

Theoretical Organ of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party

Marxist Leninist

New Democracy

45

April - June 2012

NDMLP Media Briefing

Self Determination as Imperialist Tool

Imayavaramban

From Monks to Politicians

Asvaththamaa

Poetry:

David Diop, A. Paheerathan, Surjeet Paatar, Ada Aharoni

Editorial * NDP Diary * Book Reviews * Sri Lankan Events * World Events

Website: www.ndpsl.org

The Vultures

David Diop

In that time

When civilization struck with insults

When holy water struck domesticated brows

The vultures built in the shadow of their claws

The bloody monument of the tutelary era

In that time

Laughter gasped its last in the metallic hell of roads

And the monotonous rhythm of Paternosters

Covered the groans on plantations run for profit

O sour memory of extorted kisses

Promises mutilated by machine-gun blasts

Strange men who were not men

You knew all the books you did not know love

Or the hands that fertilize the womb of the earth

The roots of our hands deep as revolt

Despite your hymns of pride among bone yards

Villages laid waste and Africa dismembered

Hope lived in us like a citadel

And from the mines of Swaziland

to the heavy sweat of Europe's factories

Spring will put on flesh under our steps of light.

David Mandessi Diop (1927-1960) was an outstanding French West African poet, born in Bordeaux, France to a Senegalese father and a Cameroonian mother. His work reflects hatred of colonial rulers and hope for an independent Africa.

From the Editor's Desk

The government has in the past successfully appealed to 'patriotic sentiments' to divert attention from pressing economic issues, rising crime rate, social insecurity, and corruption, among other issues that affect their day to day life. At one time the cause was defending the country against LTTE terrorism. Since the military defeat of the LTTE, the theme has changed to defending national sovereignty against imperialist intervention. Activities of an ill advised section of the Tamil diaspora which pleads with the West to intervene in Sri Lanka also comes in handy for the government.

Chauvinist domination of the print and electronic media has helped the government to defer badly needed action to address problems faced by people in the war ravaged parts of the country, let alone action to resolve the national question. The past three years were witness to deliberate moves that aggravated the national question by provocative chauvinistic activity, backed overtly and covertly by the state.

The government successfully in dampened the protests of February against price increases by taking advantage of the impending UNHCR resolution on Sri Lanka, which was due to be taken up in March. That resolution, once passed, was used to harden attitudes at home rather than to act to address the national question. Despite all its anti-Western ranting and raving for home consumption, the government has been yielding to economic and political pressure from the IMF and the US.

The nearly 20% devaluation of the rupee against the US Dollar earlier in the year with further depreciation by a similar rate anticipated within the next few months as well as the various steps to cut public expenditure are as dictated by the IMF, whose loans to bail out the government from defaulting on loan servicing are driving the already severely indebted country into further debt. Political pressure from the US was clearly the driving force behind the presidential pardon that commuted the prison sentence of former army commander Sarath Fonseka.

Yet, Fonseka's release is hailed as a victory for democracy by rival opposition parties, each making a bogus claim a share in that 'victory'. The electoral benefit of a free Sarath Fonseka to the opposition is doubtful, however, as none of the parliamentary opposition parties have a plan or a programme to deliver the country out of its present political and economic quagmire. The bankruptcy of the opposition is also evident in its inability and unwillingness to take up the cause of the hundreds of 'terrorist suspects' languishing in jails and detention centres for years without formal inquiry or trial.

People are suffering under the burden of rising prices of essential goods, with street protests and strikes becoming common events. The split in the JVP was the result of disaffection among the rank and file about the opportunism of the JVP leadership. But there is a serious lack of farsighted left leadership among the Sinhalese to mobilise the anger and frustration building up among the Sinhala masses and transform them into a revolutionary political force to address the real issues facing the country and its people.

Various Trotskyist groups that splintered from the LSSP and its factions have failed to move towards building a mass political organisation; and genuine leftists who split from the JVP since its failed insurrection of 1971 never organised themselves as a political party. The FSP formed in April this year by a strong group of JVP dissidents seemed to be a ray of hope, but fast fading because of the inability of the leadership to free itself from the ideology of the JVP and unwillingness to critically review its past.

The state which is heaping burdens on the people, partly under imperialist pressure, will certainly become more repressive in the face of growing mass discontent, public protests and strikes. It is in this context that it is important that the people are politically mobilised, based on a common programme that will address the issues of economy, democratic and human rights, and the national question, all in the context of growing dominance by foreign powers, especially imperialism and regional hegemony.

The dominance of the political sphere in the North by reactionary, conservative and pro-imperialist Tamil nationalists is showing signs of yielding to a more progressive outlook as witnessed not only by the successful May Day rally of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party in Jaffna but also by the public anger against the attempted media blackout of the event. But the building of a strong left alternative in the North-East and the Hill Country is conditional upon the building of a credible left movement among the Sinhala majority, without which the chauvinist government and its chauvinist rivals will continue to divert attention from essential questions by whipping up communal sentiments.

What should be well remembered is that, when the left fails to offer an alternative to an unpopular bourgeois regime, it is fascism that takes over.

[Since the 44th issue of New Democracy the name of the Journal has been changed to "Marxist Leninist New Democracy". The change was made necessary by administrative problems relating to the registration and publication of the Journal. On a positive note we trust that the readers will find the revised title more appropriate to the identity of the Party.]

NDMLP Media Briefing

(Jaffna, 22nd April 2012)

[The following is a summary of the media briefing by the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party held at the Party Office in Jaffna in the morning of 22nd April 2012. Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the Party, Comrades S Thevarajah, K Thanikasalam and K Selvam Kathirgamanathan, members of the Politburo of the Party and Comrade T Prakash, on behalf of the Youth Front of the Party participated in the session. The text is based on a statement in Tamil released to the media by Comrade Selvam Kathirgamanathan]

Comrade Senthivel initiated the media briefing by pointing out that activities to polarise the nationalities of Sri Lanka have been intensified following the passage of the UNHRC resolution on Sri Lanka in Geneva in March 2012 and that forces of extreme chauvinism and religious extremism are at the forefront of these activities, which have the blessings and guidance of the ruling United People's Freedom Alliance government. Such activities pave the way for ethnic discord and ethnic conflicts. Only the Mahinda Chinthana government and the Indian and American powers make gains through them and achieve their ends.

He added that, under the conditions, the Tamil people should come forward to identify and carry forward a new political direction that will let them determine their own fate. The Tamil people will gain nothing by pinning their faith on failed policies or on the United National Party in the name of change of government or on India or the US. Hence what are needed by the Tamil people are a clear policy, far sighted mass struggles and realistic political tactics. The Party will be emphasising these matters on the forthcoming May Day.

In the current situation in Sri Lanka, two matters seem prominent: one concerning the deteriorating economic crises and the other concerning the national question which is being denied a solution. The former manifests itself as the continual rise in prices of goods and the escalating social crises which affect the entire people of the country. The latter continues as the oppression of the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil nationalities, and in particular the Tamil people of the North-East. Amid these, one sees the denial of the supposed freedoms, democracy, human rights and trade union rights and a personal dictatorship holding sway.

The Mahinda Chinthana government does not seem to be concerned about these matters or attempting to find appropriate solutions. It is the dictatorship of the family that seems dominant at the apex of political power. While political parties, trade unions, human rights organisations and a section of the media, although subject to constraints, are protesting, denouncing and demonstrating against these developments, they have not been brought together under a common programme, and the ruling UPFA government is taking advantage of this weakness. The government is also upholding its chauvinistic stand while stubbornly refusing to find a solution to the national question. It has through such conduct invited the Geneva resolution and has thus harmed itself.

Comrade Senthivel explained the stand of the Party and responded to questions from the media. While commenting on the lack of solution to the national question, he pointed out that the national question of the country has developed over a century to become a very important problem. Those who view it from a chauvinistic perspective tend to play down its significance and portray it as a secessionist issue. The ruling Sinhala capitalist and comprador capitalist chauvinist forces, chauvinistic institutions and their leaders have continued to deflect the attention of the ordinary Sinhala masses from the real issues with the help of venomous ideas based on religious and linguistic sentiments.

The Tamil leaders who claim to oppose it, rather than put forward correct and objective policies and appropriate strategies, keep responding to chauvinism with Tamil narrow nationalism. They have used it as a vote gathering ploy to serve their politics parliamentary bargaining and in their empty boasts about their politics of non-violence. What was carried forward as thirty years of armed struggle was a mere continuation of their politics. All of it has failed and the Tamil people, burdened with destruction and misery, remain abandoned in a political wasteland not knowing where to turn.

At the same time, the Tamil leaders, unwilling to self-criticise their past, are itching to return to the politics of filling ballot boxes, dating back to the era of the Tamil Congress and the Federal Party. Unable to develop a far sighted policy and the relevant strategy by drawing on historical experience, they are in a pathetic plight in which they pin their entire faith on the mercy of India, the

US and the West. This situation seems likely to add to the crises and the ruin faced by the Tamils at various levels.

The present duty of Tamil nationalist forces that genuinely care for the Tamil nationality is to adopt a broad-based, far sighted and objective Tamil nationalist stand with the minimum necessary progressive content and join hands with the left, democratic and progressive forces of the country, based on a common programme. Otherwise, the Tamil national struggle will only retrace its old trajectory to uphold the disastrous policies of the past. The younger generation should come forward to think about this matter scientifically and wisely.

The position of the Party on the solution to the national question comprises autonomy for a merged North-East based on the right to self determination within a united Sri Lanka. It also holds that such a solution based on autonomy should accommodate devolution of power with internal autonomous units for the Muslims and Hill Country Tamils.

The May Day rallies of the Party to be held in Jaffna, Hatton, Colombo and Vavunia will highlight the need to address the above and such other problems in the form of mass struggles. The Party intends to conduct a bicycle procession from Chunnakam to Jaffna and a May Day Rally in Jaffna. In Hatton, the Party will join hands with a few other organisations to have a United Revolutionary May Day, which will emphasise the issues of class and nationality faced by the Hill Country Tamils.

The May Day is the day of struggle of the international working class. The Party has always commemorated in revolutionary spirit that revolutionary highpoint in class struggle when the working class won by shedding blood its right for an 8-hour working day as a day of militant opposition to oppression based on class, nationality, caste and gender.

The Party firmly believes that through these May Day rallies the working people could be inspired to gain political consciousness and prepare for mass mobilisation.

Nationalism and Nationhood under Neo-colonialism - 5

Self Determination as an Imperialist Tool

Imayavaramban

Although the right to self determination is enshrined in the philosophy of the UN, that right is not explicitly stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted and proclaimed by the UN in 1948. The term self determination has, however, been defined in various UN declarations and covenants as a universal right of all peoples to self-determination, and thereby the right to freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. However, in UN practice and in international law, the concept of self-determination has been eroded by considerations relating to the principle of integrity of existing states. Notably, the Vienna Declaration of the UN World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 declared that the right to self-determination "shall not be construed as authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent states conducting themselves in compliance with the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples and thus possessed of a Government representing the whole people belonging to the territory without distinction of any kind".

Thus 'self-determination' as restrained above would not include the right to secession when a state is considered to conduct itself 'in compliance with the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples and thus possessed of a Government representing the whole people belonging to the territory', and will apply only when it fails to conduct itself properly. Compliance with the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples has come to be identified by the rather murky term "internal self-determination", which is in fact a negation of the right of a people to freely determine their political status and

freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. The degree of flexibility offered by the Vienna Declaration of 1993 allows sufficient leeway for many repressive states to get away with national oppression without risking the exercise of the right to secession. It is only when a particular state is targeted by imperialist powers (also known as the 'International Community'), especially the big power that controls the UN, that it risks legitimised foreign intervention to impose secession on it.

The principle of the right to self determination was first spelt out by Lenin in the context of the Russian revolution. It was a well thought out strategy to preserve unity of all nations under Tsarist oppression on a voluntary basis so that they could remain united as equal partners within a union of socialist republics. The aim of asserting that the right of nations to self determination meant the right to secession was not to encourage secession but to enable unity on a voluntary basis and free of any form of coercion.

Imperialism never viewed self determination in that way and—in contrast to Lenin's concept of self determination—the once lauded concept enunciated by Woodrow Wilson in 1918 in the wake of the First World War was more concerned with wartime strategy and diplomacy among imperial powers and not based on ethnic and communal considerations of the national question. Wilson's ideas could not be applied in an unqualified way because considerations of national self-determination in several instances ran counter to imperialist interests. It was also hypocritical since not long before 1918 the US militarily had invaded and occupied Nicaragua (1912-33), Haiti (1914-1934), Dominican Republic (1916-24) and Cuba (for a third time since 1906 from 1917-33). These invasions were besides strong arm tactics use in much of Latin America, mainly to achieve and maintain control Central America as well as continuing expansion of US territory by military and other means.

