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TOIL

R Murugaiyan

The festival chariot shines
In its majestic grandeur
Reaching out high
Into the blue sky

The bulls below, yoked to the chariot
Are thoroughly exhausted,
Panting, foaming at their mouths.
The chariot moves because the bulls pull.

But the decorative wooden horses
On the prominent top row
Remain in their proud galloping poses.
Most of the people have lost sight of
The exhausted old beasts below.

(Written circa 1970 in Tamil & translated by the author)

From the Editor's Desk

Threats to journalists continue to haunt democracy in Sri Lanka. The most recent victim of the vicious campaign against the media by anti-democratic forces is Keith Noyahr, Associate Editor of 'The Nation', a successful weekly in English, launched only a few years ago.

Noyahr was abducted by unknown individuals on the evening of 22nd May on his way home and his car abandoned opposite his house in Dehiwela, a suburb of Colombo. He had been put through prolonged brutal torture before he returned home seven hours later, badly battered and bruised, and too shocked to speak about his ordeal. The news of his abduction and maltreatment produced angry responses from media personnel as well as organisations and individuals concerned for media freedom, and human and fundamental rights. A large group of angry journalists held a public demonstration in protest of the horrible act. The New Democratic Party has issued a statement denouncing the abduction and attack, and warning of the dangerous trend in curbing media freedom in the country.

The country has barely recovered from the shock of the manhandling of the News Director of the Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation on 27th December by goons accompanying Minister Mervin Silva following the failure of the SLRC to telecast in full a speech by the minister. It was the live broadcast of the sequel to the attack, where SLRC employees stopped work in protest, restrained the intruders, and handed them over to the security staff that seems to have angered the authorities rather than the ugly incident that provoked the protest.

Although Minister Mervin Silva offered to step down as minister and resign as MP to defuse the rising indignation, the offer failed to materialise. But five employees of the SLBC have since been individually attacked and injured, two seriously, by criminal elements. Meantime, some others, identified as leaders in the protest, have been subject to anonymous threats. A witch hunt went on for the 'ringleaders' of the SLRC protest, while no action was taken against the real culprits. Thus there is reason to doubt if those responsible for the abduction of Noyahr will ever be brought before the law.

Journalists in the South, since 1990, are facing only now the kind of treatment that has been routine in the North-East, where newspapers have been forced to shut down or accept a severe form of censorship under pressure from the government forces as well as by armed Tamil militants. While pro-government militia groups backed by armed forces have been implicated in recent attacks on the Tamil media in the North-East, government politicians have been prominent in threats to the Sinhala and English media in the South. Even then, Tamils have been the more common targets.

Several journalists have been held in detention for long periods under Emergency Regulations without charges, and some who won legal battles for freedom continued to be harassed by unlawful elements. Last year, the Editor of the Daily Mirror was reportedly threatened by an important person in government; two newspapers (*Maubima* and Sunday Standard) forced to close down; and the Leader group of newspapers faced a violent arson attack that gutted its printing press. Internet access continues to be denied to Tamilnet, a fairly popular alternative source of news on the national conflict. Five FM radio stations (*Hiru*, *Shaa*, Gold, *Suuriyan* and Sun) were closed down in October 2007 and resumed broadcasting in May 2008; significantly, the key person in control of the broadcasting organisation switched political loyalties following the closing down.

Ongoing private and public threats to journalists represent a major threat to the media, accentuated by the plans of the state to control them in the name of national security, making free expression of views as hard as under censorship and emergency rule. The fear that the National Media Policy proposal announced by the government in September 2007 is aimed to subdue the media is accentuated by the attacks on the media.

The current threat to media freedom needs to be seen against a staggering number disappearances and killings, whose victims have mostly been young Tamil males and include humanitarian workers and media personnel (source: Civil Monitoring Commission, Free Media Movement, and Law & Society Trust in October 2007) as well as the many arrests of terrorist suspects held in detention without charges. The threat is part of a complex problem; and overcoming it requires a negotiated settlement of the national question, based on the right to self-determination, free of foreign meddling.

Space for foreign intervention on the pretext of restoring democratic and human rights is already being created by nationalists on all sides. Rash attacks on the media will merely strengthen the argument for foreign intervention, put forward by some unaware of and others fully aware of the

long term consequences of foreign intervention. The dangers should be clear to the politically conscious, and it is time that the genuine left and democratic forces organised themselves to mobilise the people as a mass movement to oppose war and defend human and democratic rights.

New Democracy is profoundly sorrowed by the loss of an estimated over 100 000 lives by Cyclone Nargis that struck the Irrawaddy delta of Burma on 4th May 2008 and the pain and suffering caused to millions as a result of cyclone related deaths and damage to dwellings and property; and about the loss of an estimated 80 000 lives and several more missing as a result of the earthquake that struck the Sichuan Province of China on 12th May 2008 and the pain and suffering caused to millions more as a result of damage to dwellings, property and infrastructure as a direct result of the earthquake and indirect damage.

New Democracy Joins the New Democratic Party to extend its heartfelt sympathies to family, friends and community of all who lost their lives and to surviving victims.

Issues of Class, Caste and Nationality

Comrade SK Senthivel
(General Secretary, New Democratic Party)

*[Excerpts from interview by T Jeyapalan for 'Thesam', January 2008 *]*

Thesam: *Would you claim that the armed struggle of the Communist party served as an example to the Tamil youth?*

SKS: Certainly. There cannot be any doubt about it. It is only after 1972 that the Tamil youth come into the picture. Those who were forerunners to carrying forward Tamil nationalism were youth like Sivakumaran in the *Tamil Maanavar Peravai* (Tamil Youth Council) from depressed castes. The thought developed that if it was possible for a people who were once living under conditions of near slavery to establish their rights within a short period, why should it be not possible for the Tamil youth to win their rights by armed struggle against Sinhala chauvinists.

Some of the youth in the *Peravai* maintained contact with us. There were those in the *Peravai* like Sivakumaran who while advocating Tamil nationalism endorsed the struggle against caste oppression; but not all. There was also resentment among them that their leaders did not support this position.

That was why they constantly questioned Amirthalingam (the late leader of the Tamil United Liberation Front). The pressure from the youth was so strong that at a meeting Amirthalingam said in public: "It looks as if pro-Peking students have infiltrated here. Do not imbibe their views and shout about struggle here".

The force of the struggle (against caste oppression) and the impact of its success led to enthusiasm among the youth in the early stages of the

youth movement. The TULF assessed with far sight that if the Tamil youth were allowed to follow this line, they would end up as a left force. That was the basis for the Vaddukkoddai resolution (calling for a separate state of Tamil Eelam). Realising that it was difficult to control the students by talking about federalism or the parliamentary path, and that it would be an even bigger danger if they moved to the left and become a formidable force, they came up with the Vaddukkoddai resolution. The resolution was not through a genuine desire to achieve Tamil Eelam but to deflect the youth away from the left.

We strongly opposed the call for Tamil Eelam as soon as it was announced. There were debates on the question of whether Tamil Eelam (TULF) was feasible or not. The first between Eelaventhan and me, then between Tharmalingam (TULF parliamentarian) and Comrade Shan, and there were several more that followed.

Thesam: *What were your reasons to say that it was not feasible?*

SKS: At the time the term 'right to self determination' was not widely used. The position upheld was that the Tamil people should be granted their rights, and that they should be granted based on regional autonomy.

The argument that we made against Eelam was that only foreign intervention could make secession possible. If that happened, it would rather be in their (foreigners') interests and not that of the Tamil people; and the whole of Sri Lanka will be subject to foreign domination. The call for secession would only create a condition where the entire people would be subject to foreign aggression and a demand that makes room for foreign forces cannot be supported.

Considering the population of the Tamils, their territory and their mode of existence, there was no prospect of an independent struggle that could win Tamil Eelam. If, despite this, Tamil Eelam were to be achieved, that would be through the agency of India, the US or some other foreign power. There was no doubt that the demand for Tamil Eelam would be taken advantage of by foreign powers.

The next question concerned the ideology on which Tamil Eelam was based.

We also raised the question about the programme that they had for the Tamil society that was divided as a caste based society as well as a class based society.

Thesam: *There has been oppression of the Tamil people of Sri Lanka. How did the Communist Party approach it?*

SKS: There was a serious mistake that the Communist Party (i.e. Marxist Leninists) made at the time. There was a debate as to whether the Tamil people were a nationality or not. Comrade Shan made an initial error. That led to a contradiction between him and us for some time. He said that the Tamils were not a nationality.

He took that position on the basis of the qualifications that Stalin required of a people to be a nation: territory, language, economy, and culture (psychological makeup). Of the four, he declared that the Tamils did not have an economy and that, according to Stalin, lacking in one of the four would not qualify a community as a nationality....

We said that Stalin was not incorrect, but we have to consider the circumstances that would define nationalities in the current context. If Tamils do not have an economy of their own, then the whole country does not have an economy of its own since everything is under the control of foreign economies.... The economy in the North is no more the money order economy that it was. The market may be elsewhere, production may be low, but there is scope for economic development.

I should admit that we could not then take the positions that we hold now on the right to self determination and on autonomy. Under the conditions prevailing from 1972, it was not possible to take a clear decision on the Tamil national question.

