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ON NATIONAL RELATIONS IN SRILANKA

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Imayavaramban



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CHENNAI BOOKS

ON
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IN
SRI LANKA
Three Essays

Imayavaramban



CHENNAI BOOKS

On National Relations in Sri Lanka
Imayavaramban

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ABOUT THIS BOOK...

One year has passed since the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord (and the entry of the IPKF) which was supposedly aimed at bringing about a peaceful solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic problem which had led to an armed liberation struggle by the Tamils of Sri Lanka against national oppression.

The Indian forces which ostensibly came to Sri Lanka to restore peace, have not only waged war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam but have also occupied about 30 per cent of the island's territory and saturated it with nearly one lakh of troops.

All this has happened contrary to the expectations and aspirations of the people of this country.

At a juncture when Sri Lanka's independence and national sovereignty are in jeopardy, and at a time when Tamils have begun to entertain fears about the future of their right to self-determination, we publish this book titled 'On National Relations In Sri Lanka'.

This book contains three essays which analyse, from a Marxist-Leninist standpoint, the solution to national problems faced by the Tamil living in the North and East of Sri Lanka. These essays by **Imayavaramban**, appeared earlier in the Tamil journals **Chempathakai** and **Puthiya Poomi**.

The essay **On National Relations** appeared in 1983, just before the outbreak of ethnic violence. 'National Oppression And The Struggle For Liberation' was serialised during the period of ethnic violence in 1983; 'Peace And The Pact' was published after the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord.

The liberation struggle of the Sri Lankan Tamils has reached a turning point after the signing of the Peace Accord and has now entered its fourth stage.

We publish this book in the conviction that, at this critical juncture, it will be of great help in formulating a correct policy - based on practical experience - about the national question.

Our sincere thanks to the publisher's, Chennai Books. The publishers welcome readers' criticisms and views.

Puthiya Poomi

15/1, Power House Road,
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ON NATIONAL RELATIONS IN SRI LANKA

ON NATIONAL RELATIONS

1. National Consciousness, Narrow Nationalism and Jingoism :

The national question is identified as the most important political problem of Sri Lanka today. The national economy is approaching disaster and is patched up by unrestricted imports, employment opportunities unrelated to production and remittances from Sri Lankans working abroad, and thus the crisis is concealed from the vast majority of the population. The democratic political system and democratic rights are being systematically eroded. Even these matters are portrayed in the press as unrelated events caused by accidental force of circumstances.

Although the importance of the national question is being emphasized by the government, necessary action is not taken to solve it; on the contrary, the activities of the government only aggravate the situation. The national question is used as a pretext to increase the power of the police and the armed forces and to justify the high-handed actions of the government. I do not expect the parliamentary political parties to be interested in finding an early but lasting solution to the problem, because solving the problem threatens their

livelihood. Caste, religion, language, race and other such differences are essential to the survival of reactionary politics. Therefore, it is not realistic to expect complete solutions in the present context. But our failure to check efforts to transform contradictions among the people into hostile contradictions will only help the reactionaries. Neither Sinhala chauvinism nor Tamil separatism is in the interest of the broad masses. It is not unusual to find wrong opinions within one nationality about another. It is only when these wrong views are not rectified from time to time and are systematically cultivated that they seriously harm national relations. I write about national relations in Sri Lanka which have been long neglected and purposely damaged, because it is still not too late to put things right.

No one is ashamed of national consciousness, and nationalism can even be a matter of pride. In my view, nationalism, in the final analysis, is a meaningless thing. However, when differences exist between nationalities and these differences affect the various aspects of social life, many are unable to resist nationalistic feelings. Nationality is part of the identity of an individual and manifests itself in many forms such as language, religion and culture, and cannot therefore be totally disregarded. When human society and human thought develop to higher levels, national consciousness is forced to give way to other considerations. But any system of thought capable of accepting man as what he is cannot but respect his national consciousness. In today's context nationalism is unavoidable and has to be treated with due respect.

Those who claim to have overcome national feelings may have done so for purely selfish motives or could be motivated by a broader interest in the welfare of mankind as a whole. Hence, the absence of national consciousness in itself is not a criterion for progressive attitudes. What is important is whether national consciousness has been replaced by a deep concern for mankind as a whole or by selfishness and the interests of the exploiting classes.

Nationalism may exist in varying degrees among people. When one attempts to project the interests of his nationality as something opposed to those of other nationalities, national consciousness becomes narrow nationalism or chauvinism. Its symptoms include a low opinion of other nationalities, treatment of cultural differences as criteria of national superiority, and viewing problems entirely from the point of view of one's own nationality. When nationalism degenerates into narrow nationalism (or chauvinism) contradictions become hostile, and when the limits of tolerance are lowered, narrow nationalism easily degenerates into jingoism.

Merely because a society is advanced or 'civilized' it need not necessarily be free of narrow nationalism or jingoism: white racism in the US and in South Africa, the racism of fascist Germany and the chauvinism of Tsarist Russia are not things belonging to backward societies. Narrow nationalism and jingoism are like contagious diseases. The narrow nationalism and jingoism of one nationality only help to stir similar attitudes in another, and these evils are, thus, able to propagate themselves.

The exploiting classes have always taken advantage of human weaknesses. Nationalism appears to provide moral support to the individual, but in reality it is an expression of one's moral weakness. Reactionaries have paid much attention to using nationalism to divide the people and to prevent the oppressed masses from uniting. Ignorance and lack of clear vision favour the development and intensification of nationalism. Minds used to believing nationalist fallacies and half truths find it hard to recognize reality: that is no reason for us to be disheartened. Chauvinism and jingoism cannot for ever fool the masses: but we cannot wait, arms folded, for things to change on their own. The task of clearing minds muddled by nationalism is before us. We who are able to identify narrow nationalism in others should not fail to detect its existence in our midst. The struggle against narrow nationalism has to be fought on several fronts. This requires the ability to understand people of other nationalities and accept them as fellow human beings, as they are.

2. National Hostility and Misgivings :

Cultural differences (especially those which concern religious belief and traditional and customary practices) emphasize the individuality of different nationalities. They are not necessarily barriers to mutual understanding between nationalities; they do, however, lead to attitudes of superiority of one's own culture over those of others. When the relationship between two nationalities is friendly these differences lead to cultural exchanges and benefit cultural development. Linguistic differences, although hindering communication between nationalities, do contribute to the development of the languages when friendly relationship exists between the nationalities. There is an abundance of historical evidence in support of the positive role of cultural and linguistic differences.

There are also several instances where cultural and linguistic differences have been used to foment hostility between nationalities. There is little need to draw attention to anything beyond the anti-semitism of Europe in this century and white racism in South Africa. In modern history, the ruling classes have used linguistic, cultural and religious differences to safeguard their interests and to divide the oppressed people. Those whose interest is the well-being of the broad masses, therefore, differ from others who represent the exploiting classes in their approach to the national question.

Historical experiences, the interpretation of history, and the way in which the short term interests of individuals and social groups are affected manifest themselves as contradictions between nationalities. Reactionaries do not hesitate to make political use of these contradictions, where possible. Continuous development of these contradictions leads to hostility between the nationalities.

The development of friendly relationship between nationalities and social groups is essential to defend the interests of the oppressed people. Efforts by members of each nationality

to recognize problems particular to other nationalities, to understand their way of life and approach to life, and to see problems not only from the point of view of one's own nationality but also from that of people of other nationalities will help alleviate the hostility between nationalities and to strengthen friendship.

Certain preconceived notions exist among Tamils of the north and the east about Sinhalese and Muslims and upcountry Tamils. Prejudices also exist in the minds of members of one section of any nationality about another section of it. Neither are all these prejudices harmful nor are they without basis. But there are instances where one's experiences with one or two individuals of another nationality are interpreted as typical of an entire nationality. A given act of an individual at given time is not necessarily representative of his entire personality, and the characteristics of an individual cannot be attributed to his entire nationality. Those who seek to foment hostile contradictions between nationalities portray an entire nationality as evil on the basis of the evil deeds of one member. It is equally possible to use the activities of Sinhala racialists and that of Tamil racialists to portray either community as racial in attitude. Much effort is often spent in concealing the favourable features of the 'hostile' nationality and the genuine problems of that nationality.

What percentage of the Sinhala people have a clear idea of the current situation in the North? Let us leave out those who do not read the newspapers and those with no interest in politics; to what extent do the literate Sinhalese understand the situation? The fault is not theirs: the Sinhala newspapers are largely dominated by chauvinists and the big bourgeoisie. Even the so-called leaders of the Tamil nationality have not made any serious effort to explain the problem of the Tamil people to the Sinhala public.

Fears about South India has persisted among the Sinhalese for a long time. The history of Sri Lanka taught in Sinhala

places great emphasis on the damage inflicted by South Indian invasions on Sinhala kingdoms and on Sinhala civilizations. Reactionaries and racialists have been very effective in their campaign so that the word 'Tamil' brings to mind South India. The Citizenship Act of the D. S. Senanayage government capitalized on this fear. This fear may seem groundless to Tamils, but it is not correct to ignore it without taking account of the psychology of the Sinhala public. It was this fear which enabled the Sinhalese to believe the chauvinists who argued that the Federal Party was asking for a separate Tamil state when, in fact, they were demanding a federal form of government. The Federal Party merely conducted lectures to the English educated elite and the members of the houses of parliament about the differences between a federal state and a separate state but never concerned itself with explaining their demand to the Sinhala people.

The instruction by the Federal Party to Tamil people not to learn Sinhala following the Sinhala only Act of 1956, the anti-Sri campaign of 1957 and other such activities, and the campaign to carry out all business in Tamil only were all seen by the Sinhalese as acts motivated by hostility towards the Sinhala language. The printing of postal stamps by the Federal Party during the satyagraha campaign of 1961 was, not surprisingly, seen as a move towards a separate state. The Federal Party often acted without any consideration for the feelings of the Sinhala people and always failed to take steps to dispel honest, but rationally unjustified, fears and suspicious of the Sinhalese.

The image of Jaffna in the minds of many Sinhalese is good government jobs and the domineering attitude of persons in high office. This wrong notion is the result of ignorance. (Equally wrongly, in Jaffna today, the image of the Sinhalese is based on the experience of the people there with the police, the armed forces and racist thugs). The Tamil nationalist leadership has functioned, so far, without any interest in explaining to the Sinhala people about the way of life of the people in Jaffna, the need for hard work,

unemployment among educated youth, the social problems of Jaffna, today's oppression, the excesses of the armed forces and violence against the Tamil people. It still continues to function in the same way. Equally, they are not interested in explaining to the people in the North the poverty, homelessness, unemployment of educated youth, and the problems of landless peasantry among the Sinhalese. (This will not win any votes, anyway, at the general elections). When the Paddy Lands Act was introduced in 1957, the Federal Party and Tamil Congress MPs chose to vote against it because it was against the interests of the Tamil land owners of the north and the east—such is their social outlook. When legislation was to be introduced in 1957 against discrimination on the basis of caste, no MP from the North had the courage to propose it in parliament and that task was assigned to the MP for Trincomalee. How could these leaders who had no courage to confront the problem of caste oppression within their own community ever have the morality or strength of character to take their message to the Sinhalese and to explain the genuine grievances of the Tamil people to them? The beggars for votes in the south are no better than their counterparts in the north: problems in the south were approached from the point of view of the Sinhalese (upper and middle class interests) as much as they were approached from the point of view of the Tamils (of the upper and middle classes) in the north. The general and nationwide character of many problems was ignored, on purpose.

For a long time, mistakes of every Sinhalese were shown to be the nature of his nationality and the mistakes of every Tamil to be the nature of his. The narrow nationalistic and reactionary politicians and the big bourgeoisie are largely responsible for encouraging this trend. If we seriously intend defeating the reactionaries in overcoming the political crisis of today, it is necessary for the oppressed people of the country to transcend national hostility and suspicions about other nationalities. Today, national hostility can benefit only a few hundred racist thugs, the reactionary government seeking to cover up its problems, and its imperialist masters.

NATIONAL OPPRESSION AND THE STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION

NATIONAL OPPRESSION AND THE STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION - 1

Where there is oppression there is struggle. This is a truth borne out by human history. Emancipation of the human race is possible only through the establishment of equality among men. In a social set-up which enables one man to enslave, oppress and exploit another, it is not only the oppressed but also the oppressor who is bound by the process of oppression. It is therefore that the science of Marxism emphasizes that the liberation of mankind is possible only through the establishment of a classless society.

Today, in all societies based on exploitation of man by man, the contradiction between the working class and the capitalist class is the most important social contradiction and remains an antagonistic contradiction which could be resolved only through struggle. We cannot, however, ignore the uneven development of human societies of the world and the socio-cultural, linguistic, religious and other differences within human societies, which have developed over a long period of history. These contradictions are basically non-antagonistic and, in a healthy social environment, could enhance the advancement of the human race. But, at the

same time, the ruling exploiting classes which want to prolong their dominance in the exploitative social system have succeeded, in the short run, in transforming contradictions among people into antagonistic contradictions. Under conditions where economic stagnation and other internal crises within a society lead to sharpening of the most important class contradiction and consequently to the taking over of state power by the working class, the exploiting classes have never hesitated to develop basically non-antagonistic contradictions among the people into antagonistic contradictions in order to deflect the course of the revolutionary struggle. Racism, national chauvinism and religious and caste fanaticism have always played a reactionary role in human history. Hence it is important for us to understand the Marxist position in situations where oppression of man by man is carried out in the name of caste, religion, race, language and nationality.

While the principal cause for oppression relates to class contradictions, we cannot ignore the various forms in which class contradictions manifest themselves in society. It is therefore that, Marxism which considers nationalism to be reactionary in essence, treats the nationalism of colonialism and neocolonialism to be most reactionary, it supports national liberation struggles against oppression by the colonialists and neocolonialists. In other words, in situations where working people are oppressed on a given basis, Marxism approves of their struggle being carried out on the very basis on which they are oppressed. In this sense, the nationalism of the oppressive colonialists is reactionary and that of the people who rebel against oppression is progressive and oppressed people are fully justified in carrying out their struggle on the very basis on which they are oppressed. That is why Marxist - Leninists claimed that it was correct for people oppressed on the basis of caste to unite and struggle as people of oppressed castes. But, at the same time, they emphasized that the struggle was not between any particular castes and should be seen as a struggle against the continuation of the oppression of man by man in the name of caste. They correctly recognized that all people

of the 'upper castes' were not oppressors, although the oppressors belong to those caste groups. In fact, not all the members of the 'upper castes' have been beneficiaries of the caste system and a vast majority of them are still subject to economic exploitation and oppression. Thus the struggle is not against any particular caste but against caste oppression and, in the long run, for the annihilation of the caste system and caste discrimination. The national liberation struggles of the past few decades, similarly, were not against the British, French or American people but against the colonialists and neocolonialists. The moment a liberation struggle makes racial hatred its basis, it begins to develop reactionary features within itself. A liberation struggle is the developed stage of the struggle of an oppressed people for their rights, when denial of rights takes the form of racial oppression, repression and genocide, the struggle against it develops and takes the form of a liberation struggle. The meaning of the term liberation cannot, however, be determined mechanically. The purpose of liberation determines the form of liberation.

The liberation struggle of the American Negro people started as a struggle against slavery, developed through several struggles for their rights and still continues as a struggle demanding social equality free of discrimination on the basis of colour. White racism and racial oppression in the US will not end as long as the US continues to be a superpower. The oppression of Negro and Hispanic minorities still continues; the minor reforms hitherto undertaken have failed to reach the root of the problem, and the liberation struggle continues. Although the cultural differences spread over a long period of history distinguishes these minorities as individual nationalities, their struggle cannot take the form of a struggle for secession. In fact, some Negro liberation movements proposed in the 1960s that the Negroes of US should become a sovereign state. But the vast majority of the Negro people rejected that proposal.

The struggle in South Africa (Azania) today and that in Zimbabwe some years ago were against their respective racist

white minority regimes. The black and white people of each of these countries, to a great extent, do not share characteristics of a common nationhood. But the struggle in neither of the countries concerned the setting up of several independent states based on nationality. The aim of the liberation struggle in each case has always been a united independent nation free from oppression of one man by another on the basis of race, tribe, language or religion.

In many neocolonial countries of the third world, colonialism intervened well before the countries could develop from feudal societies into capitalist societies and, as a result, they developed into countries without real economic independence with partially developed capitalism with several of the bad features of the old set up. Because of backwardness in economic development and the ascent to political power by the national bourgeoisie before the emergence of a powerful proletarian leadership, it became possible for the neocolonialists and hegemonists to meddle in the internal affairs of these countries. The national bourgeoisie, incapable of facing up to the economic problems of the country, uses various ploys to keep itself in power. The pressure of comprador capitalists and neocolonialism, on the one hand, and the needs of the working people and the effects of their growing political awareness, on the other, bring to the fore the vacillatory opportunist mentality of the national bourgeoisie. In order to continue in power as a class and in order to prevent the national economic crisis from developing into its own political crisis, it attempts to compromise with comprador capitalism and neocolonialism. Although this compromise is not very durable, force of circumstances and the lack of opportunity to join hands with a powerful proletarian movement compel the national bourgeoisie to surrender, however hesitantly, to the imperialist forces. On the other hand, recognizing the real danger of the internal economic and political crisis developing into a mass revolution, it resorts to dividing the oppressed people on the basis of religion, language, region and caste. This is in keeping with the exploiting class nature of the national bourgeoisie.

Although the national bourgeoisie benefits, in the short run, from its compromise with neocolonialists and succeeds in holding on to political power for sometime, the overall beneficiaries are the comprador bourgeoisie and the neocolonialists. The introduction and encouragement of conflict among the people results in the negation of gains in the continuing struggle against neocolonialism. It is against this background that the national question in countries subject to neocolonialism, the struggle against national oppression and the right to self determination need to be examined. Marxism is not a set of dogmatic formulae. Any form of Marxism which fails to take into account social reality in its historic context and apply Marxist theory scientifically on that basis is of no value. If we fail to approach problems in their various aspects from different angles and to implement short term needs with awareness and concern for the long term interests, we will not only fail in our mission but also be likely to act against it.

