

Theoretical Organ of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party

Marxist Leninist

New Democracy

May 2017

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**Imperialism, National and Identity
Politics and Third World Fascism:
a Marxist Leninist Approach**

Global Turmoil

**International tutelage and adherence in
a time of crisis**

Free Maruti-Suzuki Workers

Poetry: Mazin Qumsiyeh

Deir Yassin to Gaza

Mazin Qumsiyeh

(Written on the way back home, dedicated to Juliano)*

My kind old mother laments
Decades of memory that transcends
Fake Gods and fake peace offers
who bless nichsayon** and slaughter
our eyes fail to see or just lament
blood of a child licked off a pavement
By stray thirsty cats
with more morals than army brats
Our ears fail to hear
voice of Dr. Izzeldinne echoes
"I shall not hate" anguished cries
After three beautiful daughters
With a tank shell and a niece in slaughters
Our noses fail to smell
The whiff of death mixed with gun powder
Or the vomit of our tortured
Our hearts fail to feel
the punctured womb by the old home
the severed girl's head by the mosque dome
Mutilated,
dismembered,
disconnected

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Editorial

Crowds were bussed by the thousands to venues of May Day rallies of the three major political groupings. The revolutionary fighting spirit of the working class has once again been vulgarised by the reactionaries. JR Jayewardene insulted the significance of the May Day by making the UNP May Day a grand show with Indian movie personalities at a time when the parliamentary left was down and out, having paid the price for its opportunist politics, and all opposition was suppressed by the brute force of UNP thugs and JVP hirelings.

By the early 1980's much of the trade union leadership had sold out to capitalist parties and, with a few remarkable exceptions, the trade union movement was stripped of left politics. The CMU, a powerful middle class trade union with Trotskyite affiliation depoliticized itself by 1990 to the point that, over a decade ago, the leader of the CMU allowed a prominent left politician, also a Trotskyite, to address a CMU-led May Day rally on condition that he did not talk politics, and sadly the latter obliged.

What dominate the massive May Day processions of the past several years are not trade unions or political parties that represent working class interests but reactionary political parties (including the chauvinist JVP) making grand road shows to impress the potential voter of their 'strength'. Speeches at their May Day rallies bear the character of election campaigns.

That is a good indication of the scale of the task ahead of the left and working class movements. The left cannot compete with the reactionaries and chauvinists in hoodwinking the public. The capitalist-controlled media are more interested in sensation than political sense. The task before the left is to put forward ideas that will advance the cause of the proletarian revolution. That means addressing immediate issues as well as projecting a long term vision of the revolutionary movement.

The two parliamentary left parties, the LSSP and the revisionist CP, since compromising with the national bourgeoisie in the 1960's gave priority to

their parliamentary political agenda. In 1966 along with affiliated trade unions (under the name of JCTUO, in fact a mockery of the mighty JCTUO formed in 1963) they held a joint May Day rally with the SLFP. The net outcome for the parliamentary left was political and organizational decline among the working class and loss of electoral credibility.

The Marxist Leninists who split from the revisionist CP held fast to the strongest proletarian tradition in the country, but were weakened by external factors including the surge of chauvinist and narrow nationalist politics as well as internal divisions. Although weakened, the Marxist Leninists and some of the Trotskyite factions did not compromise their ideological character. The JVP, originally an anti trade-union and anti working class party, after its revival in 1978 took advantage of the decline of the left trade unions to make headway in selected trade union sectors.

The setback suffered by the left movement was compounded by the escalation of the national question into war. Thus the revival of the Marxist tradition of the working class movement was slow. The principled perseverance of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party, the leading Marxist Leninist Party of the country, began to pay dividends since this century and the May Day events organized by the Party this year were more successful than that of rival events, especially of Tamil nationalists, both in revolutionary spirit and public enthusiasm.

The NDMLP May Day events in the North and the Hill Country were also remarkable in their international spirit by the identification of the events with ICOR and strong expression of solidarity with the long persecuted workers of Maruti Suzuki in India. These are encouraging developments that need to be built on and followed up by the genuine left elsewhere in the country.

It is time to act towards a united revolutionary mass movement led by the genuine left based on clear principles and an unambiguous programme.

Imperialism, National and Identity Politics and Third World Fascism: a Marxist Leninist Approach

“For a long time I believed that it would be possible to overthrow the Irish regime by English working-class ascendancy....Deeper study has now convinced me of the opposite. The English working class will never accomplish anything before it has got rid of Ireland. The lever must be applied in Ireland. That is why the Irish question is so important for the social movement in general.”

[K Marx, 10 December 1869 from Karl Marx & Frederick Engels, Lawrence & Wishart, Electric Book 43 (Letters) pp. 1868-70, 2010]

A people which oppresses another cannot emancipate itself. The power which it uses to suppress the other finally always turns against itself. As long as Russian soldiers remain in Poland, the Russian people cannot free itself either politically or socially.

[F Engels, 1874, from Karl Marx & Frederick Engels, Collected Works, Marxist Internet Archive, 24 pp. 5-11]

“The class-conscious workers do not advocate secession. They know the advantages of large states and the amalgamation of large masses of workers. But large states can be democratic only if there is complete equality among the nations; that equality implies the right to secede. The struggle against national oppression and national privileges is inseparably bound up with the defence of that right.”

[VI Lenin: “More about “Nationalism” *Put Pravdy* No. 17, 20.2.1914; Lenin Collected Works, Moscow, 1972, 20, pp. 109-110.]

1 Imperialist Manipulation of Post-Colonial Nationalism

Nationalism under Colonialism

Here, post-colonial refers to being free of direct colonial or semi-colonial rule. The context is not truly post-colonial as colonialism has transformed into neocolonialism as warned by Frantz Fanon in “the Wretched of the Earth” (1961, Grove Press, New York) and explained clearly by Kwame Nkrumah in his “Neocolonialism the Last Stage of Imperialism” (Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd., London 1965). Decolonisation was in effect a project of neo-colonisation. The end of colonial rule in much of the Third World did not mean the end of control by the colonial masters. Marxist and progressive leaders in many former British colonies pointed out on the eve of ‘independence’ that what was on offer was a transfer of power from colonial rulers to acquiescent social elite. It will, however, be to oversimplify to say that the transfer was always smooth or that loyalty was always assured or that political succession was as desired by the colonialists. Much depended on the colonial power and the colony and various geo-socio-historical factors.

Nationalism had a central role in anti-colonial uprisings and was to that extent a progressive force as noted by Lenin. The contexts of the struggles for freedom, their form and the class and class interests that dominated the freedom movement were decisive in the political development of former colonies. The way countries were created under direct colonial rule including colonial carving up of regions in the Middle East and parts of Africa and South and South East decided the trajectory of “post-colonial” nationalism in the Third World.