Thesam: *You say that Shan stood rigidly by Stalin's position on the national position. Did he change it subsequently?*

SKS: Yes, he changed it subsequently. On the national question we acted differently from Shan. We clearly stated that there were four nationalities in Sri Lanka. The Tamils are one nationality and the Muslims and Hill Country Tamils too are also nationalities. Self determination is essentially about autonomy. There is a need for an autonomous structure created for Muslims within the autonomous region comprising the merged North and East. Similarly, autonomous structures need to be set up in the Hill Country based on the density of population of the nationality.

We do not say that we reject Stalin's definition. It is correct. But it was based on conditions before the creation of the Soviet Union. Nationalities have developed in the era of freedom from colonial rule. Minority nationalities have developed to the same degree that the nationalism of

the majority has. We should not use Stalin's definition to reject the development of these nationalities. Our stand is not a rejection of Stalin's definition but one of seeing that the right to self determination and Stalin's definition in the specific contexts of the Third World. Marxism Leninism is something that continues to develop. It is bearing in mind this development that we need to see how the concept of self determination could be applied to the national question in our country.

.....

Thesam: *In the current situation where the national contradiction is very sharp, is there a need to carry out struggles against casteism?*

SKS: There are problems (relating to caste). But national oppression is being carried forward intensely by the chauvinistic state. Chauvinistic oppression is at no stage willing to climb down. It is chauvinistic oppression directed not just against Tamils but also against the Muslim and Hill Country Tamil nationalities. What we see when we approach the problem on the basis of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought is that among several contradictions that can coexist at any time, one plays the main or dominant role. There cannot simultaneously be two main contradictions. To recognise the main contradiction is essential for those who develop policy regarding struggle.

Today the national contradiction and the chauvinistic oppression that goes with it occupy the main place. It has created the war situation of today. It has affected all the people as nationalities. Hence struggles relating to this contradiction should not be carried forward in ways that will blunt or deflect the thinking of the Tamil people or in ways by which other contradictions are projected in a manner that diminishes the severity of this contradiction.

The Party recognises four kinds of contradiction in Sri Lanka today. One is class contradiction, which we recognise as an explicit and fundamental contradiction. That needs to be resolved through prolonged struggle along the path of people's war. The second is the national contradiction, which has in the course of development over a long time become war. It is a friendly contradiction that has become a hostile contradiction. This is not a permanent state and the contradiction will revert to its friendly status when the correct solution is found for the national question. Reactionary elements among the Tamil nationalists like to preserve it as a hostile contradiction. The third one is the caste contradiction. As explained earlier it exists in subtle institutional forms in social practice,

in ideology and in personal matters. It permeates everything. The last one concerns oppression of women. It remains a friendly contradiction, but is becoming intense. All four contradictions have persisted in Sri Lankan society.

While the class contradiction remains the fundamental contradiction, the national contradiction has been aggravated by both chauvinism and narrow nationalism, which have been feeding each other, and has been transformed into the main contradiction. To say that it is not the main contradiction is against reality. To hold high the caste contradiction while the national contradiction is the main contradiction or to present the caste contradiction as the main contradiction will only support chauvinist oppression.

Thesam: *I concede that the national contradiction is the main contradiction. There is no dispute there. My question is how the other contradictions are to be handled while the main contradiction remains unresolved.*

SKS: Each has to be handled at its own level. We do not prescribe that if caste contradictions are observed in a school, a university or a government office that one should not make an issue of it. We do not say that it should be ignored because it will harm the national struggle. It should be exposed. Ideas critical of it should be expressed. It should be handled in ways that do not deflect attention from the main form of oppression arising from the main contradiction, and not in ways that will allow the caste contradiction to be used to divide the Tamil people and weaken the struggle.

....

Thesam: *Alongside national oppression is caste oppression. Then on what basis is the struggle against caste oppression to be carried forward?*

SKS: It has to be carried out within certain limits. Rather than as a struggle, work should be done to expose it and take the message to the people through propaganda. That will help the unity and endurance of the Tamil nationality while doing the work of breaking down casteism. To take it beyond that as a struggle would only lead to harm for the Tamil nationality as a whole. But we do not take the position that there is no problem or that it should not be talked about or exposed. We write denouncing events that take place from time to time.

The Party is implementing some programmes in villages. Our work goes on in villages where our struggles of the past took place. The work concerns the economic, educational, social and cultural uplifting of the villages. We show the way for the landless to obtain land with aid from the government and to work collectively on the basis of self reliance.

Given the situation in Jaffna, community centres are important to backward villages. We undertake our work based on these community centres. In Putthur (Vempirai) there is a village, Kalaimathi Kiraamam. It is a village badly neglected by the forces of caste domination. It is a most oppressed village. Up to 2006, only one student had passed the GCE (AL) and entered university, that too in the field of sports. You cannot find a single government employee there. Only now they are trying to put up stone houses. Not a significant number, perhaps a family or two, has migrated abroad.

It is a large village of 500 families, and one where since 1980 the entire people have been united. Basic educational facilities are provided amid difficulty. Health facilities have been set up with support from some NGOs with whom there are no contradictions.

What we tell the people is that rather than expect financial support from others they should unite and allocate a part of their earnings to carry out community projects. On that basis, the people of the village have built a 100 feet (30 metres) long hall and conduct an education programme for the elderly. Do not think that it is only for people over sixty. All persons over sixteen who have not been to school are brought under the scheme and taught to read and write. There are, besides, a primary school and classes for school students.

There is also cultural work. The consumption, sale and production of illicit liquor are strictly prohibited. A People's Forum has been set up where problems in the village are taken up, inquiries conducted, verdicts given, and acceptable punishments meted out. People do not go behind the movements since the Community Centre is administered well. This is because the main administrators of the Community Centre are from the Party. Disputes among some of the 'upper castes' too are brought there for arbitration as they expect fair judgment there.

It is an exemplary village in the Northern Province. A variety of such programmes are being implemented in different villages. We give prominence to educational development. Protection of employment is essential. People from Kanpollai village in Nellyyadi are harbour workers in Point Pedro. A union has been organised there for them. In the village

of Saanthai in Sillalai the Party provides guidance for various programmes.

But it is not possible to function freely as in the past. We have to work amid various pressures.

.....

Thesam: *Is not there the charge that Marxism does not take in new things?*

SKS: It is an absolute lie. If it is true, it is only true of dogmatic Marxism. Who makes the accusation? Advocates of postmodernism make the accusation because Marxism has not accepted it. How can Marxism endorse postmodernism? Postmodernism was created to destroy Marxism. See for example how careful they are about the use of the term 'class'. They simply avoid the term. They talk about marginalised people and people on the fringe. They would refer to a launderer as a laundering artist and a barber as a hairstyle artist simply to avoid the concept of worker and thereby class. They reject class to oppose Marxism. Even Dalitism came about in that fashion.

It was the NGOs that adopted the concept of Dalitism that came to Tamilnadu from the north. There was a proliferation of NGOs. Individuals like A Marx took it over and propagated it. Today the pioneers of Dalitism are disunited. Ravikumar is on one side, A Marx is on another side, and various little groups are in various directions.

The problem today is that Dalitism has become a means for these characters to find a place among the Tamil Diaspora. None of the journalists, cinema personalities or writers looks in the direction of Sri Lanka. They get Euros, dollars and foreign travel in the name of Dalitism. How can they act against oppression?

.....

Thesam: *Could you say something about the near future of the Party?*

SKS: A bitter experience in the past led to a setback both nationally and internationally. That situation came about because of imperialist actions and inner party weaknesses, including those in ours. There are several questions of right and wrong in them. But beyond all that, we have a historical duty of carrying forward the Marxist Leninist movement. What is important is not whether one is a major force or a minor force. The journey should be towards the right goal with the right policy. That we do

with our lives at stake. We work under conditions in which guns are ready to fire from many directions. Five of our comrades have been arrested under Emergency Regulations and are in detention in prison. Other comrades are working under severe surveillance. The party is functioning amid much opposition and oppression. Being the only political party functioning on the basis of Marxism Leninism Mao Zedong Thought, it is the only party that is able to function while swimming against the tide.

There are several complications in the political left of Sri Lanka. They are hard and difficult. But we have a political duty from which we cannot retreat. There are people and villages that in the past placed their trust in us and stood by us in struggles making sacrifices of blood, tears, hunger and starvation, and still persist in their faith. People who are so poor that they cannot even travel to Colombo believe in the party, accept its policies, and continue to act accordingly. Our very strength is the might of the people.

We do not view any movement from a hostile perspective. But at the same time we do not compromise on matters relating to our basic political stand. That was our success in the past. We never went behind any movement. We continue to function with our unique identity in the North-East amid continuing threats. There is a favourable situation in the Hill Country. There we are actively carrying forward activities in youth organisations and on the trade union front.

The international situation is bringing about changes that are favourable to us. Nepal is an experimental site. Then there are the anti-imperialist upsurges in South America. Then there are the developments in the Marxist Leninist movements of India. I do not say that it is a single movement: there are several movements. What I say is that we see no sign for one to lose faith in class struggle or in the Marxist Leninist line. We are firm in our belief in class struggle and the Marxist Leninist line. Even in the crisis-ridden current situation, we are carrying out work that could be handed over to the next generation.

*[*For the full text of the interview in Tamil see www.thesamnet.co.uk]*

Political and Economic Decay Ruining the Country

by

'Puthiya Malayakam' Mahendran

A state of crisis

The government continues to claim that the country and the people are being salvaged from terrorism and that the democratic environment is being restored. The state and the state media proclaim that normal life is being rebuilt for the people; that resettlement, reconstruction and development activities are being undertaken at a rapid pace; and that the economy of the country is growing.