There are many who liberally quote Marx, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao Zedong on the national question. If we examine whether they use these quotations with sincerity, the answer very often is in the negative. The quotations are often out of context and ignore the Marxist outlook and analysis and the historical conditions to which they relate. If it is possible to arrive at definite conclusions and clear solutions, on the basis of definitions in dictionaries or a set of quotations, in issues as complex as the national question, there would hardly have been any need for Lenin, Stalin and Mao Zedong to struggle to develop Marxist thought after Marx and Engels. The line of the Russian revolution and that of the Chinese revolution on the national question are fundamentally similar. But major differences exist in the implementation of the policy on national question in the two revolutions. The former was motivated by the need to unite the Russian people and all the nations oppressed and dominated by the Tsarist Russian empire over a long period of history and to win liberation for all the people oppressed by Tsarist rule through the overthrow of that reactionary regime. Hence, the right to self-determination had

to take the form of the right to secede. The Chinese revolution, in contrast, was in a large country with many nationalities struggling to liberate itself from a semi-colonial, semi-feudal social set-up and from foreign aggressors. If self-determination in that context was interpreted as the right to secede, the imperialists and colonialists would have taken advantage of that right to carve up China. Neither China nor the Soviet Union has achieved a completely satisfactory solution to its national question. This is because the national question in these countries has a very complex historical background. The only country with a comparably complex national question is India, whose record needs no elaboration.

We can say with certainty that much more has been achieved in developing friendly relationship between the various nationalities of China and the Soviet Union than has been achieved anywhere under capitalism. It is remarkable that, in China, the minority nationalities without the right to secession enjoy a greater degree of freedom, equality and self-determination than in any other country, including the Soviet Union. To argue therefore that the Chinese solution would apply to every nation of the world would be absurd. What are important are the social set-up and the political outlook which enabled a good solution. Even in China there have been instances where the national question has been mishandled. Several errors were made during the 'Cultural Revolution'. But the fact that the errors could be rectified and the problems resolved without hatred between nationalities only emphasises the importance of a correct socio-political outlook in handling problems.

The national question in Sri Lanka developed, during recent years, from the stage of the struggle for rights of the Tamil people (especially in the North and the East) against Sinhala chauvinist rule into a liberation struggle against repression and racial oppression by the UNP Government which is the sole representative of Sinhala chauvinism, reaction and imperialism. Opinions differ about the form of the liberation. But it has become more and more clear that in the absence of an autonomy which ensures the rights of the minority

nationalities an amicable solution is not possible. Marxist-Leninists have always approached this problem from the point of view of how the solution to the national question will help the liberation and salvation of oppressed people, both nationally and internationally. It still remains the correct approach to the problem.

We should first criticize correctly the point of view that the liberation of the Tamil people is distinct from that of the Sinhalese people and the interests of one people are harmful to those of the other. Such viewpoints have been carefully nursed over a considerably long period by the reactionary communalist leaders of both the Tamil and the Sinhalese communities. To rectify or to eradicate these views in one day is not possible. First the historical falsehoods on which these views are based should be negated. If the activities undertaken to safeguard the interests of the upper classes of the Sinhalese, Tamils and Moors and to resolve their own internal contradictions and to prolong their political power could be correctly recognized, then it will be clear how the conflicts arising from the various needs of the well-to-do classes of different nationalities were used to split and to divide the masses. Sri Lankan politics should be freed from the continued domination by the ideologies of the reactionary Tamil leadership and Sinhala chauvinists, which were developed to cover-up the class-nature of the problem, in the course of covering up their own reactionary political mistakes. It is especially important for the genuine fighting forces of the Tamil people struggling against racial oppression and the patriotic Sinhalese progressive forces who have dared to struggle against the anti-democratic dictatorial trends to have a clear idea of the class nature of the UNP regime and of the class outlook necessary to achieve success in the struggle against it.

Until tendencies to conceal class contradictions and to portray the national question as entirely an ethnic conflict is overcome, slogans of socialism and human rights will be devoid of substance.

NATIONAL OPPRESSION AND THE STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION - 2

Sinhala chauvinism was not born yesterday, nor were narrow nationalist attitudes among the Tamils, Moors and other minorities. Caste, religion, regionalism and other differences entered politics long before independence in 1948. These differences did not, however, give rise to views which stood in the way of Sri Lanka being granted independence from British rule, as one nation. The Sinhala-Moslem conflict earlier in this century was a consequence of bitter rivalry between traders of the two communities. It is useful to remember that those who encouraged such communal conflicts have mainly been right-wing politicians and members of the exploiting classes. Even today, those who attempt to portray the liberation struggle of the Tamil people as something hostile to the Sinhala people and as one with no room for any solution other than secession try to equate the political opportunism of the Sinhala parliamentary left and the blatant Sinhala chauvinism of the right. This is very mischievous. The refusal by some to take into consideration the historical conditions which enabled the birth of Sinhala chauvinism and its development into a dominant force in national politics and to recognise correctly the circumstances under which narrow nationalism developed among the Tamil people is related to that mischievousness.

We have little doubt that those who negate the class basis of these social problems and insist that differences in race, religion, language, caste, region and culture give rise to permanent divisions among people are reactionaries at heart. It is important to note that, in order to portray the current liberation struggle as favouring a given political orientation and to divert its course in that direction, not only contemporary history and political affairs but also those of our long past have been distorted. The liberation struggle of a people subject to national oppression is adequately justified by the very acts of oppression. To distort history and to attribute a historically antagonistic nature to differences between people of different nationalities, because of some compulsion to provide further justification for the struggle, is in fact an attempt to distort the problem rather than to seek a solution to it.

The liberation struggle of the Tamil people today is not only just but also inevitable and necessary. In today's context, its result will be determined by the attitude of the Sinhala chauvinist reactionaries who are the oppressors and by the development of the struggle against their oppression. It is clear that the existing political structure of Sri Lanka is inadequate to guarantee the fundamental rights of the minority nationalities. An independent Tamil Eelam is only one of several feasible solutions and has not become the best or the only available solution. A solution which grants autonomy to the national minorities of Sri Lanka, while guaranteeing that foreign countries will not be able to take advantage of the minority problem or any other reason to interfere in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka, is possible. It is, however, becoming clear to all that it is not possible to dominate the Tamil people or other minorities by sheer oppression. The detailed structure of the solution will emerge only on the basis of the prevailing political situation at the time when sincere effort is made for an amicable and peaceful solution. We do not doubt, however, that a just and durable solution is possible only through a fundamental political change in the whole of Sri Lanka. Before we seek possible solutions, it will help us to look at some unclear aspects of the history of Sri Lanka's internal problem.

Before we proceed, let us, for the benefit of those who seek to assign a sense of historical permanence to the apparent hostility between the Sinhala and Tamil people, take a leaf from the recent political history of Sri Lanka. When the Citizenship Act, designed to deprive the hill country Tamil plantation workers of their citizenship, was presented in Parliament, a sizeable majority of the Tamil MPs from the North and the East voted in favour, while the Sinhala 'left' was unanimous in its opposition to the Act. Does this not tell us that in politics class interest take precedence over that of nationality?

Those who emphasize the separatist demand as the only feasible solution to the national problem claim that Sri Lanka was at no time one nation and it was British imperialism which put it together. The truth in this claim is lost when that argument is extrapolated to show that Sri Lanka always comprised Tamil and Sinhala kingdom. The nation state is a creature of the post-feudal era, and it should be noted that, even on the Indian sub-continent, kingdoms were not based on language or race. The Chera, Chola and Pandiya kingdoms of South India as well as the Pallava kingdom which emerged later in history do by no means support the thesis of ethno-linguistic nation-state put forward by the advocates of separatism. Sri Lanka, being a small island, had a strong possibility of being under one powerful sovereign. When that rule weakened, smaller kingdoms emerged. There is no evidence to suggest that the kingdoms of Sri Lanka had permanent boundaries or to assume that they were based on ethnic or linguistic distinctions. The Jaffna kingdom in the north was relatively recent and established as a consequence of the invasion of the island by the Chola empires. Tamil people lived outside the borders of the Jaffna kingdom in large numbers: Tamil people and an advanced Tamil culture existed outside the Jaffna Peninsula long before the Jaffna kingdom was established. The large number of Buddhist archaeological relics discovered in Jaffna, the countless items of Saivite relics discovered in the south, the evidence of Sinhala influence in village names in Jaffna and the influence of Tamil in the names of Sinhala villages

further indicate that borders between kingdoms were not determined on linguistic, religious or ethnic basis. It should, therefore, be stressed here that today's liberation struggle of the Tamil people has no historical continuity with the Jaffna kingdom of the past. The justification and the cause of this struggle emerge out of contemporary politics. The Sinhala-Tamil national differences have, for many years, been presented as Aryo-Dravidian differences. This fallacy owes itself to a considerable extent to the Mahavamsa. The legend of Prince Vijaya, the apparent founder of the Sinhala race, is very vague. It is not certain, whether his country of origin was on the west coast or the east coast of India. Even if Vijaya was an Aryan Prince, it is ridiculous to claim that the entire Sinhala race descended from Vijaya and his companions. In early 1983, Professor Valentine Basnayake, a senior don in the Medical Faculty of the University of Feradeniya, Sri Lanka, presented the findings of a study carried out by him and a few of his colleagues. It concluded that the physiological differences between the Tamils and the Sinhalese are statistically insignificant. The differences in features between urban Sinhalese and urban Tamils and those between their rural counterparts were insignificant when compared with those between the urban and rural populations of Sinhalese as well as Tamils. On the other hand, the physiological differences between Aryan and Dravidian people in India are statistically significant, despite considerable racial mixing over several millenia.

The Salagama caste among the Sinhalese were South Indians settled by the Dutch colonialists on the south-western coast of Sri Lanka a few centuries ago. Their family names (not surnames as understood today but 'house names' as known among the Sinhalese) are Tamil names, in most instances. The origins of the Karava caste have been traced back to Tamils by Dr. Michael Roberts a Sri Lankan historian presently in Australia. The Catholics of the north - western coast, who were predominantly Tamil, became Sinhalese early in the century as a consequence of an edict of the Roman Catholic diocese of that region to conduct church services in Sinhala. Besides them, less than a century ago, Malayali toddy-tappers

from the Kerala in South India who were brought to the island by the British colonialists settled down in Sri Lanka and were absorbed into the Sinhalese population. Any possibility of racial purity is highly questionable in the context of prolonged contact with Arab traders along the coast line and by racial mixing with the Portuguese which started over four centuries ago. Even in recent times, the upper castes among Tamils as well as Sinhalese have shown greater hostility to inter-caste marriages than to inter-racial marriages. This, once again, suggests that class differences have been more dominant than racial differences.

One piece of evidence used by those who attach great weight to cultural differences between the Sinhalese and Tamils concerns language. It has for long been claimed that Sinhala is an Aryan language and Tamil, Dravidian. The arguments in support of the Aryan origins of Sinhala are not always well founded. It is said that modern Sinhala is the successor to the ancient language 'Hela' which existed in Sri Lanka. There are serious phonetic differences between old Sinhala and Sanskrit. The advent of Buddhism introduced new sounds from the Pali to Sinhala. The sounds of Sanskrit entered Sinhala later and the influence of Sanskrit is related to the development and spread of Mahayana Buddhism. Many Sinhala words in current use are of Tamil origin or entered Sinhala through Tamil. The Sinhala script is more akin to South Indian scripts than to Devanagari and other North Indian scripts. Sinhala and Malayalam characters are closely related to those of Grantha, a script developed some centuries ago for transcribing Sanskrit words in Tamil. There are fundamental similarities between Tamil and Sinhala grammar, and their declension, junctural features and syntax have much in common with other South Indian languages. An important characteristic of all nouns in Aryan languages is that all names whether referring to animate or inanimate objects have a gender based on phonetic grammatical considerations. In Sinhala and all Dravidian languages, masculine and feminine genders refer only to human beings, deities and mythological characters. All lower forms of life and inanimate objects are referred to in the neuter gender. The term 'Arya Sinhala

race' is based on the falsification of history in the Mahavamsa. It was as a consequence of this that the 'Aryan' nature of Sinhala gained emphasis. It is interesting that when a movement to purify Sinhala was initiated early in the century, somewhat similar to the 'pure Tamil movement' in South India, moves were made to rid Sinhala of alien words from the Sanskrit. Even if it was to be assumed that Sinhala is an Aryan language, it is undeniable that Sinhala was greatly enriched through the direct influence of Tamil.

Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism of today is particularly keen to emphasize the significance of Theravada Buddhism in the history and culture of Sri Lanka. The view that Theravada Buddhism has always been dominant among the Sinhalese masses prevails in Sri Lanka. But it is undeniable that Mahayana Buddhism was dominant for a considerable period of history. Mahayana Buddhism was influenced by Hinduism and has had a lasting impact on the culture of the Sinhala people. Further, the practice of Buddhism in Sri Lanka is not exactly the path prescribed by Theravada Buddhism. Perhaps, a minority of the Sinhala Buddhist laity and a large number of the clergy strictly adhere to Theravada Buddhism. But the vast majority of the Sinhala Buddhists worship Hindu deities along with the Buddha and go on pilgrimages to Hindu shrines in Kataragama and Muneeswaram, thereby deviating from Theravada Buddhism. The cultural tradition of the Sinhalese and Tamils have much more in common than the practice of the westernized and the more traditional sections of either nationality.

The common features between the two nationalities in language, religion, culture and other areas do not suggest two nationalities divided and hostile throughout their long history in the island. On the contrary, they suggest kinship and mutual support. The history of the Southern Indian sub-continent is full of instances where Sinhala kings took the side of one or the other of South Indian Tamil rivals in conflict and equally of South Indian intervention in conflicts between Sinhala rivals. The only meaningful conclusion to be drawn from this is that, in feudal society, which preceded the birth of the nation state, conflicts between kings were not based on race, language

or religion but on clash of interests of different sections of the ruling classes. Even at the time of arrival of the British, contradictions between the two major nationalities of Sri Lanka were not antagonistic. The emergence of a capitalist class following social changes in the wake of British colonialism, the practice of divide-and-rule at which the colonialists had developed mastery, and the emergence of a local elite class created by the colonial regime mark the beginning of narrow nationalism in Sri Lanka. The roots of the national problem in Sri Lanka and the causes and course of its development have much in common with the national question in many other post-colonial societies.

The exploiting classes succeeded, although temporarily, in deflecting economic issues and class conflict by using difference in race, religion, language, region and caste. This, no doubt, has weakened the struggle against imperialism and neocolonialism at the national as well as the international level.

NATIONAL OPPRESSION AND THE STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION - 3

Although narrow nationalism has seen rapid growth among the majority nationality as well as the minority nationalities during recent years, differences between nationalities have not played a dominant role in political and social change over long periods of history and there is no evidence in Sri Lankan history to support claims that state boundaries have consistently been on the basis of ethnic distribution. Therefore, the specific nature of existing contradictions between the nationalities can be correctly understood only on the basis of recent history.

The development of the national bourgeoisie and of the state employment sector cultivated under the British colonial regime led to new social contradictions arising from the need for these new classes to develop and safeguard their economic power, comforts of life and concessions granted by the colonial regime. On the one hand, adverse effects of British colonial domination on their class interests gave rise to strong anti-colonial sentiments, while, on the other, the slow economic growth inadequate to meet their fast growing needs led to powerful rivalries among them. Various social differences were taken advantage of in the scramble for the concessions won from the British. Among the Sinhalese, the elite of the

majority Goigama caste, corresponding to Vellala caste among Tamils, did not take an active interest in trade. As a result, members of other caste groups in the western and southern coastal regions, were able to take the lead in trade and make better use of the educational facilities provided by the Christian missionaries.

Thus the social basis which enabled the continuation of the caste system and caste oppression became weaker. Although caste oppression continued to have its effects on economically backward caste groups, when compared with the more rigid caste structure and oppression in the north, it was facing rapid collapse. The almost total domination of the field of education by the upper classess among the Vellala caste of the north helped the continuation there of oppression based on caste. Although caste differences have for long played an important role in the politics of the South, it was in the North that the people of the oppressed castes arose in heroic struggle against caste oppression. In the south caste differences took the form of rivalry between equally powerful forces representing different caste groups. Under British rule, the well to do sections of the Burghers and Christians enjoyed a few concessions. As Roman Catholic and Protestant Christian missionary schools were at the forefront of providing education in the English medium, it became relatively easier for members of these religious communities to have access to education and to better employment. Although the Christian missionaries were initially concerned with winning converts to their respective faiths, in course of time, they paid more attention to developing a good relationship with the upper class Buddhists and Hindus. The arrival of the American missionaries in the Jaffna peninsula, enabled Jaffna to have greater access to higher education than the rest of the island, with, of course, the exception of course, the exception of Colombo. The economy of the Jaffna peninsula was conditioned, on the one hand, by its climate, which demanded very hard physical work, and, on the other, by the attraction of government employment under the British-rule and of small business. A 'money-order economy' with home and family in the peninsula and employment and earning outside it emerged. Of those who left the Jaffna peninsula for

better employment and business prospects, the majority of those who became wealthy and socially influential chose to reside permanently in Colombo and other cities in the south, while a very large number, unwilling to break with their social environment and unable to give up their employment settled in rented apartments in the cities in the south. Even among those who had their own houses in Colombo, many held on to their land and property in the peninsula. Until recently, the dominance of the Tamils in government jobs and in the professions did not lead to hostility of the vast majority of Sinhalese towards the Tamils. In fact, more complaints came from the upper-middle class Tamils of the Eastern Province, especially Batticaloa, than from their Sinhalese counterparts about the government servants and traders of Jaffna district being not adequately interested in the regions where they were making a living and about their lack of concern for any place other than their own region in the north. This would show that the basis of the contradiction is not nationality but the economic needs and the rivalry for dominance within a middle class which was expanding both in size and in material needs: this in turn led to the encouragement of conflicts based on race and religion.

It was the Christians who came next to the Burghers in being favoured by the British for employment in the colonial administration and in British owned companies. It should be noted that many Sinhala Buddhist leaders of later years and their ancestors were able to earn and enhance their power and wealth because they were Christians. The Protestant Christian upper classes, unlike their Roman Catholic counterparts, who were under direct domination of the authority of Vatican, developed, at least in appearance, a good relationship with the upper classes among Hindus and Buddhists. This resulted in a long period of hostility of the Sinhala Buddhist extremists towards the Roman Catholic Church and Catholic Action designed to protect the interests of the upper middle class Catholics. The Catholics among Tamils were, predominantly, economically backward and it may be said that the wealthier members of the Tamil Catholic community were people from India who settled in the Western Province in later years.