The Post-Colonial Nation

The national question when Lenin offered the right to self determination to nations that were prisoners of Tsarist rule is vastly different from what it is today. Thus to quote Lenin or Stalin out of context to decide the validity of the claim of a people to nationhood is unscientific. The core criterion used by Lenin and Stalin, namely anti-imperialism, to recognise

any given nationalism as progressive is, however, still valid. (*Lenin, 'The Right of Nations to Self-Determination', Selected Works Vol. 1, Part 2, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow 1950; Stalin, 'Marxism and the National and Colonial Question, Lawrence & Wishart, London 1947)*

The post-colonial (really neocolonial) context, at least superficially, poses a dilemma to an anti-imperialist analyst. While the post-colonial state is the victim of neocolonialism, it is also an oppressor of minority nations, nationalities and national minorities (the definitions of which we will come to later). Thus, it is necessary to develop fresh criteria to identify the oppressor and the oppressed: Mao's analysis of contradictions is most helpful in distinguishing between primary and secondary contradictions, between the primary contradiction and the main contradiction during a certain historical stage, and thus between hostile and 'friendly' contradictions. (*Mao Zedong, 'On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People' Speech at the 11th Session (Enlarged) of the Supreme State Conference, February 1957)*

Terms like nation, nationalism, national oppression and national liberation relating to the neocolonial national question bear superficial similarity to those under colonialism. But the identities of oppressor and oppressed and the relation between them vastly differ. Thus the Marxist Leninist approach to the national question under neocolonialism needs to address the changed circumstances.

Defining a Nation

The association of a nation with a state met the needs of an emergent capitalist class. The need to define a nation arose in Europe in the context of a people constituting a socio-economic entity seeking independent statehood against domination by an imperialist power.

Nationalism served imperialist interests well by giving the oppressor state a respectable national identity in which even the oppressed classes were deluded into having a stake. The neat definition by Stalin in 'Marxism and the National and Colonial Question' remains an

appropriate description of what constituted the modern nation: “A nation is an historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological makeup manifested in a community of culture”.

The definition came out of a thorough understanding of what made a nation state feasible in the context of national oppression and Lenin’s offer of the right of nations to self-determination. The key features of a nation defined by Stalin are still essential to a nation state.

One should remember that nothing is natural about a nation and that historical and socio-economic factors decided the emergence of nations. Progressive thinkers like EJ Hobsbawm and B Anderson were rather dismissive of nationalism. Hobsbawm in *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 1990 says that no universal criteria are required for a nation so that “any sufficiently large body of people whose members regard themselves as members of a nation will be treated as such”; and Anderson in *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 1983 proceeds to name all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact as imagined, with nations imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. Yet, neither rejects the significance of nations and nationalism or their right to exist.

The concept of nation state, was closely linked to the development of capitalism, became domestically less important to imperialism with internationalisation of capital cutting across national boundaries and imperialism pursuing globalisation for its global domination. Nationalism in advanced capitalist countries was at worst dormant and reactivated in the wake of the global economic crisis that started in 2008, manifesting as resistance in Europe to domination of the EU by Germany as well in the clash of interests of the US and EU. This should not be confused with the rivalry for global domination among powerful capitalist nation states in the colonial era up to the end of WW2. While prospects are weak for rivalry between powerful

capitalist states leading to war, nationalist rivalry among imperialist countries and can lead to serious conflicts including proxy wars.

Post-colonial National Oppression and the Concept of Nationality

The end of direct colonial rule of a Third World country meant that national oppression of the colonial kind was a thing of the past. But residues of colonialism remain, allowing former colonial masters a say in the affairs of the former colony, and tempting communities in conflict, as in the former French colonies of North and West Africa, to look up to former colonial masters to solve internal issues. There are instances of the US stepping into the shoes of the old colonial master. But no context exists for mass struggle against an occupying imperialist power, except as a partner of a loyal regime. The burden of controlling militant protest against exploitation and plunder has thus been transferred to the local elite.

The national question under neocolonialism concerns contradictions among nationalities with national oppression meaning a strong community (usually a majority nationality) oppressing a weaker community (usually a minority nationality) in a territory controlled by the stronger. The term nationality is should be read in a broad sense to mean a nation or any community possessing the essential features of a nation and thus the potential to become a nation-state but may or may not claim nationhood for various reasons. The use of the concept of nationality helps one to better understand the national question under neocolonialism. The concept is valuable to the resolution of conflicts in contexts where co-existence of a nationality with other nationalities (or other communities) within the framework of a multi-ethnic or multi-national state is challenged.

The irony of the current form of national oppression is that both the oppressing and oppressed nationalities face imperialist exploitation and domination. Imperialism, no more the ruler of a colony, plays the role of a promoter of conflict, profiting from arming one or both

parties to the conflict and as a peacemaker or guarantor of peace earning access and influence with the parties to the conflict. It is known to have cynically used the concept of the right of nations to self determination and the newly created Right to Protect (R2P) to stir conflict between nationalities and use it to intervene militarily.

It should be remembered that the evolution of nations in the Third World is based more on the history of colonial rule than on identity based development. Since the nation-state is a product of capitalism, which in the colonies and neo-colonies was— with rare exception —a colonial-imperialist implant, the creation of Third World nations was based on the whims of the colonial masters and now imperialist powers. Colonial rivalry for regional and global domination decided how borders of countries were drawn. The interests of the colonial masters dictated whether a colony was carved up or lumped with other colonies to make a single administrative unit.

The Third World Nation as a Colonial Product

Scholars in the West who comment on the national question generally ignore the role of colonialism and neocolonialism in the creation of nations and nation states. The way capitalism developed in what became the Third World ensured that national awareness and nationalism differed vastly from their European counterparts, which have been analysed in depth by many scholars. Nationalism under colonial rule had far less to do with the growth of capitalism in the colony than with colonial/imperialist exploitation of countries and communities. Under neocolonialism, nationalism evolved mostly in response to oppression by a local elite class (often acting in the name of a community) or by imperialism or by the combined action of imperialism and a local elite class. Thus feudal and semi-feudal societies too were propelled into 'nationalism' of some kind.

Carving up of territories by colonial powers and demarcation of borders based on colonial/imperialist economic interests meant that

new 'national' identities were imposed on people who in the absence of colonial intervention could have developed into a single nation, as in the case of Arabs. It also meant suppression of national identity, as in the case of Kurds who got divided among four countries.

Colonial and imperialist powers, besides oppressing and exploiting people and plundering natural resources in the colonies and semi-colonies, also indulged in many forms of slave trade, with harmful implications for national identity and nationalism even under neocolonialism. The national identity of displaced populations, already complicated by forced and voluntary migration of labour under colonialism, got more complex following mass displacement owing to civil war and economic crisis induced by neocolonialism and migration of labour under imperialist globalisation.

Despite the reactionary content of nationalism deriving from its bourgeois character and the complexity of the identity of migrant populations, nationalism exists and cannot be lightly dismissed. Imagined or not, it plays a role for both oppressor and oppressed. Marxist Leninists view nationalism based on objective reality, which is why they then defended the rights of nations and now defend the rights of nationalities, not in an abstract or crudely universal sense but based on objective reality in the neocolonial context.

2 Colonial and neocolonial Creation of Nations

Making Nations of Colonies

The European nation state arrived to serve capital. The uneven development of capital used colonialism to control trade, and natural and human resources. This had implications for the emergence of nations in territories under direct or indirect colonial rule. European capitalism which became imperialism in late 19th Century willingly undermined relations between ethnic groups and communities which, despite rivalry among traditional rulers for hegemony, had coexisted in relative harmony.

The way in which colonial powers set out to wield control over different regions of the world varied, with much depending on the kind of capitalist development of the colonial power. The way each colony was administered also depended on the predominant social structure of the colony.

The emergence of states in Latin America and the Muslim Middle East and North Africa, despite major differences, show how 'nations' and national boundaries emerged from territories without internal boundaries— regardless of feasibility of boundaries based on ethnic identity or geographic features —merely to suit colonial purposes. In contrast, in South Asia, British colonialism held together under a single colonial administration a vast area with ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural identity more diverse than all Europe. So did the Dutch colonialists in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) with many languages, cultures and religions. Ethno-linguistically and culturally distinct regions comprising Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos made the federated colony of Indochina under the French. Rival colonial powers controlled China through coerced trade and territorial concessions by a series of unequal treaties.