The reality, however, shows the exact opposite of this picture. Sinhala Buddhist chauvinistic capitalist state power is waging a cruel war in the North in the pretext of eradicating terrorism. The state, through indiscriminate bombings and barbaric killings in heavily populated areas, is at the forefront of suppressing the just right of the Tamil people to livelihood. At the same time, the state is keen on eliminating any voice in support of the right of the Tamil people to self determination.

Democracy in the East

The atrocities committed by armed groups with the fullest connivance of the government hiding behind the smokescreen of restoration of democracy in the East are an open secret. Chauvinistically motivated settlements in the name of resettlement and improper appropriation of land in the name of development continue to be undertaken. At the same time, the state, through its attempts to conduct successive elections,

without creating the conditions that favour an environment for return to normal life, is seeking to demonstrate to the internal community that terrorism has been totally overcome and that a democratic environment has been created for the people.

Meantime, the state, in the name of war, is suppressing with an iron fist the fundamental and democratic rights of the minority nationalities in other parts of the country. Kidnappings, murders of individuals, arbitrary arrests and detentions have become ordinary events so that a climate of intimidation and fear dominate normal life. The country now occupies a leading spot internationally in the violation of human rights and in the denial of media freedom.

The decline of the economy

The economic structure of the country is heading for a terrible collapse. While export income has been on the decline, import expenditure has risen several fold. A major part of the national economy has been handed out to imperialist multi-national companies. The poisonous consumer culture brought in by globalisation at the expense of local production, self-reliant economy, rural industry and agriculture is being thrust on people at all levels of society. The plantation sector which made a major contribution to the national economy has been farmed out to local, foreign and multi-national companies on long leases and is being wrecked in several ways.

The prices of essential goods are increasing by the hour, while the state and economic experts continue to provide various explanations and interpretations for the decline in economy which is making the daily life of the ordinary people shaky. Recently, the Governor of the Central Bank, the body responsible for regulating the economic network of the country, has stated that the usage of motor vehicles and mobile telephones have increased and on that basis it could be said that individual incomes have increased and that economic growth rate shows a large increase.

Imperialist loyalty

In order to conceal the truth that the entire economic activity of the country is governed by foreign imperialist powers and to prevent any form of resistance to it from among the people, the state has put to use with maximum effect the weapon of war. American, European, Indian and Japanese capitalists compete keenly among themselves in their bid for a share of the resources of our country.

Imperialism, in its bid to implement economic and other programmes including an educational programme, designed to carry forward its neo-colonial programme of globalisation, is throwing crumbs in the name of development aid and humanitarian aid.

The chauvinistic ruling class elites that have been taking turns to govern the country are faithfully paying homage to imperialism and reaffirming their loyalty to imperialism in order to safeguard their class interests and to secure their own positions. Similarly, while implementing their chauvinistic agenda with the blessings of the forces of imperialist globalisation, governments have paid attention to adapting the state machinery and the media to serve the purpose, and enrol the support of dominant Buddhist forces and intellectuals who are willing to play second fiddle to the upper class elite interests to create a strong network of state power.

The plight of the working people

Under these conditions, the daily life of the workers, peasants and other ordinary working people is seen to be full of struggles and challenges and face the denial of the right to livelihood and of democratic rights. Meanwhile, the poisonous thoughts and decadent culture brought in by globalisation penetrate every home right up to the kitchen.

The United People's Freedom Alliance government which came to power in the name of 'Mahinda Chinthanaya' with attractive policies of rural development, encouragement of local industry, building a self-reliant economy and achieving self sufficiency in the production of essential goods, in order to secure its position, is most active in an open display of its loyalty to Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism and in unleashing cruel oppression of minority communities.

Meantime, state terror, the chauvinistic parasites nurtured by the state and loyal sections of the media are active in brutally putting down any uprising or struggle that may emerge not only from the minorities, but also from other ordinary people. At the same time, the political and trade union leaderships which depend on the votes of the people and the subscriptions of the workers for their political survival and should from time to time speak up against the economic burdens, exploitation and oppression to which the ordinary working people are subject, accept posts and portfolios from the government that comes to power to enjoy the highest forms of luxury, and make it their politics to mortgage the sentiments of the people to make a living for themselves.

Deception by the UNP

The politics of certain other political leaderships that appear to offer a political alternative operate on the illusion that replacing one major party in power with another would lead to salvation.

However, the UNP, which is the main opposition party today, was a party which provoked and developed the ethnic conflict as well as the party which wielded political power most cruelly to suppress political and trade union struggles at various times.

It was the UNP that introduced the open economic policy to ruin the economy of the country and the all powerful executive presidential system through a constitutional change in 1978 to pave the way for personal domination. The consequences of these curses are being suffered to this day by the people of this country.

It is such a party that is shedding crocodile tears for the sufferings of the people and cunningly play-acting on the streets and in market places. It is merely acting to protect its vote bank and safeguard its class interests and using the political theatre that it has mastered to stage its next performance to capture power on the next available occasion.

The chauvinist venom of the JVP

On another side, the JVP, which once wore a leftist mask to attract the Sinhala youth in particular and undermine genuine Marxist Leninist activities, is today at the forefront of fuelling chauvinism in its bid to represent and defend Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism; negating the rights of the minority nationalities to self determination; and encouraging the cruel war aimed at ethnic cleansing.

There have been several instances when the JVP, which waxes eloquent on platforms about anti-imperialism and a socialist future, rushes to the fore with its bogus pro-working class slogans when struggles are launched for the basic rights of people and for securing trade union demands, only to push back the genuine forces of mass struggle and cause the campaigns to fizzle out.

Besides that, its activities as well as those of its shadow organisations have thoroughly exposed its true nature on many occasions. The JVP has, on the other hand, never fought sincerely for the rights of the ordinary working people of this country. It has always had its own agenda.

Now the bankruptcy of its anti-working class politics is getting thoroughly exposed and internal conflicts are getting sharper and splits are in the making.

The plight of the old left

There are some political parties and leaderships that proclaim that they represent the grand old left of the country. Some of them like to pose off as if their old left politics is still intact, and while away their time wallowing in the comforts of ministerial and other posts provided by the government in power.

There is another section that holds high the banners of opposition to war, anti-imperialism, and opposition to arrests, kidnappings and disappearances, to give the impression that it is leading mass uprisings. Those involved in it also issue the occasional statement to the press, hold conferences and appear in the visual media to express opinions to survive in their political career.

There are yet others who are pawning their Marxist politics to make a living out of collecting money from abroad and running NGOs by pointing to today's abnormally chaotic situation and the abuse of human rights. These leftist careerists are not only indirectly serving capitalist interests but are also a major obstacle to carrying forward genuine left political work.

Misdeeds of the NGOs

NGOs are playing a vital role in infiltrating society to wreck the socio-economic structures existing among the people, ruin collective existence, and thrust unhealthy Western values into our minds so that we are guided by such values and become captive to a consumerist economic culture.

These NGOs who are commission agents of Western imperialism have evolved into a major menace, obstacle and challenge to social liberation. Their main programme of work is to infiltrate and monopolise all manner of struggles that may emerge from among the masses to wreck popular uprisings and militancy; eliminate political and trade union mass mobilisation; and prevent the emergence of a genuine political leadership, in order to thrust into us individualistic ideologies and poisonous imperialist dictatorial thoughts.

The danger of these anti-democratic forces taking the form of the path to salvation in the struggles of the people for their rights should be correctly understood.

The need for firm political leadership and action

Who then is to salvage the workers and peasants from the ruinous climate of political intrigue and conspiracy? Who then is to win the just rights of the nationalities for their existence? Who then is to rescue the younger generation from the cultural decadence poured in by globalisation? All sincere mass activists and political and mass organisations committed to social liberation face these questions.

No prophet or saviour will come to salvage the people from this unusual situation. Therefore it is necessary to build up a firm political leadership to overthrow the existing power structure of the capitalist class. Thus there is a need for mighty struggles and mass leaderships to fight on the fundamental issues faced by the people, and to develop through such mobilisation a mass political leadership.

This responsibility is a historical duty that faces the forces who sincerely uphold Marxist Leninist political theory for class liberation. Thus we find ourselves in a period in which it is necessary to carry forward deeply thought out political programmes and firm actions.

[This is a translation of an article in Tamil by Comrade Mahendran while in detention at the Remand Prison, Welikada, Colombo and published in Puthiya Poomi, May 2008. Comrade Mahendran is one of the five NDP activists arrested in October 2007 under Emergency Regulations and currently held in detention in Colombo without trial.]

The Bogey of Stalinism

A smokescreen for targeting Marxism-Leninism

Mohan

Defining Stalinism

The term Stalinism means many things to many people. No serious Marxist Leninist has used it to refer to any form of ideology, Marxist or otherwise. Advocates of the imperialist global agenda use it to refer to anything that the Soviet Union stood for under the leadership of Stalin that challenged western imperialist interests. The term has also been used to refer to any form of government led by a communist party. Exceptions are occasionally made to draw convenient distinctions. But the term simply means a 'dictatorial' government hostile to capitalist enterprise, especially foreign capital. The Nikita Khrushchev regime, which did the dirty work for imperialism by casting Stalin as a monstrous villain who ran the Soviet Union like a massive concentration camp, was spared the Stalinist label. The label returned with a vengeance during the Leonid Brezhnev era when the Soviet Union again posed a serious challenge to the US bid for global domination. Of today's socialist states, only North Korea enjoys the privilege of being referred to as Stalinist by US imperialism.