It is true that the US expressed support for the granting of Independence to several British colonies, including India, but that did not stop the US from occupying South Vietnam when the French colonialists were defeated. It forcefully occupied or installed puppet regimes in several other countries. Although the neo-colonial mode of operation of US imperialism is different from that of old colonialism, the US has proved to be no less brutal than its colonial predecessors in former European colonies which came under its dominance.

When it came to dealing with struggles against colonial rule and racist regimes in Africa, the European colonial masters and US imperialism got together to ensure that there was no post colonial regime that was anti-imperialist or leaning towards the Soviet Union or China. Regimes have been changed, leaders have been murdered, and countries have been attacked and invaded throughout the former colonies and semi-colonies by the imperialists since the end of the Second World War. The pattern has intensified since the Soviet Union collapsed and China abandoned socialism.

The use of ethnic grievances to divide oppressed people is nothing new, as 'divide and rule' was an age old colonial strategy in which British imperialism once excelled. However, dividing territories controlled by imperialist powers individually or as a group into nations, was seldom based on any form of ethnic or other such identity based considerations, but rather by the desire to further imperialist interests. Secessionism as an imperialist project took form following the decline of colonial rule in Sub-Saharan Africa, the last bastion of direct colonial rule.

The short-lived secession of Katanga (1960-65) from the former Belgian colony of Congo became unnecessary after imperialism liquidated Patrice Lumumba and was therefore done away with after imperialism ensured total control over Congo. The next project was in Nigeria where imperialist rivalry played a role in the declaration of independence by Biafra and the tragic civil war that followed.

The US mainly, and its imperialist allies to varying extents, had encouraged the separate existence of parts of countries divided by civil war especially when separation was aided by imperialist intervention. Of Vietnam, Korea and China, only Vietnam has been reunited following the defeat of US imperialist aggression in 1975. In the case of Germany, which was divided between the three Western powers and the Soviet Union, following the defeat of Fascist Germany in the Second World War, the US showed an interest in the reunification of Germany only in the 1960s when a call for reunification was to its advantage in its bid to weaken the Soviet bloc.

On the other hand, the US remains the biggest obstacle to the reunification of Korea. Ever since China wrested from the US-backed Taiwan regime its legitimate seat in the UN in 1972, the US moved towards promoting the "Two Chinas" project through certain interest groups in Taiwan, as well as backing Tibetan secessionism. Following the weakening of the Soviet Union, the US used Sunni Muslim fundamentalists backed by the Saudi Arabian regime to promote secession of Chechnya from Russia and has extended the project to the Uigur majority of the Xinjiang-Uigur Autonomous Region of China.

Since the decline of the Soviet Union as a global power in the mid-1980s and especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union, US imperialism has become an important promoter and sponsor of secessionist projects of minority nationalities and national minorities in countries with governments which stood in the way of global domination by the US. The breaking up of Yugoslavia was a joint project of the US and leading EU countries, especially Germany and France. The secession of Bosnia was achieved through the promotion of civil war and inducing hostility between the Muslim nationality and the Serbs in Bosnia. The role of Muslim fundamentalist volunteer fighters in the pay of Saudi Arabia was significant in the escalation of the conflict. That was followed by further dismembering of Serbia by active support for Kosovan secessionists.

Political and military intervention and subversion designed to weaken hostile or potentially hostile states has always been a salient feature of US foreign policy. The attitude of the US and its imperialist allies towards various nationalist projects and the selective defence of the right of a people to self determination to justify support for secession are now weapons in the armoury of US foreign policy. It is in this context that the stand taken by imperialism in the various national questions would appear to have any consistency.

The US policy on the national question has never been consistent because it is not based on the interests of the nation or nationality concerned but on the desire of the US for global hegemony. The position of the US on the secession of Eritrea was most remarkable for its inconsistency. The US backed Eritrean rebels in their bid to secede from Ethiopia (which annexed Eritrea in 1945, federated it in 1952 under a UN resolution, and re-annexed it in 1962). The US and the West were hostile to the Eritrean struggle which started in 1962, until the pro-Soviet Mengistu Haile Mariam came to power in 1977. The US then opted to support the Eritrean cause, while the Soviet Union changed sides to back its new ally in Ethiopia. The US also backed the invasion of the Ogaden region of Ethiopia by Somalia that year, which was frustrated by Soviet and Cuban intervention. Mengistu was overthrown in 1991 and in the same year Eritrea established a provisional government (which was formalised by a referendum in 1993). Ever since a new ally assumed power in post-Mengistu Ethiopia, the US has backed Ethiopia in its disputes with Eritrea as well as used Ethiopia to fight its wars in Somalia, where it had lost ground.

The position of the US on Kashmir is another notable instance of inconsistency. While the case for the right to self determination of the people of Kashmir has always been just and the treatment of the people of Indian-occupied Kashmir by India has been deplorable, US support for the UN resolution calling for a referendum in Kashmir was based on its military alliance with Pakistan. With India getting closer to the US, especially from the 1990s, US support for the referendum has waned.

The US has also been a promoter of secessionist projects in countries such as Bolivia and Venezuela, based purely on the desire of the wealthy few in certain Departments (administrative regions) to deny the government access to the mineral wealth in their regions so that they could plunder it in alliance with the imperialists. Imperialism and the wealthy minority and the reactionary forces have been negative towards efforts by the governments of Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia to make amends for the historical injustices committed against the indigenous people and restore their pride as a people, because that stood in the way of guaranteed profits for the multinational companies plundering the natural resources and exploiting cheap labour.

It is, however, in the context of the role of US imperialism in the creation of the states of Bosnia, Kosovo and South Sudan, and to some extent its support

for Kurdish nationalists in Iraq (but not Turkey) that a section of the leadership of minority nationalities in some countries, like the Tamils of Sri Lanka, seek to align themselves with the West, and US imperialism in particular. But they do not show any awareness of the plight of Bosnia, Kosovo and South Sudan since secession. Nor are they aware that the real intention of the US in speaking up for the rights of the nationalities is to secure a regime change or to create conditions that will compel the countries to align with the West and curtail ties with rivals of the US such as China and countries such as Iran resisting the US bid for global hegemony.

US imperialism would prefer to deal with large client states as long as they would deliver on its scheme of imperialist globalization and not pose a challenge to US hegemony. At the same time, it would use any contradiction within the country as a means to destabilise a wayward state. Narrow nationalism, ethnicity, tribalism and religion are emerging as powerful divisive forces with the backing of the exploiting classes within countries as well as their imperialist allies through various agencies.

It is well known that imperialism has since the 1980s sponsored Islamic fundamentalist organisations directly or indirectly— mostly through the agency of the repressive, reactionary and corrupt regime in Saudi Arabia. Even today, despite solemn declarations about fighting Islamic fundamentalism, the US is covertly working in tandem with Islamic fundamentalists in several countries and is able to broker deals between Islamic fundamentalist parties and its clients who wield state power, as for example in Egypt, following the overthrow of Mubarak in 2011. Thus the genuine grievances of an oppressed minority, especially when it is frustrated by the intransigence of the oppressor state, could be easily taken advantage of by any imperialist or hegemonic power to target a state that is considered 'unfriendly' towards it. What should not be forgotten is that the oppressed minority will be abandoned by its foreign patron once the purpose of the latter has been fulfilled.

The case for an oppressed nationality, ethnic group or tribe to defend itself against oppression and exploitation is undeniable. But to seek imperialist shelter and support to fight its cause or to let imperialism and its international agents act as intermediaries in its disputes with the oppressor will be inimical to the defence of every basic right of the oppressed nationality, since imperialism has never respected the sovereignty of any people, unless it has been compelled to.

From Monks to Politicians

Transformation of Buddhism from Social to Political Sphere in Sri Lanka

Aswaththamaa

Buddhism as the religion practiced by around 70% of the people of Sri Lanka has been central to activities in the political and social spheres, particularly since national independence. Traditionally, the majority of Buddhist monks have stayed away from politics, and for long Buddhism detached itself from active politics and engaged in the social sphere. Thus, the monk remained a person who renounced material goods and lived on the generosity of the householder, devoting all of his time to the quest for liberation from the cycle of birth and death. Early in the history of Buddhism, this total dependence of a renouncer on the laity for material sustenance led to a social relationship which, at its core, was one of gift exchange – returning the laity's gift of material goods with the spiritual guidance which is explicitly understood in Buddhism as a gift that surpasses all other gifts. This eventually evolved into an ornately wrought priestly and pedagogic role. Despite periodic 'declines' in Buddhism, the monk's anchor in the code of monastic discipline (*vinaya*) was firm, the foundations of his belief in it solid, and his relations with the laity kept within clearly demarcated boundaries (Seneviratne 2001). It is within this framework of monk-lay relations that the social role of the monk in Sri Lanka evolved through the centuries.

There was a clear divide between the political and social spheres with which the Buddhist monks associated themselves. The interpretation of the notion of 'social service' changed with passage of time, and the new reading covered a broad spectrum of advice and guidance in wholly secular activity—conspicuously including political activity, understood as the right to make and unmake governments and to exert pressure on the elected representatives of the people. This is where the transformation began in Sri Lankan Buddhism which later emerged as 'Political Buddhism'. Scholar monk Walpola Rahula best articulated the basis for this transformation in 1946 in his book titled

Bhiksuvage Urumaya (later translated as *The Heritage of the Bhikkhu*), which argued that given their mandate to perform social service, monks could participate in politics and had done so since the time of Buddha. Significantly, political Buddhism emphasizes politics over Buddhist values (Schalk 2007) because it disregards Sri Lanka's multi-ethnic heritage and seeks to institutionalize a Buddhist ethos for the entire country.

Active involvement of Buddhist monks in Sri Lankan politics in an individual capacity has been there since the politicization of society under British rule. For instance, a Buddhist priest was a founder member of the Communist Party of Ceylon. Since the 1950s, however, monastic involvement in politics has gradually become institutionalized. In 1956, the *Eksath Bhikkhu Peramuna* (United Buddhist Front) was a driving force in the successful electoral campaign of the *Mahajana Eksath Peramuna* led by SWRD Bandaranaike. The role of the clergy suffered a setback after the assassination of Bandaranaike by a priest in 1959, but recovered in the mid-1960s and has risen during the past five decades, notably in a militant form among young Buddhist monks closely associated with the politics of the *Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna* (JVP) in late 1990s and early 2000s. Even though the young JVP monks paraded in JVP May Day rallies, their involvement in active politics has been rather restrained. Contesting elections was not an option open to all politically active monks, since participation in active politics was considered to be in conflict with Theravada Buddhist norms. (Theravada Buddhism which is predominant in Sri Lanka, Thailand and Burma is claimed to be doctrinally closest to Lord Buddha's teachings).

The paradigm shift from complete social work to partial involvement in politics by the Buddhist monks was seen as a departure of Buddhism from the social to the political sphere, and within the society the monks wielded influence and command on societal organization. Obeyesekera (1970) analysing post-independence cultural and political shifts in Sri Lanka referred to the Theravada Buddhism that Sri Lanka was experiencing as 'Protestant Buddhism', pointing out that many of its norms and organizational forms are historical derivatives of Protestant Christianity while it also remained a protest against Christianity and Western political dominance associated with it, prior to independence.

On the one hand, many expressed fear that social service would inevitably lead to monks compromising monastic discipline. The critique of 'social service as the work of the monk' was based on religious-moral grounds. With the gradual acceptance of the idea that the monk's work is social service, a new and secular criterion to assess the worth of the monk has come into being. As opposed to the religious-moral criterion, this is an ethical and liberal-humanist criterion of social responsibility. To many lay critics, the monks do not live up to expectation.

On the other hand, with the Sri Lankan state already more receptive to Sinhala nationalism, politicization of Buddhism paved the way for the domination of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism in the affairs of the state and politics. Political Buddhism and Sinhala Buddhist nationalism have created the nationalist ideology prevalent in government and in the predominantly Sinhala Buddhist society. The most fundamental belief anchoring Sinhala Buddhist nationalism is that Sri Lanka has been preserved for Sinhala Buddhists, and minorities live there only because of Buddhists' sufferance. This sentiment automatically privileges Buddhists, marginalizes followers of other religions, and justifies Sinhala Buddhist dominance and minority subordination. The dominance was enabled by the transformation of the spheres of activity of Buddhism and the people increasingly seeing Buddhism as the primordial phenomenon linking Sinhala Buddhist society and polity.