Besides indirect control, neocolonialists, for strategic reasons, also directly controlled several small regions such as Hong Kong (freed in 1997), Gibraltar and the Malvinas (still under British rule), Macau which Portugal held on to until 1999, and French occupied territories like its overseas regions of Guiana, Reunion etc. and numerous overseas collectives and territories. The US which emerged as the major neocolonial power since the Second World War (WW2), has *de facto* colonial possession and control of many territories. It dominated over China's Taiwan for some decades. While such colonial features make more complex the national question in the Third World, the most pressing issue is national oppression in post-colonial states.

Colonial rulers encouraged the merging of its ex-colonies of Malaya, North Borneo and Sarawak (as well as Singapore which was forced

out before long) into the larger state of Malaysia, for fear that the large Chinese population in Malaya could sway the country towards socialist China. On the other hand, they induced secession in India. The North-South division of Vietnam and Korea were both outcomes of imperialist fear that, united, these countries would go socialist.

While imperialism desired economic alliances such as ASEAN and the EU in to protect capitalist interests, it did everything in its power to dismantle voluntary unions of nations with a socialist goal, however imperfect. The break-up of Yugoslavia was followed by further punishment of Serbia by enabling the secession of province of Kosovo which already had considerable autonomy. Imperialist cynicism led to the secession (albeit temporarily) of Katanga (1960-63) from the newly independent Congo to punish the left-oriented leadership, and the secession of South Sudan in 2011 to punish defiant Sudan.

Thus it is clear that, under colonial rule as well as under neocolonial domination, people and regions outside West Europe and North America have been grouped and un-grouped as countries, based on imperialist interests. The cynical role of imperialism in the national question of Third World countries will be commented on later in the context of national contradiction in the Third World.

The Post-Colonial National Question

It can be seen that the emergence of independent states from colonial or semi-colonial rule had more to do with colonial interests or even whimsical decisions than with ethno-linguistic, cultural or religious identity. Thus, many post-colonial states are lacking in one or several of the basic features of a nation as defined by Stalin, namely 'a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture'.

While a post-colonial state generally has contiguous territory, a common language is often absent as is a common culture. Economic life too could be less shared or fragmented unlike in the emergent

capitalist nation that Stalin had in mind, for the reason that the independent state emerging from colonial rule rarely had a modern industrial economy and the economic development that followed was built on the residue of its colonial heritage, rather in the fashion of an appendage of the economic interests of the neocolonial power dominating its economy.

Neo-colonial bondage to imperialism ensured that development of capitalism and economic modernisation in the post-colonial state was conditioned more by external forces than by factors internal to the country. Motivation for different ethno-linguistic identities to merge into a common national identity was weaker than that during the growth of European capitalism. Also, the role of native languages in the economic lives of the people in several parts of the world, especially South and South East Asia, was curtailed by neocolonial domination and now the process of imperialist globalisation with English (and to a less extent French) as the dominant language of business of the region as well as the key link language between speakers of regional languages. This has had adverse implications for inter-community relations in countries with several native languages: it discouraged learning other local languages, and strengthened both politically and socially a new middle class with affinity for English.

The sense of nationalism in colonial countries was driven by a spirit of patriotism and desire for freedom from colonial rule. Uneven social development under colonial rule followed by rivalry among the elite for political and economic dominance and rivalry among the middle classes for upward social mobility amid limited opportunities resulted in identity-based rivalries, often involving ethnicity.

Historical contradictions between identity groups, which seemed insignificant during the anti-colonial struggle, came to the fore in the run-up to or after independence from colonial rule. Often, such rivalries were encouraged by the colonial rulers who set one community against the other to weaken anti-colonial unity.

Whatever the cause, minority nationalities and minority ethnic and religious communities are now increasingly a target of oppression by a majority. And failure to correctly handle such contradictions is to the detriment of the socialist cause.

Responding to Colonial Carve-up

Arab Nationalism: Victorious anti-colonial struggles persuaded a few Arab leaders to work for the political unity of Arabs. The United Arab Republic comprising Egypt and Syria, founded in 1958, fell apart in 1961; a subsequent Iraqi proposal to re-establish the UAR comprising Egypt, Syria and Iraq failed too. This experience, despite the desire of the Arab people for unity, showed that divisions among the ruling elite driven by class interests and the influence of imperialism obstructed not only Pan-Arabism but even Arab unity in matters affecting the Arab people. Imperialist control of the Middle East would not have lasted almost as long as a century following the fall of the Ottoman Empire in early 20th century was it not for the weakening of Arab nationalism by colonial carving-up. Imperialism and Zionism now rely heavily on the division of the Arab World based on rivalry among the ruling elite, while ensuring that a few strategically important states remain clients of US imperialism for their survival against the anger of the oppressed population. Thus what exists in the name of Arab unity are alliances like the Arab League and its sub-groups led by the most reactionary Arab states. Thus, besides the weak prospects for reviving a pan-Arab nationalist project, the imperialist grip on the dominant Arab state will ensure that any Arab alliance will not benefit the anti-imperialist cause. While prospects for a progressive international Islamic alliance are weak, international Islamic alliances nurtured by the US and its Arab allies have become reactionary outfits with fascist features.

Kurdish nationalism: The national liberation project of the Kurdish people, whose large territory was wilfully carved up and shared

between Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria, transcends state borders. Prospects for a strong left-nationalist alliance were strong in Turkish Kurdistan with the prospect of uniting the Kurdish nation in the course of an anti-imperialist struggle, since imperialism was a close ally of their biggest oppressor, Turkey. Developments over the past two decades, however, enabled the US to manipulate Kurdish leaders in Iraq, and to some extent Turkey, to pin their hopes on imperialism. The revolutionary potential of the Kurdish liberation forces hangs in the balance amid issues of regional power rivalry.

Pan-Africanism: The concept of the nation state in the African Continent was much weaker than elsewhere as geographic borders, especially in sub-Saharan Africa was not based on any form of ethnic or linguistic identity. Unlike in Asia, development of the languages and culture was undermined by colonialism, through the domination of the two main colonial languages, namely English and French, and the intrusion of Christian faiths, while ethnic (or 'tribal') differences were kept alive in each colony. Kwame Nkrumah, leader of Ghana, the first Black African colony to be freed of colonial rule turned this negative context on its head.

Nkrumah, a true anti-imperialist and internationalist, proposed a progressive anti-imperialist pan-African alliance. The project failed to materialise owing to imperialist subversion in the continent which continues to this day, while what exists in the name of African Union is an alliance of states, generally subservient to imperialism. There are, however, efforts to revive the pan-African project as imagined by Nkrumah. But success requires the emergence of strong progressive and anti-imperialist political forces in Africa.

Latin America and the Caribbean: What is important about national identities that emerged from centuries of colonial intervention in the Americas is that the language, culture and even religion have been seen as those of the occupying powers at the expense of the identity of

the indigenous people. The settlement of Africans and, to a less extent, south Indians as slaves or indentured labour, especially in Caribbean, added new ethnic identities as did mixing between races.