Centre-left and liberal politicians also ritually denounced Stalinism when communists posed a threat to their vote bank among the working class. The term was used by them in the same way that right wing politicians used it. That is not surprising since, in substance, they do not stand for anything substantially different from what capitalism stands for.

Of those calling themselves revolutionary leftists or socialists, the Trotskyites are especially fond of the term Stalinism. In their discourses, there is an elusive interplay between what are considered Stalin's serious mistakes which have been recognised by many progressive-minded people (and referred to as heinous crimes by reactionaries and enemies of Stalin) and the ideology upheld by Stalin.

The Imperialist agenda

The vicious campaign unleashed by Khrushchev against Stalin had much to do with justifying the revisionist political line that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) advocated for the international communist movement and to enable the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union. Khrushchev could not last long, especially after the disastrous failure of his agricultural policy and the new foreign policy of accommodating imperialism in the name of 'peaceful coexistence'. Soviet mishandling of dissent in Poland by being too severe and in Hungary by not acting in time against foreign meddling and allowing a crisis to develop that led to drastic action helped to discredit the Soviet Union as well as the communist movement. The Cuban missile fiasco was something where Cuba was badly let down; it showed that, in the absence of a clear policy of support for revolutionary left and anti-imperialist struggles across the world, the policy of collaboration and competition with the US to ensure a power balance between the US-led imperialist bloc and the Soviet-led 'socialist bloc' was doomed.

Although Khrushchev went into political oblivion in 1964, the damage that he did to the left movement was lasting. The Soviet Union, rather than rectify his erroneous line on the parliamentary path and the role of armed struggle, encouraged communist parties and factions siding with it against the Marxist-Leninist line upheld by the Communist Part of China and other parties that rejected the parliamentary path; and continued to encourage parliamentary opportunism to win influence over Third World Countries. In India, the line meant that the Communist Party of India would lend unconditional support to the Congress government. In Iran, Iraq and Syria the pro-Soviet communists abandoned their militancy and independence, only to face destruction in the hands of nationalists.

The priority that the Soviet Union gave to its rivalry with China was so cynical that, besides the bad treatment of China including various military threats, an armed conflict across the border was provoked in 1969, in the wake of Chinese denunciation of the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Cuba and North Vietnam, although critical, were soon bullied into muting their positions owing to their dependence on Soviet support against US aggression. What was even more shameful was that the Soviet Union sought to make capital out of anti-colonial struggles in Africa, among the more serious consequences of which were the civil war in Angola and the tragic implications for the Eritrean liberation struggle. It was also willing to accommodate Suharto's fascist Indonesian dictatorship of Indonesia which slaughtered between 500,000 and a million suspected communists and

sympathisers, in view of the latter's hostility towards China, to the extent that it passively endorsed the Indonesian invasion of East Timor following the abandoning of the colony by the Portuguese.

None of the critics of Stalin take notice of the change of course of the Soviet Union after Khrushchev placed himself in control. In fact, Khrushchev was held in greater regard by imperialism than were Mikhail Gorbachev who paved the way for the collapse of the Soviet Union and Boris Yeltsin who almost transformed Russia into a vassal of the US.

Even before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the imperialist project to belittle the achievements of the Soviet Union under Lenin and Stalin, and the key role played by the USSR in defeating fascist Germany was well in place. Thanks to imperialist domination of the internet, electronic and print media, history is being rewritten to read that it was the US and its allies that saved the world from fascism in the 1940s. Where it is not possible to deny credit to the Soviet Union, emphasis is placed on supposed mishandling of the war effort by the Soviet Union (or more conveniently by Stalin, who is even easier to vilify).

What has been achieved for the people, nations and nationalities oppressed by the Great Russian Empire of the Tsars in terms of social and economic development, national liberation, and revitalisation of oppressed cultures are being concealed from public view. What are highlighted are things that are portrayed as violation of human rights and political repression. Much of the information is exaggerated if not distorted; and many of the serious mistakes that were made in dealing with what Mao Zedong would have considered 'friendly contradictions' occurred under conditions when the Soviet Union was in a state of siege of one kind or another. Imperialism did not relent in its efforts to isolate the Soviet Union and weaken it, and used every possible trick to misrepresent Soviet intentions, accusing the Soviet union of meddling in the internal affairs of countries, while in reality it was the imperialists who were seeking to undermine the Soviet state.

Soviet domination over Eastern Europe in the post World War II era has to be seen in the context of the shifts in attitude of the western capitalist powers towards the Soviet Union before the outbreak of the war, when they hoped that the Soviet communists and the German fascists would fight each other to destruction so that they could control the world; their lack of cooperation during critical moments of the war; and a hostile approach following the end of the war with the defeat of fascist Germany and Japan. The signs were already there even before the surrender of Japan. The Soviet Union has been accused of isolating itself from the rest of the world

until Khrushchev entered the scene. But it was the British Premier Winston Churchill who declared 'Iron Curtain' separating the socialist countries from the capitalist west.

The Soviet Union and later China were blamed for the wars in Korea and Vietnam, while these wars were the result of imperialist meddling to prevent these countries from choosing their own destiny. Many former colonies were under pressure from their former colonial masters and their imperialist allies from establishing any kind of link with the Soviet Union (or for that matter China, whose isolation continued into the 1970s).

That Stalin made mistakes, some very serious, is not questioned by Marxist Leninists. But their assessment of Stalin's contributions is based on his role in defending and carrying forward the revolution. No one could be more aware of the gravity of some of the errors than the Chinese communists. They have criticised those and other serious mistakes, drew lessons from them and developed the mass line on that basis. The importance of the notion of 'friendly' as opposed to 'hostile' contradictions is an outcome of this experience.

It is easy to criticise or even denounce Stalin in hindsight. But it will be wrong to pass judgment on any error without examining the context in which it occurred. It will be unacceptable today to make such mistakes, but that is with the benefit of hindsight which Stalin did not have.

A good comparison will be with denouncing revolutionaries for violating democratic and human rights of people in the course of revolutionary struggle and consolidating the victory of the revolution. Many of the alleged violations are exaggerations and distortions and, where the charges have a basis, they are presented out of context, to exclude provocations by the oppressor, often a powerful state; popular fury about atrocities committed against them; and the creation of situations under which excesses are inevitable. But Marxists do not follow bad precedents, and learn from mistakes and struggle to achieve their goal without unnecessary loss of life or harm to the livelihood of people. It is the oppressors who create conditions that lead to destruction of human life and livelihood.

Reactionaries have a clear purpose in portraying Stalin as a villain and constructing 'Stalinism' as the sum total of that villainy. The volume and intensity of the anti-Stalin propaganda have been so overwhelming, that some Marxists are too intimidated to counter the charges. Even worse, some occasionally join the imperialist chorus denouncing Stalin.

The Trotskyite agenda

Trotskyism went bankrupt well before Trotskyites lost their credibility in the few countries where they held sway. A misreading of the meaning of term 'permanent revolution' led many to think of it as an all embracing revolutionary theory, which it was not. Slogans like 'The revolution is round the corner' mouthed by Lankan Trotskyites became political jokes, while Trotskyite ideas like militarising the peasantry and exporting revolution proved to be counter-productive ideas even during Trotsky's lifetime. Trotskyite rejection of supporting forces of national liberation including the national bourgeoisie as class collaboration is another failed theory, and today several Trotskyites are strong supporters of nationalist projects.

It was when Trotskyism was almost politically dead that Khrushchev came to its rescue. He made it possible to denounce Stalin as a wicked man and therefore claim that Stalinism is a bad thing. What Trotskyites define as Stalinism are ideas that stand in opposition to what Trotskyism stood for. What they really do there is to reject Lenin. It is easier and safer to denounce Stalin than Lenin, who is still held in high esteem by not merely Marxists but also other progressive forces of various descriptions.

Trotskyites use the term Stalinist to refer not only to genuine Marxist Leninists but also to revisionists and other opportunists. Thus, to them, the two revisionist parties of India as well as all Marxist Leninist political parties in India, including the Maoist Communist Party, are Stalinist. Thus it would seem that Stalinism represents a wider spectrum of political views than Marxism Leninism itself.

The difficulty for Trotskyite schools as a whole is their unwillingness to come to terms with the fact that Marxist Leninists have played a leading role in a variety of revolutionary and liberation struggles and, what is worse, succeeded. While orthodox Trotskyites are stuck in dogmatic mud, haste and opportunism get the better of those who seek to be more pragmatic, as evident from the events in Sri Lanka.

Having rendered themselves politically impotent, Trotskyites find solace in any successful revolution that they see even remotely as a rejection of 'Stalinism' (in reality Marxism Leninism). They have stock explanations for the failure or any setback suffered by a revolution or a revolutionary struggle. Some trace any failure to the 'Stalinist theory' of building socialism in one country. To them, it is something like the Original Sin for orthodox Christians.

Stalinism and Maoism

Attempts to vilify the personality of Stalin are no different from those to vilify Mao Zedong since mid-1980s, with some help from those with an agenda for capitalist revival in China. The terms Stalinism and Maoism were originally introduced in an abusive fashion.

