divided; and their political doom is at hand irrespectively of the future course of the Tamil national struggle.

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## *International Events*

### **Nepal: Acts of Bad Faith**

Army chief General Rookmangud Katawal was dismissed by the Prime Minister for acting in defiance of cabinet decisions and in breach of the Peace Accord by continuing to recruit members to the Nepal Army, irregularly extending the service of some officers who were due to retire, and refusing to integrate the 19,000 PLA fighters into the 90,000 strong Nepal Army. Ram Baran Yadav, President of Nepal made the unconstitutional move of reinstating the General on 3<sup>rd</sup> May. With the opportunist Communist Party of Nepal–United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) withdrawing from the coalition government led by the Communist Party of Nepal–Maoist (CPN-M), Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) announced his resignation on 4<sup>th</sup> May afternoon in a televised address. He accused the opposition, some of the coalition partners, and foreign powers (meaning India) of conspiring against his eight-month government and encouraging the President to go beyond his constitutional role to back the army.

Finance Minister Baburam Bhattarai charged that “India supported the army and the president in their unconstitutional acts against democratic forces.” He added that the CPN-M would initiate a mass struggle as well as use the interim parliament to reverse the President’s unconstitutional move to reinstate the army chief General Katawal, and called for the dismissal of General Katawal and President Yadav for acting against the constitution.

Although India facilitated the agreement between the enfeebled mainstream Nepali parties and the CPN-M to expedite the end of the army-backed tottering regime of King Gyanendra, it resorted to conspiracy to keep CPN-M out of power after it won the election to the Constitutional Assembly an year ago to form the government despite Indian manoeuvres backed by the US, army officials, and parties such as the Nepali Congress (NC) and the elitist section of the CPN-UML.

The signs were there early in the year of something brewing; and concerns were expressed in March by a writer in Red Star, the journal of the CPN-M, about the dragging on of the writing the New Constitution. The writer observed that the matter did not receive due priority, and pointed out that while the views of the indigenous communities about their aspirations were being compiled, the former king was on a Delhi

visit, and was the guest of the Hindu fascist Narendra Modi; and that the leader of the opposition party Nepali Congress, Girija Prasad Koirala and the leader of the coalition partner, CPN-UML, KP Oli were in India for “medical check-up”. Recruitment to the army went on in defiance of the directive of the government. Since returning from India, the bitterly anti-Maoist Oli and Koirala intensified their attacks on the CPN-M. Nepali media had reported visits to Delhi by officers of Nepal Army. The writer suspected that, since Delhi knew that neither the NC nor the CPN-UML can run the government, it sought to retain Maoist-led government in power and manipulate it by using its agents in Nepali power structure.

Another commentator, KC Shyam, writing in Kantipur Online on 16<sup>th</sup> March pointed to unequal treaties between India and Nepal and to Delhi’s arm-twisting tactics like the stoppage of the supply of petroleum products in 1974 when the Rastriya Panchayat passed a resolution deploring Indian annexation of Sikkim. He observed that “the timing of the Delhi visits could not have been more inappropriate as the Maoist-led government is contemplating signing a new treaty with China, and the proposed pact is said to have raised many an eyebrow in New Delhi. The powers that be in New Delhi cannot obviously be pleased with the proposed treaty, and is likely to see it as a threat to India even if they do not say it in so many words”. His final paragraph sounds prophetic: “The present Maoist-led government, and an interim one at that, has been indulging in taking decisions and actions that have far reaching consequences. Not all of them may be pleasing to Delhi Durbar. The Maoists, fully aware how the 12-point agreement was reached in New Delhi in November 2005, know the possibilities rising out of Nepalese political leaders converging in New Delhi on one pretext or the other. So who’s afraid of New Delhi? One presumes we all are as are others living in countries in the periphery of Big Brother”.

Sources: *Red Star, Kantipur on line, Times of India*

### **Pakistan: Bullied into Destruction**

The popularity of the government of Pakistan has evaporated fast. Under Pervez Musharraf, pressure from the US dragged the country into an unpopular war in Afghanistan. Musharraf’s reluctant departure in August 2008 under threat of impeachment did not lead to the fulfilment of the hopes of the people who rejected him at the parliamentary elections in February 2008. Following the departure of its trusted ally, US imperialism, worked even harder to push the government into continuing its support for its war effort in Afghanistan. The US has used

all manner of pressure to have its way. Its offers of economic aid are closely tied with military performance. It continues to play parliamentary political rivals against each other. Naturally, and as a US Defence Department official had acknowledged recently in private, there has been much mistrust between the US and the Pakistan.