The first Buddhist monk to be elected to parliament belonged to the left wing *Lanka Samasamaja Party* and was elected from the Galle District in the elections held in December 2001. Already, a Sinhala chauvinistic party calling itself the *Sihala Urumaya* (SU) had entered the fray in October 2000, claiming that it was contesting for the upliftment of the Buddhism. Despite expectation that the SU would do well in the parliamentary elections, especially in the southern regions, it received only 1.47% of the national vote but, nevertheless, won a seat in parliament. The SU fared worse in the elections held an year later in December 2001, with only 0.57% of the vote and no seat in parliament. During its December 2001 election campaign, the SU declared that if elected it would force all those under eighteen years of age to join the Buddhist clergy, provoking the rather light hearted question whether Sri Lanka was witnessing the birth pangs of a Sinhala "Buddhist-Taliban" (Sunday Times 2004).

The unexpected death in Russia in December 2003 of the populist Buddhist monk Gangodawila Soma Thera, with a wide local TV audience, under unclear circumstances offered the politically active monks an unexpected opportunity to arouse anti-Christian feelings and whip up Buddhist sentiments (Uyangoda 2007). In the wake of this build up, the SU reorganised itself as the *Jathika Hela Urumaya* (JHU) in February 2004, and developed the strategy of fielding Buddhist monks as candidates in parliamentary elections. It pleaded with the Sinhala-Buddhist voters that their interests could be best served by electing Buddhist monks as law-makers. The main features of the electoral platform of the JHU in April 2004 were "the protection of the interests of the majority Sinhalese, protection of Buddhism from non-Buddhist adversaries and international conspiracies while working towards the moral regeneration in society and politics". Nine monks were elected to parliament. The elected monks asked not to be referred to as members of parliament but as 'advisors' to the masses, and argued that their goal was to create a block in parliament to protect and propagate Buddhist interests. Meantime, several Sinhala Buddhist nationalist intellectuals latched on to the catch phrase *jathika chinthanaya* (national

consciousness) to propel Sinhala Buddhist chauvinistic ideas. The JHU subscribed to the shared belief that, given the island's 2,500-year-old civilization, the people should return to its roots and seek to reinstitute cultural nationalism. Venerable Athuraliye Rathana, the outspoken media spokesman for the JHU, remarked: "the *Sangha* has entered the arena of politics to ensure the protection of Buddhist heritage and values which had been undermined for centuries" (Deegalle 2006).

Meanwhile, many Buddhists were uncomfortable about such conspicuous participation in politics by monks, so that a Presidential Commission report in 2002 recommended that *bhikkhus* should not be allowed to contest elections or engage in politics. Notably, the JHU clergymen received the highest share of their votes in urban electorates with a large concentration of middle-class Buddhists, many of them literate in English, but performed poorly, with less than 5% of the vote, in the rural districts of the Southern and North-Central Provinces, seen as the heartland of Sinhala nationalism. Thus, the emergence of Buddhist monks as parliamentarians seems a manifestation of the spread of militant Sinhala nationalism among the urban middle class constituency, and the transformation was made possible by the middle class, and it was accreted in the last elections in 2010, with the major share of votes for the JHU coming from the District of Colombo with a large section of elite and educated middle class voters.

The JHU election campaign in 2004 stood out from its earlier campaigns since its slate of candidates consisted entirely of Buddhist monks and the JHU is still presented as a monk-led political party. Although the novelty and radical development that Buddhist monks as a large representative group chose to enter Parliament paid electoral dividends, the conduct of the clergy in Parliament led to a political setback, a weakening of the JHU, and second thoughts on the prospect of running a slate of Buddhist monks in elections. Nevertheless, this episode is likely to have had a significant impact on the future of the *Sangha* (the order of Buddhist monks). The JHU monks have become a symbol of Sinhala Buddhist strength within Parliament. This brings us to the question how it was possible for the Buddhist monks to shift from mere social discourse to full-fledged political activity. Answers to this question will shed light on the politics of modern Sri Lanka. Frustration with mainstream politicians and the feeling that politicians typically manipulate and use *bhikkhus* have played a role in the emergence of the JHU. The monks have run the gamut participating in active politics for over fifty years in Sri Lanka; all that was left was contest elections directly, and the JHU was a natural product of political Buddhism. The active presence of evangelical Christian groups and 'unethical' conversions by them, led to understandable public concern, promoted by monks and made into a national issue by Buddhist nationalists, also contributed to the founding and growth of the JHU (DeVotta 2007).

Against this backdrop, Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism seems a modern political response to newly emerging local and global social challenges, which also benefits from the institution of majoritarian democracy and the accompanying tyranny of the majority, in the absence of fair “checks and balances” to protect the minorities in the post-colonial period, in which Buddhism has been mobilised and politicised to legitimise a Sinhalese majoritarian state. The mobilisation and politicisation has been neither static nor steadily growing, but waxed and waned almost inversely with the supremacy of the majority and domination of Buddhism in the social and political spheres. Uyangoda (1996) has argued that Sinhala Buddhism has made no significant contribution to the evolution of a non-violent social ideology. On the contrary, the Sinhala Buddhist historiographical tradition and the ideology inherent in it support ethnic political violence.

The Buddhist clergy, although almost exclusively identified with Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism, still has progressive clergymen in its midst. But with the upward mobility of the Buddhist clergy owing to support by the state, wealthy individuals and affluent Buddhist organisations, the clergy, although divided along political, caste and regional lines, act as a privileged social group, and play an important role in carrying forward the cause of Sinhala Buddhism in all major Sinhala nationalist parties. The four *mahasanghas* have been given increased prominence by successive governments and have generally acted to obstruct solutions to the national question and suppressed the minorities and moreover helped to maintain the tyranny of the majority. The upward mobility of the clergy is a major source of political ambition of monks and their urge to move from the social to the political. The Sinhala Buddhist elite and the more advantaged sections of the clergy have a vested interest in making Buddhism the state religion and have succeeded in securing for it a special place in the constitution. Besides the benefits enjoyed by the Buddhist clergy through the elevated status that they have in the Sinhala Buddhist community, successive governments have granted various special privileges to the clergy as a whole, but in actual practice benefiting the Buddhist priests. The prominence given to Buddhism in the affairs of the state and the rise in religious awareness also has led to the introduction of religious rituals in public and state functions which for long had been secular and to a tendency for individuals and organisations to make a public display of religious identity, especially that of Buddhism.

However, given the degree to which the JHU has hitherto compromised itself, it is unlikely to improve its performance in future elections. But, irrespective of electoral fortunes, its monks will continue to play an influential role in the effort to expand the extant Sinhala Buddhist nationalist ideology. Buddhism in Sri Lanka, which has become sandwiched between the social and political spheres over the past several decades, has now been wholly transferred to the political sphere with the political playing field dominated and evaluated by the norms

and values of the political Buddhism in the name of protection of the sanctity of Buddhism. Modern day fascists have come to power using the pretext of democracy; and modern day political Buddhism in Sri Lanka has actually brewed itself from ultra-nationalism at large. Anti-Muslim and anti-Christian sentiments, endorsement of majoritarian parliamentary democracy, celebration of militarism and suppression of the minorities have become the defining features of political Buddhism in Sri Lanka, which is alien to the humane and tolerant philosophy of Buddhism.

Bibliography

- Deegalle, Mahinda. 2006. "JHU Politics for Peace and a Righteous State." In Deegalle, Mahinda, ed., *Buddhism, Conflict and Violence in Modern Sri Lanka*. London: Routledge.
- DeVotta, Neil. 2007. *Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalist Ideology: Implications for Politics and Conflict Resolution in Sri Lanka*. Washington DC: East-West Center.
- Obeyesekere, Gannet. 1970. "Religious Symbolism and Political Change in Ceylon." *Modern Ceylon Studies* 1: 43–63.
- Schalk, Peter. 2007. "Operational zing Buddhism for Political Ends in a Martial Context in Sri Lanka: The Case of *Simhalatva*." In Hinnells, John R., and Richard King, eds., *Religion and Violence in South Asia: Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge.
- Seneviratne, H. L. 2001. "Buddhist Monks and Ethnic Politics: A War Zone in an Island Paradise." *Anthropology Today* 17(2): 15–21.
- Sunday Times* (Colombo). 2004. "Uposatha: Good for Both Clergy, Govt.," December 19.
- Uyangoda, Jayadeva. 1996. "Militarization, Violent State, Violent Society: Sri Lanka." In Rupesinghe, Kumar, and Khawar Mumtaz, eds., *Internal Conflicts in South Asia*. London: Sage Publications.
- Uyangoda, Jayadeva. 2007. *Religion in Context: Buddhism and Socio-Political Change in Sri Lanka*. Colombo: Social Scientists Association.

PUBLIC LIBRARY
JAFFNA

Leon Trotsky as I Knew Him. MN Roy.

Second Wave Publications & Distribution, London, 2010, pp 32.

£2.00 (soft cover).

The booklet contains an extract from a collection of essays by MN Roy titled "Men I Met" published in 1987: the article on Trotsky was written in 1940 after the death of Trotsky. The publishers have added a long note outlining the political biography of MN Roy, recognising his importance to the international communist movement as a pioneering thinker on problems of revolution in colonies and semi-colonies. The note takes an objective view of the politics of Roy and, while identifying his outstanding contributions, it also draws attention to the sources of his failure and his ultimate isolation from Marxist politics. Thus the booklet comprises critical comments on two major players of the international communist movement.

Roy's critique of Trotsky, as one could expect, has earned the wrath of many a Trotskyite commentator. But what is important about the essay by Roy is that it not only enlightens the reader on several misrepresentations of historical events by those who seek to glorify Trotsky but also highlights the differences in character between Trotsky and Lenin, which explain why the former was in several important issues out of touch with objective reality.

Roy cites Lunacharsky from his *Revolutionary Silhouettes*, written when Trotsky was at the height of power and glory: "... Lenin never looks at himself, never glances in the mirror of history, never even thinks of what posterity will say of him— simply does his work... In distinction from him, Trotsky treasures his historic role, and would undoubtedly be ready to make any personal sacrifice, not by any means excluding the sacrifice of his life, in order to remain in the memory of mankind with the halo of a genuinely revolutionary leader".

Roy acknowledges Trotsky as one of the most powerful orators ever known, a brilliant writer and a skilful agitator, but also points out that Trotsky, despite his brilliant mind, was politically unstable and erratic. He attributes the grave errors of Trotsky as a Marxist theoretician mostly to his vanity.

Roy would possibly most irritate the worshippers of Trotsky by his iconoclastic revelation that Trotsky's was not the sole creator and leader of the Red Army and that his role was significant only as an inspirer and not as a military genius or strategist. He also makes the point that the roles

played by Bleucher, Frunze, Bujenny and Stalin, although on record, are not as publicised as that of Trotsky, perhaps because they did not seem so dramatic, and that, taken together, their parts were heroic and were of more decisive importance than the dramatic feats of Trotsky.

Roy points out that Trotsky was saved by Lenin from making grave errors on two major occasions that risked the destruction of the Soviet Union. On the first occasion Lenin had to effectively bully him into signing the Best-Litovsk Treaty with the German army, despite Trotsky's stubborn and subjective belief that the international working class will come to the rescue of the almost tottering Soviet Government in 1918. The next occasion concerned the New Economic Policy, when Lenin had to be firm against Trotsky's dogmatic opposition to concessions to the peasantry. On the third occasion Lenin was not there to save the revolution as well as the political career of Trotsky, whose arrogance got the better of him at the session of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in 1927. He was stubborn in his position that socialism cannot be built in one country, insisting that building socialism was not possible in the Soviet Union as long as the world remained capitalist. That was a defeatist line which offered no option to the Soviet Union but to passively wait for world revolution. Trotsky isolated himself from the rest of the Communist Party so that his was the only vote against his expulsion from the Party.

Roy denounces Trotsky's crusader's zeal for a second revolution in Russia and his plan to launch the Fourth International as something that was not egged on by any theoretical conviction but by a "bitter hatred for the man who had done him the greatest service of having prevented him from doing the greatest disservice to the Revolution". Roy adds: "Had Trotsky his way and Stalin been removed from the leadership of the party, most probably there would not have been a Soviet republic today. Therefore, Trotsky goes down in history as one of the most outstanding personalities of our time, with his place there secured by the help of the man who has come to be known as his archenemy".