In South and Central America, the Portuguese colony of Brazil remained more or less intact as one country, while Spanish colonies splintered into several, based largely on colonial administrative regions. The republic of Gran Colombia— comprising predominantly Spanish-speaking regions of present-day Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama, and parts of other countries —founded by the initiative of Simon de Bolivar, a progressive thinker and an important anti-colonial leader, was short-lived (1819-1831), but the Bolivarian spirit was revived a decade ago by Hugo Chavez amid the anti-imperialist upsurge in South America. What is important about the Bolivarian project is that, inspired by the Cuban experience, it extended its scope to include the Caribbean so that alliances like the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) have emerged to counter the US imperialist neocolonial projects like the Organization of American States (OAS) to subjugate the region and resist the installation of US-sponsored dictatorships. Although the Bolivarian project has been weakened by subversion by the US and local reactionaries, it survives as something more than a Latin American nationalist project with great anti-imperialist potential for the new millennium.

An important feature of the 21st Century democratic movement in Latin America is the restoration of the national rights of indigenous people. Mass uprisings and left governments led to state recognition of indigenous people as nationalities or national minorities and granting legal status to indigenous languages as in Peru granting official language status to Quechua and Aymara in 1975; and Venezuela in 1999 and Bolivia in 2009 making all indigenous languages official languages. Much work has to be done to prevent the subversion of the unity of South American countries by US

imperialism by promoting narrow nationalism among the indigenous people, whose rights were totally denied to them by dictatorial regimes backed by US imperialism.

Unlike South and Central America, with many predominantly Spanish speaking countries, North America has just three nation states— with the US expanding its territory even in the 20th Century and itching to take control of Puerto Rico. But the US encourages secessionism in South and Central America, already divided among several nations. Support for secession is, however, based on class interests that coincide with the imperialist interests and not ethnic interests, like the rights of indigenous people in Canada and the US.

Other Victims of the Nation State

The formation of nation states led to the marginalisation and denial of traditional territory of nomadic people like the Gypsies across Europe and seriously undermined the territorial rights of the Sami in the arctic region of Europe. The emergence of the nation state with arbitrary boundaries as in Africa divided communities and affected the livelihood as well as identity of ethnic (or tribal) groups.

The concept of the right to self determination has been tampered with by the United Nations which recognises that right only for aggregated populations of territories under colonial or foreign domination, but denying it to many indigenous people who form minority groups within those aggregated populations. Such minorities suffer colonial-style discrimination and face the prospect of assimilation or extinction under a state acting in the name of a majority.

The global search for mineral resources threatens the existence of indigenous people, despite the UN General Assembly adopting, after much struggle, the Draft Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples to protect against discrimination, racism, oppression, marginalisation and exploitation, (See “Rights of Indigenous People” by Anup Shah in www.globalissues.org/article/693/rights-of-indigenous-people).

Imperialism, despite its notorious record of denying freedom to nations and nationalities, helped to create nations, by transplanting populations, as in Israel, by breaking up countries by inducing ethnic and national conflicts, as in Yugoslavia and the subsequent secession of Kosovo Province from Serbia. Imperialist attempts to break up Somalia are not much unlike the attempted secession of Katanga from Congo in the early 1960s and Biafra from Nigeria in the late 1960s.

Imperialism switches loyalties for opportunist reasons, as in Ethiopia and Sudan— both colonial creations —where cases for self determination of Eritrea and South Sudan were strong. Imperialist backing of secession in both cases was for geopolitical reasons.

Post-Colonial Nationalist Projects and the Left

Third World societies have coped with diverse identities; and countries survived without serious ethnic conflict. The Third World national question owes much of its complexity to colonialism and now imperialism, whose interest in the right to self determination of populations and the creation of nation states has been driven by a single purpose, namely global control.

Imperialism is likely to aggressively pursue an agenda of supporting nationalist causes where states seem to defy imperialism, but allowing oppression of nationalities and indigenous people to pass unchecked elsewhere. Imperialism simply keeps the oppressed people divided.

The lesson for oppressed people therefore is to find ways of resolving their respective national questions in ways that will avert imperialist and hegemonic intervention in their affairs.

Although European colonial powers have since WW2 yielded to control by the US neocolonial control in many countries, they hold sway in several countries and have acted to change governments that dared to defy imperialism.

3 Ethnicity and Nationhood

National Identity in the Colonial Era

The development of the nation state alongside capitalism in Europe, led to the emergence of a dominant or language in each of several European countries. The modern capitalist state killed many ethnic and national identities by various means. Besides a rise in literacy, a common educational system, industrial development, expansion of economic activity and mobility of the population generally weakened and/or marginalised dialects and regional languages.

For example, British national identity emerged at expense of the Cornish, Welsh and Scottish identities, but assimilation of Irish identity to the British was less successful despite forced disuse of the Irish (Gaelic) language. French national identity forged under Napoleon meant suppression of all languages but official French. Italian became the main language of Italy since unification in 1861, but dialects/regional-languages persisted so that the adoption of Italian as the official language in 2007 met with dissent in parliament. The German language was successfully unified to become the standard language in Germany and elsewhere. Exceptionally, following the Bolshevik revolution, Russia adopted Russian as the official language of the federal government but with co-official status for twenty (now 27) regional languages.

Things were different in what later became the Third World. Feudal imperial rule in Asia could not suppress ethnic and linguistic identities, although religious conversion and cultural hegemony had a lasting impact on communities under foreign domination. If most feudal empires did not indulge in genocide, it was not because of the benevolence of the rulers but because it was not in the interest of the empire. But European colonial expansion indulged in genocide in the Americas and Australia for territorial expansion. Africa became a massive resource of not only raw materials but also labour in the form of slaves, while parts of Asia provided indentured labour. The impact

of European colonialism on ethnic and linguistic identity of people varied with region and period of history, and was greater than under feudal empires, owing to the combination of capitalist economic expansion with colonial conquest.

Thus, when part or whole of a community was drawn into the economic activity of the colonial power, it came under the cultural hegemony of the latter. This altered the cultural identity of sections of the community and led to the emergence of distinct ethnic groups, based on newly acquired religious, linguistic and cultural identities. Communities which were not directly exposed to colonialism and thus remained relatively isolated have, following the transformation of colonialism into neocolonialism, suffered intense oppression and exploitation, especially under the globalisation of monopoly capital.

After feudal resistance to colonial occupation died down, colonial rulers, to facilitate capitalist expansion, became accommodative of the feudal or pre-feudal social order that prevailed in the colonies. This preserved the old social hierarchy to the extent that it served colonial interests as well as stood in the way of integration of ethnic groups and local communities into larger social groups, unlike under European capitalism. Thus even small regions and countries retained many distinct ethnic groups and communities, including religious and caste groups.

Post-Colonial National Identity

While group identities did not change following end of direct colonial rule, inter-group relations changed as group interests moved to take the place of what was collective anti-colonial national interest. Assertion of group interests took different forms according to context of rivalry and tendency for some groups to dominate over others based on identity. Contradictions concerned elite group interests and found expression in terms of ethnicity, caste, religion and region. National oppression based on ethnic identity or nationality is a

serious issue in Asia. Caste has been the oldest socially divisive factor as well as mode of division of labour and therefore class exploitation and oppression in South Asia. Caste-based oppression exists, more in rural areas, but with declining relevance to social production. Caste identity persists owing to endogamy and social discrimination, and needs to be addressed seriously, but not as ethnic identity. Under exceptional circumstances, religion defined nationality as in the case of Bosnian Muslims, Sikhs in India and, more recently, Muslims in Sri Lanka. But it proved inadequate to cut across ethno-linguistic identity to define nationality as the experience of Pakistan has shown.