US pursuit of the Afghan resistance forces across the border into Pakistan escalated since the present government took power and attacks included a number of aerial attacks in the past several months, which had angered the people of Pakistan, including sections of the armed forces. The increasingly aggressive and insensitive approach of the US made the war in Afghanistan even less acceptable to the people of Pakistan and sympathy for the resistance has grown, despite a lack of popular appeal for the Taliban in Afghanistan. The Pakistani Taliban movement without a strong presence across Pakistan capitalized on it to expand its influence, especially in war affected regions in the west of Pakistan. Consequently, the embattled government of Pakistan, much against the wishes of the US, agreed to a truce with the Taliban in February and consented to the use of the Islamic law (Sharia) in the Malakand division which included the Swat valley where the Taliban was strong. The Taliban continued to expand its presence beyond the Swat Valley into the Buner region to the south and Dir to the west.

With the Taliban in the Buner region only 100 km from the Pakistani capital, the US, insensitive to the internal situation in Pakistan and taking a purely militaristic view, goaded the government and the armed forces of Pakistan into striking hard at the Taliban. It had already forced Pakistan to move 6000 of its troops deployed on the Indian border following the Mumbai terror attack to its border with Afghanistan to fight the militants and demands even more from Pakistan. It wants the Pakistanis to carry the burden of fighting the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

The Pakistani forces have since early May gone on the offensive against the Taliban in the Buner and Dir Districts, in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan, and are locked in a battle with Pakistani Taliban that is bound destabilize Pakistan. The US, worried by the prospect of a nuclear-armed Pakistan under the rule of Islamic militants, is desperate to control the spread of Islamic militancy, and its militaristic approach is bound to be counterproductive.

The fighting in Dir to the west of Swat are said to have been heavier than Pakistani officials have acknowledged, and that the civilian cost has been high. The military said some 70 militants had been killed in Dir just three days of fighting, while according to Amnesty International more than 30,000 civilians had fled their homes in the region in that

period. Things are worse in Buner following heavy attacks launched by the armed forces on 8<sup>th</sup> May to rid the region of militants, estimated at 4000. The death toll is mounting, with the government claiming the killing of hundreds of militants, all of whom may not be militants. The exodus was close to 200,000 people, atop the half-million who had already left parts of the North-West Frontier Province and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, because of fighting between the government and the Taliban and fear of missile strikes by remotely piloted American aircraft. Relief officials said that as many as 300,000 people were moving or preparing to flee.

There are signs of fresh unease on Capitol Hill about US involvement in the region. David Obey (Democrat), Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee has expressed strong reservations about President Obama's plan for Afghanistan and Pakistan and repeatedly likened Obama's approach to Richard Nixon's plans for Vietnam in 1969.

By bullying Pakistan to carry an even greater share of the burden of the US war in Afghanistan, the US will only get bogged down in its unpopular war and, in the process, push Pakistan along the road to ruin.

*Source: New York Times*

## Afghanistan: Blundering Along

Afghan officials and villagers said on 6<sup>th</sup> May that American air strikes killed more than 100 civilians in western Afghanistan and the International Committee of the Red Cross confirmed that dozens had died in the bombing in the western province of Farah. Most estimates place the death toll at not less than 120. US Defence Department officials tried to dodge the blame by claiming that the civilians were killed by grenades hurled by Taliban militants, but eye witness accounts have firmly contradicted that version of the story.

The US armed forces, fighting a war that they cannot win, are known for night time raids on villages, detentions and air strikes that have brought the population in southern Afghanistan to the point of revolt. Thus the latest mass murder of civilians is not new, but worse than any before it, and will stiffen Afghan opposition to the war, at a time when Obama is sending 20,000 more troops to Afghanistan. The reports offered a grim backdrop to talks between US President Obama and the Afghan puppet president Hamid Karzai in Washington on the same day. Although Karzai's office called the civilian deaths "unjustifiable and

unacceptable”, it was certain to go along with the plans of the US to destroy Afghanistan in the pretext of fighting the Taliban.

University students angered by the killings in Farah province rallied in the capital, Kabul, on 10<sup>th</sup> May. They said that they held the US responsible for the killings and demanded that those who ordered the air raids be put on trial. But bombing raids by the US go on regardless.

Sources: *guardian.co.uk*, *Democracynow.org*, *Al Jazeera*

## India: Crimes and Punishments

### Gujarat: A Small Victory for Justice

On 6<sup>th</sup> March 2009, a Fast Track Court in Ahmedabad sentenced to life imprisonment all six accused for the offence of gang rape of a poor Dalit student in a college in Patan near Ahmedabad. The convicts are active members of the right wing ‘Sangh Parivar’ and close associates or relatives of members of Narendra Modi’s cabinet. All the offenders were teachers and the victims their own students.

After gang rapes of several Muslim women, including mass rape of Bilkis Bano as part of 2002 Godhra genocide, the saffron brigades of Modi had turned to poor Hindu girls, gang raping at least 98 girls in Patan, Gujarat, just two months after BJP was re-elected in December 2007.