Having witnessed the tragedy of Trotskyism in Sri Lanka, after reading Roy's account, I cannot help wondering whether the Sri Lankan disciples of Trotsky have been as much the victims of their own petit bourgeois vanity as was their mentor.

-SJS-

Rebellion, Repression and the Struggle for justice in Sri Lanka — the Lionel Bopage Story. *Michael Colin Cooke.*

Agahas Publishers, Rajagiriya, Sri Lanka, 2011, pp 566+xix.
US\$25.00 (soft cover).

This somewhat hagiographic account of the life and politics of Lionel Bopage is perhaps the nearest I have come across so far to a serious self-critical account of the politics of the JVP by anyone closely associated with the movement.

The author, perhaps in his attempt to make the book more comprehensive, has added "An Index of Political Personages and Political Parties" which is neither insightful nor usefully informative in the context of the book. There are, besides, serious omissions and distorted information, suggesting reliance on sources of doubtful credibility, and ill informed Trotskyite leanings. I cannot trace the sources of all errors, but many seem to relate to the author's weak understanding of the political history of the country.

My interest in the book chiefly concerns issues relating to the political path of the JVP and the validity of the explanations offered for the conduct of the JVP. To me, it is important to understand how the JVP—which to quite a few, for vastly differing reasons, was or still is a 'Marxist' party—could, on the national question, sink to lower depths than not just the parliamentary left but even some Sinhala nationalist parties have sunk. Thus I will leave out matters pertaining to the personal or political life of Bopage and examine mainly the validity and significance of his interpretation of events that brought the JVP to its current sorry state.

The most useful part of the book is his account of the events that led to the insurrection of April 1971. Despite the omission of some important details, it helps to correct several wrong impressions and interpretations created not only by the ruling classes in their bid to vilify the JVP leadership but also by those who wish to romanticise a badly conceived, badly planned and badly executed amateurish putsch that led to the killing of well over 10,000 youth and encouraged the militarization of the state.

Lionel Bopage seems to have had strong differences—many of them relating to the national question—with the JVP leadership since the early 1980s. Bopage, unlike Wijeweera—who dominated the JVP until his capture and killing—and his modern day successors, was not a chauvinist. But

he has not fully escaped the influence of the Sinhala Buddhist ideology, which rose to dominance over the Sinhala polity during the last century. For example, he uses the argument that the Eastern Province was traditionally ruled by Sinhalese kings to reject that the East was a traditional homeland of the Tamils (and Muslims). Besides, he fails to realise that the large presence of Sinhalese in that province was as a result of planned settlements. He also reserves comment on the belief, common among petit bourgeois Sinhalese, that Tamil examiners had been favouring Tamil candidates in public examinations, although every investigation of such charges that came up in the 1970s proved that such claims were groundless. These and other such failings do not make him a Sinhala chauvinist, but certainly indicate how deep the 'dominant ideology' runs within society so that even rational and progressive minds have to struggle hard to shake themselves free of it. I could say the same of several Tamil progressives, including a few who turned Tamil nationalists in 1983, abandoning wholesale their spirit of internationalism. Thus I refuse to attribute Sinhala nationalistic reasons for the erroneous arguments offered by Bopage in defence of the JVP, but seek other explanations for what seem to be serious deviations from the truth.

Neither the parliamentary left nor Marxist Leninists nor Trotskyites considered the JVP to be a genuine left party. Their reasons differed, but they were dead right in their view that the JVP was not a party built in the Marxist spirit of proletarian internationalism, despite the JVP leadership having its origins in the two factions of the Communist Party. The JVP, despite claims by Bopage as well as several sympathisers of the JVP that it adapted Marxism to Sri Lankan conditions, did nothing of the kind. Its brand of "Marxism with Sri Lankan characteristics" I dare say is akin to Sinhala Buddhism (i.e. "Buddhism with Sri Lankan characteristics"), in its deviation from the spirit of the source. Bopage is reluctant to call the JVP a Marxist party and denounces its Sinhala nationalism. But he is reluctant to acknowledge that it was founded on chauvinist thinking.

He argues that Wijeweera's differences with N Sanmugathasan (Comrade Shan), the leader of the "Peking Wing" of the Communist Party, had no ethnic considerations and dismisses claims that Wijeweera played the communal card against Comrade Shan to mobilise a sizeable section of the party's youth wing behind him.

Interestingly, Bopage in his reference to the expulsion of Wijeweera from the Party also omits the reason for that disciplinary measure: Wijeweera had used the Party's printing facilities to print unauthorised pamphlets in the name of the Party in support of the infamous chauvinist demonstration of January 1966 by the parliamentary opposition, in which vicious anti-Tamil slogans were shouted. The pamphlets were discovered and destroyed, but Wijeweera, in defiance of the stand of the Party on the matter, participated

in that demonstration as did the parliamentary left that had sold out to the chauvinist SLFP.

The claim that the JVP had adapted Marxism to suit Sri Lankan conditions rings hollow because the JVP added nothing to any form of Marxist understanding of the Sri Lankan situation but only pandered to Sinhala chauvinism. Bopage's defence of the JVP against left criticism of the JVP at the time simply relies on the negation of the feeble argument of some members of the "Moscow Wing" of the CP that the JVP leaders were CIA agents, while ignoring the main political criticisms put forward by Marxist Leninists. Firstly, the JVP rejected the working class as a revolutionary force, and vilified it as a class that has corrupted itself in trade union struggles and instead upheld the youth, irrespective of class origins and ideology, as the main revolutionary force. Secondly it was chauvinistic in its attitude. Thirdly, its view of the revolution was conspiratorial, rejected the mass line and excluded mass struggles. The validity of these criticisms was borne out by events preceding the April 1971 insurrection as well as by the subsequent conduct of the JVP.

Bopage dismisses lightly the JVP's notorious "Third Lesson" on Indian expansionism in the "Five Lesson" package of the JVP as an irrelevancy that came about under Chinese influence and is pleased that the lesson was dropped by the JVP in 1977. The point is that, Indian expansionism has not gone away and exists today in a more virulent form. Strangely, that seems to be the sole idea that the JVP gathered from the "Maoists", only to be distorted to suit its chauvinist agenda. Neither the reference to the Tamil plantation workers as "arms of Indian Expansionism" nor the significance of this obnoxious reference to the subsequent omission of the lesson are for some reason not evident anywhere in the book. Besides, the JVP's plan for the plantations was not just reforestation of unsuitable plantation regions as claimed in the book but also planting manioc (tapioca) in place of tea and ridding the plantations of "Indian workers". These views, uttered in public by JVP cadres even as late as 1970, I believe, existed in the JVP literature of the time.

While Bopage denounces the Sinhala Only Act and the practice of medium-wise standardisation for university admissions, the JVP had not uttered a word denouncing the Act or that practice of standardisation when it was introduced in 1970-71. The JVP, as he correctly claims, is a child of the developments of 1956. Thus its chauvinism has its ideological roots in the upsurge of Sinhala nationalism as well, on which SWRD Bandaranaike rode to power.

Bopage, seemingly at a loss to understand why the Tamils did not warm up to the JVP, attributes even the reluctance of "Tamil Maoists" in the late 1960s to join the JVP to Tamil nationalistic sentiments. I fail to see why

Tamil nationalist explanations are sought for "Maoists" rejecting a party whose ideology was nowhere near theirs. Bopage, nevertheless, claims the existence of sizeable patches of support for the JVP among Tamils in the North since 1977 and accuses the Maoists 'who were afraid of the growth of the JVP in the North' of physical attacks on Wijeweera and disruption of JVP meetings in Jaffna in the early 1980s. What he fails to note is that Tamil nationalist youth groups had strongly emerged by then and the overwhelming rejection of the JVP by the Tamil youth was due to its failure to distinguish itself from other Sinhala chauvinist parties. Bopage is thus clutching at straws to avoid facing the stark reality that it was the chauvinism of the JVP that denied it support from among Tamils as well as the Hill Country Tamils.

It seems to me that it is Bopage's lingering affection for Wijeweera and an inability to come to terms with his leading role in a party which, much against his beliefs, was steeped in Sinhala chauvinism that stand in the way of an intellectually honest analysis of the sources of the chauvinism of the JVP leadership and its domination of JVP theory and practice.

Several left parties and groups (excluding the CP and LSSP) denounced the brutal repression of the JVP by the state machinery. They also denounced the harsh sentences, including several death sentences, handed down to leading insurgents, and participated in protests held across the country against the death sentences, which were later commuted to prison sentences. However, with the exception of Bala Tampoe, whose left credentials have now ceased to exist, the left kept its political distance from the JVP. Tampoe's defence of members of the JVP at the CJC was admirable and duly acknowledged by Bopage.

Tampoe also secured prompt recognition for the JVP from the one of many Fourth Internationals to which he was affiliated. JVP's short-lived infatuation with Trotskyism, beginning in 1977, was brief and had more to do with Tampoe's compassion towards the JVP leadership than any knowledge of Trotskyism. Recognition by a Fourth International certainly helped to boost the 'left' image of the JVP internationally. But the temptation of JVP's inherent chauvinism was too strong to resist, and the new-found left identity soon washed off. A quarter of a century later the Trotskyite organisation that had endorsed the JVP suddenly woke up to the fact that the JVP was after all a chauvinistic party and 'expelled' it.

Bopage regrets Tamil rejection of the JVP at the presidential polls of 1982 despite its upholding the right of Tamil people to self determination. What seems to have slipped his memory is that although Wijeweera declared support for the right of Tamils to secede in his campaign speech in Jaffna, it did not take him two days to reverse his stand and solemnly declare in the South that he will give his life to prevent secession. Bopage may have

forgotten the episode, but the Tamil electorate was not impressed with Wijeweera's doublespeak.

Bopage was among the few leading cadres of the JVP who realised that the JVP had blundered. Most of them had left the JVP in the late 1970s to form left oriented groups, some Marxist-Leninist, but failed to organise themselves as political parties. Bopage was perhaps alone in his conviction that the JVP could be salvaged with the help of some Trotskyite tinkering. Wijeweera and others had different ideas. Bopage for some reason has not recorded the role of the JVP in obstructing the already weak opposition from rebuilding itself into an anti-UNP force. JVP used violence to disrupt rallies organised by the SLFP and its former left allies. It also targeted other left groups. The dictatorial UNP regime of JR Jayewardene allowed the JVP free run and the police did nothing to check the JVP violence. The relationship between the UNP government and JVP gradually began to turn sour, when the former felt that the JVP's growth at the expense of the parliamentary left and the SLFP was too fast for its liking.

There are many unanswered questions relating to the release of the JVP insurgent leaders by the right-wing UNP government. While the JVP leadership had the support of Tampoe from the time of their detention following the insurrection, its ties with JR Jayewardene began with the prospect of an electoral defeat of the now isolated SLFP government in sight. Negotiations took place between Wijeweera and the former SLFP politician Ronnie de Mel acting on behalf of Jayewardene. That the convictions of supporters of the UNP for foreign exchange fraud by the Criminal Justice Commission would be quashed was to be expected. But Jayewardene went the extra mile to invalidate the CJC and all its convictions. Why would Jayewardene, a friend of US imperialism and a bitter enemy of the left nationally and internationally, go out of his way to enable the release a group of insurgents convicted for waging war against the capitalist state? Jayewardene could be guilty of anything but naiveté, and I fail to see how the possibility of a deal between Jayewardene and Wijeweera escaped Bopage.

The book would have left not left so many questions unanswered, had the author been better informed of the politics of the country and the JVP in particular. Some of the omissions by Bopage are probably unintentional and could have been averted had there been more searching questions by the writer.

-SJS-

Presidential Pardon to Sarath Fonseka

NDMLP Statement to the Media

25th May 2012

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued the following statement on behalf of the Politburo of the Party.

If it is possible for the President to pardon the former Army General Sarath Fonseka who was detained for reasons of political vengeance and imprisoned under court verdicts, why is it not possible to pardon and release political prisoners who are under detention for many long years without inquiry? In that context, the demand by the Tamil political prisoners who have been on hunger strike for the past five days that they should be released is fully justified. The Government should pay full attention to their demand and take the necessary steps to secure their immediate release.

The former Army General Sarath Fonseka was detained, charged and imprisoned under court verdicts because of contradictions among the ruling class forces. These steps, nevertheless, comprise denial of democracy and political vengeance, and are unacceptable in any way.

Sarath Fonseka was released yesterday through a pardon by the President. The pardon was not based on democratic considerations but because the Government yielded to pressure from the US.