Economic and social development in some contexts enabled some ethnic identities to be assimilated to larger national or regional identities. Post revolution Russia recognised its ethnic groups as major indigenous people or titular nations (which we place on par with nationalities) and minor indigenous people (which we will refer to as national minorities). China recognises 55 minority ethnic groups (including those one may refer to as minority nationalities) as national minorities. While India refers to indigenous people other than major nationalities as Scheduled Tribes thereby offering some constitutional protection, Indonesia recognises its ethnic groups but denies special rights on the grounds that all national except Chinese and other immigrants are indigenous.

To the colonialists Africa was just a source of minerals and slave labour. As a result, modern African states were defined by colonial conquest and mostly retain the borders drawn by European colonial rulers, which have little to do with ethnicity, language, culture or way of life. Thus the post-colonial African state comprises indigenous people of diverse identity. Conversion to Christianity and imposition of foreign languages added to social complexity while denial of educational and industrial development rendered most colonies unprepared for transition to an industrial society. Ethnic (or tribal) identity as a substitute for nationalism was a threat to the post-

colonial African governments. This occurred in Nigeria when Biafra seceded in 1967 and was forced back into Nigeria in 1970 by war, and again in recent times with ethno religious differences and externally induced Islamic fundamentalist violence acting to destabilise Nigeria. Another cruel experience is the civil war in South Sudan which is the direct outcome of imperialist encouragement of ethno-religious feelings in southern Sudan to induce the secession of Sudan.

Latin America and the Caribbean predominantly comprise descendants of European colonists (mainly from Spain and Portugal) and people from Africa and to a less extent South Asia forcibly brought in as toilers. Colonial genocide and adverse living conditions imposed on the native population led to depletion of the indigenous population and their marginalisation from the mainstream of society. There has, however, been considerable mixing among all sections of the immigrants and to varying extents with the indigenous people.

Ethnic nationalism in Latin America and the Caribbean has not been a divisive force, (except for the unsuccessful demands for secession of small regions of Chile, Brazil and Colombia). The indigenous populations secured much of their linguistic and cultural rights across the region through struggle, but economic rights remain to be won. Although much has been achieved, mainly under leftist governments with an anti-imperialist agenda, much remains to be done. Notably there is demand for more autonomy by the people of French Guiana, which France claims is its Overseas Province. The more serious attempts at secession have been US imperialist instigated attempts of the economically well to do provinces to demand more autonomy or to threaten secession as in the case of the Santa Cruz Province of Bolivia in 2008 and the Zulia state of Venezuela in 2006.

Ethnicity and Secessionism

Some view each distinct ethnic group as a nation or nationality and prescribe secession as the remedy for oppression and exploitation.

Such prescription lacks understanding of the concept of nation and its historical development, and mostly ignores the need for a sustainable economy and feasibility of an independent state.

It is correct for any ethnic group to assert its right to determine its modes of social and political existence. But this right cannot be readily read as right to self determination meaning the right to secession. To a Marxist, the right to self determination is mainly a means to unite nations and nationalities with a common interest, which in current context also implies resisting imperialist and hegemonic domination and exploitation. Thus the principle of self determination should be interpreted in its true spirit and applied not just to nations or nationalities but also in appropriate fashion to national minorities and other socio-ethnic groups that may individually be not in a position to become independent nation states.

At the other end is chauvinism of a dominant majority seeking to suppress all minority national and ethnic identities by negation of contiguous territory, forced assimilation of sections of the population and denial of cultural, linguistic and religious rights. Such oppression divides the people and thereby strengthens the local exploiting classes and their imperialist masters.

Imperialism thrives on internal contradictions in the neo-colonies. If the policies of a rival power (like Russia or China) or a neocolonial country are to the slightest displeasure of imperialism, internal conflict is encouraged to bring pressure upon the regime to make it yield, failing which steps are taken to destabilise the regime, as in Syria, Libya and Iraq. Tibetan and Uygur separatism are used to bully China and Islamic fundamentalists are used to create chaos in Russia.

Ethnicity, Language and Nationality

Many countries have regions comprising several indigenous ethnic groups who preserve their distinct identities amid shared economic interests and interaction between the groups, which under conditions

of rapid capitalist development would have led to the merging or elimination of some identities. Commerce and urbanisation which have blurred ethno-linguistic geographical boundaries have also enabled coexistence of the ethnic groups and multi-lingualism.

Multi-lingualism of a community does not mean that each member is fluent in several languages, but that large sections of it use different languages for different social purposes. Even now, many Italians and American Blacks use “standard language” for formal activities and dealings with ‘outsiders’ but revert to dialect— mostly unintelligible to other communities —within their community. While modernisation and migration weaken the significance of dialects, linguistic identities have endured the thrust of capitalist development.

Whereas in European countries capitalism allowed a local language or dialect to become the common language, in the colonies, often the language of the colonial rulers became the common language. The language of the colonial power owed its pre-eminence during the colonial and early post-colonial periods to its foremost position in the affairs of the state, economic and political activities of the local elite, higher education, modern professions, and the print media. After neocolonialism replaced colonialism, English consolidated its position in former British colonies. Imperialist globalisation enabled its US version to edge out other European languages and gain importance in parts of the Third World without direct or indirect colonial control.

The elite of many Third World countries are cosy with English as the dominant language in business activities as well as inter-state and intra-state affairs. Thus, despite strong nationalist sentiments expressed by South and Southeast Asian elite, the de facto ‘common language’ for the affairs of the state is not a national language.

The importance of language in the struggle against neocolonialism does not comprise xenophobic rejection of any foreign language but concerns the assertion of the voice of the oppressed masses. But the way the language question was posed in multi-ethnic societies of the

Third World led to rivalry among powerful native languages for hegemony amid submission to the dominance of English or another language of neocolonialism.

Thus, addressing the national question in the Third World demands reviewing or redefining national identity in terms of the objective reality of countries and regions subject to oppression by an alliance of neocolonialism and feudal-capitalist elitism.

There is a tendency to define a nation as comprising a single 'race' or an ethnic group and proceeding from there either for a majority community to suppress other identities or a minority to demand the right to secession by defining itself as a 'nation'. The logical end of this narrow approach would be, on the one hand, the suppression of ethnic minority identities and on the other the fragmentation of Third World countries into many nation states. Neither is in the interest of the oppressed masses.

In contexts lacking capitalist development, it is beneficial to recognise as nations or nationalities a group of people who live in a contiguous territory and have common interests, a sense of community despite ethnic differences, and a shared need to protect themselves against globalised capital and 'great nation' oppression. Language is not divisive where ethnic groups coexist and share a group of languages, and that commonality can define a nation or a nationality in place of a single common or dominant language.

Multi-ethnic societies are a greater reality today, owing to migration of labour and displacement of people by war, national oppression, natural disaster and economic crises among other reasons. What is important in the context of imperialist domination is to encourage multi-ethnic societies to preserve their identities as multi-ethnic nations or countries. There is, however, the need to ward off attempts to divide them based on ethnic identity and deny the right to identity of any ethnic group in the name of national unity

4. Politics of Identity

Evolution of Identity Politics

The term 'identity politics' came into being in the 1970s after Black Liberation movements like the Black Panther Party of the US combined Black Liberation with Marxist class analysis and working class awareness. Intellectual sources of progressive identity politics include the feminist studies of Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) and decolonisation studies by Frantz Fanon (1925-1961). It is now not confined to race, gender or ethnicity, and since the 1990's is also an intellectually fashionable substitute for, if not challenge to, class struggle and left politics.