With complaints to the state government falling on deaf ears, on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2008, students and parents took the matter into their own hands to organise a demonstration, capture the rapists, beat them up and damage their vehicles. Then the police swung into action to save the culprits from the wrath of the public; and the Modi Government resorted to damage control exercises like appointing police officers to ensure that the inquiry was confined to culprits named by the students, and organising a hasty magisterial inquiry without any terms of reference. Meanwhile, number of ‘upper caste’ supporters of the campaign for justice suffered harassment at the hands of officials. But the determination and defiance of the campaigners paid dividends.

Justice in this instance is only symbolic, since many more offenders associated with the Hindutva gangs in Gujarat remain sheltered from punishment by protection from the government and the state machinery. Yet it is an important victory, because it encourages mass mobilisation for justice.

Source: *new-wave-nw.blogspot.com*

## Chhattisgarh: Continuing Injustice

Binayak Sen, a highly respected doctor who for thirty years worked tirelessly for the tribal poor of Chhattisgarh, is still behind bars after his arrest two years ago under the heavy-handed Chhattisgarh Special Public Security Act and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act on charges of sedition, criminal conspiracy, making war against the nation, and knowingly using the proceeds of terrorism. His guilt is yet unproven; and the flimsy basis for his arrest, that he passed on letters from a jailed senior Maoist leader to an aide, is unsubstantiated: Sen had visited the Raipur jail as the State General Secretary of the People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) to provide legal and medical assistance to prisoners including the said Maoist leader.

His real offence was that he denounced the atrocities of Salwa Judum, the state-backed militia which armed local tribal people and pitted them against Maoist insurgents in Chhattisgarh. He led a 15-member fact-finding team in December 2005, which published the first in a series of damning reports about Salwa Judum’s excesses. The evidence he produced of the role of the police in the killing of innocent tribal people in Santoshpur cost him his freedom in late March 2007. The state acted deliberately to silence him, and he has been consistently refused bail at all levels of judiciary.

Professor Ilina Sen, the wife of Dr Sen, and Kavita Srivastava, National Secretary of PUCL, have been raising international awareness about the injustice of his arrest. A public petition to the India’s Home Minister demanding Dr Sen’s release had been launched last year. But the good doctor’s detention continues with the Home Minister feigning sympathy and blaming the BJP government in the state, while the bail petition has been rejected by the Supreme Court as well.

Clearly, the central issue is undemocratic legislation in the pretext of fighting terrorism, about which no elected government has done anything except to add to the existing Draconian ant-terrorism laws.

Source: *CommonDreams.org*

## Thailand: Fight for Democracy

Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat, whose party won a fair democratic election December 2007, was forced from office an year later by a questionable court ruling even as thousands of yellow shirted members of the ‘Peoples Alliance for Democracy’ (PAD) protesters barricaded two of Thailand’s airports in November 2008, stranding hundreds of thousands of travellers. This anti-democratic movement succeeded in

its use of force to paralyse the government to enable the military, the courts, or King Bhumibol Adulyadej to intervene in its favour. Interestingly, no one from the PAD has been punished for acts of violence. The main objective of the PAD, representing the interests of Thailand's elite, is to destroy the populist political movement of the exiled former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, and disenfranchise the mostly poor and rural voters who have repeatedly empowered him or his surrogates in democratic elections.

Thaksin is no leftist; and his party, the Thai Rak Thai (TRT), was a party of big business committed to free-market policies at a macro and global level and Keynesian policies at village level. Since TRT's election to power in 2001, Thailand, despite rising national oppression in the predominantly Muslim southern provinces, witnessed considerable democratic freedoms, an active civil society, and campaigns to defend the interests of the poor. The PAD, which initiated the current political crisis following the re-election of the TRT in 2005, charged the TRT government of corruption but rather than fight the TRT at an election preferred a military coup and the repeal of social welfare measures introduced by the TRT regime. When its appeal to the king to dismiss the government was turned down, the military staged a coup in September 2006. The "Democrat Party" welcomed the coup.

The military rulers replaced the most democratic constitution that Thailand had with one that diminished the role of political parties and installed a crony system where members of the elite appointed themselves to the senate, the judiciary and "independent bodies". The revised constitution allowed neo-liberal free market policies and huge increases in the military budget. It removed the constitutional right of the people to oppose military coups so as to legitimise future seizures of power by the military.

The Thai judiciary was never independent, and the military used the courts to dissolve the TRK before elections in December 2007. Yet the People's Power Party, which evolved from TRT, won a majority. The courts were used again in 2008 to dissolve the PPP, and the army bullied and bribed some of the most corrupt elements in the PPP to side with the Democrat Party and make Abhisit Vejjajiva prime minister.