The release of Tamil political prisoners is being deliberately dragged on and denied owing to chauvinistic considerations. The Party urges in the name of law, democracy and human rights that all other political prisoners including Tamil political prisoners who have been detained without inquiry for a very long time should be released.

S.K. Senthivel
General Secretary

Abduction of JVP Dissidents Denounced

NDMLP Statement to the Media

9th April 2012

PUBLIC LIBRARY
JAFFNA

JVP dissent group members Premkumar Gunaratnam and Dimuthu Attygalle who have left the JVP and been active in forming a separate political party had been abducted from separate locations on the 6th of April and are still missing. The Politburo of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party strongly denounces this incident. At the same time, the Party points out that there is no doubt that this abduction and disappearance comprises an act of planned political revenge.

The Party further points out that planned abductions and disappearances are events that have been going on for a long time in the country. The abduction and disappearance of individuals with dissenting views has occurred in a continuous and systematic manner throughout the country, especially during periods of war, and even after the end of the war. We have seen that protests and denunciations of such events have gone as far as the Human Rights Council in Geneva and echoed internationally. Besides, the government is under pressure at the international level that it should conduct an independent inquiry into the disappearances so far.

Rights to freedom of expression, assembly and organization are generously enshrined in the Constitution. It is thus shocking and contemptible that it was when dissenters sought to get together and found the Frontline Socialist Party as a new political party that its forerunners Premkumar Gunaratnam and Dimuthu Attygalle had been abducted and are still missing. Already two members of this group, namely Lalith Weeraraj and Kugan, had been abducted in Jaffna four months ago and they have neither been released nor is there news of them. It is both legal and democratic for dissenters who have left the JVP to found a party of their own. To indulge in abductions to prevent the emergence of a political party is an expression of fascist attitudes. The Party demands that all four of them should be released immediately.

S.K. Senthivel
General Secretary

UNHRC Resolution on Sri Lanka

NDMLP Statement to the Media

25th March 2012

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued on behalf of the Politburo of the Party a statement on the

resolution on Sri Lanka, adopted by the UNHRC in Geneva on 22nd March 2012.

The statement pointed out that the resolution against Sri Lanka that has been passed at the UNHCR in Geneva was a consequence of the chauvinistic military repression of the Tamil people by the Mahinda Chinthana government and its arrogance of military success. The resolution and the debates on it have brought degradation and humiliation to Sri Lankan government in the International arena. At the same time, the Geneva resolution has provided the US with the long awaited opportunity to further tighten its hold on Sri Lanka through the UN. The President and the UPFA government led by him have to accept the entire responsibility for these developments.

The statement also pointed out that the lack of a solution to the national question and the consequent pursuit of a cruel war were the bases for the resolution against Sri Lanka to be proposed and passed in Geneva. They led to the committing of war crimes and human rights violations. Their consequences persist as denial of a political solution, denial of democracy and human rights violations even today, nearly three years since the end of the war. It is in this context that the UN brought the Sri Lankan issue into its agenda, based on the Report of the UN Committee of Experts and handed over the matter to the UNHRC. The US, which made use of the opportunity to introduce the Geneva resolution and have it passed, is seeking to tighten its grip on Sri Lanka.

The US had earlier failed in its attempt to strengthen its dominance over Sri Lanka by operating behind the Norwegian facilitated peace talks. But it has since resumed its interference through the UN. The US move is not in the interest of resolving the Sri Lankan national question and creating reconciliation and unity among the people. Nor is it by way of securing the fundamental rights of the Tamil people. It is based on the need of the US to keep strategically important Sri Lanka under its control to serve its purpose of global hegemony. The US introduced and got passed the Geneva resolution against Sri Lanka following its method of using internal contradictions to intervene in and infiltrate countries. The only way to stop it and to frustrate the intentions of the US is to bring about a just solution to the national question without further delay. Likewise, steps need to be taken to put an end to acts of denial of democracy and human rights violations that persist in the country. But, how willing the President and the government headed by him are to come down from their chauvinistic oppressive stand to move towards a constructive and far sighted action remains the issue.

SK Senthivel
General Secretary

May Day Meetings of the NDMLP

The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party held its May Day meetings in Jaffna, Hatton, Colombo and Vavunia.

The meetings organised by the Party represent a revival of the spirit of militant working class solidarity in the true tradition of the May Day the world over. This is particularly important in the context of Sri Lanka, where especially since 1978, May Day celebrations have been perverted by the ruling classes not only to promote their reactionary electoral political agenda but also to express anti-working class sentiments embedded in chauvinism, narrow nationalism and sectarian thinking.

The NDMLP rallies were a breath of fresh air for the working class struggle amid a suffocating political atmosphere in which the parliamentary left — comprising revisionists and the main party of Trotskyite lineage— has all but abandoned its left label, with the JVP pursuing a chauvinist agenda and some Trotskyite parties flirting with the reactionary UNP.

The meeting in Jaffna was remarkable for several reasons. The well attended rally was a renewed show of strength by the Party and was preceded by a bicycle procession by Party comrades and supporters from Chunnakam to the venue of the meeting. Besides, it was the only genuine working class May Day rally in the Northern Province, where the revolutionary tradition of the May Day had been hijacked by narrow nationalists and government loyalists for several decades, against a background of war and repression.

Comrade Selvam Kathirgamanathan chaired the Jaffna May Day rally, and Comrades SK Senthivel, K Thanikasalam, R Thavarajah, A Seevaratnam, T Sri Prakash, (Mrs) Easvari Tharmalingam, TV Krishnasamy, M Thiagarajah and S Seelan addressed the gathering. Revolutionary songs were recited.

The May Day rally in Hatton was chaired by Comrade V Mahendran. The well attended meeting was addressed by Comrades T Aiyaathurai, S Panneerselvam, ACR John, S Thevathas and S Ramesh.

In Colombo, Comrade S Thevarajah chaired the May Day meeting, which was addressed by Comrades S Nanthamohan, M Mauran, Marx Prabakar and R Ranjan. Their talks were followed by a lively discussion with active participation by the members of the audience.

In Vavuniya, Comrade Don Bosco chaired a well attended May Day meeting; and Comrades N Pratheepan, S Dhanujan, N Pakeerathan and S Venthan addressed the meeting.

Sri Lankan Events

Media hypocrisy

The May Day procession and rally of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party in Jaffna was a memorable occasion that revived the spirit of the May Day. The cycle procession from Chunnakam to Jaffna was all the way cheered by the people and the enthusiastic rally was well attended. No newspaper from Jaffna, let alone the national dailies, said a word about that event either before or after it. It was clearly a planned black-out of news by the media which regularly moans about the freedom of the press.

The public responded angrily to it, and the editorial staff of the newspapers met with a barrage of protests in person, by telephone and by post against the hypocrisy of the Tamil media in Jaffna. Such public response to the violation of the right to information by the media is a healthy sign for a community that has for long been intimidated and muted by persons wielding weapons.

The tale of two flags

Mainstream political parties have been making a mockery of May Day rallies since the 1970s. A "Joint Opposition May Day" rally was held in Jaffna by the feudal-capitalist class allies, the Tamil National Alliance and the UNP, and opportunists including a discredited Trotskyite party. It was a shameful parody of the most solemn occasion for the working class. To add insult to injury, the UNP leader was handed a national flag to be held up jointly with the TNA leader, who was taken by surprise but cooperated. The hoisting the flag was denounced by sections of the TNA for parochial reasons.

Meantime a flag of 'Tamil Eelam' with its tiger logo was smuggled into the gathering, surprisingly without the security forces even noticing it but prominently enough to be telecast the same evening by the state television.

Political parties and media were thrashing out the question of the two flags in the days that followed, but the point that the only flag appropriate to the occasion was the red flag of the working class went unnoticed.

In the shadow of Wijeweera

The founding of the Frontline Socialist Party by JVP dissenters seemed a ray of hope for the left movement in the South. But the signs are that the FSP has not yet freed itself of the fetters of its chauvinist and opportunist past. Its

reluctance to criticise Rohana Wijeweera, the founder leader of the JVP, is in itself an obstacle to a serious self criticism of the political past of the FSP, including its adventurist insurrections and chauvinist line. Sadly, the FSP has so far, not accepted the Tamils, Muslims and Hill Country Tamils as distinct nationalities or offered them any form of autonomy.

Interestingly, the FSP, seeking new allies among the discredited left and former LTTE members, has avoided formal discussion with the NDMLP, the only significant Marxist Leninist political force in the country.

Cluster bombs

In late April the AP news agency reported that “A report from a UN mine removal expert says unexploded cluster munitions have been found in northern Sri Lanka, appearing to confirm, for the first time, that they were used in that country’s long civil war”. The discovery followed the killing of a boy and injuries to his sister in the town of Puthukkudiyiruppu in the north of the country in March when they tried to pry apart an explosive devise they found.

The Sri Lankan media, which normally respond with denials and conspiracy theories, have been remarkably silent on the issue. That may be because the UN seems to have chosen not to press further on the subject.

Resurrecting the Federal Party

The Federal Party (FP) ceased to function as a party following the founding of the TULF in 1976, and was a forgotten force for nearly three decades. The Tamil National Alliance was formed in the first decade of the millennium when the right to the name of the TULF went by default to Anandasangaree, the badly isolated leader of the TULF.

For want of an election symbol to which the people could relate, the TNA opted to contest elections under the name and symbol of the FP. That move found other uses for the FP label to some leaders who came in the tradition of the FP. Following the defeat of the LTTE, it was proposed to revive the FP, not to resurrect its federalist goal, but to use it to dominate the TNA —whose recent application for recognition as a parliamentary political party failed— and thereby ensure that ‘difficult’ partners in the TNA will be sidelined.

The reason why the FP congress was held in Batticaloa in May, however, had less to do with the revival of the FP than with advancing the prospects of the TNA in the forthcoming elections to the Eastern Provincial Council.

ASIA

India: Struggle & Solidarity

Italian army killings denounced

The Party of the Committees to Support Resistance – for Communism (CARC), Italy issued a statement on 13th March denouncing as war criminals the Italian soldiers who killed Indian fishermen on the coasts of Kerala on 15th February, their instigators and protectors, and expressed solidarity with the families of killed fishermen and the Indian masses demanding for justice to be done.

The statement, which also criticised attempts to portray the killers as national heroes, called upon truly democratic soldiers and policemen to publicly denounce such crimes and abuses, to expose and isolate the fascists, racists and bullies who are in their ranks, and to carry out the democratic watch from the inside. The CARC statement is of great significance since it is an expression of class solidarity in the true spirit of proletarian internationalism, transcending nationalist considerations.

[Source: www.carc.it]

Fear of the Truth

The government of India is contemplating a ban on the future visits of 85-year-old Jan Myrdal, the Sweden-based author of several books including 'Report from a Chinese village', 'China: The Revolution Continued', 'Confessions of a Disloyal European' and 'India Waits', because it considers him to be a Maoist supporter. The Home Ministry has claimed that Myrdal had attended pro-Naxal conventions in Kolkata, Hyderabad, Ludhiana and Delhi early this year and expressed support to the CPI (Maoist) ideology of armed struggle against the state.

It is no secret that, two years ago, Myrdal travelled in the conflict-affected regions and personally interacted with the tribal people and the leadership of CPI (Maoist). Myrdal, responding to the Indian Home Ministry claims, said that he was not stupid to give political advice to Indian friends and asked the authorities to withdraw the "very stupid and anti-Indian" move. He added that he had been in India in January/February, 2012 on a one month conference

visa to launch his book "Red Star over India. Impressions, Reflexions and Discussions when the Wretched of the Earth are Rising", a copy of which he had personally sent to the Home Minister. The book has now seen its second English language edition in India and is being published in Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi, Tamil and Telugu. In Europe it has been translated to German, Italian, Norwegian and Swedish. It is available internationally as an e-book and on the Internet.

[source: change.org, zeenews.india.com]

Against repression and arrest in Nonadanga

On 30th March the Nonadanga colony in Kolkata was destroyed and razed to ground by the Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority, rendering homeless hundreds of families, ironically, to make space for a housing project to accommodate people "below poverty line". The eviction took place without prior notice to the people and despite a pledge by the minister concerned that there would be no eviction. It should be noted that these people referred to as 'squatters' by the mainstream media had earlier been evicted from canal banks across Kolkata and resettled here.