Contrary to claims that identity politics is a mode of organising intimately connected to the idea that some social groups are oppressed, not all socio-cultural groups and interests pursuing identity politics concern oppressed sections. Some, like white racist groups and high caste elite, are on the side of imperialism and bourgeois oppression.

Much of the literature on identity politics in the West concerns gender, colour, sexuality, and cultural identity. Elsewhere, it is about indigenous rights, nationalist calls for autonomy or secession, and issues of caste and religious identity. Unlike the Black identity politics in the US in the 1960's with strong radical and left tendencies, middle class feminism and Dalitism deteriorated fast to take anti-left positions and form alliances with oppressive caste and class forces.

By distancing itself from the left, Dalitism weakened itself and hurt unity among the oppressed castes. The way caste politics evolved in India ensured that Dalitist electoral politics eventually served the interests of the ruling elite, unlike the anti-castism campaign in Sri Lanka's north led by Marxist Leninists in the 1960's which culminated in a prolonged struggle against caste discrimination and oppression by an alliance of progressive forces, including members of the 'upper castes'.

Feminism, postmodernism and identity politics have gone separate ways in the West. But proponents of South Asian identity politics still draw on

postmodernist ideas to reject class and class struggle and isolate identities, by emphasising the particular over the general. Ironically, identity politics, in course of seeking commonness or uniformity within a group to buttress its cause ended up wrecking the cause of common identity. For example, Dalit politics in India, not only failed to unite the depressed castes as a social force but also divided the oppressed castes on caste lines or even narrower bases, for opportunist political reasons. Thus identity politics is a loose alliance of distinct social groups subject to oppression and denial or suppression of identity.

Identity Politics and Attitude towards the Left

Acceptance or rejection of identity politics the issue facing the Marxist left or other progressives. What matters is to recognise how any identity issue fits into the broader picture of class struggle and how it manifests itself as anti-imperialist, anti-hegemonic liberation struggle. It is also important to examine how one form of identity politics relates to other forms.

In the colonial era, Marxist Leninists castigated as reactionary the nationalism of oppressor but endorsed as progressive nationalist projects opposed to imperialism. With neocolonialism as the mode of imperialist domination of Third World countries, the ruling national bourgeoisie readily compromise with imperialism and oppress minority nationalities and national minorities. This has led to new ethno-political identities and strange alliances, where imperialism sides with a minority to encourage secession or with the majority to brutally suppress a liberation struggle. The Marxist Leninist stand therefore has to be appropriately formulated.

Identity politics will exist as long identity-based oppression exists. Struggle against such oppression will invariably assume the identity of the oppressed. That in itself is not reactionary. The progressive content of a struggle is very much determined by how it relates to other just struggles. The just struggle of a group reinforces itself by allying with just struggles of other groups suffering similar or different forms of oppression by a common oppressor or group of oppressors.

A major weakness of identity politics has been that that it often restricts itself to a single issue or closely related issues, chosen to maximise unity within a group. As a corollary there is aversion to addressing broader issues and isolation from other just struggles. Consequent failure to benefit from other struggles against oppression leads to frustration and exploitation by reactionary forces.

Identity political activists in the Indian sub-continent have at times flirted with other causes, but hostility to Marxism and the left persisted. This could have been due to the leaders wishing to preserve their 'patch' from 'intruders' even at the risk of losing the cause. Notably, identity politics is reluctant to highlight the fact that imperialism sustains social oppression, despite occasional anti-imperialist posturing lacking in substance. Thus identity politics attracts NGO sponsorship through community based projects which are carefully isolated from mainstream political issues.

Some advocates of identity politics cynically identify trade unionism with Marxism to present the latter as identity politics exclusively for the working class to the exclusion of other identities. Nothing is further from the truth. The historical stand of Marxists on gender oppression, liberation from colonial oppression, and oppression based on race and caste is well known. Marxists are now at the forefront of defending the rights of indigenous minorities in every sphere of activity.

Marxist Leninists and Identity Politics

A Marxist Leninist cannot be indifferent to any form of social oppression. However, while opposing social oppression on any basis, one should view each issue in the context of class and class struggle, neocolonialism and imperialist globalisation. It should be noted that the national question in the neocolonial context is more complex than that in the colonial context.

That identity politics has thus far mostly served to hurt the universal goal of human liberation is no argument to reject the causes that underlie identity politics. Identity is important in a world divided by identity and where there is identity-based oppression there will be identity-based

struggles. The question is whether such struggles, however just, could succeed in isolation from other just struggles.

Of all political theories opposing oppression of humans by humans, only Marxism Leninism draws a distinction between hostile and friendly contradictions and seeks to resolve amicably conflict of interests among the oppressed. Thus Marxist Leninists, while supporting an identity-based just struggle, also act as a catalyst that unifies a wide range of oppressed groups against an oppressive system upheld by imperialism.

Politics of national liberation has the potential, however limited, to work with other identities for a common cause. While nationalists cannot address the liberation of humanity as a whole, they can fight against social injustice within their community. Marxist Leninists can treat such nationalists as natural allies, at least in the short and medium term.

Narrow nationalists who ignore other just causes in the name of unity of the nationality, tend to align tactically or strategically with imperialism and eventually become pawns of imperialism and reaction.

Marxist Leninists thus need to isolate the just causes that underlie identity politics from the agenda of identity politics and devise ways to address identity issues that will prevent the oppressed from falling prey to imperialist schemes.

5. Fascism under Neocolonialism

The Party undertook an extensive study of fascism in the neocolonial context, and the findings were reported in an article titled “Understanding Fascism in Context” (MLND 58). The main findings are summarised here in the context of fascism as an outgrowth of nationalism, its impact on the national question, and as a challenge to the anti-imperialist cause.

Fascism in Context

Fascism, a 20th Century phenomenon, has been defined variously based on one’s ideological outlook. Features of pre Second World War (WW2)

fascism dominate most definitions and a common failure is the omission of its mutability and adaptation to the neocolonial environment.

Fascism has, however, been researched extensively, and despite difficulty in arriving at a universal definition, its salient features are well identified, with emphasis varying with ideological outlook. It should be noted that several features of fascism, taken individually, apply to many non-fascist states and political organisations, while truly fascist outfits lack in some.

Fascism came into being during the First World War (WW1) amid European capitalist crisis to dominate much of Europe until end of WW2. Georgi Dimitrov in 'The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Struggle of the Working Class against Fascism' (Main Report delivered at 7th World Congress of the Communist International; https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/dimitrov/works/1935/08_02.htm) describes fascism accurately as "an open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, the most chauvinistic, the most imperialistic elements of the financial capital".

Dimitrov also noted that "the development of fascism, and the fascist dictatorship itself, assume different forms in different countries, according to historical, social and economic conditions and to the national peculiarities, and the international position of the given country" and explained that the accession to power of fascism is a substitution of one state form of bourgeois class domination by another, namely bourgeois democracy by explicitly terrorist dictatorship.

The large body of writings by Marxist and other progressive analysts on the re-emergence of fascism in Europe and the Americas have overlooked the place of fascism in the neocolonial context. Based on writings of Dimitrov (**Against Fascism and War**, New York: International Publishers, 1986) and Palme-Dutt (R Palme Dutt, **Fascism and Social Revolution**, New York: International Publishers, 1934), the Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM) in 2002 characterised fascism as "the open terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic, and most imperialist elements of finance capital and an extreme measure taken by

the bourgeoisie to forestall proletarian revolution” (accessible on <http://www.prisoncensorship.info/archive/etext/wim/cong/fascismdef.html>)

While the above sums up the essence of fascism as it was in the first half of the 20th Century, fascism in the colonies and neo-colonies was not in the same class as that in industrialised Europe. The imperialist dimension referred to therein is, however, most relevant to the neocolonial context.