The government acted heavy-handedly to stifle dissent, and that led to protest, culminating in the massive demonstration by a sea of red-shirted protesters of the Democracy Alliance Against Dictatorship demanding the resignation of Abhisit, who gained power undemocratically, and his 4-month-old administration. It also led to the cancellation of the ASEAN Summit scheduled for 11<sup>th</sup> April in Pattaya. Leaders of the DAAD claim that the violence associated with

the demonstrations, including clashes provoked by the military-backed, pro-government "blue shirt gangs" in Pattaya, were sparked by the government to discredit the Red Shirts in the eyes of the public.

The developing conflict has a class characteristic pitting the rich against the poor, but expresses itself in distorted and complicated ways. The "Yellow Shirts" who enabled the coup and subsequent undemocratic measures represent the elite classes while the grassroots "Red Shirt" movement is based on ordinary citizens who want democracy and freedom. They deserve to transcend Thaksin into becoming a republican movement as the monarchy will inevitably get drawn into politics by the military and the PAD.

Interestingly, most Thai NGOs have openly sided with the "Yellow Shirts" or have remained silent in the face of the general attack on democracy, despite posing as the friends of the poor and the oppressed, thus exposing the true nature of NGO politics.

Sources: *Washington Post*; *pcpthai.org*; *wdpress.blog.co.uk*

## Africa: Imperialist Racism Exposed

### Sudan: Targeted by Imperialism

**Zionist Piracy:** American officials confirmed in late March that Israeli warplanes had bombed a convoy of trucks in Sudan in January that was believed to be carrying arms to be smuggled into Gaza.

Although the air strike was carried out in January and reported on several internet sites, a Sudanese official declared only on 26<sup>th</sup> March that a convoy of trucks in the remote eastern part of Sudan was bombed by what he called "American fighters", killing at least 39 persons. When asked how he knew the forces were American, the official said: "We don't differentiate between the U.S. and Israel. They are all one."

Israeli officials refused to confirm or deny the attack, but intelligence analysts noted that the strike was consistent with other measures Israel had taken to secure its borders. Israeli Prime Minister Olmert did not comment specifically on the reported bombing but arrogantly said that when it came to security, "we operate wherever it is possible to harm terror infrastructure, near and far."

An Egyptian Foreign Ministry spokesman protested: "How do we know these are weapons to be smuggled and destined to go to Gaza through Egypt? These are only intelligence reports."

Source: *New York Times*

**Voices of Support:** The call of the International Criminal Court to arrest Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir for alleged war crimes in Darfur needs to be seen against the background of imperialist targeting of Sudan and meddling in its internal affairs for over two decades.

Venezuelan President Chavez endorsed on 31<sup>st</sup> March in Doha a resolution passed on the previous day by the 22-member Arab League rejecting the ICC's arrest warrant for Bashir. He told reporters that the ICC should be asked to prosecute former US President Bush and Israeli President Perez.

Source: Xinhua

On 17<sup>th</sup> March 2009 Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, President of the UN General Assembly, speaking at a news conference to mark the end of a world tour, said that the ICC's indictment of Sudan's president was racist and lamentable because it would undermine Darfur peace talks; and argued that the request by the African Union and the Arab League for the Security Council to suspend the indictment for a year should be respected. He pointed out that the indictment "helps to deepen a perception that international justice is racist" because the case is the third to be brought against Africans.

Source: New York Times

## Zimbabwe: Facing Neo-Colonial Injustice

Economic sanctions against Zimbabwe are worsening the plight of ordinary citizens in an already harsh climate and should be lifted immediately urges an 'Appeal for Zimbabwe' launched in Mali in February. Signatories declared that drinkable water, food and medicine must 'cease to be deployed as weapons of war', and reminded the UK, US and EU 'of the exorbitant social and human cost of the punitive measures' they have used in a bid to force a regime change in Zimbabwe, grappling with 94% unemployment, world's highest inflation rate and food shortages affecting an estimated seven million people. The petition also commended the Southern African Development Community (SADC) member countries' successful efforts to resolve peacefully the conflict between President Robert Mugabe and his rival Morgan Tsvangirai.

It reminded Britain and its allies of the circumstances under which Mugabe was forced to confiscate the 15.5 million of the country's most fertile hectares held by a mere 6000 white farmers while nearly 4.5 million blacks lived on community land, often arid, where the settlers had confined them for a century; and pointed out that economic sanctions have been the financial, economic, social and political war machine that has been deployed by way of punishment meted out by the UK and its allies, particularly the US.