Nevertheless, the influence of the Catholic Church, which for a long time supported reactionary politics in Sri Lanka, was until recently very great among the Tamil Catholic population. The main reason why this did not develop into a Hindu Catholic conflict lies in the continued domination of the political leadership of the Tamils in the north by the Tamil upper middle classes and the activities of the Catholic Church being uninjurious to their class interests. The Saivaite (Hindu) revivalism which gained momentum early in the century around the personality of Arumuga Navalar failed to gain significance in the politics of later years.

It was only after 1977 that the national question gained importance within the Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church which showed little interest in the language problem fought to the bitter end on the question of the state take-over of schools. This merely reflects the fact that the interest of the Roman Catholic Church in any issue is governed by the class interests of its authorities. One reason why the conflict between the nationalities has had a more intense effect on the affairs of the church is that the economically backward sections of Catholics with close contact with the lower ranks of the clergy have been subject to severe oppression in the north.

The introduction of standardization of marks for university admissions, supported by changes in national and international situations, contributed significantly to the development of the national question to its present state. Nevertheless, the strength of feeling among Tamil students of Colombo and Jaffna about the question of standardization was not to be observed among Tamil students from other areas. When standardization was supplemented by the "district quota" system, it was enthusiastically supported in the Eastern Province, the hill country and the districts of Mannar and Mullaitivu. Further, the demand to make Kilinochchi a separate district was motivated to some extent by the advantage of admissions on a district basis. There is no dispute among us that standardization was introduced for unacceptable reasons and that it was carried out in a contemptible manner. But arguments for concessions

to districts with poor educational facilities and to students with inadequate educational opportunity cannot be dismissed lightly. The district quota system really helped only the better off sections of the middle classes in the backward districts. We know several instances of corruption where students register themselves in schools in the Eastern Province but really study in Jaffna or Colombo to secure places in the university on the bases of their district quota. The district quota system simply side-tracked the basic problem of education and its class basis and, thereby, indirectly encouraged the development of racial feelings. What is most important is that the role of matters relating to university admissions in the intensification of the contradictions between the nationalities only demonstrates the significance of upper middle class interests in the national question. The conflict of opinion in the Tamil districts about the merits of the district quota system further underlines the importance of these class interests.

The first major incident of ethnic violence in Sri Lankan history, was triggered by rivalry between traders of the Sinhala and Moor communities and to this day in nationalistic politics, the 'feeling of insecurity' among the middle classes and the prevalent desire within that class 'to advance socially' have always played an important part in whipping up feelings leading to violent conflict. It was the parasitic lumpen proletariat which was used by the chauvinists in arson, looting, murder and other acts of crime and vandalism during every major incident of communal violence. Until 1977, there was virtually no instance of hostilities within the working class on the basis of nationality and trade unions dominated by nationalistic sentiments were largely middle class. It is worth noting that during the ethnic violence of 1983 nationalistic sentiments within the middle classes were stronger than ever before.

The decline of the parliamentary left since the mid-70's and the weakening of their trade union organizations made it possible, not only for the national bourgeoisie, but also for the UNP, which was generally considered the representative of the comprador bourgeoisie, to play a dominant role in the trade union movement under its new identity as a force of ultra-nationalism and Sinhala chauvinism. The weakening of the

trade union movement of Sri Lanka after 1977 to a state where they could not even effectively resist ethnic violence is partly a consequence of the loss of the national leadership of several unions to the forces of reaction, because of the opportunism of the parliamentary left. It should nevertheless be noted that, even today, the trade unions with a long tradition of relationship with the left movement are among those at the forefront of the opposition to communalism and national oppression.

The major instance of nationalistic conflict among the oppressed classes of peasants and workers concerns the contradictions between the peasantry and the plantation workers in up country districts such as Kandy and Matale. This relates to the settlement of indentured labour from South India in plantations set up in lands taken over from Sinhalese peasants by the British colonialist administration. The Sinhala peasant saw the plantation worker as the person who grabbed his rich cultivable land. The colonialist and plantation administrations ensured that the plantation workers were isolated from the Sinhala peasantry. Reactionary trade unions were able to strike root among the plantation workers because of the prevalence of illiteracy and lack of political awareness among the plantation workers. Around the time of national independence when political awareness among them was likely to grow sharply, the Sinhala chauvinist UNP succeeded in isolating them from the mainstream of national politics by introducing the Citizenship Act. When the plantations were nationalized in the early 70's Sinhala chauvinists were active in driving out the plantation workers from the estates where they have been living for generations. The years of drought led to a situation where the plantation workers were reduced to begging in the cities of the hill country and to migrate to the north and the east in search of livelihood. But it is important to note that, until the UNP came to power once again in 1977, racial violence was not unleashed on plantation workers on a national scale.

Let alone the parties of the national bourgeoisie, between 1969 and 71 the opportunistic leadership of the JVP carried out a

vicious communalist campaign among the Sinhala peasantry of the hill country against plantation workers. This, once again, highlights the difference between the opportunism of the JVP and the long history of the left movement in Sri Lanka. The left movement, although deflected and weakened by the influence of Trotskyism and parliamentary opportunism, is still in the forefront, along with other forces connected with the traditions of the left and trade union movement in opposing communalism and national oppression. This should, clearly and firmly, demonstrate the class nature of the national question.

NATIONAL OPPRESSION AND THE STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION - 4

The heightening of contradictions relating to the national question occurred only during recent years in the long period of political history of Sri Lanka and Sinhala chauvinism and narrow nationalism among the minorities were cultivated on the basis of the short term interests of the middle classes. Although the development of contradictions among the nationalities appears to serve the interests of the national bourgeoisie, it leads to conflicts among the sections of the various nationalities which could be mobilized against imperialism, and, therefore, in the final analysis, safeguards the interests of imperialism. The national economy is weakened as a result of hostility between the nationalities and consequently the interests of the national bourgeoisie and of the majority and minority nationalities are sacrificed to serve imperialist interests. The national bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeois middle classes, because of their vacillatory nature and their political short-sightedness which make them sacrifice their long-term interests for short-term gains, readily fall prey to communalism. While bourgeois democracy serves the interests of the bourgeoisie, it also holds aloft the principle of universal franchise, although only nominally. The bourgeoisie, in order to ensure the electoral success of political parties serving their interests, resort to all

sorts of trickery. In parliamentary democracy the clash between the ruling and opposition parties mainly reflects the contradictions within the capitalist classes. In situations where some of the sharp aspects of these contradictions gain emphasis, matters like national integrity, self-determination, economic independence and anti-imperialist struggle become important issues in the struggle for parliamentary power and when the national economy is in crisis the contradiction between bourgeois reform and bourgeois oppression becomes sharp. In such situations, communalism becomes a powerful tool in concealing the root causes of problems such as lack of educational and employment opportunities and economic stagnation and in blocking social change. Not only in Sri Lanka, but also in many other third world countries communalism has been encouraged in more than one way by forces of reaction.

Communalistic tendencies were evident in Sri Lanka politics early in the century. It may, however, be said that the development of communalism into a powerful political weapon occurred following splits within the Ceylon National Congress. The principal aim of the UNP which posed off as a national party was to weaken politically the minority nationalities and the working class. The planned colonization of the Eastern Province and the disenfranchisement of the hill-country Tamils are two important examples. It is equally important that the parliamentary leadership of the Tamils of the north and the east was little concerned with these issues at that time and, even more significantly, they collaborated with the UNP on the Citizenship Act. The fact that the percentage of non-UNP Sinhala MPs who voted against that ignominious piece of legislation was greater than that of the Tamil MPs of the north and the east to do so bears clear testimony to the class nature of the problem. The Federal Party was formed in 1949 by people who left the Tamil Congress because of its betrayal of the hill-country Tamils. It is worth noting that the Federal Party was humiliated in the parliamentary election of 1952 which it contested with the Citizenship Act as a central issue. This illustrates the extent of the importance of 'racial unity' between the Tamils of the north and the east and those

of the hill-country in the electoral politics of the north and the east.

The 'clever' political manoeuvres of G. G. Ponnambalam, the leader of the Tamil Congress, which made the Tamil people believe that the economic interests of the Tamils could be preserved by cunning manipulation such as intended in the notorious 50-50 proposal of Mr. Ponnambalam and by accepting posts in the cabinet, came to naught when the UNP adopted the Sinhala only policy at its Kelaniya conference. Both the UNP and the SLFP, founded by S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake who left the UNP in 1950, contested the general election of 1956 with a pledge to make Sinhala the official language. The MEP (People's United Front) led by the SLFP swept the polls in the south while the Tamil Congress lost ground to the Federal Party in the north.

The SLFP represented the interests of the national bourgeoisie of Sri Lanka and thrived on the strength of the anti-imperialist feelings in the country and the resentment among the Sinhala-educated middle classes about the English-educated ruling class. The SLFP, not being a working class party, was naturally susceptible to narrow nationalism, in this case, Sinhala chauvinism. But its anti-imperialist stance permitted it to function as a progressive force at the national level. The politics of the UNP represented the interests of imperialism and the big capitalists within Sri Lanka and the UNP was, undoubtedly, capable of making cynical use of narrow nationalism.

The Federal Party, which took a strong anti-UNP stance in the election of 1956, failed subsequently to differentiate its outlook from the comprador bourgeois class outlook of the Tamil Congress which it effectively replaced in the political affairs of the period following 1956.

Attributing the failure of the 'left' in parliamentary elections in the north and the east (the Point Pedro electorate in 1956 being a special exception), and the development of the politics in these regions in a manner oblivious to the

affairs of the entire country and lacking in international outlook to the opportunism of the parliamentary left would, at best, constitute vulgar propaganda. The real reasons relate to the social and economic conditions prevailing in these regions.

Although politics in the Sinhala regions was falling victim to Sinhala chauvinism, anti-imperialist feelings and reformism continued to play an important political role there. The Trotskyists and parliamentary communists, who proved incapable of mobilising the anti-imperialist sentiments and the desire for social change among the Sinhala masses to build a revolutionary force, failed to pay due attention to combating Sinhala chauvinism. This failure, in contrast with what was anticipated by the opportunist leadership, made the parliamentary left even weaker and pushed it to the sad plight where it could not win a single parliamentary seat without the support of the SLFP. As a result, the influence of the left within the trade unions and in mass politics started to fall, and the militant forces under working class leadership too became weaker. A situation emerged where the parties of the national bourgeoisie could dominate the field of trade unionism. It should be noted that despite the weakening of the left movement, the traditions of left ideology and left politics has made a significant and lasting impact on the political life of the Sinhala people. Even today, in a situation severely affected by chauvinistic sloganeering and oppressive rule by the UNP, anti-imperialist feelings and awareness of democratic rights continue to exist as irrepressible political forces.

Politics among the Tamil people of the north and the east continued to be based on a single issue, and dominated by a single political party. Between 1956 and 1965 (when the Federal Party became a partner in a coalition government with the UNP) the language problem dominated the political scene. Sinhala colonization and the Citizenship Act were retained as decorative features. The demand for a federal state for Tamils which was proposed as a political solution was, in effect, abandoned after the collapse of the 1961 'Satyagraha' campaign. Between 1965 and 1969 there appeared to be no issue to fight on,

and the impending elections of 1970 resulted in a break with the UNP coalition government on issue which were of little significance to the politics of the Tamil people.

The resounding victory of the SLFP-led coalition in the election of 1970 was followed by despicable development in the ties between the UNP and the Federal Party. What is significant, however, is that the politics of the Northern and Eastern provinces has to date, been dominated by parties which have declared themselves to be concerned only with the interests of the Tamil people and these parties have paid great attention to isolating the Tamil people from the Sinhala progressive forces. There was no difference between rival Tamil political parties in opposing the removal of British naval and air bases, the Land Reform Act, the nationalization of oil companies and the take-over of state-assisted schools by the state. The Federal Party which maintained silence over major international events vigorously attacked China on the question of the Sino-Indian border conflict in 1961 and in 1971 the Federal Party was ahead of the UNP in accusing China of supporting the 1971 April insurrection. The 'Suthanthiran' the propaganda organ of the Federal Party concentrated its attack on the left political parties, following the electoral decline of the Tamil Congress. It seems strange that a political party demanding a Federal State should on the one hand attack the left which was a likely supporter of that demand and on the other make no effort to explain to the Sinhala people the nature of their demand. The truth is that the national question was a powerful weapon in their bid to dominate the politics of the Northern and Eastern Provinces, and what motivated the Federal Party to attack the left political parties were the possibility that the left may deprive them of that political advantage, the growing influence of the left parties among the depressed castes, and the potential threat to their class interests if the Tamil workers were mobilized under the leadership of the left parties. The social set-up in the north and the social importance of government service there helped such political attitudes to take root and thrive. The conservatism of the north along with the hold which the caste system had on the society were not only useful political devices but also helpful in depic-

ting the left as forces of evil to the exploited people of the 'upper castes'.

The manner in which the Federal Party squandered its opportunities to solve the problems of the Tamil people also deserves attention. The anger among the Tamil people in the wake of the passing of the 'Sinhala Only Act' was used by the Federal Party for demagogic purposes. But the Federal Party was at no stage prepared to mobilize the people and organize them for a struggle for justice. The fanfare of the march to Trincomalee and the massive Federal Party Congress of 1957 proved to be devoid of substance when the Satyagraha campaign of 1961 fell apart soon after the declaration of a state of emergency. The 'Anti-Sri Campaign' (initiated with no plan or programme of struggle and based on the trivial issue of the ruling to use the Sinhala character 'Sri' in motor vehicle number plates instead of Roman characters) ended up as a fiasco. Slogans like "We will oppose Sri and fill the jails" reflected the political bankruptcy of those who mouthed them. The only tangible achievement of the 'Anti-Sri Campaign' was that the Northern Province was deprived of new government buses for several years, on the insistence of the Federal Party. The Satyagraha Campaign of 1961, which too was started hastily and without any political guidance or programme of action, gained popular support because of police excesses on the satyagrahis opposite the Jaffna Kachcheri. The entire campaign came to a crashing halt when the leaders of the Federal Party were detained following the declaration of a state of emergency. Besides, postal stamps, post cards and stamped envelopes issued by the Federal Party led to confusion as to whether they were demanding federalism or a separate state. When the Federal Party leaders set alight the constitution of 1972, many believed that they were launching an illegal struggle. But the fact was that the Federal Party leadership which was well versed in legal affairs knew that their act was not unlawful and that many people would not realize it. From 1956 to this very day, the Federal Party and its successors, namely the TUF and TULF, spent most of their energy passing off political humbug for popular struggle.

The Federal Party did show considerable interest in solving problems through negotiations. This resulted in the 'Bandaranayake-Chelvanayakam Pact' of 1958, which was subsequently abandoned as a result of fierce opposition from forces of Sinhala chauvinism. The UNP and one of its important leaders, Mr. J.R. Jayawardene, played a prominent role in mobilizing opposition to that accord. It is also important to note that the 'Anti-Sri Campaign' of the Federal Party and the militant slogans of the Federal Party and their use of the name Tamil Arasuk Kadchi (Tamil State Party) in Tamil while using the name Federal Party in English (and in Sinhala) aroused strong suspicions in the minds of the Sinhala-speaking people and helped the campaign of the UNP against the pact and provided some vulgar justification for the campaign to tar Tamil letters in road signs, bill-boards and other public displays. Although thugs from the UNP had a key role in the anti-Tamil violence of 1958, Sinhala chauvinists from other quarters too made their contribution to that bloody episode. The government acted fairly quickly to bring the activities of the racist extremists under control. When the UNP formed a minority government following the general election of March 1960, the Federal Party refused to participate in that government and the UNP, angered by the refusal by the Federal Party, unleashed highly mischievous and vicious racial propaganda during its campaign in the general elections which followed soon after in June 1960: claims were made that a secret agreement existed between the SLFP and the Federal Party, which would pave the way to partitioning the island. Despite all its efforts, the UNP was soundly defeated at the polls. During that period some goodwill developed between the SLFP and Federal Party leadership and this created an opportunity for an amicable settlement of issues relating to language and other issues of concern to the Tamil people. The Federal Party leadership not only failed to take advantage of this opportunity, but also misused it. In 1961, talks were in progress between the SLFP Minister of Justice, Sam P.C. Fernando and the leaders of the Federal Party on some of the key issues concerning the Tamil people, and despite differences on some matters of detail, agreement was achieved on most matters. It was agreed that

further consultation would take place and it was at this stage that the Federal Party, without prior warning or preparation, launched its 'satyagraha campaign' which was a political gamble that turned out to be a total disaster and demolished all prospects for future struggle under the leadership of the Federal Party. The period between 1961 and 1964 saw the Federal Party drift closer to the UNP. This was not accidental: the demise of the Tamil Congress as a political force was nearly complete by 1960 and in the subsequent period members of the professional upper classes and of the business community, who were once supporters of the Tamil Congress and the UNP, became highly influential within the Federal Party. The Tamil nationalistic trade unions organized by the Federal Party in the 60's were set up with funding from several leading Tamil businessmen. (There were, nevertheless, some important exceptions which included the Tamil clerical service union, the AES.)

There was a superficial similarity between the SLFP and the Federal Party in 1956, to the extent that they represented an affinity to the respective national languages (in preference to English), the interests of the respective national bourgeoisie and the expectations of the lower levels of the petit-bourgeoisie. The UNP and the Tamil Congress, on the other hand, represented the most reactionary sections of the population. The weakening of the Tamil Congress and the development of nationalistic politics played a significant role in the transformation of the Federal Party. Influential Colombo Tamils gained a more important role in deciding the policies of the Federal Party while former supporters of the UNP and the Tamil Congress, including businessmen became very influential within the party. The Federal Party which once drew attention to the elitism of the Tamil Congress allowed the development of an elite within its own organization. These changes were reflected in the participation of the Federal Party in the vote against the SLFP government on the bill to nationalize the Lake House, whose defeat brought down the government. The Federal Party found itself in the company of the UNP, the SLFP right - wingers led by C.P. de Silva who left the SLFP government and the more orthodox Trotskyists

led by Edmund Samarakkody, who left the LSSP only a few months earlier. In the early part of 1965 the Federal Party gave the SLFP government the impression that it would give parliamentary support to the SLFP government to complete its full elected term in power, but at the last moment pulled out of the deal. The expectation of support from the Federal Party was one major reason for the delay by the SLFP government to move for dissolution of parliament and hold general elections. The UNP used this in its campaign to vilify the SLFP and claimed that democracy was at stake. The splits within the 'left' parties also helped the UNP to secure enough seats to form a coalition government in 1965, which included the Federal Party. The Federal Party had, up to that time, sworn repeatedly that they would never participate in government until its political goals were achieved. The leaders also had to cover up their role in collaborating secretly with the UNP at the elections of 1965. They avoided the embarrassment, partly, by making M. Thiruchelvam a Q.C. from Colombo a Senator and allowing him to accept a post in the Cabinet.