Post-Colonial Fascism in Europe and the Americas

Fascism was defeated in war, but not eradicated. Several of the neo-Nazi organisations which sprouted in Europe since WW2 are still alive. While aversion for fascism ensured that European fascism and its derivatives did not, on their own, muster sufficient electoral support to secure state power as in post-WW1 Europe, neo-fascists have since the 1980’s grown strong enough to be partners in government in several West European countries. Fascists also re-emerged in Russia and some European member states of the former Soviet Union, notably Ukraine, where they joined government in 2014 with help from the US.

Post-WW2 fascism (also referred to as neo-fascism) retains key features of pre-WW2 fascism including the reactionary, racist, chauvinist and anti-left essence. As the European left movement weakened amid the degeneration of the parliamentary left, European fascism donned ultra-nationalism and racism to play on prejudice and, where possible, resort to populist politics. European racism finds expression most in anti-immigrant policies based on, but not entirely on, colour.

While several small neo-Nazi groups exist in the US, the main source of fascism is the state, which is fully under the control of monopoly capital. It implements a fascist agenda within and outside the US in the name of democracy, freedom and defending the American way of life. The rise of the potentially fascist Christian fundamentalism in the US is no accident; and Barry Goldwater, the unsuccessful presidential candidate of 1964, and President Donald Trump are not racist freaks but spokespersons for the reactionary white supremacist ideology pervading society.

Fascism in Latin America, unlike its European counterpart, was not home grown. Fascist dictatorships were imposed on Latin America by the US in the 1960's and 70's. Thus Latin American fascism is unlike European fascism, where fascists use populist politics. There are, however, instances, as in Chile in 1974, where manufactured dissent served as pretext to impose a US-backed fascist regime that lasted until 1990. Despite political defeat, fascism has its footprints in Chilean politics. The people of Latin America have suffered brutal US-backed fascistic regimes so that popular resistance to right wing regimes is strong. However, the pattern of US-induced regime-changes in Latin America persists and the US has not given up its endeavour to replace any regime with a semblance of social justice or anti-imperialism with an oppressive right-wing dictatorship.

Fascism in Asia and Africa

In pre-WW2 Asia, only Japan had a fascist regime imposed on the people by a militarist takeover approved by the monarchy. Several anti-colonial movements, resentful of colonial domination, were attracted to fascism in the run up to and during WW2. Fascination with European fascism faded out with the emergence of a strong socialist bloc.

The most important post-WW2 fascist event in Asia was the US-backed military coup which installed General Suharto in power in Indonesia in 1965. Suharto invoked religion to incite anti-communist violence by the Muslim majority. The army, aided by anti-communist militias and guided by US intelligence, killed between 500,000 and 1,000,000 communists and sympathisers. His fascist regime annexed West Papua in 1969 and East Timor in 1976, with the blessings of the US, and pursued cruel repression in East Timor (1975-99) and Aceh (1976-2005). Even after liberation in 1999, East Timor was punished through Indonesian state-sponsored violence. Suharto's fall has yet to fully free Indonesia of its fascist legacy of 32 years.

Another serious fascistic development was in the Philippines following the re-establishment of the Communist Party of Philippines (CPP) in 1968. President Marcos declared martial law in 1972, and in 1973 extended his

rule beyond the constitutional limit using Communist threat and Moro nationalist insurgency as pretext. Public anger dislodged him in 1986 despite US support for his fascist dictatorship.

The only neo-fascist forces in Africa with European fascist features were in South Africa where Nazism had an early audience but not much impact. There was however the Afrikaner Volksfront, a white-supremacist coalition formed in 1993 to prevent, unsuccessfully, the transfer of power to the native majority by disrupting elections scheduled for 1994. White racism survives in South Africa, but is less explicit, since Black leaders of the ruling ANC have assured that imperialist domination and privileges of the White capitalists will remain as long as they are in power.

Modern Fascism in Asia

Modern fascism in Asia developed along two routes: transformation of ethno-religious chauvinism into neo-fascism; religious fundamentalism induced or encouraged by imperialism. Modern religious intolerance in South and South East Asia can be traced to anti-colonial ethno-religious nationalism, resentful of colonial rule as well as religious minorities.

In Sri Lanka, Sinhala Buddhism first targeted Catholics, then Muslims, Hill Country Tamils and Tamils in that order. Muslims are increasingly targeted since the last decade of the 20th Century. Myanmar (formerly Burma) has a long record of national oppression of minority nationalities and armed struggles in response. Its record of anti-Indian violence from the time of WW1 ended with the military regime expelling Indians en masse in 1964. Burmese Chinese were victims of state-sponsored violence and injustice from 1967 through the 1970's. Buddhist fundamentalist pogroms targeting Rohingya Muslims in the western state of Rakhine is a phenomenon that followed political transition in 2011. Militant Buddhism in Myanmar and in Sri Lanka, despite differences in detail, has much in common. The main fascist movements, Ma Ba Tha in Myanmar and the JHU in Sri Lanka are religious fundamentalist entities playing on the

sensitivity of Buddhists. However, unlike the JHU, which suffered several splits, Ma Ba Tha, for now, dominates Buddhist extremism in Myanmar.

Ultra-nationalistic, anti-socialist Hindu fundamentalism in India had its origins in sections of the Indian national movement which identified India closely with Hinduism. Hindu identity, initially asserted as response to colonial rule and Christian domination, later emphasised Hindu-Muslim rivalry. Right-wing Hindu nationalists were quick to adopt the concept of a Hindu India. This combined with communal friction aggravated by colonial rule enabled the emergence of potentially fascist outfits of Hindu extremism viewing Muslims as the main enemy.

‘Sangh Parivar’ refers to a group of Hindu nationalist organisations dominated by the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS), the oldest and strongest Hindutva (Hinduness) organisation, founded in 1925, which also had direct links with European fascists. (For a fuller account, see “Soldiers of the Swastika” by AG Noorani in Frontline, 23 January 2015.) Ideologically Hindutva has much in common with European fascism and, despite diversity of opinion on a range of issues and in the style of work ranging from social work through active politics to outright thuggery, the Sangh Parivar concurs on the idea of a Hindu Indian state and the concept of Hindutva. More importantly, the RSS, despite claims to being apolitical, exercises control over the ruling Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP) as it did over its predecessor the Bharatiya Jan Sangh.

Among prominent faces of Hindu fascist violence are the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), notorious for tearing down the Babri Masjid in December 1992, the Bajrang Dal, the militant youth arm of the VHP, a key player in anti-Christian and anti-Muslim attacks across India, including the Gujarat pogrom of 2002 in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi was implicated as Chief Minister of Gujarat, and the Shiv Sena, the Marathi sectarian front founded in 1966 which joined the Hindutva bandwagon in the 1970’s. Of late the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) the student arm of the RSS has been notorious for Hindutva fascist activities in the universities.