The petition draws attention to the disastrous consequences of the Structural Adjustment Programmes from the IMF and the World Bank as well as the more frequent cycle of droughts for Zimbabwe. Other African countries escape disaster because they live with cash injections from external funding of which Zimbabwe is deprived. Some of the arguments presented in the petition place the imperialist powers in the dock and call for Africa to free itself of imperialist shackles:

- *Democracy, human rights and good governance are debased, instrumentalised and discredited when powers who claim to be their representatives, ridicule them if not convert them into dreadful weapons of pressure, domination and blackmail to withdraw their financing.*
- *It's high time to prioritize in the discussion on the present and the future of the postcolonial State in Africa, the key question, which is often overshadowed and concealed, of the control of resources as well as the initiative of change, including agrarian reform. Beyond the extreme personalisation of the political debate, Robert Mugabe's country is, in this regard, a textbook case to meditate on at a time when you see multinationals from all over the world rushing to grab the fertile land of the continent and everything being sold off in the name of growth and the prevailing whims and supremacy of the market.*
- *It is perilous for Africa to follow the advice of the masters of this world who have sunk into the mire of a deep crisis, an indictment of failure of their model of society that the moralisation of the financial sphere will not rehabilitate and manage to restore faith in. As for the legitimacy of political power in Africa, it is necessary to underscore that, beyond the requisite elections, it lies above all in the willingness and ability of elected leaders to trade and manage the resources of the continent in the best interests of those men and women who have elected them and mandated them to do so.*
- *To give a chance to authentic and lasting peace in Zimbabwe, we join our voices to the chorus of Zimbabweans, of the SADC and the African Union. We remind Great Britain, the US and the EU of the exorbitant social and human cost of the punitive measures imposed and foisted upon this country.*
- *- We declare that drinkable water, food and medicine must cease to be deployed as weapons of war.*  
*- We call for the immediate lifting and removal of the blockade that deprives millions of Zimbabweans of these amenities which are absolutely essential for human existence.*

- We hold that it is profoundly unjust and irresponsible to make human lives depend on a top level political power sharing agreement.

- Yes, we can! What is required is to stop mixing up British, US and European interests with the legitimate rights and entitlement of the Zimbabwean and African populations to land, food, drinkable water, healthcare, education, employment and income. WE ARE ALL ZIMBABWEANS!

Source: *pambazuka.org*

## Latin America: Surge Continues

### Ecuador: Registering another victory

Despite the worsening of the economy of the world and the region, the left keeps winning in Latin America, most recently in Ecuador, where President Rafael Correa was re-elected in the first round on 26<sup>th</sup> April under a new constitution for four more years.

Correa has delivered on promises that were important to his constituents: Social spending as a share of the economy increased by more than 50 percent in Correa's two years in office. The government also invested heavily in public works. The US military base at Manta in Ecuador is scheduled to close later this year. The government also resisted pressure from the US Congress and others in a multi-billion dollar lawsuit that Ecuadorian courts will decide, in which Chevron is accused of dumping billions of gallons of toxic oil waste that polluted rivers and streams. And in an unprecedented move last November, Correa stopped payment on \$4 billion of foreign debt when an independent Public Debt Audit Commission, long demanded by civil society organizations in Ecuador, determined that this debt was illegally and illegitimately contracted.

The re-elected President pledged to continue with his socialist programme.

Source: *The Guardian UK*

### Bolivia: The Struggle Continues

President Evo Morales, on 15<sup>th</sup> April ended his five-day hunger strike after Bolivia's congress approved a new election law which permits him to stand again for election on 6<sup>th</sup> December, reserves 14 congressional seats for indigenous candidates, and allows expatriates to vote. Morales spent several nights on a mattress on the floor of the presidential palace, surrounded by banners and supporters.

Although the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) led by Morales had enough votes to ratify the bill in the lower house, the opposition played the trick of refusing to grant the quorum needed for a vote. Also while MAS controls the lower house, the opposition has used its slim majority in the senate to block dozens of government-proposed reforms.

Morales's opponents have argued that the law will give him political advantage because it assigns more seats to the poor, indigenous parts of the country whose rights he has championed since taking office in 2006. Amid rising mass support for Morales and anger against the racist dirty tricks, the opposition finally agreed to a deal whereby a new electoral register would be compiled. The opposition has other reasons as well to worry, since the government did not lose time to seize from wealthy estate holders 94,000 acres of farmland and hand over the ownership to poor indigenous people in Bolivia's wealthy eastern lowlands, a stronghold of the reactionary opposition, where ranchers have held workers in conditions of semi-slavery.

Sources: *Bolivia Rising; Al Jazeera*

### El Salvador: One More Left Government

Leftist FMLN candidate Mauricio Funes won the presidential election in El Salvador, ending two decades of US-backed reactionary rule. Funes won 51.3% of the vote against 48.7% for Rodrigo Avila of the ruling right-wing ARENA party. Avila conceded defeat late on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March. The FMLN was a coalition of rebel guerrillas who resisted the US-backed military government. More than 70,000 people died over an eighteen-year period, the overwhelming majority killed by military and paramilitary forces.