The frustration and anger caused by the activities of the Federal Party between 1960 and 1965 prompted not only the SLFP but also its parliamentary left allies to vote against the Tamil language legislation of 1966 based on the Dudley Senanayake-Chelvanayakam Pact of 1965 and to shout anti-Tamil racial slogans at the opening of parliament in 1965. Acts of racialism are not to be condoned, whatever the motivation. But to ignore the contribution of the Federal Party to the political situation will amount to concealing the background to these events.

The participation of the Federal Party (which campaigned on the basis of the problems of the Tamil people) in the UNP government did not please the Tamil people, and, consequently, their popularity began to wane. The Federal Party which, in anticipation of the forthcoming general elections, hastily withdrew from the coalition government saw, for the first time in its history, a marked decline in its percentage share of votes. The defeat of Mr. Amirthalingam, one of the chief spokesmen for the party, was a slap in the face

for the party leadership. The results of the elections of 1970 indicated that the people voted for the Federal Party because there was no other credible parliamentary political party to represent Tamil interests and that popular individuals could defeat the Federal Party candidates. The Federal Party, nevertheless, secured a majority of the seats in the north and the east. The Federal Party leadership learnt a few lessons and recognized the importance of political struggles. But the class solidarity it had forged with the UNP was too powerful to be abandoned. 'Standardization' of marks for university admissions in 1970 was a hevensend for the Federal Party. However, given their inability to demonstrate the possibility of a solution through legal struggle and their weakness in the parliamentary political scene, they had to find other means. As the political situation did not favour unlawful struggles, the leadership which was incapable of leading such struggles, chose to instigate minor struggles through organizations such as the Students' Front. New possibilities were seen by the Federal Party in the insurrection of April 1971, the liberation struggle of Bangladesh and India's role in that struggle, and the denial of some language rights in the new constitution of 1972. The move towards the demand for a separate state was indirectly encouraged by some individuals including A. Amirthalingam, S. C. Chandrasahasnan and the editor of the unofficial party organ the 'Suthanthiran'. The youth movements encouraged by these individuals proceeded to develop, in directions which was not prescribed by the leadership and at a pace which could not be regulated by leadership, to become extremist movements. When the Tamil United Front was formed in 1974, the idea of a separate state was discussed in the open. (The expectation that there was oil wealth in the north, fuelled by the initially favourable, but erroneous, reports from the exploration at Pesalai, too, was a significant factor encouraging separatism). The reactionary intentions in forming the TUF can be seen clearly from the fact that not only G. G. Ponnambalam and S. Thondaman but also K. W. Devanayagam of the UNP joined it, with the blessings of the UNP. The purpose of transforming the TUF into the TULF in 1976 became clear in 1977: on the one hand, the extremist

youth movements encouraged by the Federal Party and aided by standardization, lack of opportunities for government employment and other frustrating circumstances, posed the threat of a serious challenge to the leadership of the Federal Party and, on the other, the Federal Party was well aware that it had no chance of electoral success in the absence of a new set of policies and a plan for struggle. The Federal Party was hopeful that with the co-operation of the UNP they could win some minor concessions in addition to the satisfactory resolution of the problem of standardization. Consequently, the TULF contested the election of a separatist platform, with a secret deal between the leaders of the UNP, the TULF and the CWC, by which Tamils in the south were encouraged to vote UNP. (Suspensions about this deal existed for a long time, but it was made public in 1983 by Mr. Thondaman, the leader of the CWC, in parliament under provocation by the unreasonable attitude of the UNP leadership in the wake of the racial violence of 1983).

The Federal Party was not particularly concerned when violence was unleashed on the supporters of the SLFP, following the elections of 1977. But it took less than one month from then for thugs under the patronage of the UNP to launch a vicious campaign of violence against the Tamils, and the response of the ministers of the UNP government was crude justification of the misdeeds on the basis of crude racialism. Even the incidents of ethnic violence in 1981 did not dispel illusions of the TULF about a just solution from the UNP: in the presidential elections of 1982 the TULF took an ambiguous position in the north and the east while the Tamils of the south were indirectly encouraged to vote for J. R. Jayawardene. When the UNP attempted to cap their antidemocratic deeds with their move to prolong the life of the parliament without holding elections in 1983 by having a referendum, the TULF was very hesitant in recommending that this move should be opposed. The behaviour of the TULF resulted in further deterioration of its political influence. The Tamil people lost faith in the TULF which could not achieve an independent Tamil Eelam through peaceful struggle and extract nothing more than an impotent District Council from the UNP govern-

ment. Their selective, but indirect, support for political violence (including the assassination of T. Duraiappa, Mayor of Jaffna) gave little help in controlling the acts of violence of the extremist youth movements.

After 1977, and especially after the orgy of violence by the armed forces in Jaffna in 1981, the extremist youth movements developed themselves into serious alternatives to the TULF. In 1982 the situation changed to a state where the TULF was in the sad plight of having to act in fear of the extremists. The TULF was also weakened during this period by the founding of the TELF by members of the TULF who were in conflict with the leadership. The period following 1983 demonstrated the impotence of TULF and today the TULF parades merely as an organization once formally elected by the people.

To sum up, the Federal Party and its successor the TULF have supported the forces of reaction in the political history of Sri Lanka. The role played by the Tamil leadership in isolating the Tamil people from the mainstream of Sri Lankan politics only helped the intentions of the Sinhala chauvinists. The hostility of the Tamil leadership towards the left, in the north as well as nationally, and their tendency to support the UNP wherever possible denied the Tamil people the opportunity to mobilize the support of anti-imperialist progressive forces of the south as allies in the struggle against Sinhala chauvinism. The parliamentary leadership of the Tamils had long lost its ability to lead and to direct the just struggles of oppressed minority nationalities, because it adhered mainly to the interests of the exploiting classes.

We can clearly and correctly identify the mistakes of the parliamentary political leadership of the Tamil regions only through an analysis of the activities of the leadership on the basis of class and class interests. It is only through a correct analysis of the political situation which enabled the development of Sinhala chauvinism, the problems of the left movement, the problems of the other minority nationalities and other related matters that we can achieve a correct understanding of the current situation and find a way forward.

NATIONAL OPPRESSION AND THE STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION - 5

The educated middle class Tamils are familiar with the identification of the Buddhist clergy with Sinhala Buddhist extremism. But it is wrong to identify the Buddhist religious organizations as the source of Sinhala chauvinism and to ignore the social reasons for the growth of the political influence of the Buddhist clergy among the Sinhala masses. If one would care to recognize that the Sinhala chauvinism within the Catholic church of Sri Lanka today is as vigorous as the Sinhala Buddhist extremism within the Sangha, he would also realize that these religious establishments wallow in Sinhala chauvinism only because they represent the interests of the ruling classes and that the ruling classes are not acting merely to safeguard the narrow nationalist interests of these religious establishments.

Buddhism has played an important role in every aspect of social life over a long period of history. Under the old educational system, the Buddhist clergy not only preached the 'dhamma' but also served as teachers of a wider range of subjects. They have also done a great service as medical practitioners and social workers. The rise of Saivait Hinduism in South India saw the decline and eradication of Buddhism and Jainism there. When Buddhism was on the wane in India it flourished elsewhere. Theravada Buddhism did not succeed in

China and Japan, and it was Mahayana Buddhism which blended with other ancient religious practices to establish itself as a powerful social influence. The conflict between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism was a major political conflict in many countries, and in Sri Lanka it was Theravada Buddhism which succeeded. Today Theravada Buddhism dominates in Burma, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The Buddhist chapters of Sri Lanka have every reason to be proud of their role in defending and developing Theravada Buddhism. The development of the Sinhala language during the major part of the recorded history of Sri Lanka was inseparable from the development of Buddhism. (The relationship between Buddhism and Sinhala would correspond to that between Saivism and Tamil at one time).

South Indian intervention had always been an important feature in the resolution of contradictions between rival kingdoms in Sri Lanka. There are several instances where the rivals in Sri Lanka sought the support of South Indian rivals and there are also instances where hegemonistic kingdoms like those of the Cholas have invaded the island, uninvited. It is therefore not surprising that the Theravada clergy saw South Indian involvement as a threat to their influence. Historical circumstances ensured that Sinhala and Buddhism identified with each other in the South in the same way Tamil and Saivism did in the north. However, owing to the long tradition of close relationship between Sinhala and South Indian rulers as well as to trade and other contacts, Sinhala and Buddhism were enriched by the influence of Tamil and Hinduism.

Although Theravada Buddhism in its unadulterated form failed to survive among the Sinhala masses and several Hindu rituals and ceremonies and worship of Hindu deities has become part of their way of life, fears relating to the losses to Buddhism and Sinhala culture through South Indian invasions are kept alive through works such as the Mahavamsa. It is these fears which enable the Sinhalese to see the Tamils of the north as aliens (Para Demala) and an extension of the South Indian Tamil community. It is in the

context of this historical background and the large number of 'Dravidians' living across the sea that a fear of persecution, something more characteristic of a minority community, developed among the Sinhala population. It is futile to discuss the validity of these fears, but these fears are a part of a reality which has to be faced in the politics of the island; the reasons for the failure of the ruling classes to eliminate these fears is not hard to guess.

After the Kotte and Jaffna kingdoms fell to the Portuguese the Kandyan kingdom remained the only independent state in the island. After the British colonialists captured the Kandyan kingdom they found it difficult to persuade the Kandyan Sinhala peasantry to work on coffee estates set up on the soil once owned by them. As a result, a large number of poor Tamil peasants from South India were brought in as indentured labour under the notorious 'kankani' system.

The arrival of large numbers of Tamil plantation workers from South India led to new fears about South India. The British colonialists and planters ensured that the Tamil plantation workers were isolated from the Sinhala peasantry thus averting the possibility of a united struggle of the plantation workers and Sinhala peasants against the British oppressors.

Apart from fears about Tamils, the development of a new capitalist class among the Sinhalese led to new contradictions between that class and the British colonialists along with the English educated upper classes which were predominantly Christian and enjoying the patronage of the British. This was an important element in the subsequent development of the national movement, and the circumstances under which the national movement developed determined its class characteristics and favoured the development of Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism. The view that Sinhala Buddhist nationalism developed as a purely chauvinistic trend is incorrect and based on incomplete information. The progressive role of the movement, insofar as the movement contributed to national independence, both political and economic, was limited by the chauvinistic trend encouraged by the influence of the capitalist class.

The development of chauvinistic tendencies within the national movement could be avoided only through the movement being led by the proletariat, the most advanced revolutionary class of the nation. The leadership of the liberation movement of India was dominated by the national bourgeoisie. The effects of this were to be seen later in events ranging from the Hindu-Muslim violence dating back to pre-independence years to the wide variety of racial and communal conflicts of today. In Sri Lanka the left movement developed along with the movement for national independence. Although it was not possible to carry out the struggle against colonial rule under the leadership of the left movement, the national movement offered the left the opportunity of developing into an important force in national politics. The splits in the left movement, induced initially by Trotskyist tendencies and later by extremist tendencies within the Communist Party, finally led to the left movement, by and large, relying on parliamentary politics as their main avenue of struggle. Consequently, the demands of parliamentary politics submerged the needs of proletarian revolutionary politics: the initial success at parliamentary elections in selected constituencies led to the parliamentary political line, originally intended as a tactic, becoming their sole strategy: revolution under proletarian leadership and the revolutionary socialist ideal were transformed into parliamentary politics and social reform.

While the policy declarations of the parliamentary left parties degenerated into election stunts, their tactics failed to secure the anticipated electoral success, and that, in turn, led to disappointment and disillusion within the ranks of the progressive forces. Those with a firm political conviction continued to function in revolutionary Marxist Leninist organizations; some opted for ultra-left lines and fell prey to opportunism, a large number drifted away from the left movement in the course of time, and ended up as mere observers. The degeneration of the parliamentary left was such that they were willing to pay any price for a few seats in parliament and a share in parliamentary political power: The VLSSP of Philip Gunawardene joined the SLFP

in government in 1956 and the LSSP briefly shared power with the SLFP in 1964. Philip Gunawardene, the 'father of Trotskyism', frustrated by his failure to arrange a coalition of the United Left Front and the SLFP in 1963, ended up as a minister in the UNP-led government in 1965-70. The parliamentary Communist Party joined the LSSP and SLFP in the United Front in 1969 and became a partner in government in 1970.

By 1970 the mass organizations with affiliations to the parliamentary left parties had become weak and many of the leaders of these organization had reduced themselves into careerists and opportunists. By the time the LSSP and, later, the CP left the UF government in 1976, their organizational strength was nearly depleted. In 1977, none of the parliamentary left party candidates or their allies won a seat, and the left failed to poll enough votes even to secure second place in any electorate in the Western Province, once a left stronghold.

The role of the parliamentary political line in the decline of the left movement is very significant. But it should be noted that the Marxist-Leninist leadership within the Communist Party, owing to its serious mistakes, lost the opportunity to mobilize the revolutionary forces and continue as a powerful left movement; the forces which split from the Trotskyist LSSP were essentially petty bourgeois individualists and incapable of mobilizing the masses. It was in this climate that the JVP entered the political scene.

Revolutionary slogans on one side and crude political opportunism on the other was the hallmark of JVP. While one acknowledges a clear distinction between the leadership of the JVP and the large number of young supporters and members who were misled by the leadership, one has to note that the dangers of rejecting proletarian leadership, recognizing the youth as a revolutionary class and failing to apply a scientific Marxist-Leninist analysis are clearly illustrated by the damage done to the revolutionary cause

by the JVP. Notoriously, during the presidential election of 1982, the JVP changed its stance on the national question, depending on time and place. This was not surprising given the fact that in 1969 the JVP exploited the hostility of the Kandyan peasantry towards plantation workers to win support among the Kandyan youth by implicating that the plantation workers were an extended arm of Indian expansionism. What is important is that, unlike the traditional parliamentary left which degenerated as a result of its involvement in electoral politics, the JVP leadership started their political career as a fake left movement mouthing revolutionary slogans, while in reality serving reaction.

Even today, the old reformist left leaders mainly remain guilty of opportunist errors in failing to oppose chauvinism with vigour. They never actively encouraged Sinhala chauvinism the way JVP did, and it is wrong to accuse them of Sinhala chauvinism. Their faults concern their line in the practical movement. The wrong line led to wrong practice. When we criticize the parliamentary left parties we criticize them on the basis of the wrongs committed by them on questions of proletarian leadership, the proletarian revolutionary movement and working class interests. It is as a result of these errors that they could not act correctly on the national question. We reject the position taken by the Tamil nationalist leaders portraying the old left as a part of Sinhala chauvinism.

The main similarity between the Sinhala chauvinism of the UNP and that of the SLFP concerns their reluctance to reject as irrelevant to modern Sri Lankan politics fears among the Sinhalese about Tamils based on the traditional interpretation of pre-colonial history, their unwillingness to repudiate communal feelings which developed out of these fears and the events since national independence, and their willingness to exploit Sinhala chauvinism as a political weapon when it suited them. Despite this similarity, the respective class bases of the parties implies important differences between the chauvinism of the two parties. However, it is only natural that those who see the national question as a purely Sinhala-

Tamil problem fail to recognize these differences. The class basis of the SLFP is national bourgeois, but the demands of electoral politics made it necessary for the SLFP to satisfy the Sinhala intellectuals and the lower middle classes. These classes were craving after opportunities denied to them and inaccessible to them under British rule. They detested the English language and Western culture and the domination by the upper middle classes who had access to English education and western culture.

The domination of the state and private sector employment by the upper middle class Tamils and Christians and their desire to preserve their comforts and privileges made these classes predominantly pro-UNP. The demand to make Sinhala the official language was progressive to the extent that it aimed at destroying the dominant role of English and domination by the classes with access to it. But, when this demand was put forward with no consideration whatsoever for the linguistic rights of 25% of the population, reasonable fears arose in the minds of the Tamil-speaking people about the status of Tamil. It should, however, be noted that the demand for parity by the Tamil leaders was put forward more as a counter-proposal than as a well considered alternative solution for the question of the language of administration. The reason for this was that the Tamil leaders were more concerned with the prospect of English losing its status as official language than about the 'threat' by Sinhala to Tamil. It is significant that although both the UNP and the SLFP-led MEP alliance made 'Sinhala only' an election slogan, the outcome of the elections of 1956 was determined by other more important issues. The people had not forgotten the events of the hartal of 1953. The leaders of the left parties failed to make good use of the victories scored in that struggle. Because of this and because their craving for seats in parliament was stronger than their desire to build a powerful revolutionary party, they failed to mobilise the masses, whose support helped the SLFP-led coalition headed by S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike gain parliamentary power.

The Tamil leadership stubbornly refused to pay attention to any issues other than the language problem. While at the same time, contradictions sharpened within the government, between extreme Sinhala chauvinists like R.G. Senanayake and K.M.P. Rajaratne on the one hand and the leadership of S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake on the other. The departure of extreme Sinhala chauvinists from the MEP government clearly demonstrated that the SLFP was not merely a party of Sinhala chauvinism. Various pieces of progressive legislation initiated by the SLFP helped the transfer of strength from mass organizations led by the parliamentary left parties to SLFP-led organizations. The parliamentary left parties, unable and unwilling to develop a truly revolutionary movement, sank deeper and deeper into the quicksand of electoral politics and were reduced to a state where they could not win a single seat without the support of the SLFP. The UNP, on the other hand, was busy changing its pro-colonial image and disguising itself as a populist party. Between 1956 and 1960 the UNP operated as a force of extreme Sinhala chauvinism. The transformation of the UNP attained completion after 1977 when it could parade as the guardian of Sinhala Buddhist culture while mortgaging the national economy to the neocolonialist masters.

We have no illusions about the forces of Sinhala chauvinism within the SLFP. But it is highly significant that after 1958, during the years in which the SLFP was in power, efforts to provoke communal conflict were put down promptly and without mercy. This record is in total contrast with the record of the UNP after 1977. It is correct to say that the present role of the SLFP as the champion of Sinhala chauvinism is a consequence of the activities of the UNP to undermine parliamentary democracy and basic human and democratic rights. The Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism of the SLFP today is an expression of political frustration. The hopes of the SLFP to capture political power through chauvinistic politics will come to naught. As things stand today, the powers within the UNP have too much at stake today. Only a revolutionary political change can bring an end to UNP rule and there appears to be no other way to stop the UNP dictatorship ending up as a military dictatorship.