People of the locality who formed an independent forum called the Eviction Protest Committee with the help of several people and organisations who support the protests are being accused of being close to Maoists; and peaceful protests by evicted residents and activists have met with brutal Police attack as well as arrests of nearly 200 protesters. But mass protests continue, including a mass hunger strike in the area by various progressive organizations, activists and intellectuals, which the state machinery is seeking to crush.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Mamta Banerjee's furious outburst and walk out from a CNN-IBN show on 18th May objecting to questions by female students concerning violence against women and accusing the students of being Maoists is a sign that her government is fast losing touch and is likely to use the 'Maoist card' increasingly as a pretext to suppress public protests.

[sources: http://zeenews.india.com/bengali/kolkata/nonadanga-slum_4312.html; <http://sanhati.com>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vx-2Ss14B9U>]

Kerala CPI (M) in the dock

A Communist Party of India-Marxist leader and four others were arrested on 15th May for alleged involvement in the murder of former party leader TP Chandrasekharan on 4th May in Onchiyam, despite earlier denial by the state secretariat of the CPI-M of any role for its cadres in the killing. Fifty-one year

old Chandrasekharan was a CPI-M leader in the area who quit the party in 2008 to form the Revolutionary Marxist Party, which unseated the CPI-M in the village council polls in Onchiyam in Kozhikode. The CPI (M) is at a loss to defend itself among its cadres, and of course voters in Neyyattinkara (in Thiruvananthapuram), where a by-election was held on 2nd June (with results due on 15th June). Denial by the top CPI (M) leadership of any knowledge of involvement and its protest that the charges against the party are part of a conspiracy to tarnish its name have only further dented its credibility.

The implications for the CPI (M) go far beyond electoral politics, especially since its humiliating defeat in West Bengal last year. Already the CPI, an electoral ally, has harshly criticised the CPI (M) in connection with the murder, which has reactivated rifts within the party. Piñata Vijayan's leadership is under siege by supporters of Acchuthananthan, former CPI (M) leader and Leader of Opposition in the Kerala Assembly, and reportedly a good friend of the victim. Hundreds of CPI (M) sympathizers including a few former office bearers of CPI (M)'s youth and student fronts organized a convention on 15th May to commemorate Chandrasekaran and to protest the dastardly killing, despite a CPI (M) ban on party workers taking such a step.

The murder is yet another sign of the degeneration of the CPI (M). Genuine leftists in the party should try to understand the problems of the CPI (M) in the context of the parliamentary road taken by the party.

[Source: <http://keralaonlinenews.com/chandrashekharan-murder-kc-ramachandran-arrest-malayalam-news-8852.html/>]

Nepal: Deepening Trouble

The Theatre of Constitution Drafting

The constitution drafting process was held up for four years owing to disputes over the electoral system, system of governance and division of provinces as well as foreign meddling. On 15th May, only days before the expiry of the 27th May deadline for the Constituent Assembly to adopt a constitution, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), the Nepali Congress, the Communist Party of Nepal (UML) and the United Democratic Madhesi Front formed a National Unity Government with an enlarged 20-member cabinet, in anticipation of the new constitution to be adopted on 27th May.

On 12th May, three days before the new government was announced, CP Gajurel, Secretary of the UCPN (Maoist) and a leader of the revolutionary faction of the party, charged that the major political parties were creating an environment to impose state of emergency by sowing social discord among various ethnic groups and communities in order to promulgate a 'sponsored constitution' that has already been drafted in India. He accused party Chairman Dahal, Prime

Minister Bhattarai and the leaders of NC, CP-UML, and Madhesi parties of spending time on political deals rather than constitution writing, and seeking to endorse a 'ready-made' constitution on May 27th. Gajurel also pointed out that the "sponsored constitution" was against the official position of UCPN (Maoist).

The decision of the new government to adopt a 'mixed' form of government with a bicameral central parliament, a directly elected president and a prime minister elected by the parliament, and 11 states in a future federal system soon ran into trouble, as it missed out on several vital details owing to disagreement on the model of federalism and on the mode of power sharing between the president and parliament.

Prashant Jha, writing on the situation in Nepal in the Hindu of 23rd May (<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/article3446690.ece?homepage=true>) noted that the issue of state restructuring perhaps resonates most among ordinary citizens, especially communities excluded from the power structure owing to their ethnic, caste, regional and religious identities who saw it as a way to address historic injustice, and exercise real political power through self-rule in regions where they are dominant. He added that the elite backlash has been strong and that upper-caste dominated parties and media have adopted various means to undermine the federal agenda, as they fear erosion of their power. The massive demonstration to oppose federation based on ethnicity by members of the Brahmin and Chhetri communities near the CA building on 27th May confirmed the fears expressed by Jha.

Madhesi activists in Kathmandu and several districts in the Tarai plains had protested in public as did sections of the minority ethnic groups who saw the proposed structure as a conspiracy to maintain the hegemony of the Brahmin and Chhetri elite and to counter the emerging alliance between the Madhesis and the ethnic groups. With the Supreme Court rejecting the plea of the CA to extend its mandate beyond 27th May to finalise the constitution, the CA had to be dissolved amid a lack of consensus. Elections to a new CA are scheduled for 22nd November.

The tragedy of the four year drama of constitution drafting is that it has only brought to the fore issues of caste and ethnicity so that the reactionaries could divert attention of the oppressed away from issues of class oppression.

[Source: www.asiaone.com, www.thehindu.com]

Metamorphosis of a Maoist

India never made a secret of its wish to decide who was to be in charge in Nepal, and having divided and subdued the leadership UCPN (Maoist), it now openly asserts itself in Nepal. The surrender to India by the 'Maoist' Prime Minister is increasingly clear. As recently as 5th April, when Indian Army Chief

Vijaya Kumar Singh visited Nepal, Prime Minister Bhattarai, lauded the tradition of the Indian Army as one that “upholds democratic norms and civilian supremacy” and added that the Nepal Army too had abided by democratic values and positively contributed to the army integration process. That is remarkable for Bhattarai, whose Party still sees Indian expansionism as an enemy of the people of Nepal.

[Source: www.asiaone.com, www.thehindu.com]

Continuing Protests

Jansevak Bureau formed: On 24th April, UNMIN-disqualified militias and Young Communist League cadres announced the formation of a separate fighting force, Jansevak Bureau. Ram Bahadur Thapa ‘Badal’ declared that the new unit was necessary because the YCL had become ineffective. The Jansevak Bureau is to play a role similar to that of the now defunct YCL and is to be extended gradually to the states, districts and the villages.

Student protests: On 7th May, All Nepal National Independence Students Union— Revolutionary demonstrated against Indian meddling in the formation of a national government in Nepal. The protesters who clashed briefly with the police while organising a torch lit rally in parts of the capital Kathmandu, held that the dissolution of Prime Minister Bhattarai’s cabinet and the formation of a national government under him were due to direct interference of India and denounced Indian meddling in Nepal’s internal issues.

Squatters protest: On 8th May, over 250 squatter homes and a primary school on the bank of the Bagmati river near Thapathali in Kathmandu were brutally demolished. Around 1,800 members of the Armed Police Force (APF) and Nepal Police took part in the operation directed by the Kathmandu Metropolitan City, Kathmandu Town Development Authority and the high-powered Committee for Integrated Development of Bagmati Civilization.

Over a thousand people were rendered homeless and forced to live in the open at the nearby UN Park. The Police have ordered the displaced including, infants, young children, dozens of pregnant and postnatal women, to remove their tents from the demolished site despite the displaced being hit hard by recurrent pre-monsoon showers, but have been asked by the.

The government is yet to provide them with the alternative residence in the Kirtipur Municipality as pledged by Prime Minister Bhattarai and the Chief of Kathmandu Town Development Authority. But on 14th May different political parties active in Kirtipur have challenged the government initiative to relocate the victims. Thus protests by the squatters continue with no solution in sight.

The Philippines: Nullify Treaty with US

On 3rd May, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) issued a statement urging the Filipino people to demand the repeal of the US-RP Mutual Defence Treaty of 1951 and the withdrawal of all US troops in the Philippines in order to ease military and diplomatic tensions over the Scarborough Shoal and Spratly Islands and pave the way for the peaceful resolution of the conflict and build mutually beneficial relations with both China and the US. The statement added that the continued US military build-up in the South China Sea through transfer of war material to Philippine troops in the name of the Treaty stokes conflicts with China, instead of helping to resolve issues peacefully.

The CPP, which had earlier called on the Chinese government to stand down, end its aggressive posturing and pull out its armed patrol ships from disputed islands so as to ease tensions, pointed out that, as long as there was direct or indirect US interference, a peaceful and mutually beneficial resolution of the territorial conflicts with China is almost impossible. It also pointed out that it was the increased US military presence in the Philippines and in the South China Sea in the past several years that led to heightened alertness of China to secure its international perimeters against what it sees as US threats to its sovereignty, and that the US is using the Philippines as a pawn to establish its hegemony over the Asia-Pacific.

The statement argued that the US plan is to heighten military presence in the South China Sea in order to contain China's growth and make it more compliant with US demands for the further opening up of its economy, while provoking China to build up its military strength and stoking conflicts in order to justify the further build-up of US military presence in the region in the name of 'freedom of navigation' and other US imperialist-contrived principles. It also accused the Aquino regime of shamelessly toadying to the US strategy and surrendering Philippine sovereignty to the US merely to acquire a few discarded American scrap military hardware.

[Source: <http://www.philippinerevolution.net/statements/repeal-of-us-rp-mutual-defense-treaty-will-help-in-peaceful-resolution-of-south-china-sea-conflicts-cpp>]

Japan: Shutting Down Nuclear Power

On 5th May thousands of Japanese marched to celebrate the switching off of the last of their nation's 50 nuclear reactors, making Japan free of electricity from nuclear power. After the meltdowns at the Fukushima Dai-ichi plant, triggered by the earthquake and tsunami of 11th March 2011, no reactor halted for checkups has been restarted, amid public worries about the safety of nuclear technology.

Anti-nuclear power activists said it is fitting that the day Japan stopped nuclear power coincides with Children's Day because of their concerns about protecting children from radiation, which Fukushima Dai-ichi is still spewing into the air and water.

The government is, however, eager to restart nuclear reactors, warning about blackouts and rising carbon emissions as Japan is forced to turn to oil and gas for energy. But Japan now requires reactors to pass new tests to withstand earthquakes and tsunami and to gain local residents' approval before restarting. The issue of nuclear power is, thus, far from resolved since pressure from investors and industry can be decisive at a time of economic crisis affecting the entire capitalist world.

[Source: *huffingtonpost.com*]

Lebanon: The Latest Saudi Target?

On 20th May, Sunni religious leader Sheikh Abdelwahed and his aide were killed and a soldier was injured in an incident at an army base in the Akkar District. While the circumstances of the incident were being investigated by the Lebanese authorities, there was a strong reaction in the form of riots and road blocks in several predominantly Sunni areas. Skirmishes continued through the night between supporters of the Al-Mustaqbal Movement and the At-Tatyyar Al-Arabi Party in Western Beirut, with two reportedly killed and 18 injured.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said on 21st May that "Moscow is seriously concerned by growing internal tensions in Lebanon. It appears that the forces that have failed to realize their plans to destabilize Syria have turned to the neighbouring Lebanon.... They clearly dislike this country's government course aimed at preventing foreign intervention in Syrian affairs and facilitating a swift peaceful settlement in Syria on the basis of Kofi Annan's plan approved by the United Nations Security Council, the actions of military and security agencies opposing the attempts at arms smuggling and militant trafficking". Russia also appealed to Lebanese politicians to show restraint and patriotic responsibility at this difficult moment for the country and the region, and urged that the Lebanese must not follow the lead of those who would like to sow new seeds of sectarian discord and confusion on their land.

Although tensions were heightened further by the kidnapping of 13 Lebanese Shia pilgrims by Free Syrian Army (FSA) gunmen on 22nd May and angry protests in Beirut, intervention by Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Hezbollah, helped to calm the situation.

[Source: *www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=31000; english.al-akhbar.com/content/12-lebanese-kidnapped-free-syrian-army*]

Syria: Continuing Meddling

An article by Tony Cartalucci for the website "*landdestroyer.blogspot.com*" and another by Chris Marsden writing for the website "*globalresearch.ca*" (<http://landdestroyer.blogspot.com/2012/05/wests-undermining-of-un-paves-way-for.html>; <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=31045>) thoroughly expose the hypocrisy of the West and the Obama administration's plans for a proxy war against Syria.