The former was popularised by Trotskyites to deflect attention from the fact that they were attacking Marxism Leninism. A personal attack on Stalin, vilifying him and casting him in an unfavourable light, was essential to the Trotskyite agenda of discrediting Stalin and thereby subverting Marxism Leninism. The term was picked up in later years by the enemies of Marxist socialism and of the Soviet Union and has become a common term of abuse in the jargon of all manner of liberals.

Not even the most ardent supporter of Stalin ever uses the term Stalinist to refer to himself. One prefers the term Marxist Leninist to Leninist in view of the need to emphasise the Marxist essence and origin of the ideology. Trotskyism stood for something distinct from Marxism Leninism and Trotskyites prided themselves in using the terms Trotskyite and Trotskyism to refer to themselves and the various brands of Trotskyite ideology. The names of the leaders of the various factions were used to distinguish themselves from one another, without any reference to Trotsky, let alone Marx, although the cult of the personality of Trotsky had been all important to each of them, and ritually used in justifying their varied stands on national and international issues.

Marxist Leninists have been accused of upholding cult of the personality of Stalin, not that of Lenin, however, and later that of Mao Zedong. Despite these accusations, Marxist Leninists in China and elsewhere who endorsed the contribution of Mao to Marxist theory and practice as a further development of Marxism Leninism in the era of global imperialist domination avoided the use of the term Maoist or Marxist Leninist Maoist to refer to themselves for a very long time. The term Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought was in currency from before the Chinese Cultural Revolution and popularised during the Cultural Revolution. The term was used to refer to the Marxist Leninist ideology as creatively developed by Mao to emphasise the mass line and to address, among other matters, contradictions and class struggle under socialist construction. It was much after the death of Mao in 1976 that the term Maoist began to be used by Marxist Leninists to distinguish themselves from revisionists and opportunists who called themselves Marxist Leninists. It was also used in

India by a group of Marxist Leninists following the collapse of the Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist) under state repression in the early-mid 1970s and the emergence of a number of factions; the Communist Party of India (Maoist) was formed only a few years ago. Even in Nepal, genuine Marxist Leninists referred to themselves as Maoists since the term Marxist Leninist is used by a revisionist parliamentary political party. The choice of a descriptive term depends considerably on the circumstances in which a political party develops. Thus, several genuine Marxist Leninist parties like the Communist Party of the Philippines do not have a Marxist Leninist label or Maoist label in their name.

Imperialist mud-slinging at Mao reached a peak in the 1990s using a paid gang of slanderers, and was helped by the negative attitude of the Chinese leadership towards Mao at the time in the interest of promoting capitalism in China. Attempts to blacken the image of socialist China between 1949 and 1976 continue, but are now less effective as the people of the world are now more conscious of imperialist designs.

Name calling and Marxist Leninists

Marxist Leninists, as long as they remain true to Marxism Leninism, uphold the mass political line, and persevere in mass political struggle, should not be perturbed by name calling by various reactionaries or by Trotskyites and their likes who have lost touch with revolutionary reality.

Yet they cannot stand idly by when history is distorted and heroes and leaders of revolutionary struggles are systematically abused. It is correct to recognise and acknowledge mistakes made in the course of a revolution and during socialist construction. Understanding the circumstances under which mistakes were made and why they occurred is important to avoid such mistakes in the future. But to join the chorus of denunciation by the reactionaries and repeat their accusations without considering the circumstances is to play into the hands of the reactionaries. The approach of the Chinese communists to Stalin is helpful here. Their assessment that his contributions were 70% positive and 30% not seems well founded and worth remembering.

Maoist Victory in Nepal

A step towards New Democracy

Shanmugam

On tenth March this year a general election took place in Nepal. It was not to elect members of parliament but for electing the Constitutional Assembly (CA) to draft the constitution for Nepal. The supporters of the monarchy in Nepal and the feudal and capitalist classes of Nepal did not like such an election taking place. The hegemonic forces India and the US too attempted to defer the election. The election to the CA had already been postponed twice. But it took place as a result of pressure in the form of mass campaigns by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and other democratic forces.

The CPN (M) has emerged as the largest single party in these elections. Together with other Marxist and democratic parties and parties of minority nationalities it holds an overwhelming majority in the CA. Through this it has become possible to rid Nepal of its two and a half centuries old monarchy. This electoral success has provided the initial victory that could enable the march to socialism through New Democracy.

The victory of the Nepali Maoists was not something that was secured through shortcuts. It was a victory secured through twelve years of armed struggle along the path of People's War according to a definite and far sighted political programme put forward by the CPN (M). There, armed struggle was not carried forward in a blind fashion. It was carried forward as a struggle that mobilised a variety of sections of the people including peasants, workers, the landless, depressed communities, tribal people, oppressed nationalities, women, youth, students, teachers, intellectuals and patriotic forces, on the basis of policy and programme along the path of class struggle.

Mass organisations under the firm leadership of the Party carried out dedicated work among the people. At the same time a people's army was

founded based on Mao Zedong Thought and the multi-faceted strategies of People's War were practiced. Base areas were created in the countryside. Methods of guerrilla warfare were adopted. Peasants oppressed by feudalism were at the forefront of struggle. Other oppressed sections of people, women and youth came to the fore in battle. Unable to bear the development of the struggle into a comprehensive liberation struggle, the US included the CPN (M) in its list of terrorist organisations.

Through this struggle of the Nepali people many regions came under the control of the CPN (M) and the people's armed forces. In those regions, land reform was implemented and agricultural land was redistributed to the landless and agricultural labourers. There was significant economic development in the liberated areas and new approaches were used in the fields of health, education and other socio-cultural matters. Hierarchical differences in caste were rejected and equality was emphasised. The individuality of nationalities was protected. Besides, initiative has been taken on several fronts to put an end to the oppression of women, and initial steps towards women's liberation have been put into practice in a planned way.

All these have been undertaken within a period of ten years of struggle. Practices that should be followed in the course of a liberation struggle led by a communist party have been followed in ways appropriate to the specific conditions of Nepal. While the elimination of the monarchy was made the goal and an armed struggle was undertaken to that end, the conservative reactionary ideology, thought and practices of the feudal system were explained to the people so that the people were persuaded to reject them. The use of weapons to intimidate people and making them do things out of fear was avoided and the people were educated scientifically and politically. This was made possible through mass politicisation.

It should be noted that the style of work of the Nepali communists for it to be able to win over the people within the constraints of dominant feudal ideology of a feudal Hindu monarchy would have been demanding. Forces of liberation struggle in South Asia should learn from the style of work of the Nepali communists.

At the same time, it should be noted that the ruling classes of India and the US consistently sought to protect and preserve the feudal monarchy and the reactionary capitalist forces of Nepal. Organisations like the America's CIA and India's RAW have continued with their mischief in Nepal. The mass line of the CPN (M) has been firm enough to stand up to them and overcome them.

The recent electoral success demonstrates the overall success of the CPN (M) on the various fronts. The liberation struggle was launched in Nepal without leaning towards the US, without support from India and without endorsement by China, by relying entirely on the people of Nepal. In a situation in which socialism has fallen in the Soviet Union and East European countries and where there is deviation from the socialist path in China, and the global media howl that socialism is dead, the red flag has been made to fly in full radiance on the peak of the Himalayas.

The communists, revolutionary masses and all the people striving for liberation in South Asia feel encouraged and assured by the red flags waving across Nepal. Red flags stand tall in Nepal because of the life sacrifices made by the many thousand communists and struggling masses there. The liberation struggle of Nepal has set an example to contemporary liberation struggles. The path of the struggle for New Democracy and socialism in the Twenty-first Century has much to learn from Nepal.

Nevertheless, there are bound to be severe efforts within Nepal and internationally by various reactionary forces to deflect the victorious revolutionary path of the CPN (M). The wish of the people of the world is that the CPN (M) should persevere in its correct revolutionary stand to overcome the various challenges, tests and obstacles.

The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) has before it the Himalayan task of carrying forward its policies in ways appropriate to the specific conditions of Nepal and consistent with Marxist Leninist ideology. The defeated feudal-capitalist classes of Nepal will not remain idle. They will join hands with the ruling classes of India and the US to make trouble. It is therefore important that the people of South Asia, the people of India especially, to be firmly supportive of the people's power that is being won in Nepal.

[Approximate translation of an article in Tamil in Puthiya Poomi, May 2008]

NDP Statement to the Media

Elections to the Eastern Provincial Council

1st April 2008

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Party, issued the following statement on behalf of the Politburo of the Party regarding the forthcoming elections to the Eastern Provincial Council.

The forthcoming elections to the Eastern Provincial Council are being conducted as a device to implement the chauvinistic ulterior motives of the Mahinda Chinthana government. The elections are being conducted to negate the existence of a national question and emphasise continuation of the war.

The elections will be used to divide the Tamil people of the North and the East and to create conflict between the Tamils and Muslims. Hence the New-Democratic Party is not participating in this meaningless exercise of elections to the Eastern Provincial Council. The government's conducting of the elections to the Eastern Provincial Council under conditions in which there no just proposal for a political solution while the war is being intensified is an act of political deception and diversion. There is no normal life or democracy in the North-East.

Besides, restoration, rehabilitation and resettlement work has not been properly implemented for the victims of war and tsunami damage in the East. The people in the East live amid threats and bullying by the movements. Repression by the armed forces of the state continues. Relationship between the Tamil and Muslim communities is being wrecked and there is fear that the elections could lead to a situation in which there could be communal clashes.