If the UNP has agreed to seek a peaceful solution for the national question today, the reason is not that the UNP has had a change of heart. The military violence unleashed against the Tamil people has created, nationally and internationally, a situation unfavourable to the UNP government. The UNP has yet to learn that it is not possible to subdue by military force a people struggling for their right to live.

Fears among the Sinhala people about India, and South India in particular, helped the development of Sinhala chauvinism. A number of leaders of the Federal Party made no secret about their sympathies with the Dravidian movements of Tamilnadu. It was expected that the Sinhala chauvinists would take advantage of the dependence of the TULF leadership on the patronage of politicians in India, and especially Tamilnadu.

The progressive and patriotic forces among the Sinhalese have been weakened by the mistakes of the left and the splits within the left movement as well as by the rise of chauvinism and narrow nationalism. The task of uniting and mobilising the patriotic progressive forces among the Sinhalese is by no means easy, but is possible and necessary. The independence of the liberation struggle of the Tamil people from foreign interference, and the development of friendly relationship with the broad Sinhala masses by the liberation forces will certainly strengthen the hands of the progressive forces among the Sinhala people. The UNP government has portrayed the liberation movements as terrorists and accused them of conspiring to topple the UNP government and subvert democracy. Efforts by progressive Sinhalese to refute these lies are carried out in the face of powerful state-backed propaganda. The progressive forces among the Sinhalese will certainly overcome their present difficulties and will, in the end, be victorious. The Tamil liberation movements will only weaken themselves and the progressive movements in the island.

NATIONAL OPPRESSION AND THE STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION - 6

Many of the organizations for Tamil liberation see the liberation struggle of the Tamil people today as a continuation of the so-called struggles of the Federal Party. While there is some justification for this view, there are also important fundamental differences which deserve attention. Some of the just and welcome features of today's struggle agree with the fair demands put forward by the Federal Party during its version of struggles. At the same time, errors in their method of analysis and styles of work and struggle also have much in common with the errors in the political outlook of not only the Federal Party but also the Tamil leadership before it. Many seem to believe that the principal difference between the Federal Party's struggle and the struggle of the movements of today concerns armed struggle. But one should remember that, although the Federal Party and the TULF declared that their struggle was peaceful, the Federal Party remains the origin of most of the main liberation organizations of today and that the Federal Party did encourage the violent and unlawful activities of organizations such as the Student's League (Maanavar Peeravay) and even gave its blessings to the first major political assassination in the north. It is therefore apparent that the Federal Party/TULF did not entirely disapprove of political violence. They certainly

did not like political violence as far as it hurt the friendly relationship between the TULF and the UNP. Thus, it is clear that the main difference between the struggles of the past and present concerns their class nature more than the form of the struggle.

Although the politics of the north and the east was built upon strong linguistic sentiments of the Tamil-speaking people, the class interests which it sought to preserve were those of the Tamil bourgeoisie and of the upper-middle classes enjoying high office in the state sector and in the professions. The large number of employees in the middle levels of the state, educational and private sector made it necessary for the Federal Party to accommodate their interests in its political programmes. However, upper class interests began to dominate the political activities of the Federal Party in the years following 1965 when they joined hands with the UNP in government.

The Federal Party convention of 1957 in Trincomalee declared war on the enemies of the Tamil people and empty slogans such as "Trincomalee shall be our capital" coined in the course of events which followed 1956, including the frivolous "anti-Sri Campaign", proliferated up to 1961, when the abrupt end to the Satyagraha campaign demonstrated the incompetence of the Federal Party to lead any kind of struggle. The popularity of the Federal Party started to decline and the opportunistic alliance with the UNP in 1965 made the people highly distrustful of the Federal Party. In 1970 the Federal Party, for the first time since its founding, lost seats in the north which it won at previous elections and the percentage vote saw a marked decline. The 'standardization' of marks for university admissions in 1970 and the new constitution of 1972 gave the Federal Party a boost. But the founding of the Tamil United Front in 1974 was a necessary ploy by the Federal Party to arrest its political decline; and the Tamil United Left Front was formed in 1976 in anticipation of the impending general election in 1977. However, the forces of youth and political extremism, encouraged by the FP/TULF for their short term interests, had, by 1977, grown into forces which could no more be controlled by the older leadership.

The racial violence of 1977 and the response of the TULF to it and its unsuccessful attempts at seeking a peaceful solution to the national question through negotiations with the UNP government further exposed the impotence of the TULF. After the violence of 1983 the people had lost faith in the TULF, and the militant youth organizations, which functioned rather erratically up to 1983, developed rapidly in the wake of excesses by government forces, especially after 1983. The justifiable anger and hostility of the people towards the government, reinforced by the acts of cruelty by the armed forces, and the lack of faith in the TULF leadership made many young people who were subject to harassment and intimidation by the police and the armed forces firmly believe that there was no way other than armed struggle.

Given a situation where the entire Tamil people of the north and the east were subject to state oppression and military terror, it is not wrong to say that the struggle against the government and the armed forces reflected the true feelings of the entire Tamil population. It is in this respect that today's struggle differs most significantly from the struggle of the Federal Party.

The hesitation of the Federal Party and other parliamentary Tamil leaders to take a principled stand during the struggle against untouchability in the north in 1967 and the reception which the plantation workers had in the north in 1974, when they were forced away from the estates by the drought and the crude racialism of the management in some estates, are adequate to demonstrate the quality of the Tamil solidarity which had been cultivated in the north and the east. (The exemplary work of certain social service organizations in the rehabilitation of the plantation workers by settling them in lands in the Northern and Eastern Provinces is, however, a commendable exception). The response of the Tamil leadership to issues relating to social problems within the Tamil community is nothing unusual and is due to the dominance of the conservative attitude of the upper-middle classes, narrow in its outlook and steeped in colonial attitudes. The north has still to grow out of that socio-political climate and the narrow political outlook continued to dominate even after 1977.

The new situation created by the violence of 1983, on the one hand, demonstrated beyond doubt the bankruptcy of the TULF and, on the other, made it impossible for the TULF to have any influence on, let alone control over, the activities of the youth associated with violent struggle. The weakening of the authority of the TULF was already demonstrated by the formation of a rival organization, TELF, by a group of dissenters who were able to cause significant problems to the TULF leadership in its dealings with the government. What made possible the incapacitation of the parliamentary Tamil leadership were the bankruptcy of the policy of liberation of Tamil Eelam by peaceful means, the political chicanery of the government in setting up powerless district councils, the participation of the TULF in talks with the government which further weakened the position of the national minorities and, above all, the strengthening of the alliance, especially since 1970, between the Tamil leadership and the UNP, which represents the most reactionary forces among the Sinhala population. It would take a different class outlook, class politics and class leadership to lead the people out of a political climate which was nurtured by a reactionary class alliance.

The reason why the various liberation organizations which grew out of the TULF were unable to develop a social outlook distinct from that of the TULF was that their class basis was not very different from that of the TULF. Initially, slogans involving Marxism and Socialism were useful in attracting youth who had lost faith in their future under the existing social set-up and felt the need for struggle because of the oppressive acts of the government. But none of these organizations were capable of mobilizing the youth on the basis of proletarian leadership and Marxist socialist thought, with which the youth were still unfamiliar. When the leaders of these organizations became dependent on the support and sponsorship of the Indian government and the politicians of Tamilnadu, the hands which fed them proceeded to manipulate them.

For many of the movements which used the phrase 'Socialist Tamil Eelam' the word 'socialist' meant nothing more than a decorative item, while the term 'Tamil Eelam' was not just a

possible means for achieving their goal of liberating the Tamil people but both the means and the ends of the struggle rolled in one. As a consequence, it was not possible for these organizations to distinguish between Sinhala chauvinism and the Sinhala masses, and this, in turn, led to Tamil fanaticism based on hatred towards the Sinhalese. It also meant that these organizations were not sensitive to the feelings of the Muslims and carried out acts which earned the hostility of the Muslims. The inaction of rival movements in failing to criticize acts of violence and terror directed against innocent Sinhala people, including the horror of the Anuradhapura massacre, and the continuation of such acts even today simply demonstrate that the crude form of narrow nationalism developed by the old leadership continues to guide the leaders of several organizations.

Lack of understanding of the specific problems of the Eastern Province and a lack of interest in the position of the Muslim community there have led to the repetition of several serious mistakes there. Killing of members of rival organizations reflects the individualism and greed for power among the leaders of these organizations. The fact that people who leave a movement, or whose conduct is considered suspect or are branded 'traitors' or 'social enemies' are tortured, or even murdered, shows that in some of the important organizations military strength is considered more important than popular support and that they are dominated by small groups who care for little more than political and military domination.

While the part played by military strength in many of the victories scored by the liberation organizations is significant, the masses have remained as mere observers in the struggles. It is not likely that the victories would continue without popular participation and it appears that a majority of the organizations are unaware of this. Even, now, many of them campaign on the basis of the claim that their particular organization is the one likely to win liberation for the people and assume that the people are obliged to support them under all conditions. As a consequence, the movement for liberation is prevented from developing into a mass movement and mass support for the organizations and their activities are on the decline. An

important reason for this is that the leadership of these organizations have got used to treating foreign countries' weapons and wealth to be more important than people. The fundamental reason for the errors, however, is the lack of a proletarian class outlook.

It should be remembered here that the JVP misled the good forces of Sinhala youth who were attracted to it, and by carrying out the insurrection of 1971, engaging in an alliance with the UNP after 1977 and through other opportunistic activities strengthened the forces of reaction. The Sinhala people were fortunate to have the opportunity to reject the JVP. The oppressive actions of the government and its armed forces have denied the Tamil people such an opportunity. Hence, many of the movements have little chance of correcting their mistakes, their militaristic attitudes and their arrogant behaviour towards the people; this will result in further development of the military struggle with foreign assistance at the expense of popular struggle, and lead to the alienation of these movements from the people. Should any of these organizations ever come to power, the people would lose the few rights they are able to enjoy today.

We identify the wrong lines of thinking and wrong practices within the organizations who are successors to the politics of the TULF to be the development of politics characteristic of a certain class, and it is not difficult to identify their class interests and to criticize their errors on that basis. But we need to be far more cautious about organizations and individuals who parade as ex-Marxists and neo-Marxists, with slogans designed to attract new membership and varied to suit the political mood, but whose real intention is to oppose the red flag by holding high the red flag.

It is the duty of every revolutionary and patriot of Sri Lanka to support the liberation struggle of the Tamil people, But to prescribe one solution as the only possible form of liberation and oppose alternative solutions and to identify the advocates of such solutions as enemies are not in the interest of the liberation struggle. 'Marxist' organizations which, for short term gain, and mainly for the purpose of developing their orga-

nizations into powerful rivals to the Tamil nationalist organizations, prescribe solutions which are put forward by the nationalists are none but rank opportunists. Their opportunism is the result of a lack of real interest in proletarian class consciousness and proletarian internationalism and the struggle for liberation by the oppressed people at the international level.

Today, healthy elements within the important organizations are able to identify corruption and errors in the activities of their organizations. But they fail to recognize that these errors and corruption are characteristic of a political line and a class outlook. Hence, the new organizations found by people who leave the corrupt ones are also likely to make similar mistakes. They should be prepared to see the national question as a class problem and the liberation of the Tamil people of the north and the east as something related to the liberation of other national minorities and the liberation of the majority nationality.

It is through joining hands with each other in their struggle to unite all forces which could be united and defeat the oppressors and their masters that forces of liberation could win freedom and save the fruits of their victory from being lost to another oppressor. People are the principal motive force in the making of history and nobody can make their history for them. No organization which lacks that faith in the people and sense of humility before the masses can carry out the task of mobilizing the people to win final victory.

Today's struggle for national liberation is a just struggle of the broad masses. Its success depends on the participation of the masses. Every attempt to reduce the role of the people to that of mere supporters and passive observers and to isolate and to suppress rival organizations will only help the chauvinistic oppressor. The tendency to oppose any solution other than the one which would strengthen the dominant role of one organization also deserves to be condemned.

The success of the liberation struggle demands co-operation between organizations. Recent history has shown, again and again, that this is possible only under the leadership of proletarian ideology. Therefore, it is essential today to build a powerful Marxist-Leninist party organization and heighten its guiding role in the struggle for liberation.

NATIONAL OPPRESSION AND THE STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION - 7

If we fail to pay attention to the dangers of seeing the national question of Sri Lanka purely as a Sinhala-Tamil problem and to differentiate between the short and long term solutions the very solutions we seek could lead to even greater problems than they would solve.

Although it is correct to consider the Tamils of the north and the east, the hill-country Tamils and the Muslims as one nationality on the basis that they are all Tamil-speaking people, it was not possible to have the whole-hearted support of the Muslims for the just struggles of the Tamil people owing mainly to the failure of the Tamil nationalist leadership to take due account of the depth of feeling among the Muslims about their Islamic tradition and cultural identity. Besides, the electoral tactics of the Federal Party merely helped the corrupt and opportunistic elements among the Muslims to propel themselves to the forefront in electoral politics. The leadership of the Tamil nationalists, who use the upcountry Tamils and the Muslims to safeguard their class interests, chose to overlook the differences between the three main sections of the Tamil-speaking people in very much the same way it overlooked caste oppression in the north and the east. It also failed to show any interest in the politics of the hill-country Tamils and the

Muslims, outside the domain of parliamentary politics. Consequently, it failed to overcome the fears and suspicions in the minds of the hill-country Tamils and Muslims about the Tamils in the north and the east. Although, in recent years, a united struggle of all Tamil-speaking people against Sinhala chauvinism became not only possible but also necessary, the forces which could be united were not united and friendly contradictions were transformed into hostile ones, because several liberation organizations retained the same wrong outlook of the old Tamil nationalist leadership. The oppressive regime of the chauvinistic UNP and its political stooges from the minority communities took full advantage of this failure.

Little attention was paid to the position of the Muslims on the proposal for a Tamil Eelam comprising the Northern and Eastern Provinces when that proposal was put forward and no serious concern was shown about the future of the hill-country Tamils on the subject. The narrow nationalism of many Tamil liberation organization helped the UNP government to isolate the liberation struggle of the Tamil people not only from that of the oppressed Sinhala people but also from that of the other national minorities.

National oppression by the chauvinistic government has paved the way for direct and indirect foreign intervention in the affairs of Sri Lanka. The Indian government and the political parties of Tamilnadu have always treated the Tamil people of Sri Lanka and their struggle for liberation as pawns in their own political games. The capitalist government of India, which considers itself to be a regional power, never relished the idea of a non-aligned, independent government in Sri Lanka. After 1977, the UNP government sought to surrender the sovereignty of Sri Lanka to the US imperialists. The scheme to lease harbour facilities at Trincomalee to the US was thwarted by Indian intervention. The planned racial violence against the Tamils in 1983 created an opportunity for direct intervention by India in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka. The arrogant attitude of the UNP government was based on its 80% majority in parliament and the unconditional backing by the western powers, and its anti-democratic activities in the south continued

unchallenged because of the lack of unity among the opposition parties and the weakening of mass organization.

In the north, the steady rise in oppressive actions by the armed forces, particularly since 1977, led, in contrast to the expectations of the UNP government, to even stronger opposition. The Tamil masses did not at any stage rely on foreign support to carry out their struggle, and it was the conduct of the UNP government during the violent events of 1983 which enabled India to intervene. Many liberation organizations failed to appreciate the real motives of the Indian government (whose intolerance towards ethnic, linguistic and religious nationalism within its boundaries was notorious and whose desire to annex neighbouring countries through aggression is well known) in encouraging the separatist cause of the Tamil nationalists in Sri Lanka. Liberations which failed to understand the difference between the support and sympathy of the masses of Tamilnadu on the one hand the patronage of the leaders of the two Dravidian nationalist parties of Tamilnadu on the other competed with each other to develop ties with these two parties, notorious for their political corruption.

There is little to criticize in India's possible contribution towards a peaceful settlement of the national question of Sri Lanka. But India's attempt to exceed its acceptable role of a neutral and friendly mediator in pushing solutions which serve its regional interests, its pressure on movements which refuse to toe its line, and its tendency to pit one movement against another are most despicable. A political climate has now developed in which not only India but also the two superpowers could intervene, directly and indirectly in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka. The long-term effects of the involvement of Mossad and British mercenaries on behalf of the UNP government will be very negative, and we should be very cautious of a situation in which state oppression is carried out with the backing of some foreign powers and the struggle of the Tamil people against oppression with the backing of some other foreign powers.

The aim of the liberation struggle of the Tamil people is neither to complicate further the national question nor to

surrender the sovereignty of Sri Lanka to another country. But these dangers have become greater today and the solutions we seek, whether short term or long term, should take these matters into consideration. The solutions which we propose should be based on the welfare of the broad masses and in the interest of the struggles of the oppressed people of the world. It should contribute to the elimination of oppression of man by man at the national level and at the international level whether it be on the basis of race, religion, language or caste. It is only through the development of an outlook capable of linking our struggle for liberation not only with that of other oppressed people of Sri Lanka but also with the struggles of oppressed people all over the world that we can win complete and lasting freedom.

The Tamil people generally accept the view that, in the present international situation, the secession of Tamil Eelam is not feasible in the absence of foreign intervention. Lurking behind the slogans of many liberation organizations, including the TULF, is the hope that a solution favourable to them will be achieved with the help of foreigners. Some expect the solution to be Tamil Eelam while others hope that it will be an autonomy comprising the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Neither the Sinhala chauvinist parties nor the leaders of many of the liberation organizations, including the TULF, have the capability of approaching and analysing problems with a long term view. The interests of the entire nation and its people appear to have been submerged in the contest for political power by the narrow nationalists. The present situation where the course of the negotiations is determined by pressure from the Indian government and rivalry between the leaders of liberation organizations is regrettable. It appears that it was not merely the Tamil nationalists who fell victim to the dogmatic formula "liberation means secession" but also some liberation organizations who choose to call themselves Marxist or leftist.

Freedom won with the assistance of a foreign power can never blossom into true independence. To transform Sri Lanka into an arena for international power rivalry is total negation of freedom. We hesitate to indulge in political fortunetelling

by attempting to forecast whether or not a situation will emerge where no solution other than Tamil Eelam is possible. But our considered view is that the means of achieving Tamil Eelam and their possible consequences are highly undesirable in the present context.