Cartalucci draws particular attention to the dubious role played by the London-based "Syrian Observatory for Human Rights" with direct links to the British Foreign Ministry and human rights outfits like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Doctors Without Borders in downplaying atrocities committed by the "pro-democracy" "freedom fighters" in Syria. He argues that despite the West's narrative unravelling, it becoming abundantly clear that the unrest is being perpetuated by terrorist organizations funded and armed by foreign interests, the US has pressed on with Israel and Saudi Arabia in continuing this funding and arming— even amid a UN brokered ceasefire.

Cartalucci also argues that the UN ceasefire was never intended to end the conflict, but rather to let the militants and their foreign sponsors regroup and redeploy for the next leg of destabilization, hoping to fulfil public expectations that a "diplomatic" solution would be tried and "exhausted" before resorting to a NATO-led military intervention.

Marsden uses his exhaustive survey of the Western media—including *The Washington Post* and *Daily Telegraph* among others—to confirm that Saudi Arabia and Qatar were sending weapons (including sophisticated anti-tank weapons) with approval from the US, which has "expanded contacts with opposition forces to provide the gulf nations with assessments of rebel credibility and command-and-control infrastructure". He also provides evidence that additional sources of weaponry include the Muslim Brotherhood with its own supply channel to the rebels funded by wealthy individuals and Gulf States, including Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and Turkey, which besides supplying large consignments of AK-47s to select battalion commanders was also training Syrians in Istanbul.

Turkey has for some time acted as an organising front for imperialist intervention in Syria, aimed at deposing the pro-Iranian regime of Bashar al-Assad. It is host to the Syrian National Council and its military arm, the Free Syrian Army—which mounts its offensives by crossing the 910 km border of Turkey with Syria.

Marsden draws attention to Saudi Arabia's desire to create a Gulf union of the present Gulf Cooperation Council, comprising Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates, to which Iran and its Arab allies in Syria and Lebanon are obstacles. He also points out that plans for an initial

preparatory union of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain (which Iran called “the American plan to annex Bahrain to Saudi Arabia”) provoked the majority Shia population to protest early last year. Although the plans have been deferred, the Arab League threw its weight behind the plan, and warned Iran against its media campaign “and provocative statements from Iranian officials” against the political and military union of the Gulf States.

Syria is also being hit hard by international sanctions, which have cost its oil sector \$4 billion, according to oil minister Sufian Allaw, and led to steep price rises and shortages for its citizens. Syria’s gas production covers only half of the country’s needs, and prices for a tank of cooking gas have more than quadrupled.

The UN Secretary General on 24th May again warned of an all-out civil war in Syria, should the supposed UN peace plan fail, the same day that Saudi King Abdullah wrote to Lebanese President Michel Sulaiman that he was “deeply concerned” about the sectarian violence in Lebanon and warned Lebanon against involvement in foreign issues, especially Syria’s. Marsden accused the UN of cynical posturing since it is well aware of the US policy of destabilisation in Syria to justify a war for regime change waged by its allies, mainly Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar, with military support from the US, and warns that these efforts to forge a Sunni-based alliance of anti-Iranian states could yet ignite a full-scale regional war with devastating consequences.

AFRICA

Egypt: Echoes of a Verdict

Parliamentary elections in Egypt have not brought any significant democratic change or social justice and, although the hated emergency law under which Egypt was ruled for 31 years was lifted on 31st May, the armed forces are still in control. The Muslim Brotherhood, which dominates the parliament, is now seen by many as being subservient to the military, the way its leaders were before the uprising of 2011. (This was reflected in their fall in popularity that gave them only 25% of the first round Presidential votes despite winning 47% of the parliamentary seats six months ago).

The Brotherhood has long since abandoned the revolution and likes to share power with the military. There is rivalry and friction, but not to the extent of unsettling the prevailing order, which is in the interest of the elite classes. Thus, when rival political parties boycotted the Constituent Assembly hastily set up by the Brotherhood-dominated parliament to write a new constitution,

the military-dominated courts dissolved the Constituent Assembly in a move designed to keep the Brotherhood's power in check.

Large-scale protests returned to Egypt in April, and tens of thousands who protested on 20th April on Cairo's landmark Tahrir Square accused the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces of manipulating the upcoming presidential elections in order to hold on to power. Banners at the rally mostly called for the departure of figures from the former regime, especially Ahmed Shafiq, a former senior commander in the Egyptian Air Force, and ex-Arab League chief, Amr Moussa, both running for president. Thus Egypt has been set on a collision course, with the SCAF reluctant to give up power and the people demanding true democracy.

The verdict of a life sentence for former President Mubarak on 2nd June, added fuel to the fury, and protests spread across Egypt against the lenient verdict for a man guilty of complicity in the killing of 900 protesters during the 18-day uprising that removed him from power. Experts in Egyptian law expressed doubt if Mubarak would spend a long time in jail, since it was likely that the legal system which let off the hook those directly responsible for the killings will also acquit Mubarak, following his appeal against the verdict. Protesters also demand the disqualification of Ahmed Shafiq, a former senior official in Mubarak's regime and widely seen as the candidate of the SCAF that is in real control of the state, from the presidential runoff on 16-17 June against the Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohammed Morsi.

The runoff, a polarizing contest mirroring the conflict between Mubarak and the Islamists, sidelines the secular activists who led the popular uprising last year and the working class that has continued with the struggle for democracy. Many Egyptians do not want either candidate as president, and protesters denounced both candidates. Activists are urging the implementation of a law, passed by the recently elected parliament, barring top officials of the former regime during the past 10 years from running for office. Shafiq was briefly disqualified from the first round following the passage of the law, but reinstated 24 hours later when the presidential election commission referred the law to the Constitutional Court, which is due to rule on the issue just four days ahead of the runoff.

The military has pledged to hand over power to the new president, but it is likely to continue to influence state policy for years to come. The military will fight to limit the president's power if its candidate loses and, regardless of who wins the election, the military will remain the real power because Egypt still lacks a constitution and, in its absence, the new president, could be denied power until a constitution is created. This was a consideration that prevented several honest contenders for president to boycott the election.

[Sources: tv.globalresearch.ca; euronews.com; countercurrents.org]

Libya: Fruits of an Unjust War

On 8th May, around 200 disaffected rebels —angry over the cancellation of monthly payments to the militiamen who served as ground troops in the US and NATO campaign that overthrew Ghaddafi and placed the so-called National Transitional Council (NTC) in power in 2011— tried to assassinate interim Prime Minister Abdurrahim al-Keib. The fraud riddled compensation program for the rebels, which disbursed \$US1.4 billion, was suspended in April. Corruption is rampant and running into billions of US Dollars and, following the exposure of the widespread corruption running into several billions, the interim finance minister announced on 11th May that he would soon step down.

Abayomi Azikiwe, Editor of Pan-African News Wire, an international electronic medium for discussion of African affairs, writing in Global Research [<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=30861>] has commented extensively on the current situation in Libya. He observed that a situation of political chaos and lawlessness prevails in Libya, with the various militia groups scattered throughout the capital Tripoli and other parts of the country not brought into a national army.

Former officials of the Gaddafi government and its supporters have been criminalized and many remain outside the country. The NTC government has passed a law ordering the round-up for prosecution anyone supporting Jamahiriya, the former political system. Thus the upcoming elections will bar political interests that still remain supportive of the Jamahiriya. Besides, confusion and inconsistencies mar the electoral registration process so that the elections scheduled for 19th June will inevitably be a sham.

The article draws attention to the detention of at least 7000 people by the current NTC regime, with many suffering torture and extrajudicial killings. Even the UN, which through Resolutions 1970 and 1973 provided a basis for the overthrow of Ghaddafi, has objected to the unjust incarceration by the Libyan rebels. Interestingly, the rationale for the US-NATO war on Libya in 2011 was violation of human rights by the Ghaddafi regime.

Most of the human rights violations are of detainees accused of fighting with the Libyan military. People are also arrested for the “glorification” of Ghaddafi. Notably, Seif al-Islam, son of Muammar Ghaddafi, is still being held in a secret prison in Zintan and not allowed legal representation of his choice. When an International Criminal Court representative visited him recently for an interview, it was witnessed that two of his fingers were severed and a tooth was missing. But ICC prosecutors are allowing his detention inside Libya, despite NTC government claims that it is not in control of the facility where he is being held.

Threats against supporters of the former government also extend beyond Libya. The previous oil minister and Prime Minister Dr. Shokri Ghanem, was found dead in Vienna in late April. Noman Benotman, an analyst and a long-time opponent of the Gaddafi government said that "It was a professionally executed crime. It is the global energy mafia. It's to do with corruption, secret deals. People wanted to make sure he is not around anymore to talk".

Violence was triggered the southern region by the racist attitude of the NTC targeting the Toubou people engulfed before the fall of Ghaddafi, and conflicts continue between the Toubou people and Arab tribesmen.

The article sums up that the situation in Libya represents the outcome of imperialist wars waged by the US and the West over the last decade. Initiated on the basis of humanitarian concerns, these interventions always result in the worsening of conditions for the masses within the respective countries. What is not sufficiently known to the public in the US and the West is the actual cost of the war to the economy of their countries and to the society itself.

Mali: Whose Coup?

Hugo Chavez, President of Venezuela, in his statement of 22nd March denounced the coup d'état by factions of the army of the Republic of Mali that overthrew the government of president, Amadou Toumani Toure. [<http://www.granews.info/content/venezuela-rejects-mali-coup>]. He also expressed unconditional solidarity with the people of Mali, and called for respect for the constitutional legitimacy that the republican institutions of Mali.

As the leaders of Mali's coup received condemnation from neighbouring members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the 'international community', thousands took to the streets of the capital Bamako in support of the newly founded junta leader Captain Amadou Sanogo.

Although Sanogo has visited the US several times after being handpicked by the Pentagon to participate in an International Military Education and Training program sponsored by the State Department, representatives of the US had applied pressure on the coup leaders to step down and allow for elections to take place. But the US, despite condemning the coup, is not planning to reconsider its \$140-million aid program to Mali for 2012, while in contrast, the African Union had promptly suspended Mali's membership.

The ECOWAS bloc has put its troops on standby near Mali's borders, ready to intervene if the situation deteriorates, in the light of the tendency for the international community's to rush to military intervention in crisis stricken regions of Africa, like in Ivory Coast in West Africa during the crisis of 2010 – 2011.

Secessionism Back on Agenda?

While the main justification for the coup was the civilian government's inadequate response to an ongoing campaign of Tuareg secessionism in northern Mali, the current disarray has prompted the steady advance of armed Tuareg militias southward under the banner of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), to seize the north-eastern region of Kidal. The Tuareg, a 1.5 million strong traditionally nomadic and pastoral people scattered across the Sahel and Sahara countries now seek to secede from Mali and form an independent nation called Azawad.

The destabilization in northern Mali could also be due to the backing of insurgent activities by the al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Since the fall of Gaddafi, armed Malian and Nigerian ethnic-Tuareg fighters moved into the Sahara in military trucks used by al-Qaeda affiliated Libyan rebels. The resurgence of rebel activity has certainly benefited from access to advanced weapons once belonging to the radical Libyan Islamic Fighting Group.

The Tuareg secessionists are not a monolithic organization and include strong Muslim fundamentalist groups like the Ancar Dine claiming to control over regions previously attributed to the MNLA. Thus the escalation of conflict in northern Mali could lead to further instability and cause refugee problems that could add to the strain on Algeria and Niger.

The real danger, not only to Mali but the entire region, is military intervention by the West in the name of restoring social order. What the West seeks in Africa is a pretext to intervene militarily and thereby achieve territorial control. Thus, who rules Mali and how is not a matter for concern. The US military now counters the Uganda-based Lord's Resistance Army by expanding its military presence through AFRICOM (United States Africa Command) in the Democratic People's Republic of the Congo. Destabilization of Mali and West Africa, by any means, will provide the necessary excuse for the recolonisation of Africa.

[Sources: <http://globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=30054>; <http://www.rt.com/news/mali-coup-american-trained-377/>]

Sudan & South Sudan: On Brink of War

Abayomi Azikiwe, Editor, Pan-African News Wire writing on his website [<http://panafricannews.blogspot.com/2012/04/sudan-south-sudan-on-brink-of-war-over.html>] observed that, despite the amicable secession of South Sudan, failure to address major issues related to the demarcation of the borders between Sudan and South Sudan and the control of oil resources has led to fresh disputes and armed conflicts.