These elections are being conducted under conditions in which the North has been separated from the East, and where basic steps have not been taken to improve Tamil-Muslim relationship. The war to the North is being

intensified without putting forward a proper solution for the national question.

Under these conditions, the elections to the Eastern Provincial Council comprise an activity that is part of a chauvinistic agenda. Participation in these elections will not bring any benefit to the people of the East, be they Tamils, Muslims or Sinhalese.

The New-Democratic Party wishes to point out that, at the same time, the elections will be used to deflect the attention of the Sinhalese from the economic crisis and the rise in cost of living that confront them and by that means to win approval for the war.

SK Senthivel

General Secretary, New Democratic Party.

May Day 2008

May Day Rallies of the New-Democratic Party

1st May 2008

Revolutionary May Day rallies of the New-Democratic Party were held in three regions, namely Hatton in the Hill Country, Putthur in Jaffna and in Vavuniya. The three May Day rallies were full of revolutionary enthusiasm.

The rallies emphasised the need for a fair, negotiated political solution, demanded steps to control the economic crisis and control the cost of living, demanded the trial or release of all Tamil, Sinhalese, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil political prisoners, and called upon the people of the Hill Country to mobilise themselves in mass struggle to win their national and working class rights.

Comrade E Thambiah, National Organiser of the Party chaired the rally held in the Sakthi Hall, Hatton. The meeting was addressed by Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the Party, Comrade S Thevarajah, Member of the Politburo, Comrade S Panneerselvam, Central Regional Secretary of the Party, and Comrade Kaavattthayuur Mahendran. Revolutionary songs were sung at the meeting.

Comrade K Kathirgamanathan, Northern Regional Secretary of the Party chaired the May Day rally in Putthur, Jaffna held in the Kalaimathi

People's Hall. Comrades K Thanikasalam, P Murugesu, K Panchalingam, S Ranjithkumar and S Thavarajah, trade union representative, addressed the meeting. It is noteworthy that this was the only May Day meeting in Jaffna, and remarkable that over a thousand people from the locality and elsewhere in the peninsula gathered at this revolutionary May Day meeting.

It was evident from the May Day rally of the New-Democratic Party that the workers, peasants and other toiling masses of the North have preserved and persevered in their revolutionary feeling and revolutionary stand amid untold oppression and sufferings under the conditions prevailing there. A play was staged depicting the problems and crises confronting the country and the people as a result of imperialist globalisation. Poems, songs and a dance concert were also presented.

The May Day rally in Vavuniya took place on a more restrained note in view of the bad conditions prevailing there. The Vavunia Regional Secretary of the Party chaired the meeting which was addressed by a Member of the Central Committee of the Party. Senior Comrade IK Soodamani participated in the May Day rally and provided encouragement to the revolutionary sentiments of the younger generation.

NDP signature campaign for the trial or unconditional release of political detainees

The New Democratic Party formally launched on May Day 2008 a campaign to obtain 100,000 signatures on a petition demanding either the trial without delay or unconditional release of all Tamil, Sinhalese, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil political prisoners who are being detained without trial.

The Party seeks the fullest cooperation and support from of all those who uphold justice, freedom and democratic values by endorsing the campaign and canvassing for support.

Appeal for Support

The New Democratic Party publishes the Tamil monthly journal *Puthiya Poomi* and the English quarterly New Democracy which play a valuable role in upholding democratic values and defending the interests of the oppressed sections of the population independently of ethnic, religious or any other such identity.

Puthiya Poomi and New Democracy are unique among publications in Sri Lanka by way of their high journalistic standards, quality of content and coverage of issues that remain unaddressed by the mainstream media and publications of political parties representing the interests of the exploiting classes.

Besides the increase in the cost of printing, the postal rates have recently been increased drastically. For the publication of the journals the party relies on financial support from some of its supporters and well wishers, who are themselves struggling against the rising cost of living. The Party neither uses NGO funding, nor has rich patrons. Thus, it has become necessary for the party to seek a broader base for financial support.

The Party appeals to readers and well wishers to contribute to the Publications Fund of the Party by adding to the annual subscription, by making a donation, or by sponsoring the publication of part or whole of an issue of either journal.

Payments may be made to:

S Thevarajah, account number 452868

Bank of Ceylon, Supermarket Branch

Colombo 11, Sri Lanka

Please mention 'Publications Fund' in the covering note attached to the payment. Address for correspondence:

47, 3rd Floor, CCSM Complex, Colombo 11, Sri Lanka.

Sri Lankan Events

Polls in the East: a tragicomedy

Not all supporters of the government believed that there would be fair and free elections to the Eastern Provincial Council. The local council elections in the Batticaloa District only two months earlier gave clear indications of what could be expected. But the UNP, the JVP and the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, despite their unanimous view that the elections would be a farce, chose to participate. The Tamil National Alliance, already targeted by the gun-carrying TMVP (the breakaway from the LTTE) dominating Batticaloa and parts of Amparai districts with the backing of the government and the armed forces, kept out of the polls.

True to expectation intimidation, ballot-rigging and other malpractices were alleged by independent observers. Yet the government party-TMVP alliance secured only a slim majority. The 'Communist' Party and the LSSP, who were partners in power with the government, sided with a Tamil alliance in protest against the government's alliance with the TMVP which was still carrying arms. After the elections, however, a CP spokesperson announced that the outcome of the elections was a fair representation of the political situation there. Whether 'fair representation' included the reality of armed men calling the shots in the politics of the East remains unclear.

Hisbulla, leader of the SLMC slate in the local council elections only a month earlier, ditched the SLMC, which contested in alliance with the UNP, to join hands with the ruling party. He was hopeful, and his supporters even more, that he would be Chief Minister if the alliance won. Disappointment awaited him as Chandrakanthan (aka Pillayan), the leader of the TMVP, beat him to the post. Peace in Batticaloa was doomed either way since, whoever was appointed, there would have been dissatisfaction leading to communal conflict.

Hisbulla has been placated since his initial refusal to accept a ministerial post, shows of protests and a threat to cross over. He is now sworn in as a minister. But the ill feelings that were fanned during the election campaign

and the opportunist politics of the various parties has led to mob violence and killings. What was to be a farce to validate the claim of the government that it has achieved normalcy in the East and enjoys the support of the people has already taken its first step towards a descent into a tragedy.

JVP split: Tweedledum and Tweedledee

Much has been made of the recent split in the JVP by the media. But politically there is little difference between the faction in control of the JVP led by Somawansa Amerasingha and that led by Wimal Weerawansa which has announced the formation of a new party, the National Freedom Front (Jathika Nidahas Peramuna).

The JVP, even before it entered into a coalition with the People's Alliance in 2004, had started to let go its pretences to left politics. Despite quitting the government early in 2005, on chauvinistic grounds rather than on issues of class politics, it was dependent on the PA for its survival. When opportunity knocked on its door in late 2005 in the form of the presidential election, the JVP greedily grabbed it. It claimed that President Rajapaksha owed his victory to its support and therefore should abide by the MoU that he had signed with the JVP, knowing well that there were other MoUs, involving other parties, and as worthless as the one signed with them.

The JVP endorsed the chauvinistic policy of the government and the escalation of the war, which it saw as the only route to resolving the national question. Thus its criticism of the government related to the possibility of the government consenting to any form of devolution of power to solve the national question.

As the popularity of the government showed signs of waning owing mainly to the failing economy, the JVP leadership tried to distance itself from the government using the rising cost of living and other economic issues as pretext. It was paradoxical that the JVP distanced itself from the government on economic problems which were the direct consequence of the escalation of war, which the JVP wanted the government to pursue with even greater vigour. Thus the JVP was not in a position to vote against the government at the budget vote last year, despite threats to that effect.

Even a superficial examination of the issues at stake between the JVP and the JNP will show that the issues are not ideological. Most of them are personal and concern seemingly shady deals involving large sums. If there was a political difference at all, that concerned the question of how to have

the cake and eat it, namely how to keep the government in power and support its war efforts, without taking the blame for the consequences.

It seems that the government has succeeded in bringing about a split in the JVP, which has now made it more secure against the risk of the JVP turning against it in the parliament

Human Rights Council: bad losers

Sri Lanka failed to retain its seat in the United Nations Human Rights Council when it sought re-election at the end of its term. Spokespersons for the government who were boastful before the voting became resentful and started throwing accusations at all and sundry for the failure to retain the seat. They blamed the failure on the campaign against Sri Lanka by the NGO Coalition for an Effective Human Rights Council which had persuaded three Nobel Peace Prize winners, Desmond Tutu of South Africa, Adolfo Perez Esquivel of Argentina and former US President Jimmy Carter to publish statements urging UN members to vote against Sri Lanka. Some even went to the extent of claiming that the LTTE was behind the campaign.

The response of spokespersons for the Sri Lankan government to criticism of its human rights violations from anyone has often been ill considered. Critics have been accused of malice, mischief and even being terrorists of some description. Recent utterances against dignitaries of influential countries could not have helped very much either.

The response to the defeat has so far been much in the style of responses to criticism in the past, and not likely to win new friends let alone neutralize those who are not friendly.

Tamil nationalists seem to be elated by the outcome, but there is not much to be pleased about. Not only China, their *bête noir*, but also India, in which many of them still put their faith in, had supported Sri Lanka's candidacy. What the Council can achieve is another matter with the US having chosen to keep out of the Council because it would not prevent rights-abusing countries from membership. It is, however, admirable that the US has ensured that at least one of the major abusers of human rights, namely the US, will not be in the Council.