Today, many in the UNP government realize that it is not possible to dominate the Tamil people by military force. The peaceful solution sought by them does not, however, arise out of concern for the Tamil people but out of their own class interest. But that is nevertheless a welcome change. There is also a militarist tendency within the government and the prospects for its development have by no means faded away. The spadework for establishing a military government by drawing attention to the situation in the north and the east and by fabricating tales about collusion between the 'terrorists' of the north and the 'rebels' of the south has already begun. In this situation, a negotiated interim solution will provide the opportunity and the necessary time to act against the establishment of military government, to put an end to the genocidal military violence against the Tamil people and to build a mass movement comprising the patriotic, progressive and democratic forces among the Sinhalese and the liberation forces of Tamils to combat the reactionary parliamentary dictatorship of the UNP. It will be useful for the advocates of uninterrupted struggle to pause for a moment to see where the liberation struggle is heading.

An interim solution is no complete solution and we have no doubt that a complete and just solution to the national question is impossible until the establishment of a people's government in Sri Lanka through revolutionary mass struggle and under the leadership of the proletariat. However, in our search for solutions we also need to bear in mind the need to

find ways and means of preventing the issues which led to the present horror of national oppression from raising their head ever again. In this respect, the proposals by the CPSL (Left) in its First National Congress deserve attention and so do the detailed report and the request put forward by the party central committee on 21-12-1986 outlining the essential features of an interim solution, which constitute a clear and comprehensive set of proposals.

PEACE AND THE PACT

PEACE AND THE PACT

The rise of Sinhala chauvinism constitutes the single most important aspect of the national question in Sri Lanka. The resolution of the national question in a way that will safeguard the national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country is in the interest of all nationalities and of the oppressed people and nations of the world. The long term resolution of contradictions between nationalities on the basis of friendship and understanding requires a patriotic and progressive approach and is only possible under the leadership of the working class. The failure of the leaders of the various nationalities to achieve a peaceful and lasting solution so far and the deterioration of good relationship between the people of different nationalities is inseparable from the class nature of the leadership and its opportunism in exploiting the differences between the nationalities to divide the oppressed classes in order to further the interests of the dominant exploiting classes. While we have no illusions about the incapability of the national bourgeois class to resolve the national question in the long run, we can neither ignore its importance in bourgeois parliamentary politics nor reject efforts made under its leadership to find short term solutions. Nothing short of state power for the working class will enable a lasting solution for the national question. But it is important for the working class to encourage every effort to foster friendship and harmony

between people of different nationalities and to support every effort to resolve conflicts between different nationalities. It is in this spirit that Marxist-Leninists have, despite their reservations about the feasibility of proposals to resolve problems relating to the national question, given qualified support to past efforts to deal with the national question. The present article is a brief and critical review of the various 'pacts' for resolving what has in the recent past been the most important aspects of the national question, namely that concerning the Sinhala and Tamil nationalities.

The rise of Sinhala chauvinism precedes national independence and its first important manifestation was the Sinhala-Moslem conflict early in this century. Narrow nationalism had already started to play a role in national politics in the years leading up to national independence and the UNP which on the one hand represented the interests of imperialism and extreme reaction also indulged in activities to undermine solidarity between the oppressed people of different nationalities. The two most notorious activities of the UNP government following independence were the planned colonization of traditional Tamil territories and the disenfranchisement of Tamil plantation workers of recent Indian origin. The mainstream of the Tamil political leadership was not much concerned about these issues and the Federal Party which was formed by a smaller number of dissenters in the Tamil Congress on the stand taken by the Tamil Congress on the Citizenship Act was mainly concerned about the implications of the Citizenship Act for the political future of the Tamils of the North and East. The Federal Party had a populist style compared with the Tamil Congress and despite its national bourgeois class nature and a sense of loyalty to the former British masters appeared to represent the aspirations of a somewhat wider cross-section of the population, but in reality echoed the resentments of the middle classes, mainly those dependent on the professions and government service. The official language issue which led to Sinhala being declared the sole official language brought electoral success to the Federal Party. But unfortunately for the Tamil people, the class loyalties of the Federal Party ensured that the Tamil people would be

isolated further from the progressive forces and the mainstream of political events in the country and that their representatives would eventually align with the reactionary forces in the South and their imperialist masters.

The Federal Party, however, was the main political party of the Tamil people of the North and the East and was the first political party with an overtly Tamil nationalist political platform. Their appeal was sentimental and tended to highlight the language issue at the expense of more serious social and political problems. Nevertheless, given the context in which they entered the political scene and given the fact that they were the only credible Tamil nationalist party with a set of demands designed to meet the reality of Sinhala chauvinist threat to Tamil interests, all negotiations to deal with the grievances of the Tamil people were based on the four main demands of the Federal Party. The way in which the Federal Party set about to achieve its goals, the way in which it reached compromise on some issues and, more importantly, the way in which it abandoned others and the behaviour of the Sinhala chauvinists of all shades in the various efforts to deal with this aspect of the national question will be examined, although briefly, against the background of a sequence of pacts aimed at dealing with the just grievances of the Tamil people.

The four main demands of the Federal Party were

1. Making both Sinhala and Tamil the official languages.
2. Granting citizenship to all Tamils of Indian origin who were citizens at the time of independence.
3. An immediate end to Sinhala colonization in the Northern and Eastern provinces.
4. The setting up of federal form of government with a federal state, comprising the Northern and Eastern provinces.

Following its electoral success in 1956, the Federal Party threatened to start a mass campaign in pursuit of its demands. This was followed by negotiations between S.W.R.D. Bandara-

naike the prime minister of the SLFP-led government and S.J.V. Chelvanayakam, the leader of the Federal Party. This led to the agreement known as the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam (B-C pact) pact. It should be borne in mind that even at the stage of passing the official language act in Parliament S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike had assured that a law will be passed in the near future to ensure the reasonable use of Tamil. It should also be noted that S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike was a believer in devolution of political power and was the first to advocate a federal system of government for the island, many years before independence. The most important feature of the B-C pact was that it made provision for the setting up of regional councils one comprising the Northern Province and the other the Eastern Province. These Councils were to be formed by direct elections and had special powers over a wide area of activities ranging from education and social welfare to agricultural and industrial development. Provision was made to give control of all future colonization in the regions concerned to the regional councils. Provision was also to be made for the Councils to have powers of taxation and borrowing. On the question of language, provision was to be made to recognize Tamil as the language of a national minority and to enable its use in the administration of the Northern and Eastern Provinces without infringing the position of the official language act. The above features went a long way towards meeting the basic demands of the Federal Party and provided a satisfactory basis for safeguarding the linguistic and territorial rights of the Tamils and Moors of the two provinces. The one issue on which no agreement was reached and about which the Federal Party was not particularly concerned was, ironically, the Citizenship Act, the very issue on the basis of which the Federal Party was founded. No attention was ever paid by the Federal Party to safeguard the linguistic and educational rights of Tamils of recent Indian origin. The Federal Party was not in the least concerned with the need for social and economic upliftment of this most oppressed section of the population and its interest was always to use these people by virtue of their number and their vital role in the national economy to increase its own political leverage in negotiations with the government. This cynical approach of the Federal

Party towards the plantation workers was profitable in its electoral politics and merely reflected the contemptuous attitude of the dominant classes of the caste-ridden Tamil society towards the plantation workers.

The Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam pact was abandoned because of a vicious anti-Tamil campaign launched by Sinhala chauvinists with the connivance of the reactionary UNP. A leading role was played by J. R. Jayewardene in the notorious 'March to Kandy' to demand the abandoning of the pact. While the left and other progressive forces in the South did everything to strengthen the hands of the government against Sinhala chauvinist efforts to tear up the pact, some members of the Federal Party, including A. Amirthalingam, hurriedly launched the anti-Sri campaign which not only demonstrated the lack of coherent thinking within the Federal Party but also its insensitivity of the political climate. The anti-Sri campaign strengthened the hands of the Sinhala chauvinists who were busy whipping up hatred towards the Tamil people. The subsequent months saw the abandoning of the pact and the first major spate of communal violence since independence.

Legislation for the reasonable use of Tamil (Tamil Language Special Provisions Act) was passed in 1958 August and assured that Tamil will be the medium of instruction for school and university education of Tamil students and that those educated in the Tamil medium could sit examinations to enter government service in the Tamil medium and if selected they will be allowed time to acquire minimum proficiency in Sinhala. It also entitled all Tamil speaking people, with the exception of government officers writing in an official capacity, to have all communications with the government in Tamil. Provision was also made for local government authorities in the Northern and Eastern provinces to conduct their affairs in Tamil and to communicate with the government in Tamil.

Another pact between the Federal Party and the government has received less attention from political commentators than it deserved. The Sam P. C. Fernando-Chelvanayakam accord was arrived at in the context of activities of Sinhala chauvinist mis-

chief makers in key positions in government service aimed at undermining the language rights of the Tamils under the Tamil Language Special Provisions Act of 1958. Relations between the SLFP government led by Sirimao Bandaranaike and the Federal Party were good until the Federal Party chose to take sides with the Catholic Church authorities in opposing the government's take over of assisted schools. It is noteworthy that the Federal Party leadership took a great interest in this issue when a vast majority of the Tamil people had no objection to the government's move. The government, for its part, contributed to the worsening of the relationship by reintroducing the Language of Courts Act (introduced in 1959 and lapsed because of the dissolution of parliament) with no provision for the use of Tamil. These matters could have been resolved through negotiations and the Communist Party did, in fact, mobilize opinion among the government MPs to make provision for Tamil as a language of record for Courts of law in the Eastern and Northern provinces. But the Sinhala chauvinist extremists in the government succeeded in blocking these efforts by making use of the Federal Party's threat to launch a Satyagraha campaign after they broke off negotiations with the government. The Federal Party launched a partially successful 'hartal' on 2.1.61 and followed it with a Satyagraha campaign on 20-2-61. Picketing was carried out at the entrance to the Jaffna Kachcheri (the Government Agent's office), but no action took place outside the Courts of law, although the language of the courts was the issue which precipitated the campaign. The police baton-charged the participants in the campaign and despite strong protests from the left political parties and demands to take disciplinary action against the police officers who used unnecessary force against civilians, the government attempted to justify police behaviour. As a consequence the campaign gathered momentum and the conduct of government affairs was hampered in the Northern and Eastern provinces. The government took the initiative in early April to discuss the matter with the Federal Party and negotiations took place between Sam P. C. Fernando (the Minister of Justice) and the leaders of the Federal Party. The minutes of the talks on 5.4.61 popularly known as the Sam P.C. Fernando-Chelvanayakam pact were signed by the Minister

of Justice and the leaders of the Federal Party. The essence of the talks concerned five demands by the Federal Party and the position taken by the government and the Federal Party representatives on the proposals.

1. The Language of Administration in the North and the East

- (a) The government was willing to conduct all transactions with the public in Tamil but insisted on keeping all official records in Sinhala. The Federal Party leaders wanted official documents to be maintained in Tamil as well. The government was willing to maintain official translations in Tamil alongside the documents in Sinhala. The F. P. leaders disagreed.
- (b) The Federal Party wanted to have every act of Parliament passed in Sinhala to be formally passed in Tamil. The government was willing to provide official translations for every act passed in Sinhala. The F. P. leaders disagreed.
- (c) The Minister offered to accept any proposals put forward by the leaders of the Federal Party within the scope of the Tamil Language Special Provisions Act. The F. P. leaders disagreed.

2. On the Language of the Courts

The government which earlier insisted that all records should be maintained in Sinhala conceded that records may be maintained in Sinhala as well as Tamil in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The Federal Party leaders rejected this and wanted records to be maintained in Tamil only in the Northern and Eastern provinces and insisted on having special judges in the higher courts including the Supreme Court to hear appeals in Tamil.

3. On the rights of Tamil outside Northern and Eastern Provinces

The minister stated that instruction had already been given December 1960 to officials to provide a Tamil translation for

any reply to communications from Tamil speaking people. He also stated that orders have been issued to print stamps, money order forms, income tax, customs and other forms in Sinhala as well as in Tamil and to make them available in any part of the country. The leaders of the Federal Party made no comment.

4. **On the right to retire with compensation for Tamil government servants and officers who joined the Service before 1956 but fail to achieve proficiency in Sinhala within 5 years from 1-1-1961.**

The minister stated that the government would add 5 years to the service of any person who had served over 10 years and give them the right to retire with due rights. The Federal Party leaders made no comment.

5. **On Regional Councils**

The minister requested postponing the consideration of this matter for a short period. The leaders of the Federal Party turned down the request.

What is clear is that the government was willing to make major concessions on the status of Tamil language in administrative and legal affairs without infringing on the position of Sinhala as the sole official language. The difference between the government and the Federal Party was over formalities concerning the status of Tamil and not over the real status of Tamil.

The Federal Party did not even wait one week from the conclusion of the talks to declare that the government's position is unacceptable and that plans have been made to intensify its campaign by setting up a parallel administration in the North and the East. In fact, they inaugurated a rival postal service on 14-4-61. The government responded by declaring a state of emergency and placed the leaders of the Satyagraha campaign under detention. The campaign collapsed in two days exposing the bankruptcy of the Federal Party

organization. The attitude of the Federal Party towards the SLFP government hardened in subsequent years and the leadership became more explicit in its support for the imperialist interests and developed ties with the UNP, which led to the participation of the Federal Party in a UNP-led coalition government between 1965 and 1969.

The conduct of the Federal Party was not only unreasonable but also unrealistic in the context of Sinhala chauvinism and serious doubts were expressed by the left about the motives of the Federal Party in launching a struggle at a time when the government was making a serious effort to satisfy the just demands of the Tamil people. The Federal Party only helped strengthen the hands of the Sinhala chauvinists who had actively campaigned all along that federalism would lead to an independent Tamil state which would threaten the security of the Sinhala nation. The Federal Party also took an increasingly hostile stance towards the left which, despite its criticism of the Federal Party, stood for the rights of the Tamil people as a national minority.

Developments within the left movement during this period also deserve comment at this point. The debate in the international Communist movement about the peaceful path to socialism had its repercussions inside every communist party. Opportunists who wanted to transform the communist party into another bourgeois parliamentary party were actively encouraged by the Soviet Union and this was fiercely opposed by Marxist-Leninists who firmly believed in the revolutionary path to socialism. This resulted in a split in the Communist Party. The revisionists backed by the Soviet Union became fully immersed in opportunistic parliamentary politics. The Marxist-Leninist left of the Communist Party persisted with its principled revolutionary stand on every question relating to social changes.

Splits also occurred in the Trotskyist LSSP with the bulk of the party taking the parliamentary line and the orthodox Trotskyists were relegated to the fringe of political activity. The parliamentary Communist Party (CP) and the LSSP became more and more obsessed with seats in parliament and, recognizing that they could not even retain their existing seats without

the backing of the SLFP, decided to move closer to the SLFP. The LSSP joined the SLFP in government in 1964 while the CP chose to wait until 1970.

The Federal Party and the dissenters in the LSSP along with some SLFP MPs who left the government joined hands with the UNP to defeat the SLFP Government on the bill to nationalize the Lake House, intended to free the press from the grip of the extreme right. The leaders of the Federal Party entered into a secret agreement with the UNP before the elections in 1965 and became partners in the coalition government led by the UNP, on the basis of the Dudley Senanayake-Chelvanayakam Pact of 24-5-1965. The essence of the agreement was :

- (1) Provision to be made under the Tamil Language Special Provisions Act to make Tamil the language of administration and of record in the Northern and Eastern Provinces.
- (2) The Language of Courts Act will be amended to provide for legal proceedings in the Northern and Eastern Provinces to be conducted and recorded in Tamil.
- (3) Action will be taken to set up District Councils. (The extent of the powers of these councils were left for further negotiations).
- (4) The Land Ordinance will be amended to provide that all citizens of the country be entitled to allotment of land under the Ordinance. It was granted, however, that the following priorities be observed in the Northern and Eastern Provinces.
 - (A) Land in these provinces should in the first instance be granted to landless persons in the District.
 - (B) Secondly, to Tamil speaking persons resident in these provinces, and
 - (C) Thirdly, to other citizens in Ceylon, preference being given to Tamil citizens in the rest of the island.

The Dudley Senanayake-Chelvanayakam Pact was not implemented. But the Federal Party remained a partner in coalition government until a few months before the general election. The effort of the government to **introduce legislation regarding the status of Tamil Language** was bitterly opposed by the SLFP. This was partly motivated by the hostile attitude of the Federal Party leadership towards them. They resorted to anti-Tamil sloganeering and appealed to Sinhala chauvinist sentiments. What was even more shameful was that their CP and LSSP allies in Parliament did very little to restrain their SLFP colleagues. Although it is to the credit of those parties that they did not pander to Sinhala chauvinism, there is no defence for their passive role in the issue. The Marxist-Leninists while denouncing the reactionary nature of the UNP-Federal Party alliance, also condemned the Sinhala chauvinistic line of the SLFP and the opportunism of the parliamentary left.

The participation of the Federal Party in coalition government with the UNP signalled some major shifts in the position of the Federal Party since its founding.

1. The Federal Party had effectively accepted Sinhala as the official language.
2. The Federal Party had not only abandoned its demand for citizenship to Tamils of recent Indian origin but also surrendered their right to own land under land development schemes.
3. The Federal Party was willing to accept District Councils with far less powers than the Regional Councils proposed under the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact and, in effect, abandoned its demand for a Federal State.
4. The Federal Party had forged a lasting alliance with the UNP.

The failure of the Federal Party to deliver the goods and the lack of a credible political program weakened the Federal Party in electoral politics. Despite its electoral success in 1970

by virtue of being the only significant Tamil nationalist party, its overall percentage of votes actually fell for the first time since 1952.

The overwhelming victory of the SLFP-led United Front in 1970 led to dismay in the Federal Party headquarters. The Federal Party did not have to wait long to find reasons to join hands with the UNP to attack the U. F. Government. The mishandling of the University admissions issue in 1970 by the introduction of standardization and the failure of the New Constitution of 1972 proclaiming Sri Lanka as a republic to incorporate legal safeguards for the rights of national minorities provided ample ammunition for the Federal Party. For their turn, Sinhala chauvinists in the U.F. also used every opportunity to develop hostility between the government and the Tamil people. The Federal Party, already encouraged by the insurrection by the JVP in 1971 and by the Indian involvement in the liberation of Bangladesh, began to take a more militant stance and with the blessings of the UNP joined hands with the weaker Tamil Congress and others to form the Tamil United Front, which in anticipation of the general elections of 1977 became the Tamil United Liberation Front.