Source: *Granama International*

### Peru: Sentencing a Criminal

On 7<sup>th</sup> April, Peru's Supreme Court convicted former President Alberto Fujimori of human rights abuses and sentenced him to 25 years in prison. The abuses included the killing of 25 people by a military death squad created by him in the early 1990s as the state was locked in a bloody conflict with the Maoist Sendero Luminoso. Fujimori had suspended the constitution of the country in 1992 to carry out his bloody massacres without hindrance. Fujimori, who already has a six year prison sentence for ordering an illegal search, faces two further trials on corruption charges, and has appealed. His government collapsed in 2001 and Alejandro Toledo, who became president in 2001, initiated the criminal case against him. He fled to Japan in 2001 to avert arrest and arrived in Chile in 2005 hoping to return to power in Peru but was extradited in 2007 to stand trial.



If what happened to Chile's Pinochet and Indonesia's Suharto are anything to go by, it is doubtful whether Fujimori will serve his sentence in full. The right wing in Peru is strong and the government of Alan Garcia is not a friend of the poor or the left. Like his Colombian counterpart, Alvaro Uribe, Peruvian President Alan Garcia receives anti-drug money from the United States and supports programs to eradicate coca fields.

Incidentally, on 11<sup>th</sup> April suspected leftist rebels killed 13 troops in two ambushes in Ayacucho province, a coca-growing mountainous area and the birthplace of the Maoist Shining Path guerrilla group, where security forces are supposed to be fighting cocaine traffickers. The two attacks bring to 11 the number of assaults on security services by suspected Shining Path rebels since the start of the year.

Source: *New York Times*

## Europe: More Protests

### Neo-Liberal Education Reforms Protested

**France:** EU-inspired neo-liberal education reform (the Bologna Plan) for Europe met with student protests across the continent leading to battles with riot police in several cities. Universities across France had been barricaded and picketed for almost two months in a standoff over these higher education reforms; and on 18<sup>th</sup> March, the day before the general strike by over one million workers, students clashed with riot police in Paris after a demonstration over the university reforms.

**Spain:** About 30,000 teachers and students took to the streets of Barcelona against the education policies of the Government of Catalonia on 19<sup>th</sup> March, charging that its New Law of Education, like the Bologna Plan aims to open the door to the privatization of education. The demonstrators demanded the resignation of the Minister of Education, who despite the protests insists that the law would be implemented. Students across Spain had previously been occupying universities in protest against the Bologna Plan, and students and the police had clashed in Barcelona on 18<sup>th</sup> March, leading to the arrest of seven students and injuries to eighty.

**Italy:** Protest demonstrations took place across the land on 20<sup>th</sup> March against plans to cut back on higher education. The scale of the protests was large in Rome, Turin, Bologna, Naples and Venice. The students had to face attacks by neo-fascist thugs besides the police. Protests are likely to go on until the government reverses its policy.

Sources: *mrzine.monthlyreview.org*; *cafebabel.com*; *libcom.org/news*

## Protesting NATO

On 2<sup>nd</sup> April, tens of thousands of protesters gathered in two towns in south-western Germany and in Strasbourg in eastern France, to protest the NATO Summit marking the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the military alliance, and attended by the leaders of the 28 member-states and their retinues of some 3500 delegates. The protests were against the continuation and expansion of the NATO after all justification for its existence had been eliminated following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

France, anticipating violence, temporarily re-established its border control with Germany for the meeting. In Strasbourg, over a hundred anti-NATO activists were arrested at the end of a demonstration. The protest, which organizers said drew some 2000 persons, ended with the police using tear gas. Although the police estimated the crowd in Strasbourg at 500, some 15,000 German police, including 31 riot squads, and 9000 French police were deployed to deal with them.

Source: *granma.cu/ingle*; *cpcml.ca*

## Mass Protests Precede G20 Summit

The G20 comprises the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Canada, Japan, the European Union, Russia, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, South Korea, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Turkey. Participating in the London Summit as special guests were Spain, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the African Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the New Partnership for Africa's Development. It is an expanded version of the earlier G7 (and later G8) designed to manipulate the newly drawn in "emerging economies" with a trade surplus to help the crises-ridden old economic powers to tackle the international financial crisis which is badly hurting their economies. While little more than the usual platitudes were expected to emerge for the poorer nations from the G20 Summit of 1<sup>st</sup> April in London, the Summit also failed to achieve consensus on a way out of the crisis.

Even as the heads of state assembled in London were at a total loss to find ways to end the crisis, they were outperformed by agitating masses. 35,000 protesters from more than 100 trade unions, aid agencies, religious groups and environmental organisations gathered in a rally to "Put People First" on 28 March and call on world leaders to commit to real reforms. The protests culminated on 1<sup>st</sup> April with a rally called "Storm the Banks" targeting the Bank of England. As more than 5000 demonstrators converged on the City, the hub of business activity in

London, the police, claiming damage to equipment and windows, arrested around 100 people, injured many and wantonly killed one.