A revealing study of the origins of the Sinhala bourgeois class

Nobodies to Somebodies, Kumari Jayawardena, Social Scientists' Association, Colombo 05, 2000 (4th Printing 2007), pp. 412+xxxii, (price not stated).

The book is unique in examining the sources of wealth and position of the elite families that came to dominate the economic and political affairs of the country in the decades preceding independence from direct colonial rule and even after.

The sections on the elite, especially the Colombo-based section of it, are well researched and supported by a wealth of documentation. The book reveals the feudal roots of the section of the emergent bourgeoisie as well as the ties that developed between those with different origins and the well-established feudal/land-owning classes. It also shows the extent to which the feudal/land-owning elite of the coastal regions were dependent on colonial patronage.

Despite its difference in style to several studies on the social nature of the capitalist classes in India and Latin America, where the bond between the big land-owners and the capitalists is strong and where capitalism had no need to subvert the feudal nature of relations of production in the countryside, it provides valuable insights into the dual nature of the relationship between the dependent capitalist class under colonial and neo-colonial rule in the Third World and their colonial/imperialist masters.

The role of caste is discussed in considerable detail and the book explores how wealth and therefore class take precedence over caste in the course of development of a merchant class, its accumulation of wealth through arrack and toll renting and its expansion into the plantation sector. The failure of this class to develop into an industrial capitalist class of significance is important and could partly be explained in terms of its

dependence on the goodwill if not patronage of the colonial masters and the kind of collaboration with colonial rulers which survived well after the departure of the colonial rulers in 1948.

The book demonstrates how willingly the new rich classes at the time took to Western culture and lifestyles and how willingly they collaborated with the colonial rulers. Thereby it helps in challenging the claims of the elite classes of today to patriotism and traditional values, while collaborating with neo-colonialism and imperialist globalisation as well as investing their wealth abroad rather than develop a national economy.

The research done on the Tamil and Muslim elite is weak, and it is essentially the individuals based in Colombo who receive attention while the Jaffna-based feudal-capitalists who made their wealth from cash crops, especially tobacco, and related products do not receive a mention. The origins of the wealth of the influential families in the provinces further away from Colombo are hardly considered.

Also the chapter on the debut of bourgeois women seems like an implant to address feminist concerns. It is misleading since women from feudal and capitalist families did not make their wealth but rather inherited it by virtue of being an only daughter or a widow. That tradition seems to have been extended to the political dynasties of the country. The westernisation and modernisation of the Sinhala elite women was less in defiance of the dominant males of their respective families than in compliance with their wishes, since the men of wealth themselves aspired to be brown sahibs, so that the women had to matching counterparts.

Some of the early leaders of the left of Sri Lanka were from wealthy feudal/land-owning families. These leaders are referred to in the book but with little comment on how their ancestors acquired their wealth or what made these young men from the elite classes turn to left ideology.

The shortcomings seem largely as a result of attempting to provide a comprehensive picture without adequate access to the necessary information. The work if confined entirely to the emergence of the Sinhala bourgeoisie and defined as such would in itself be of much value to the student of Sri Lankan political history. Inadequate sections on other communities based on poorly researched texts does more harm than good to what is otherwise a valuable study.

Curse Not

Semmalar Mohan

You are troubled by vibrations of some sound within you.
Your lips curse someone or another.

We, like chicks spotted by the eyes of an eagle –
You with a wounded heart....

Rumblings of fury are concealed behind screens
in well planned fashion.
Trying to expose treachery neatly hidden behind masks
we were pushed down and trampled underfoot

Your body is parched dry by thoughts
of our bodies that arose
to free ourselves from the scars of poverty.
Your skin wrinkled in lines scratched by exploitation,
the hollows of your cheeks echoing the frustration
of their inability to surge up.

Your dreams as an unfilled vacuum
from your granny to you and you to me
as an umbilical link
as inaccessible distance....

How will it be possible?
Without shaking off with disgust
this base political lineage,
starved of humidity and buried deep
life will be parched dry.

Persevere to rip off the curtain and surge forward.

The new world to be won may not be for us,
but let not tomorrow curse us.

(from the Remand Prison, Colombo)

International Events

Lebanon: A Failed Misadventure

Following the sudden move by the Lebanese government on 6th May to curb the power of Hezbollah, the Shiite Muslim organisation which successfully defended Lebanon against Israeli invasion in 2006, by declaring as illegal Hezbollah's independent communications network spanning across much of the country and dismissing the pro-Hezbollah head of security at Beirut Airport, located in Hezbollah territory.

Separately, national discontent over wages resulted in a strike call, in the poorer areas of Lebanon where support for Hezbollah is strong. By 7th May the strike degenerated into gun battles between anti-government protesters and supporters of the ruling coalition. Hezbollah supporters blocked the roads to the airport as the fighting escalated further.

On 8th May the popular Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah declared that the government actions were tantamount to a declaration of war aimed at supporting the policies of the United States and Israel. By 9th May Hezbollah forces took control of the mainly Muslim west Beirut and by the next day fighting had spread to north Lebanon.

With the death toll already in the dozens, the army declared a freeze on government measures against Hezbollah. The fighting continued, however, but sporadically. On 14th May the government yielded to key Hezbollah demands to rescind its decisions on the telecommunication network and the dismissal of the airport security chief.

Despite clear provocation by the pro-Western government in Lebanon, US President Bush on 12th May, on the eve of his visit to Israel, accused Iran of stoking the fires by supporting Hezbollah. Egypt and Saudi Arabia, not surprisingly, sided with the Lebanese regime. While the Iranian government blamed the US and Israel for the situation in Lebanon, the leaders of Syria and Qatar declared that it was an internal affair of Lebanon, to pre-empt the internationalization of the issue.

The pro-Western leaders of Lebanon do not make major political moves without the backing of or, to be more correct, prompting by the US; and the

provocative act by the Lebanese rulers was aimed to bring Hezbollah under control, and the strong response by Hezbollah has frustrated yet another attempt by the US-Israeli axis to destabilize and dominate Lebanon.

Colombia: a Tale of Two Protests

A well-orchestrated 'apolitical' public protest was successfully launched on February 4th in Colombia against the 'terrorism' of the guerrillas of the FARC-EP (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army). A month later the tables were turned on the Colombian government.

The illegal air and ground assault by the Colombian forces just past midnight on 1st March inside Ecuador with intelligence support from the US that killed Raúl Reyes, Julian Conrado of the FARC-EP and twenty of their comrades drew protests across the world. Rafael Correa, President of Ecuador and Hugo Chávez, President of Venezuelan denounced this blatant violation of international law and agreements established through the Organization of the American States and the Andean Parliament, to prevent the violation of a nation's sovereign territory. Despite Colombia's insistence that it acted alone, concerns persist about direct US involvement in the hunt for Raúl Reyes, besides technological support from the US to the Colombian regime in its war against FARC.

On 6th March, Colombian masses, led by the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes, turned out in far bigger numbers than in the anti-FARC rally of February to call for a rejection of Colombia's paramilitary groups and those who aided them.

Paramilitary power and impunity still looms large in Colombia, with the Colombian military closely involved with the paramilitaries in unlawful acts including extrajudicial executions. In Colombia, conservative and liberal political parties that have alternated in power serve the interests of the same oligarchy, as was the case elsewhere in South America until recently and is the case in much of Central America even today. Electoral changes are based on a small fraction of the population, since the vast majority does not take the electoral exercise seriously; and if by chance a meaningful alternative emerged despite the system, vested interests act fast to pre-empt it. The assassination early in 1948 of the popular and progressive Liberal leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitan remains a powerful lesson to potential challengers. Thus it will take a lot more of mass political agitation and mass uprisings before the government's killer squads and paramilitaries are brought under control.

Bolivia: Making Mischief

A low turnout, autonomy referendum, held on 4th May in Bolivia's richest province of Santa Cruz, was denounced as unconstitutional by President Evo Morales as it was not authorized by the Congress or the electoral authorities, while its promoters claimed approval by 70% of the votes cast. The referendum was designed to allow the soy and cattle barons who are hesitant to share their wealth with the poor Indians of Santa Cruz, which boasts nearly 30 percent of Bolivia's GNP, to consolidate their hold on the wealth of the region.

The Santa Cruz oligarchy sought to achieve a massive poll turnout to weaken the government argument about the illegality of the process. With a large "Yes" vote anticipated, the government and the MAS (Movement Towards Socialism) sought to diminish the voting results by calling for mass abstention. Some others asked the people to vote "No" where they feared opposition bullying of the people into casting their vote.

The oligarchy, backed by US imperialism, aims to topple Latin America's first indigenous president and regain control of the immense wealth in the region, coming under increasing control of the state, which by a decision on May 1st seeks to recover control over four trans-national oil companies and nationalise the telecommunications company, ENTEL.

The Bolivian people understand what is at stake and increasingly realise the need to hit back at the tiny elite, supported by the United States, seeking to reverse the democratic and cultural revolutions taking place in Bolivia. The 2008 May Day celebrations demonstrated that popular Bolivian organizations appreciate the need for unity between all sectors to defend the country's agenda of humanity and solidarity, respectful of differences and respectful of nature, represented by Morales.