Marxist-Leninists always recognize the just grievances of the Tamil people and have never hesitated to speak up against oppression. They also recognized that the demand for a separate state was not in the interest of any nationality of the country and could lead to foreign intervention. The Federal Party, on the one hand, encouraged young militants to participate in acts of violence against those considered traitors to the Tamil cause, while, on the other hand, made secret deals with the UNP to bring down the SLFP government. The exact contents of the deal between the three leaders of the UNP, the Federal Party and Ceylon Workers' Congress before the elections of 1977 are unknown. But the UNP government dealt with the problem of university admissions by increasing the number of places available. This move provided short-term relief but had serious implications for the quality of education and prospects for employment in the long run. The UNP government also attempted to set up District Councils without any real

powers and this led to dissatisfaction among a sizeable section of the TULF, who finally deserted the TULF to form the TELF. The militant youth movement started to grow in strength following the anti-Tamil violence of 1977, during which the then Prime Minister J. R. Jayawardene virtually declared war on the Tamils. The repetition of anti-Tamil violence in 1979 and 1981 and, especially, that in 1983 resulted in further growth of militant organizations demanding a separate Tamil State. These events should be seen in the context of the undermining of the parliamentary democratic system by the UNP which introduced the executive Presidential system, extended the life of the government beyond 1983 by not holding parliamentary elections and used every possible means to intimidate its political opponents.

The violence of 1983 provided India with its first real opportunity to interfere in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka. The attitude of the UNP government and its commitment to a military solution to suppress the liberation movements in the North and the East made it possible for the Government of India to have a greater influence over the liberation movements. The views of Marxist-Leninists on the liberation struggle and the genocidal policy of the UNP government were very clear and are well illustrated by the position taken by the Communist Party of Sri Lanka (Left). The CPSL (left) has stated that it was not only just and correct but also necessary for the Tamil people to struggle for their rights. While it recognized that the struggle was one for liberation from national oppression, it did not consider the demand for secession to be in the interest of any of the nationalities or the country as a whole. It constantly warned the militants and the Tamil people about the danger of foreign intervention. It welcomed the role of India as a neutral and friendly neighbour in achieving a peaceful settlement provided that India does not take advantage of the situation to further its regional interests. It also put forward a set of proposals for the solution of the problems relating to the Tamils of the Northern and Eastern Provinces within the existing political framework and a set of immediate steps to be taken in order to achieve a climate in which the proposals could be implemented.

(See Minimum Proposals of the Central Committee of the Sri Lanka Communist Party (Left) for an Interim Solution to the national question.)

The fears of the CPSL (left) about India's intervention were well founded and have been confirmed by the concessions India has extracted from the Sri Lankan Government on matters relating to foreign policy and defence. We will examine below the implications of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 29-7-1987 in the context of India's involvement in the issue and its role in resolving the problem.

The present accord is not the first between India and Sri Lanka on matters relating to Sri Lanka's national problem. India was reluctant to get involved on the question of Tamils of recent Indian origin who were made "stateless" by the Citizenship Act. Jawaharlal Nehru always claimed that it was the internal problem of Sri Lanka (then Ceylon). Sirimao Bandaranaike and Lal Bahadur Sastri signed an agreement in 1963 by which a large majority of the "stateless" people will be accepted by India and a minority will be granted Sri Lankan citizenship. This was much against the wishes of the vast majority of the Tamils of recent Indian origin who wanted to become citizens of Sri Lanka. There was no final agreement about the exact numbers and the 'repatriation' of Tamils to India was carried out at an extremely slow pace. In 1974 negotiations between Sirimao Bandaranaike and Indira Gandhi led to an agreement by which the exact proportions of the people to be granted Indian and Sri Lankan citizenship was finalized. This agreement also included the demarcation of territorial waters of the two countries in the north-west of Sri Lanka. The implementation of these agreements was slow, and the plantation workers who went to India in the hope of a better future found themselves in a worse plight than in the plantations. Marxist-Leninists while welcoming the efforts of the government to end the problem of "statelessness" denounced the failure of the agreement to reflect the wishes of the people concerned, and expressed concern for the welfare of plantation workers who were to be sent to India. Their fears proved reasonable and the treatment of the people (who were to be citizens of India) by the state and

central governments of India demonstrated the cynical, exploiting class nature of the ruling classes of India. The treatment of refugees from the north and the east who went to India since 1983, although not admirable, was somewhat better. Militant organizations received special treatment at the outset and enjoyed facilities for recruitment and combat training. Many organizations took a long time to realize that the Indian government was not interested in their struggle for an independent Tamil state. Rivalry between organizations was used by the Indian government and political parties of Tamilnadu to further their ends. The Indian government while giving hope to the Tamil people took advantage of the unwillingness of the Sri Lankan government to reach a just settlement and the uncompromising position of the leading militant organization, the LTTE, on the question of a separate state to delay its direct involvement until it was in a position of strength to impose its will. The move by the government of Sri Lanka for a military victory early in the year was in the context of a war weary population longing for peace, a weakening of morale among the youth as a result of endless conflicts between rival movements and a lack of popular enthusiasm for the struggle. The result was a stalemate. The Indian government used this opportunity to impose its peace plan on the LTTE by applying pressure on the LTTE and its political backers in Tamil nadu (the state government of M.G. Ramachandran).

While the accord goes into significant detail about the setting up of regional councils and their powers, it is very unclear about some important matters including the right of India to intervene in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka.

The proposals of the CPSL (left) were correct in wanting the wishes of the people of the eastern province to be taken into account in setting up of regional councils. A merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces or having two separate regional councils for the two provinces are not matters to be decided in a mechanical fashion. Regional Councils should bring together people who wish to be under one administration while giving others an opportunity to remain outside. If that is not possible, provision should be made to safeguard the rights of the

minorities within the areas coming under a regional council. Provision also should be made for safeguarding the rights of other nationalities living in the predominantly Sinhala regions. As in the past, the problems of Tamils of recent Indian origin have been completely overlooked.

Given the present ethnic composition of the Eastern Province, the proposed referendum is likely to cause more problems than it would solve. No provisions have been made to ensure that planned settlement of Sinhalese in traditional Tamil areas will not take place in the period leading up to the referendum and there is no commitment to resettle people who fled their homes as a result of attacks by the armed forces, the homeguards and other political thugs.

The principle of amnesty for political detainees has to be seen in a national context. Although the accord talks about a general amnesty, serious doubts have been expressed by opposition political parties about its applying to Sinhalese detainees.

While the accord talks about surrender of arms by the militants, nothing has been mentioned about disarming the homeguards and other paramilitary forces of the government of Sri Lanka, no provision exists for the payment of compensation to victims of violence by the armed forces and other paramilitary forces or to punish those who were guilty of excesses.

The Indo-Sri Lanka Accord aims to end the armed conflict in the north and the east. It is by no means a comprehensive answer to the national question. As a solution imposed on a people and one which fails to ensure the basic democratic rights of the people, it is likely to lead to new problems. The dependence on Indian armed forces for the implementation of the proposals and the right of the Indian government to maintain its troops on Sri Lankan soil for an unlimited period are highly undesirable features. The accord has also compromised national independence in matters of foreign and defence policies; concessions made to India in these matters are totally irrelevant to the problem the accord is supposed to deal with. The principle of equality between nations has been violated

by the provisions which ensure that Sri Lanka will not seek foreign military assistance without reference to India or permit any Sri Lankan port or broadcasting facility to be used for military or intelligence purposes by another country; but India has no such obligations towards Sri Lanka.

Marxist-Leninists welcome the relief the accord has brought to the people of the Northern and Eastern provinces who were under a state of siege for the past four years. It welcomes the recognition by the Sri Lankan government of the right of the Tamil people of the Northern and Eastern provinces to be under one regional administration. But it seriously doubts whether the provisions under the accord are likely to meet the genuine needs of the different nationalities living in the Eastern province. To treat the Eastern province as one integral unit whose merger with the Northern province should be on an 'all or nothing' basis is bound to lead to more problems than whatever the outcome of the referendum would solve.

No Marxist-Leninist could welcome the right of one country to interfere in the internal affairs of another. Given the reality of Indian military presence, the only realistic course of action for salvaging national independence and sovereignty is for all patriotic forces to build on the positive features of the accord to create conditions under which the Indian military presence will be made unnecessary. Only the politically bankrupt could declare their objection to Indian military presence while opposing every positive step towards a peaceful resolution of the national question.

We have no illusion about solving the national question by a pact between the Sri Lankan and Indian governments. It is not possible to achieve national unity and preserve national independence and sovereignty in the absence of basic democratic rights in the widest possible sense. It is the duty of all patriotic and progressive forces to join in the struggle for the unity of the people of all nationalities and for the restoration of democratic and human rights in the country.

ANNEXURE

In the interests of readers we annex the section of the resolution dealing with the national question, extracted from the Political Report submitted to the First National Congress of the Sri Lanka Communist Party (Left) and three important reports of the Party's Central Committee on the ethnic question, selected from among the reports issued by the Central Committee from time to time.

PUTHIYA POOMI PUBLISHERS

PRESS RELEASE :

Sri Lanka Communist Party (Left),
15/1, Power House Road,
Jaffna.

(A statement and appeal to the patriotic and democratic forces and political parties of the country on the current political situation in the country including that in the north and the east by the Communist Party of Sri Lanka (Left), emphasising the importance of a broad, nationwide united front against the anti-democratic UNP government and its foreign masters.)

The opposition democratic forces of our country should not be self-satisfied over the progress made by the SLFP in the recently concluded parliamentary by-elections. Neither should it under-estimate the Enemy's capabilities. In fact, this victory prophesies the necessity for a better organized broad based unity among the opposition democratic forces. If we fail to take this into consideration and work to achieve this goal during this hour of peril and turmoil in our country the retrospective effects will bring further gloom to our nation.

When the UNP government of J.R. Jayawardene came to power it brought along with it the poison seeds of civil war and of plunder by multinationals. Today the country has to face the harmful consequences.

The people demand a general election owing to a burning desire to establish an alternative government because of their fury at the nett effect of the frustration in the midst of workers, the economic crisis, unrest among the youth, indefinite closure of the universities, detention without trial of hundreds of young men and women, the continuing erosion of democratic and human rights and the changes in Sri Lankan foreign policy. They persist in their struggle for an independent national economy and for the restoration of democratic and human rights in order to strengthen national unity and achieve economic progress.

Suspensions about the intention of the Indian government to place the north and the east under its control or the control of its agents and to establish a puppet government in the south which will be amenable to Indian ambitions in the region are gaining strength in the minds of democratic forces. People recognize that the presence of nearly 100,000 Indian troops in the north and the east, the accumulation of modern weapons and military aircraft, and the control of important harbours including Trincomalee of the Palaly airport by Indian forces endanger the independence, sovereignty and unity of Sri Lanka. The popular movement to oppose the development of this situation is gaining strength in the south.

No country should interfere in the internal affairs of another. As it is India's intention to interfere, the matter causes serious concern since it is a dangerous precedent for South Asian nations.

Now is the time for the working people and all patriotic and democratic forces, parties and organizations to act irrespective of differences in race and religion with vigilance, caution and unity. It is necessary to bear in mind that it is the absence of a situation for such action which constitutes the main strength of the dictatorial UNP government and its foreign masters and expedite the building up of a broad, nation-wide united front based on a minimum programme of opposition to the UNP government and its masters.

The Tamil people have a very important role in this broad nationwide united front. They constitute a considerable part of the national population and their hard work is essential to the economy, national unity and other aspects of national life. One factor favouring intervention by the Indian forces is the failure of the democratic forces of the opposition to give prime importance to national interests and put forward policies for the solution of the problems of the Tamil people at the time when the problems of the Tamil people were sharpening.

The above was a part of the report by the Central Committee of the Sri Lanka Communist Party (Left) which met on the 23rd and 24th of July 1988 on the political situation of the country. The report further states that;

“The Tamil people should be united into this united front by putting forward a policy capable of finding an honourable political solution to their problem by basing itself on the positive features of the minimum proposals of the central committee of the Sri Lanka Communist Party (Left) for an interim solution to the national question (21-12-1986). The Communist Party of Sri Lanka (Left) warns that ignoring this need would indirectly help the UNP and its masters and appeals for immediate action by all the working people and democratic forces to build up a broad nationwide united front.”

On the situation in the north and the east :

The view of the report on the situation in the north and the east are as follows :

It will soon be an year since the arrival of the Indian Peace-Keeping Force on the pretext of finding a solution to the national question of Sri Lanka. More effort has been spent during this period in military action than in implementing the accord with the Sri Lankan government: their action in encircling of Mullaitivu confirms this. It does not appear that attention has been paid to the fact that attempts to liquidate the LTTE militarily or to achieve an unconditional surrender will lead to turbulence among the Tamil people. During this year the Tamil people have lost several hundred valuable lives; the Tamil people who encountered the day and night curfews implemented continuously for months suffered hunger in refugee camps without proper shelter for days on end; incalculable damage was done to property; agriculture and industrial development suffered serious set-backs; hundreds of youth have been detained in camps without legal inquiry for periods exceeding six months and the state of unclarity about the question of with whom and on the basis of the law of which country that communications can be made to obtain their release continues; in the east planned instigation of clashes between Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim people is leading to further bitterness in relations between the nationalities.

The democratic forces which once believed that the Indian government, the Sri Lankan government and the IPKF are

seeking to solve the problem are now viewing the activities of the IPKF with anxiety. The Communist Party of Sri Lanka (Left) cautions that peace can be achieved only through an honourable political settlement for the Tamil people and not through military action or other forms of oppression. It also emphasises that a favourable solution should be sought urgently and on the basis of the positive features of the peace accord.

Hostilities with the LTTE should be ceased and preliminary talks conducted with them with this intention and tripartite talks should be initiated; all efforts should be made without delay for an interim solution through the establishment of an interim administration in all possible ways.

It is essential to solve some of the important problems in need of an early solution through such an interim administration.

Importantly, in the north and the east, and especially in the Eastern Province, Sinhala colonization has been carried out from 1977 to date with mischievous, chauvinistic motives. Such settlements must be removed and now schemes be established in suitable areas in the south. The names of persons who were thus settled since 1977 should be deleted from the electoral register. To hold elections for regional councils before such action would only further complicate the problem.

The Communist Party of Sri Lanka (Left) took into consideration all aspects of the national question and emphasised the following three point demand on May Day this year:

1. Tripartite talks between the representatives of the Sri Lankan government, Tamil militant movements including the TULF, and the Indian government should be carried out on an extensive basis and agreement found to implement the positive features of the accord ;
2. An interim administrative structure should be established to implement the tripartite agreement for solving the national question ;

3. The IPKF should be withdrawn at the earliest possible date through expediting the above.

The Communist Party of Sri Lanka (Left) reiterates it once again.

The liberation struggle of the Tamil people has reached its fourth stage (See page 101) in the present critical period. This should be a turning point in history and it is important to identify the fundamental reasons for the setbacks of today, caused by the mistakes of the past. Liberation movements, including the TULF, committed five serious mistakes in the past :

- * Liberation movements depended on foreign countries (especially India) and were controlled by their command, guidance and patronage ;
- * They failed to put forward a long-term programme for the liberation struggle ;
- * They failed to build a strong united front among the parties and movements which represented the aspirations of the people of different communities in order to mobilise all possible forces in support of the liberation struggle ;
- * They failed to develop a mass line by considering arms to be everything in the struggle ;
- * They made enemies of the Sinhala masses who were a friendly force by killing ordinary Sinhala people.

It is necessary at this stage, where the liberation struggle of the Tamil people is coupled with the struggle for the expulsion of the Indian troops, for the liberation movements to correct their mistakes and unite with the Sinhala working people and democratic forces who are carrying out a struggle against the capitalist government of J.R. Jayawardene and its foreign masters, to rely on each other and to give support to their struggle and win their support for the liberation struggle, and to carry forward the liberation struggle of the Tamil people against national oppression on a nationwide basis. By this, they could rectify the past error of pushing the Sinhala working people into

the ranks of the Sinhala chauvinist capitalist gang in power and strengthen the struggle against that gang and its masters.

The Communist Party of Sri Lanka (Left), which emphasises the need for an interim solution to the national question in the current context, is aware that it is through the struggle for an interim solution and its achievement that past mistakes will be corrected and a situation favouring the formation of a strong united front will emerge : Only a new social system which is achieved through a variety of struggles by the democratic forces under the leadership of the working people could provide the correct direction for the solution to the national question. The CPSL (Left) appeals that the liberation struggle of the Tamil people against national oppression be developed towards that goal.

The conditions are developing favourably and the situation in the south is changing. Broad political movements have been initiated by the patriotic and democratic forces and parties to restore human and political rights, to find an honourable political solution to the problems of the Tamil people and to strengthen national unity and build an independent national economy to achieve economic progress. Such movements are functioning on the basis of methods familiar to those involved, including parliamentary politics. It is worth noting that in the recent elections held in the south the people of the south have made absolutely clear their hatred towards the UNP government and its masters.

K.A. Subramaniam
GENERAL SECRETARY

26.7.88

THE FOUR STAGES OF THE STRUGGLE AGAINST OPPRESSION OF THE TAMILS

1. The first stage of the struggle to win the just rights of the Tamils began under the leadership of Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam and the Tamil Congress. They put forward the unrealistic and impractical fifty-fifty demand. The struggle ended in failure, and with bargaining for portfolios.
2. The second stage began with the launching of the Federal Party (Tamil Arasu Kadchchi) headed by Mr. S.J.V. Chelvanayagam and other MPs who broke away from the Tamil Congress. The FP too followed the path of the Tamil Congress ; it entered into political bargaining with the UNP, launched some mass struggles with a view to capturing parliamentary seats, formed the Tamil United Liberation Front, put forward the demand for a separate Tamil State and ultimately surrendered to the JR govt.
3. The liberation struggle of the Tamils against the national oppression unleashed by the JR govt. which came into power in 1977, was transformed into an armed struggle by the Tamil Eelam militant movements. This was the 3rd stage.
4. In July 1987 the Indo-Ceylon Accord paved the way for the entry of the IPKF. The Indian military intervention has led to a new turn : it heralded the 4th stage which the armed Tamil liberation struggle has now entered.