The seizure of Heglig oil fields in Sudan on 10th April by the Sudan People's Liberation Army, the armed forces of South Sudan, met with international

condemnation and a declaration of war by President al-Bashir of Sudan on 18th April. South Sudan on 20th April announced withdrawal of forces from Heglig. But on 23rd April Sudanese aircraft had reportedly bombed the oil towns of Bentiu and Rubkona in South Sudan. Large-scale troop build-ups by both Sudan and South Sudan have been reported along the border since 18th April. Armed conflicts include a series of battles between the SPLA-North, a rebel group allied with the SPLA, which says that the South Kordofan region of Sudan is part of South Sudan.

Following the resumption of fighting between the two countries, the South Sudanese government declared that it will cease exporting oil through Sudan and that it has secured funding to construct a new oil pipeline. It appears that South Sudan is seeking funding from China to build a new pipeline. South Sudan's President Kiir arrived in China on April 23 for a five-day official visit.

China is the largest investor in the oil industry in Sudan as well as South Sudan, and is in a strategic position to mediate the escalating conflict between the countries, despite China's long-term support, including arms supplies, for Sudan having been a sore point with South Sudan. But China, eager to tap South Sudan's oil was quick to develop ties with South Sudan.

The US, whose attitude towards Sudan has been hostile for decades, still seeks the overthrow of the government of Sudan as well the secession of the western region of Darfur, where fighting has intensified in recent times. South Sudan is also facing internal strife on various fronts, and conflict between the South Sudan Liberation Army (SSLA) and the government of President Kiir has led to the dislocation of thousands of people in recent months. The US will not miss an opportunity to take advantage of the growing conflicts within South Sudan and across the border.

LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN

Subversive Geostrategy in Latin America

Nil Nikandrov writing on recent US conduct in Latin America noted on 13th May [<http://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2012/05/13/pentagons-subversive-geostrategic-activity-in-latin-america.html>] says that although the US frowns on the progress of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) towards an autonomous regional security system, its response to recent UNASUR moves in the security sphere are muted.

US Defence Secretary Leon Panetta, during his five-day tour of Colombia, Brazil and Chile in late April, besides his generous declarations of love for peace and friendship, also lectured on combating drug cartels and criticised Venezuela over its rearmament aided by Russia and China, missing the point that it is the US wars for oil that prompted the rearmament.

The themes that Panetta addressed should give a fair idea of the US agenda in the region. He praised the joint anti-drug campaign of the US and Columbia, which also involved fighting leftist guerrilla groups, and expressed conviction that Plan Colombia, costing the US at least eight billion Dollars was a success and pledged continuation of the US-Columbia cooperation despite the shrinking financial resources of the US. Panetta seemed to tout the US-Colombia military ties as the model for the US to pursue in other Latin American countries as its short and long-term priority.

In Brazil, Panetta tried to lure Brazil into a close alliance, with pledges of support for a stronger and more globally engaged Brazil—a clear departure from the earlier policy of resisting the growth of Brazil as a global force. This generosity was undoubtedly the result of increased interactions between Brazil and Venezuela in the military sphere, in contrast to the hostility that prevailed before Chavez befriended Brazil to make it an ally in guarding Amazonia. Panetta also sought to rush Brazil into buying—at a cost of 4 to 5 billion US Dollars—36 US-made Super Hornet aircraft, loaded with top-secret technologies, usually supplied exclusively to top-trusted partners. Brazil, however, seemed undecided with other options on the table from France and Sweden. Brazil has not been pleased with the US for blocking, among other things, the 380 million US Dollar sale of its Embraer light aircraft to Afghanistan and another big contract of Embraer with Venezuela for Super Tornado aircraft, since some of the components came from the US.

Panetta delivered an accolade to Chile's experience in dealing with conditions of natural disaster and added that that the US would no longer resist the efforts countries of Latin America to cultivate their military potentials and that the US has far-reaching plans for "innovative alliances" with its partners. He asserted that "We are both Pacific nations" to drive home the importance of the Asia Pacific region to the security and prosperity of both countries. The signal was obvious—the US wants Chile to become instrumental in its control over Asia Pacific with an increasingly visible Chinese presence. Already, China is ahead of the US in trade with Brazil, Chile, and Peru, and poised to overtake the US in Argentina and Columbia.

The US is strengthening its network of military bases in Asia Pacific to counter China's expansion in the region. The US Southern Command spent around 500 million Dollars recently to open a new base in Chile's Concon, whose purpose is yet undeclared, but the official story that the purpose is to train Latin American peacekeepers under the UN auspices is untrue: the

Chilean parliamentary commission which had the compound inspected found it populated mostly by US servicemen.

In all three countries, Panetta called for “stronger mechanisms of regional security cooperation”. Given the fact that UNASUR and its defence council are trying to build the very mechanisms independently, it appears that Panetta’s mission was a subversive operation to drive divisions within the alliance. Chavez had recently asserted that the UNASUR move towards unity on the common defensive doctrine was inspired by recent US interventions.

The US plans to offer specific regional security proposals at the conference of defence ministers due to open in the Uruguayan capital of Montevideo in October. Uruguay’s deputy defence chief Jorge Menendez told in an interview that the UNASUR countries would stick to a coordinated position at the forum.

The signs are that UNASUR will be unreceptive to whatever the US has to offer in Montevideo, since now there are even fewer who are naïve enough to embrace “continental solidarity” with the Empire.

PUBLIC LIBRARY
JAFFNA

EUROPE

Political Bite of the Economic Crisis

Greece: Pro-Austerity Parties Collapse

The biggest winner in the elections of 6th May was the Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left), led by Greece’s youngest political leader Alexis Tsipras. It pushed the socialist Pasok to third place. Even more significant was the outright rejection of the EU bailout by two-thirds of the electorate. The firm rebuff of the pro-austerity parties and the ‘Troika’ (International Monetary Fund, European Union and European Central Bank) was a response to years of austerity measures that led to a collapse in living standards, 51% youth unemployment, and mass poverty. Notably, abstention was higher than predicted, at a record 35%, and ‘blank’ and invalid votes stood at 2.4%.

Despite a vast majority of voters rejecting the pro-austerity parties and a strong swing to the left, the immediate future depends on the outcome of elections scheduled for 17th June. As the extreme right ‘Golden Dawn’ too has scored on the anti-bailout and anti-austerity line, an outright victory of a left alliance opposed to austerity measures imposed by the ‘Troika’ is not assured. But prospects are strong for the new government to reject austerity measures and call the bluff of the EU about excluding Greece from the Eurozone and

possibly the EC, since economic conditions in Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain are not different from that of Greece.

In fact, expulsion could be a good thing for Greece in the long run since it will offer Greece an opportunity to explore socialist options, unhampered by the EU and its economic system. It is, however, premature to say that the large swing to the left by Greek voters would readily lead to a socialist alternative to the capitalist crisis and austerity cuts. The left needs to unite on a principled basis and rally the masses to evolve a feasible short as well as a long term political and economic strategies. Also, there is a need to guard against the far right capitalising on the crisis, since a return of the right would mean more misery for the masses compounded by a repressive regime.

France: Sarkozy Out!

Although the defeat of Nicolas Sarkozy by the Socialist Party's Francois Hollande in the run-off elections held on 6th May was by a narrow margin, it was a welcome change in France which was fed up with the handling of the economy by the Sarkozy regime. The change also has adverse implications for Germany's President Merkel who has been taking a hard line on EU countries defaulting on budgetary obligations.

A welcome move by President Hollande was the decision to withdraw French forces from Afghanistan, which means that French soldiers will depart an year earlier than originally planned and two years earlier than those from many coalition nations. Efforts by NATO commanders to stall the French move, out of fear that the French move would embolden other partners to pull out amid internationally faltering political support for the war, failed.

The Socialist Party is expected to fare well in the elections to the French Parliament on 10th June, although an outright victory is uncertain. An alliance with the Greens and perhaps the Left Front is more likely to secure a majority government.

The new government is unlikely, however, to make much difference to the ailing economy, and doubts exist about a change in attitude towards Syria, where the US-led imperialist meddling was backed by the Sarkozy regime.

Germany:

The ruling Christian Democratic Union of Angela Merkel suffered a humiliating defeat in the election in North Rhine-Westphalia, the most populous German state. Merkel's tough advocacy of austerity is designed to overcome budget deficits by heaping burdens on the working people so that big banks and big

business, which are responsible for the economic tragedy, remain untouched. Sixteen months ahead of next year's national elections, the voters delivered the CDU its worst defeat in North Rhine-Westphalia. The main opposition, the Social Democratic Party, was greatly strengthened and its partners, the Greens, held their own, so that the two will hold full sway there. Although a change of government next year will not mean a resolution of the economic crisis, the new government will be under pressure to be sensitive to popular sentiments or face civil unrest as in the troubled states of Europe.

Spain: Massive Anti-Austerity Protests

On 30th March, a day after an anti-austerity general strike paralysed Spain, the government announced further deep budget cuts for 2012 in its increasingly unpopular austerity driven response to EU demand to slash the budget deficit to manageable levels. But Spain's economic woes deepen by the day with unemployment reaching 24.4% —the highest in the Eurozone— and half of all Spaniards under the age of 25 out of work.

Angered by the country's grim economic prospects over 100,000 protesters took to the streets on 12th May in 80 cities across Spain. The four day-long demonstration marked first anniversary of the protest movement, to mark the first anniversary of the "Indignados" movement that was initiated on 15th May 2011 and inspired activists in other countries. Workers' unrest is on the rise across Spain, and coal miners rallied in Madrid on 31st May to protest against spending cuts in the mining sector.

With the country already facing 30 billion euros in cuts that have left public services severely under-funded and the country sinking further into recession, the government is pushing further austerity measures, prompting fears that Spain may soon need a Greek-style bailout. A more serious concern, however, is social unrest which, without a strong left initiative, could return Spain to fascism.

Bosnia: Economic Woes Trigger Protests

On 26th May, in the first major demonstration since the end of the civil war in the mid 1990s, thousands of workers took to the streets of the capital Sarajevo, calling on the government to do more to turn around the country's economic woes.

A recently agreed budget sets out unpopular wage and spending cuts, linked to securing a new IMF loan deal, and protesters threatened to stage a series of strikes if the business climate and employment levels do not improve.

However

A. Paheerathan

When
because of the inevitably rising prices
at the apex of the world order
and the sharpening of prevailing ethnic conflict
people rise irrepressibly
and unite as one,
transcending caste, race and narrow nationalism,
a change will come about unhindered.
A new cultural change will come about

In the unity of the good hearted
who mean or do no harm to another
for equality in a united world
with each respecting the rights of the other
and to ensure the end of poverty to all,
the living humankind will unite
and change human chemistry to be rid of caste.
A new life will come about.

In the effort to make new history
through sincere conduct and solidarity
to be rid of ones who lead by deception
and ensure the ascent of those who toil
by making the world belong to the toilers,
a new democratic change will come about.
There will be epochal changes on this beautiful earth
For humanity to bloom and blossom

Candles

Surjit Paatar

Light these candles.
Rise, light these candles.
There will remain,
These quarrelsome winds,
But you should light these candles.

May darkness not think the moon scared.
May night not think the sun dead.
Light these lamps to honor life.
Rise, light these candles.

Granted, the night's reign may be stubborn,
But rays of light still survive.
On dark pages, verses revealing life.
Rise, light these candles.

These cruel whirlwinds will remain,
The fall will shake away the leaves,
But this does not mean that new leaves will not grow.
Rise, light these candles.

Unafraid of the poison that spreads daily in the wind,
Nature continues to do its duty,
Of transforming poison into nectar.
Rise, light these candles.

Girls, do not cry, this is time for the raihiras*
Do not linger on death, reflect upon the passage of time
These difficulties will pass away.
Rise, light these candles.

Evening prayer of Sikhs, intended to add energy to one's being and living environments.

*Dr Surjit Patar (b.1945) is a reputed Punjabi academic and poet.
He has also translated into Punjabi plays by Federico García Lorca, and Girish Karnad, and poems by Bertolt Brecht and Pablo Neruda.*

The Hell With War

Ada Aharoni

**They announced a ceasefire
But we continued to bomb
The Beirut Airport
And the streets and the houses,
What is it with us?**

**I loathe killing, I hate destroying,
Horrible, pitiful war!
Why should we allow them
To force us to be here?
And what hence?
And when will it end?**

*This poem by the Israeli poet Ada Aharoni,
inspired by letters of Israeli soldiers in Lebanon,
was published in May 2001*

Published by V Mahendran of 15/4 Mahindarama Road, Ratmalana
Phone, Fax: 011 2473757; E-mail: newdemocraticparty@hotmail.com
Website: <http://ndpsl.org>

Printed at Comprint System, HL ½ Dias Place Colombo 12
Phone: 011 7201738