The protests in London were preceded and followed by marches in Berlin, Vienna, Paris and other European cities to demand action on poverty, job losses and climate change.

Sources: *granma.cu/ingle; guardian.co.uk*

## France: Massive Strikes & Demonstrations

The day of united action on 19<sup>th</sup> March proved to be a great success with more strikes and more demonstrations than on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January, which witnessed an exceptional mobilization itself. Three million people comprising private- and public-sector workers, youth, and pensioners demonstrated in France in what could be seen as not merely a show of strength and a verdict against the reactionary government of President Sarkozy but against the failing capitalist system itself.

Sadly, the French trade union establishment failed to support the general strike in the French Caribbean island of Guadeloupe from 20<sup>th</sup> January against rising cost of living, which brought economic activity to a standstill in the island. There was, however, public sympathy and support in France. The strikers claimed a victory in early April with a plan to improve wages and living standards after 44 days of general strike and the killing of a trade union militant, Jacques Bino by the police on 17<sup>th</sup> February.

Sources: *libcom.org, miami.indymedia.org*

## Economic Issues Dominate May Day

**France:** France's eight labour unions joined for the first time for May Day demonstrations across the country to protest government measures on the economic crisis as insufficient. The Confederation Generale du Travail, or CGT, estimated that 1.2 million people marched in 283 demonstrations making it the biggest ever Labour Day demonstration.

**Britain:** Anti-capitalist demonstrators took to the streets of London and Manchester. In London's Trafalgar Square, police penned in thousands of leftists, including hundreds of members of the Kurdish Workers Party. A massive police presence— a total of close to 15,000 including reserve police forces —inevitably provoked clashes between young people and the police.

**Italy, Turkey, Greece and Germany:** Leaders of Italy's main unions held a rally in the earthquake-hit town of L'Aquila, in a show of solidarity while increasingly militant May Day protesters clashed with

riot police in Turkey, Greece and Germany. Demonstrations in Spain, as elsewhere, reflected growing public anger in Europe at unemployment and the handling of the global economic crisis.

**Norway:** The National Union Confederation (LO) marked May Day by preparing for a massive private-sector strike. On 3<sup>rd</sup> May, over 80,000 workers in a broad range of industries were on the picket line demanding higher wages and five weeks' paid vacation, and on 5<sup>th</sup> May, the LO warned that it would escalate the strike to make it the biggest strike since 1945.

**Russia:** Thousands waving banners and red Soviet flags rallied in protests calling for a return of socialism. Far-right protests also took place.

Sources: *bloomberg.com, english.aljazeera.net, Workers World News Service*

## Iceland: Centre-Left Victory at Elections

The rightist Independence Party government resigned in February amid mass protest, and elections in April led to a centre-left government in Iceland after 70 years. The Social Democrat Alliance and the Left-Green movement won 29.8% and 21.5%, respectively, of the vote and formed a coalition government led by Ms Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir of the SDA. The new government faces an anticipated 10% shrinking of the economy this year, soaring unemployment and a high rate of inflation, the legacy of its neo-liberal predecessor, who has also committed Iceland to a massive IMF loan and the stringent conditions that go with it. There are besides strong differences between the coalition partners over joining the EU, which can become critical issues if the coalition fails to deliver on the economy.

Source: *english.aljazeera.net*

## Georgia: Call to Quit

Tens of thousands of protesters marched through the streets of the capital city Tbilisi on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2009 bearing signs and chanting slogans against President Mikheil Saakashvili, who took office five years ago with promises of a 'progressive' pro-Western government. They gathered in front of the Parliament building calling for the resignation of Saakashvili, who they denounced as a tyrant who had also mishandled the war with Russia. The protest movement has severely isolated and weakened the pro US imperialist Saakashvili.

Sources: *Associated Press, oregonlive.com*

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## **Arise and Come Forward**

### ***Janaka Manamendra***

**When we fall dead  
hungry stomachs stuck to the spine  
legs shivering and ears turning red  
somehow they rise with weapons to wage war.**

**If the laughter spilt, joys felt, tears shed  
and breath inhaled and exhaled  
are for you as for me  
what is the sense in our battling to death  
in the name of race?**

**Bullets in my gun take you to death  
for an arms peddler's life of comfort.  
Our problems remain where they were—  
the way they were.**

**We carried them on palanquins and sent to parliament—  
you see them ruin the country.  
You at least rise  
and come forward to save our country.**

**It is they, the politicians  
who sell and destroy the country  
who divide the people and dominate.  
You at least mobilise the people  
to drive them off.**

**You say that you bore weapons in hand for lack of work.  
You justify your killing of many who were with you.  
You say that you are in control  
and carry the gun to save women and children.  
Lives are lost but problems remain unresolved**