PRESS RELEASE

Sri Lanka Communist Party (Left),
15/1, Power House Road, Jaffna,

“The Central Committee of the Sri Lanka Communist Party (Left) is continuing with its in-depth study of the ‘Peace Pact’ between the government of India and Sri Lanka. Although the pact has achieved a limited end to the sufferings of the Tamil people it is the view of the Central Committee that an agreement between the two governments cannot bring about a solution, whether short-term or long-term, for the nation question, because in the Tamil question, an interim solution could be achieved only through the participation, co-operation and consent of all the sections concerned, and solutions based on one-sided, coercive and intimidatory methods should not be thrust upon them. It is from that point of view that our party totally disapproves of the attempts by the Indian government to detain Mr. V. Prabhakaran, the leader of LTTE in order to force him to agree to their wishes. Both governments should take the necessary steps to enable Mr. Prabhakaran and the LTTE to put forward their views and to participate independently and of their own accord in the talks to find a solution. The Communist Party of Sri Lanka (Left) stresses that at the same time, all the militant youth movements, the TULF and the Sri Lankan government should, through discussions, find a political solution.”

The above was part of a report by Mr. K.A. Subramaniam, General Secretary of the CPSL (Left) on behalf of the Central Committee of the party.

The report proceeds to warn the people of Sri Lanka that the invitation of the Indian peace force on the basis of the Indo-Sri Lankan Peace Pact has caused damage to the independence, sovereignty and integrity of this country and paved the way for a new form of threat to the nations of South Asia. The Jayawardene government has at every turn, instead of solving the national question, proceeded to mortgage the sovereignty of the country to every possible alien power. The invitation to Indian

troops in the pretext of keeping peace marks a climax to that course of action. Our party strongly denounce this act of the government.

As India has been involved in several ways with the intensification of our national question and since it is our nearest neighbour, our party has already expressed its acceptance of India's role as a neutral friend while warning that India should not give primary to its interests as a regional power.

Our party has put forward proposals for an interim solution to the national question and emphasized the need for a political solution. That is the wish of all people including the Tamils. Thus, only an amicable political solution, arrived at through extensive discussions between all the militant youth organizations, the TULF and the government, could be correct interim solution. Our party believes that is the only possible course for genuine peace.

02.08.1987

K.A. Subramaniam,
GENERAL SECRETARY

**Minimum Proposals of the Central Committee of the
Sri Lanka Communist Party (Left) for
AN INTERIM SOLUTION TO THE
NATIONAL QUESTION**

The Sri Lanka Communist Party (Left) released on 21-12-86 the following statement, containing the minimum proposals of its central committee, for an interim solution to the National Question. The statement signed by the General Secretary of the Party, Comrade K.A. Subramaniam on behalf of the Central Committee is as follows :

The people of the entire country are undergoing the painful effects resulting from the serious situation for which the present UNP government is responsible.

The national oppression committed particularly against the Tamil People has resulted in unbearable suffering. The economy of the country has deteriorated and the living standard of the people has eroded considerably. Defence expenditure incurred is approximately Rs. 20 million per day and the entire burden is borne by the working class. Several important personalities in the UNP have begun to realise that the national question cannot be solved by war.

The entire people including the Tamils want a peaceful life and eagerly await an interim political solution. No one assumes that any interim political solution will be a lasting solution to the national question. Failure to pay attention to a short term as well as a long term solution will lead to further serious problems, and to perceive Sri Lanka's national question as merely a racial problem between Tamils and Sinhalese will lead to a dangerous situation.

Continued national oppression by the present chauvinistic government could lead to an international threat to the country's independence through direct and indirect intervention by foreign powers. The UNP since 1977 has been trying to barter our independence to U.S. imperialism.

Plans by the UNP government to lease facilities of Trincomalee Harbour was thwarted by Indian intervention. Systematic and planned communal violence and the bloody pogrom of July 1983 against the Tamil People with the blessings of the present government resulted in direct intervention by India in Sri Lanka's internal affairs.

Although the attempt of the Indian government to find a political solution to the national question acceptable to both parties is to be appreciated, the Indian government should not be permitted to impose a solution to further its regional political interests.

The aim of the liberation struggle should not be to weaken the country's national independence or to lead to the loss of sovereignty and independence of our country. The threat to Sri Lanka's independence and sovereignty is increasing, and it is being realised by all sections of the people.

This is why various sections of the people are now pressing the government for an urgent political solution to the problem without worsening the crisis. All forces fighting for the emancipation of Tamil People should take account of this and support an interim political solution through negotiations to thwart the emergence of a military dictatorship, to put an end to military genocide violence against the Tamils and, also, to give an opportunity and the time to build a mass organisation of democratic forces and Tamil liberation forces against the right-wing parliamentary dictatorship of the UNP.

The SLCP (Left) has acknowledged and stressed that the Tamils have a traditional homeland and they constitute a distinct nationality. Our party recognises the traditional homeland of the Tamils by rejecting the planned Sinhala colonisation under government sponsorship.

The central committee stresses that an interim political solution should incorporate the following proposals with a clear guarantee of their implementation:

1. Traditional homelands of the Tamils in Northern and Eastern Provinces should be granted regional autonomous status and appropriate autonomous bodies set up.
2. Any autonomous body should have the right to merge with one or more or, if necessary, to function independently if it chooses to.
3. Regional autonomous bodies should have maximum freedom to manage their economy, employment, internal security, education, culture, health, social services and other affairs without the intervention of the central government.
4. Muslims, Tamils of more recent of Indian origin and Sinhalese who reside within these areas should be given the right to establish inner autonomous bodies and thereby ensure their basic human and civic rights as well as their linguistic and cultural rights.
5. In the absence of external aggression the autonomous bodies should be fully responsible for the security of the autonomous areas.
6. Each autonomous body should have the freedom to set up colonisation schemes within its area. At the same time it should have the right to accept or reject any colonisation scheme of the central government within its area.
7. Concrete steps should be taken to eradicate discrimination on the basis of nationality, language, religion or caste at national and regional levels.
8. Basic rights of the hill country Tamils and Tamils and Muslims who reside in outside the North and East in large numbers should be recognised by setting up inner autonomous bodies.
9. It should be guaranteed that elections at the national and regional level should be held without the intervention of government, armed forces and other organs.

10. Depressed communities and backward sections of the society should be given institutional guarantee for their social upliftment by way of concessions and facilities in the field of economy, employment and education.

While stressing the above proposals as a basis for arriving at an interim political solution our party emphasizes the necessity of taking steps to eliminate the problems which arose in recent years due to the warlike situation prevailing in the North and the East.

To ease the present tension in the country, our party emphasizes that the following steps should be taken without any further delay:

- (1) The Prevention of Terrorism Act should be withdrawn, the state of emergency lifted and all persons detained under the act and emergency regulations released unconditionally.
- (2) These persons who are wanted under Prevention of Terrorism Act and under the emergency regulations be pardoned unconditionally. All charges against them and those arrested prior to the passage of Prevention of Terrorism Act and promulgation be withdrawn.
- (3) The Sixth Amendment to the constitution should be withdrawn and freedom of expression of the Tamils honoured.
- (4) Government troops should be withdrawn from the traditional lands of the Tamils on a time table and the camps be closed.
- (5) Home guards should be disbanded and disarmed and that institution scrapped.
- (6) The government should give full compensation to those affected for losses caused by the troops and home guards by way of murder, arson, burglary and looting.
- (7) The government should give facilities to people who were forced to leave their homes and their villages

owing to the excesses committed by the government troops and home guards and be assisted to return to their homes and restart their vocation in peace.

- (8) Government troops and home guards who committed excesses should be tried before an impartial commission of inquiry.

The above actions are the minimum expectations of the Tamils for the security of their lives and property. If the government intends to maintain on its troops and political thugs in the Tamil areas, the interim solutions will not be implemented.

The SLCP (Left) calls upon mass organisations, personages, patriotic forces, democrats and others to press the government to take steps on these lines.

Our party is very clear that these interim proposals will not provide a lasting solution to the problems within the present social set up, until the advent to power of the working class through a mass revolution there cannot be a lasting solution to the national question. However, our party's stand is that the solution it proposes will, to an extent, ensure that there will be no repetition of the current situation in the future and bring sanity for the present.

K. A. Subramaniam
GENERAL SECRETARY,

Sri Lanka Communist Party (Left),
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15/1, Power House Road,
Jaffna,
Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka Communist Party (Left),
15/1, Power House Road,
Jaffna,
Sri Lanka.

We publish the relevant section of the Political Report on the National question, adopted at the First National Congress of our Party.

20th September, 1984. K. A. Subramaniam
GENERAL SECRETARY

ON THE NATIONAL QUESTION IN SRI LANKA

While the Party admits that the national question in Sri Lanka has sharpened to a point of crisis it does not, in any way, share the view that the racial contradiction in this country has developed into the principal contradiction. We also do not accept the view of some extremist communal forces that by nature the national question is so complex that it cannot be resolved. Approaching the problem under the guidance of Marxist-Leninist proletarian stand will lead to a solution to the national question in Sri Lanka. SLCP (Left) is of the view that there can be no lasting solution to the National Question under a capitalist set up. However, our party considers that, by adopting certain measures, the matter could be handled smoothly even within that set up.

Sri Lanka's minorities constitute twenty five percent of the population. There are 3.5 million Tamil speaking people comprising three main sections: Sri Lanka Tamils, Tamils of recent Indian Origin and Tamil speaking Muslims. The Tamil speaking people live in compact communities in North and East and also in other provinces, scattered among the majority community. The Northern and Eastern Provinces are traditional homelands of the Tamils. Tamils lived in these regions for several centuries. The economy, language, education, culture etc. developed in these areas are distinct in character. Considering the four requirements of a region, economy, language and culture to define a nationality, Tamils living in the North and East can be clearly identified as a distinct nationality. At the same time, Muslims and people of recent Indian origin because they speak the same language, cannot be included in the Tamil nationality by compulsion or otherwise. But Tamils of recent Indian origin and Muslims fall within one minority group of Tamil-speaking people.

Of the Tamil Nationality living in the Northern and Eastern province one third of it were known as "untouchables" for

hundreds of years and in recent times as "depressed castes". They should be given special concessions to develop their areas by treating them as a minority group. During its hundred year rule, British imperialism using its divide and rule policy never allowed this minority group and the Tamil nationality to have close links with the Sinhala majority. Today's National Question in Sri Lanka is a direct result of this. The problem of the plantation workers is very similar to this. The governments which came to power in succession failed to solve this problem. The UNP under the leadership of J. R. Jayawardane indulged in further political gambling and drove the country to a point where its independence is under threat.

Tamil speaking people are being discriminated against, neglected and subjected to alienation in their traditional land by successive governments. Discriminatory language policy, planned Sinhala colonisation, discrimination in employment, standardization in higher education and lack of concern for development of Tamil areas form the basis of the problems of the Tamils. Along with this, periodic communal riots and the severe effects of communal violence have driven the Tamils to utter frustration.

In 1948 D. S. Senanayake who foresaw a future threat to the ruling classes from the unity of Sinhalese working class and the plantation workers deprived a million Tamils of Indian origin of their citizenship. This reactionary started the planned Sinhala colonization in the Eastern Province with a design to carve off traditional Tamil areas. Although it was S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake who introduced the Sinhala Only Bill, it was the UNP which mooted the idea. It was the UNP which planned and executed communal violence especially after 1977, on more than four occasions, and forced the country to the present grave situation. J. R. the class conscious reactionary diehard and the comprador bourgeois UNP in order to continue their class rule are making maximum use of the national question of the country and more than anyone else and have reaped great political benefits.

The so-called Tamil leaders used the national question and made similar political gains in the North and East. From

G. G. Ponnampalam who made the unrealistic fifty fifty demand Amirthalingam who demanded a separate state of Tamil Eelam, these leaders played the worst reactionary role, never leaning towards the progressive forces of the country.

The national bourgeois Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) too racially discriminated against and neglected Tamils, but a lesser degree than the UNP. It cannot be denied that it was prepared to arrive at a reasonable solution to the problem. In 1957 S. W. R. D. Bandaranayake came forward to sign the Bandaranayake-Chelvanayagam Pact. Had that accord been implemented, it would have been a turning point in Sri Lanka's national problem. Knowing this beforehand, J. R. started his notorious Kandy March against the Pact and forced the then government to abandon the implementation of the accord. The role played by the Tamil leaders in the non implementation of this accord is equally important. Instead of lending strong support to Bandaranayake to implement the accord, the Federal Party, under the initiative of Amirthalingam, started its anti-Sri Campaign, thus helping the UNP. This will not be forgotten in Sri Lanka's political history.

Similarly when Mrs. Srimao Bandaranayake, who came to power in 1960, sought a reasonable solution to the problem through the Sam P. C. Fernando-Chelvanayagam Pact. That too was thwarted by the UNP, FP reactionary forces.

To retain its comprador bourgeois rule, the UNP kept the issue unresolved and made the problems worse by acting in a chauvanist manner. Instead of winning the reasonable rights of the Tamils through collaboration with anti-UNP progressive forces, the Tamil leadership consistently extended its co-operation to the UNP.

To ensure parliamentary success Tamil leadership in 1976 put forward its separatist "Tamil Eelam" demand. Before long it slipped out of their hands and fell into the hands of militant Tamil youths.

Tamil youths organizations dominated by the mentality of small owners and taking a petty-bourgeois stand contracted the

syndrome of instant revolution. While they use Marxist phraseology and display progressive features, their separatist theory is dominated by a narrow nationalist outlook.

The hatred and opposition of the Tamil youths grew alongside the country's hostile feeling towards the big bourgeois UNP. Knowing very well that this meant danger, the ruling class let loose communal violence and state terrorism. They beat the full responsibility for individual terrorist activities of the Tamil youth.

Today the comprador bourgeois UNP immersed in Sinhala chauvinism encourages military action against the entire Tamil population. "Putting down terrorism is our sacred duty" says the Government. By subjecting the Tamils to oppression and terror it tries to divert the attention of the people of this country. While talking of the Indian threat, it has fallen at the feet of America. The national question in Sri Lanka also has super-power rivalry in its background. The Soviet Union is trying to advance its interests through India. The U.S. is trying to push forward through J. R. and the UNP. for the domination of the world, in the long run, Sri Lanka's role is important to the Soviet Union and hence we cannot underestimate the threat of Indian intervention. Under this pretext, J. R. is trying to push Sri Lanka to take a pro-American stand, which is his long cherished dream.

Our Party fully realises the danger facing our country as a result of the separatist demand for "Tamil Eelam." That is why our party stresses the need for a solution to the national question which has become a threat to national independence.

A solution to our national question can be found to meet our specific situation by establishing one or more autonomous region and inner autonomous bodies allowing the Tamils to develop their own economy, politics, education, culture, etc. in their traditional homelands. Under the autonomous set up, depressed caste 'Minority Tamils' should be given special concessions to enable them to get out of the backward condition they have been placed in for generations. At the same time, Muslims should also be encouraged to preserve their identity in.

regions where they live in considerable numbers, through the setting up of inner autonomous bodies. Tamils of Indian origin should not consider their citizenship won by arduous struggles as a mere right to cast their votes. Like other Sri Lankan citizens they should be given land, employment opportunity and educational and other rights. In addition, to enable them to guide themselves to a better future, regional bodies should be set up and their cultural and social independence assured. The rights of the Tamils and Muslims living in other areas should be protected on a similar basis. The rights of Sinhalese and Muslims living among Tamils should also be assured through inner autonomous bodies within autonomous regions.

The unity and co-operation of all nationalities must be ensured in order to build a strong democratic Sri Lanka, and the setting up regional autonomous bodies is a necessary minimum condition.

Our Party does not in anyway condone the justification of the call for secession in the name of the theory of self-determination, without taking into consideration the specific circumstances of this country. We should approach the theory of self determination in a dialectical way and not dogmatically.

In the imperialist czarist Russia, minority nationalities lived compactly in different areas and as their secession would weaken the czarist imperialism Lenin and the Bolshevik Party stressed the need for secession and the setting up of separate states. But Sri Lanka's situation is different from that of czarist Russia. Sri Lanka is a neo-colonial country of the Third World. Its principal enemy is imperialism. In Sri Lanka, where minorities live scattered, secession would weaken progressive revolutionary forces and lead to direct intervention by foreign powers. That is why our Party stresses the right of self-determination without secession. The theory of self-determination with the right to secession implemented by Lenin during the October Revolution was transformed into self-determination without secession by Mao Zedung and the Chinese Communist Party to meet the specific situation in China and established Peoples Republic of China and showed a path for equality of nations and socialist,

communist progress. Can anyone say that Mao Zedung and the Chinese Communist Party rejected Marxism-Leninism or Lenin and Stalin, in regard to the theory of self-determination? Certainly not. Based on dialectical development and historical materialist theory, they studied China's special circumstances and introduced the right to self-determination without secession.

Hence we also should study our country's history, geographical formations, economy, political nature, cultural tradition under the guidance of proletarian ideological path of Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedung Thought and find a solution to the national question. We should not submit to emotion or empty slogans but take a correct revolutionary stand, under proletarian approach that will form a correct solution to the national question.

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Sri Lanka Communist Party (Left) believes that a reasonable political solution to the National Question can be found by setting up regional autonomous bodies on the following basis :

The national question that has developed to the stage of threatening the nation's independence and integrity could be solved by setting up more than one regional autonomous areas and inner autonomous bodies of autonomous towns and villages. These autonomous bodies should have the right to decide on matters of education, employment, colonization, and regional security of the nationalities that come under respective autonomous bodies without any form of discrimination. All nationalities should be assured of their economic and cultural advancement through these autonomous bodies.

- (i) The Tamil nationality living in the Northern and Eastern Provinces should have full fledged autonomy and they should be given the opportunity to decide whether they wish to have one or two regions for them. On the question of Whether the Eastern Province should merge with the Northern Province or remain a separate regional autonomous body the decision should be made according to the wishes of the people of Eastern Province.

- (ii) So called depressed castes among Tamils, who come within these autonomous bodies should be given special inner autonomous organs to enable their rehabilitation.
- (iii) People of recent Indian Origin, most of whom are plantation workers, should be given suitable autonomous set up which would ensure protection of their rights won through arduous struggle and the enjoyment, without discrimination, of all rights enjoyed by other Sri Lankan People.
- (iv) In areas where Muslims are predominant, possible autonomous organs should be established to enable them to develop their economy and culture.
- (v) Suitable autonomous bodies should be set up to protect the rights of Sri Lankan Tamils living outside Northern and Eastern Provinces and Sinhalese living within the autonomous bodies.