Morales announced on 8th May that the country will hold a recall vote over his mandate as well as that of the governors of the country's nine regions. The move was approved the same morning by the opposition-controlled Senate, with a rightwing majority, which seems to think that it is now opportune to attempt to oust Morales and to subvert the country's new constitution. The referendum should be held within 90 days of the signing of the bill by President Morales.

The finger prints of the foreign meddlers are all over the region and, on 6th May, legislators from the opposition political party, A New Time (Un Nuevo Tiempo) in the oil-rich state of Zulia in neighbouring Venezuela

proposed a feasibility study for potential autonomy from the federal government, on the lines of the autonomy efforts in Santa Cruz.

More Left Signals from Latin America

In Paraguay, a former Catholic bishop Fernando Lugo ended 61 years of rule by the conservative Colorado Party by winning 41% of the vote to be elected president. He defeated the ruling party candidate Ms Blanca Ovelar by a 10% margin.

In Nicaragua, much to the chagrin of Washington and the Nicaraguan right, the Sandinista (FSLN) government led by President Daniel Ortega went beyond rhetoric to make its anti-imperialist course more thorough and far-reaching. The government is moving fast to reverse the devastating impacts of seventeen years of neo-liberal misrule. Free education and free health are being restored alongside an ongoing literacy campaign, relief programs to overcome hunger and child malnutrition, and programs to stimulate and reactivate small businesses and small-scale farming. Venezuelan aid has been of value in restoring the country's failing infrastructure especially in transport and energy. Venezuelan and Iranian investments are likely to bring long-term benefits to the economy.

The FSLN heads a minority government and cannot carry out far-reaching economic changes without the consent of a pro-imperialist majority of deputies in the national assembly. Thus the economic strategy of the government has to accommodate the reality of a dominant capitalist economy and a society dominated by liberal and neo-liberal values. Defending the revolutionary measures of the government and resisting capitalist expansion is not easy and the government strategy of reliance on Venezuelan cooperation and ALBA initiatives along with traditional measures to attract foreign investment remains vulnerable, despite softening the impact of the grave global economic situation on the country, and a growth of 18% in the export earnings during 2007.

Kosovo: Double Standards

The declaration of independence by Kosovo disregarding the historic importance of the region to Serbia has served the US objective of further weakening the Serbian state, but has really done no good to the Kosovo Albanians. But what is increasingly clear is that Kosovo will see continued US

military presence there, which will be used to serve US expansionist interests in the region and thereby adding to tension in the region.

The consequences of the hasty creation of an independent Kosovo for the region are already visible. Some member states of the EU including Spain, Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia have refused to recognise Kosovo; and the legality of the declaration of independence is being challenged internationally.

It is interesting that the US and EU respond differently to the secessionist movements in Georgia, their client state. They asked Russia for restraint following the recent flare-up between Russia and Georgia over the nearly two-decade old breakaway of Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions from Georgia, where Russia is supportive of the breakaway states.

Pakistan: Back to the Wall, Democracy

Pakistan's fragile coalition government was dealt a blow on 12th May as Nawaz Sharif, leader of the Pakistan Muslim League withdrew his ministers from the six-week-old cabinet following the collapse of talks with Asif Ali Zardari, leader of the Pakistan People's Party, about the way to reinstate the forty-five senior judges sacked by President Pervez Musharraf in November 2007. The split could destabilise Pakistani politics and derail transition to civilian rule after nine years of military rule under Musharraf.

The PML instead of joining the opposition would support the PPP-led government on an issue-by-issue basis. Although superficially the dispute is about technicalities, there are serious differences. While the PML advocates an immediate return of the judges, the PPP prefers a cautious approach, and judicial reforms to limit the Chief Justice's powers.

The real controversy is about the fate of Musharraf, who enjoys the support of the Pakistani military and the US government and has made clear his objection to the return of Chaudhry, the Chief Justice whom he dismissed.

US Assistant Secretary of State, Richard Boucher has held several meetings with Zardari and Sharif, leaders of the PPP and PML, respectively, in London. Retaining the unpopular Musharraf as President seems to have been a central issue of the discussions, as the US trusts the dictatorial Musharraf to do its dirty work against al-Qaida and the Taliban, more than it would trust any civilian leader. The role of the US continues to dismay democracy activists in Pakistan who are beginning to see that the real interest of the US is not about restoring democracy in Pakistan.

The resignation of PML ministers, coming at a time of deepening economic difficulties, rising inflation, failing business confidence, growing public impatience, and a decline in popularity of the PPP government, could force the PPP to turn to Musharraf loyalists for support. Pakistan could then be back at square one.

Democracy activists should realise sooner than later that playing political musical chairs with a chief of the armed forces and two politically bankrupt leaders will take Pakistan nowhere towards genuine democracy. Unless the people of Pakistan resolve to overthrow the double burden of the feudal-capitalist classes that have wielded real power in Pakistan, and the US, their imperialist master, there can be no hope for democracy.

Nepal: Indian Blush

The electoral success of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) in Nepal was unexpected by the Indian political establishment as a whole. The hope that the CPN (M) would finish a poor second or even a third so that the monarchy could somehow be salvaged went up in smoke. But the Indian establishment and its US allies do not give up easily. Steps are still afoot to exert pressure on the revisionist Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist Leninist) to collaborate with the badly battered Nepali Congress to avert a new constitution by opting for amendments to the existing one.

Mass enthusiasm for the CPN (M) is gaining momentum and any intrigue to undermine the overwhelming desire for a republican constitution will only backfire. The CPN (M), although aware of the potential dangers of Indian meddling, is guarded in its comments to avoid provocation. Whether the Indian ruling classes will leave Nepal to the Nepali people is something that one has to wait and see.

Olympics 2008: Dalai Lama in US Team

The US, fearful of being overrun by China in the field of sports at the forthcoming Beijing Olympics, has chosen to defeat the Games themselves so that whatever glory that China may achieve at the Games would be tarnished by blemishing China and the Games together.

To this end it has already fielded a powerful team led by the former Tibetan slave-owner monk-cum-politician Dalai Lama with nearly 50 years of experience in the American game of China-bashing using human rights. The unethical conduct of the team in its game of hunting the Olympic

Torch and its blood sport in the Chinese province of Tibet won the praise of champion human rights games commentators in the global media.

However, the disastrous earthquake that struck Sichuan Province and killed an estimated 80 000 has taken the limelight away from the Dalai Lama's human rights circus. But the team will be back in action with a vengeance as the Games get closer and will stop at nothing to bringing discredit to China and Olympics 2008 at the bidding of its masters.

Myanmar: Imperialist Folly amid Tragedy

US and the western media are working overtime to take advantage of Cyclone Nargis that on 4th May hit heavily populated areas of the country, claimed the lives of over a hundred thousand, sent many thousands missing, and took a heavy economic toll as well as created a major health threat to hundreds of thousands.

The military rulers of Burma refused to allow foreign armed forces to provide relief. Initial pressure through various governments and agencies including the UN to allow intrusion by US armed forces in the pretext of providing aid failed. A campaign of vilification followed, accusing the ruling military junta of purposely making the people suffer and die. Finally a compromise was reached in late May by the personal intervention of the UN Secretary General who visited Myanmar.

It should be noted that several Asian countries, including India, and China despite its own problems with coping with the aftermath of a terrible earthquake, had already sent in relief in various forms. Myanmar also consented to the co-ordination of international relief efforts by countries of ASEAN, of which Myanmar is a member state.

Although the Myanmar regime is repressive, its decision to resist foreign meddling in the name of disaster relief is correct. The people of Myanmar should be encouraged to deal with their problems based on their own resources, and with help from genuinely friendly people of the world.

US condemnation of Myanmar's refusal to allow American armed forces to carry out relief work reminds one of US refusal to allow Cuban doctors who were willing and ready to provide badly needed health services for the poor victims of hurricane Katrina in August 2005, who were badly neglected by the state.

Theek Hai

Varavara Rao

**You ask me
If it is hard for me there
Yes, when I think of those comrades
Who in exile are suffering hardships
To wipe off the misery of the people,
This inaction is really hard to bear.**

**You ask me
If am happy here,
Hope for the future glimmers
Like lightning hid in the cloud
In the hearts of the millions of this vast country
It jingles in these fetters**

**Even in these prison dens
Which wide-mouthed
Seek to swallow revolution,
There is unrest;
Giving the slip
To the exploiter's flag on guard
Each morning,
Light and love of people
Call to have a word with us**

**Birds perched on the barbed wire
Over the prison walls,
Jasmines that sprouted in the sweat
Of the prisoners
Always hold forth a message
In silence**

**Breezes blow in the night,
As a poet-friend fancied
The moon gets caught in the barbed wire
Over the prison walls
And we, after singing and discoursing,
Lose ourselves in the dreams of revolution**

**But the poor lonely policemen
Exiled from sleep and shelter
Yawn out at every hour
Sab Theek Hai!**

October 1973, Translated from Telugu by CV Subba Rao

A Letter from Prison

Samih Al-Qassem

Dear mother, it gives me great pain,
To think that my days pass in vain;
And when friends ask about me, you weep,
Because I am thrown away, in a deep
Dungeon that my enemies built for me,
To curb my liberty and kill the free
Fighters whose voice fills the land,
And brightens tomorrow, reviving the sand.
Yet, although I am caught, taken away,
My cell shall soon see the light of day.
Inside our prison, we continue the strife
To bring about once more the wondrous life!
Mother, our day of liberty shall come soon,
When we shall neither weep nor swoon!

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