**All of us are children of this land.  
Why do we kill each other?  
The brain-dead run the country and  
the children of Lanka perish.**

**Is it life for me to rejoice with my family  
when you die and your orphaned child weeps?  
There is a world waiting, by us to be made  
where you and I live and for all to rejoice.**

**Let us create a world that defends humanity  
by defying the destruction of humanity  
by armed men with neither mind nor heart  
speaking the language of arms lacking in heart.**

**It was not I who took away you rights  
and threw you on the street.  
It was not you who took away my rights.  
It is the animals that rule that took away our rights.  
However much they kill or rob they are the lords.  
One of us stealing a coconut is a big terrorist.**

**There is no money to bring up the children.  
Is it right to spend on mass killings?  
The one who uses people's wealth to kill people  
Is no saviour but murderer.**

**Law will not protect us, justice will not glance at us  
Armed with humanity, let us set out in unity  
to defend the truth.**

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**McCarthyism: a Sri Lankan Episode**

**International McCarthyism: the Case of Rhoda Miller de Silva, Judy Walters Pasqualge, Social Scientists Association, Colombo 05, 2008, pp. 462+iv (price not stated).**

Judy Walters Pasqualge's book is about events of more than a half-century ago when Rhoda Miller de Silva an American national and a communist activist married to Joseph de Silva, a Ceylonese, was deported from Sri Lanka, formally under the provisions of the Immigrants and Emigrants Act No. 20 of 1948, which permits the Controller of Immigration and Emigration considerable discretionary power to refuse any foreigner permission to stay in the country, but actually for political reasons.

The book demonstrates clearly that the deportation was on the urging of the US government agencies, and loyally carried out by the UNP government led by the virulently anti-left Sir John Kotalawela. It details the role of various political forces nationally and internationally in her deportation and final return to Sri Lanka in 1958.

The book is well researched and documented in matters relating to the deportation and the relentless campaign by Rhoda challenging her deportation. It outlines the important contributions of Rhoda as author and columnist and includes a selection of her writings.

The main weaknesses of the book lies in the reliance of the author on indirect sources for information on matters on which she should have searched close to the sources. The Communist Party of Ceylon had expelled Rhoda for splittist activities well ahead of her deportation. The reasons for the expulsion have not been researched properly, and even comments on the CPC, the Soviet Union and the international communist movement have a strong Trotskyite bias if not unquestioning acceptance of the general perspective of the Western mainstream media.

The book could have been better edited for the structuring of the information. Especially, the short Chapter 6 "An Outsider Comments", named after Rhoda's column in the Ceylon Daily News is patchy and shows a lack of depth in the author's understating of the political developments of the country during the period considered.

The book is useful reference for students of the political history of the first period of UNP rule, and a timely reminder of the subservience of the leaders of an "independent" Ceylon to western imperialism.

-SJS-

**To Rakhshinda Zoya**

*13 April 1981, during a jail visit  
She cannot say it, but then  
My little one manages to say  
Father, come home  
Father, come home  
She cannot comprehend  
Why, in prison, I continue to stay  
And not return with her, hand in hand  
How should I explain to her  
That home, too, is like a prison  
Kot Lakhpat Jail*

**On Iqbal Centenary**

*When we arise to wake the poor, the have-nots  
A beeline to the police station they make, these wealthy sots  
They say that God this wealth to them allots  
Oh these trite excuses, oh these dusty plots  
Night and day the working men's blood they suck,  
o poet of the East  
These congenital liars, with the vileness of a beast*

**The Government of Jack Boots**

*If the dacoit had not had  
The village guard as his ally  
Our feet would not be in chains  
Our victory would not defeat imply  
Mourn with turbans round your necks  
Crawling on your bellies, comply  
Once the jack boot government is up  
It's hard, to make it bid good-bye*

*Written during years of military dictatorship  
Translated from the Urdu and Punjabi by Fowpe Sharma  
Courtesy - <http://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org>*

# **HERE WE SHALL STAY**

*Tawfiq Zayyad*

**In Lydda, in Ramlah, in the Galilee,  
We shall remain  
Like a wall upon your chest,  
And in your throat  
Like a shard of glass,  
A cactus thorn,  
And in your eyes,  
A sandstorm.  
We shall remain  
A wall upon your chest,  
Cleaning dishes in your restaurants,  
Serving drinks in your bars,  
Sweeping the floors of your kitchens  
In order to snatch a bite for our children  
From your blue fangs.  
Here we shall stay:  
Singing our songs,  
Taking to the angry streets,  
Filling prisons with dignity.  
In Lydda, in Ramlah, in the Galilee,  
We shall remain,  
Guarding the shade of the fig and the olive,  
Fermenting rebellion in our children  
As is yeast in the dough.**

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