Anti-Muslim violence by Hindutva organisations and the State, especially in Kashmir have provoked Islamist acts of terror and attacks on public places. But there is no Islamic fundamentalist organisation targeting other religious communities in India. Thus there is distinction between home-grown Muslim militancy in South Asia, including terrorism with or without Pakistani state backing, an outcome of unresolved Indo-Pakistan issues, Kashmir especially, and the Islamist fundamentalist and terrorist outfits which emerged in the 1980's under President Zia ul Haq. Nurtured by the US to topple the pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan, they proliferated but went out of control of the Pakistani state.

Political Islam

Modern political Islam started in the 1970's in response to economic stagnation in several Muslim countries, and had an anti-imperialist (and anti-Marxist) content. Later, the US adopted Islamist fundamentalism and terrorism as part of its plan for global domination, with the help of reactionary Arab states, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, mainly.

Externally induced Islamist militant outfits like al-Qaida and the Saudi-backed Wahabi and salafi groups act to destabilise secular Arab states and African countries with large Muslim populations. But they fall short of being fascist, as they are neither nationalistic nor represent capitalist interests in the country where they operate. But they have fascist potential.

Imperialist dominated media use the term "Islamofascism" to discredit Arab mass political parties like the Hamas, Muslim Brotherhood, and Hizbullah by placing them on par with terrorist groups like al-Qaida to justify institutionalised harassment of European Muslim immigrants.

The newest arrival, Islamic State (IS), differs in objectives from other Islamist organisations despite a shared pedigree with the most pernicious of Wahabi, salafi practices concerned with juridical and theological issues of Sunni Islam. The IS indulges in fascist political, social, and militaristic practices besides state building based on corporatist, capitalist structures, with the 'state' and its war machine generating revenue through the oil

infrastructure, extorted taxes and tariffs. It enforces its corporatism by a security apparatus and 'Islamic' to administer a severe penal system to coerce obedience. (<http://mondoweiss.net/2015/11/isis-fascist-movement/>).

What matters is the direction that an Islamist militant organisation would take when in power. Islamist regimes have been severely repressive with streaks of fascist repression. The danger in dubbing all repression as fascist is that one loses sight of real fascism. It should be remembered that Christian fundamentalism has greater fascist potential and global reach than Islamist fundamentalism since the former is an imperialist ally while the latter is a tool which occasionally goes out of control.

Dealing with Fascism

The global left— revolutionary as well as parliamentary —debates if Turkey is a fascist state. Eric Draitser's comment in *New Eastern Review* (<http://journal-neo.org/2015/09/21/has-turkey-become-a-fascist-state/>) seems close to reality: "...a close analysis of Turkey in the 'Age of Erdogan' does reveal a country that has given over to violence as a political tool, repression and censorship as standard government practice, and sponsorship of terrorism as foreign policy. If it hasn't already earned its fascist moniker, it may well be on its way". The recent constitutional reform of April 2017 has made it clear that President Erdogan is constitutionally pushing Turkey towards a fully-fledged fascist state.

There are many states and political organisations with fascist features, but insufficient to identify them as fascist, based on characteristics of European fascism between WW1 and WW2. Also, the methods used by modern fascism to seize power differ from the populist methods of pre-WW2 fascism. Post-WW2 European fascism has implanted its clones within bourgeois democratic parties so that the centre-right and at times "centre-left" parties of Europe, willingly accept key aspects of the fascist agenda, on immigrants, the working class and the left.

Since WW2, fascism found fertile ground in parts of the Third World, where nationalism, once a progressive anti-colonial force, degenerated

into chauvinism and narrow nationalism, even making religion part of national identity. When survival demands repression, such identity-based politics, bereft of anti-imperialism, seeks imperialist patronage and acquires fascist characteristics or turns fascist. When imperialism turns a blind eye to such events, the anti-imperialist struggle inevitably become an anti-fascist struggle as well.

Some tend to identify militant ultranationalists and fundamentalists as neo-fascist while exempting their electoral political counterparts. In reality the Arakan National Party of Myanmar is as fascist as that of the Ma Ba Tha or the 969 Movement; and the JHU in Sri Lanka as fascist as the BBS or the Sinhala Ravaya; and the BJP as fascist as the RSS or the Bajrang Dhal.

Populist fascism is dangerous and needs to be dealt with firmly by the left and democratic forces. Unlike pre-WW2 fascism, fascism today implements its fascist agenda not only as a party in power but also as a partner in coalition government and as a forceful pressure group, both within and outside parliament. The left has to be proactive to prevent fascism of any kind from hijacking the anger of the alienated working class and other disillusioned sections of the people.

Political counteraction cannot await identification of an organisation as fascist. Identification is important, but action is needed not only against identified fascist, neo-fascist or proto-fascist outfits but also against fascist tendencies such as ultra-nationalism, anti-left rhetoric and pro-imperialist attitudes. One needs to act before fascist violence strikes.

Being neo-colonial subjects, Third World fascists need backing from imperialism for prolonged survival, and therefore become clients of imperialism. Imperialism, on the other hand, is desperate to sustain the global swerve to the Right. Thus global capitalism and bourgeois democracy are conciliatory towards ultra-nationalism, anti-immigration and anti-Muslim racism. Thereby, anti-fascism in the Third World becomes inseparable from anti-imperialism. Third World anti-fascists should, in the context of mass struggles for social justice, be alert to active as well as passive imperialist support for fascist tendencies.

6. Extending the Right to Self Determination

The New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party has since its founding in 1978 studied the national question in depth and concluded that the right to self-determination offers the most fair and sustainable solution to the national question within the framework of a united Sri Lanka. The NDMLP, based on experiences of the USSR, China and Nicaragua among others, explored the national question in far broader terms to cover national minorities and to bringing them within the scope of Self Determination. “On Self Determination” (New Democracy 1) and its revised version “Self Determination Revisited” (MLND 55) present the analysis in fuller detail.

The national question was analysed in the post-colonial context as discussed earlier based on the Leninist position outlined in “The Right of Nations to Self-Determination, (first published April-June 1914, Collected Works 20, Progress Publishers, 1972, Moscow, pp. 393-454; <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1914/self-det/>).

The Spirit of Self Determination

The study by the NDMLP, while accepting Stalin’s definition of nation as fundamentally correct, noted the inadequacy of confining solutions to the national question based on the right to self determination to entities recognised as nations. It noted that this approach led to subjective definitions of a nation, on the one hand, to assert self determination with a view to secession and, on the other, to deny national identity to a people and thereby reject not just the right to secede but even autonomy.

Why and how a group of people declare distinct identity and even nationhood and why calls for secession arise were closely examined in the context of Sri Lanka where the national question— once seen as a Sinhala-Tamil question —over a few decades became one concerning a Sinhala majority and three predominantly Tamil-speaking minority nationalities. The study took note of a tendency for both oppressor and oppressed to insist that self determination means secession, so as to achieve their shared objective, namely escalation of conflict; and reasserted that the right to self

determination is a powerful device that enables the voluntary union of nations (or nationalities) and not a whimsical license to secession.

Difficulty in defining contiguous regions comprising predominantly one nationality was noted in the context of Sri Lanka as well as countries with fragmented populations, and nomadic people. Thus the right to self determination was reviewed from a perspective of its underlying spirit, namely, the right of a community which has the essential, but not necessarily all, qualifying features of a nation to decide its socio-political mode of existence alongside other communities. The study also noted contexts where secession is inadequate to preserve the socio-political mode of existence of a community (be it a nation/nationality or a national minority), so that the choice of a nation to secede is a special instance where co-existence is for some reason impossible.

It noted that oppression of a nation by another in the colonial context involved an imperial power oppressing a colony or semi-colony. Although strong countries like India, Indonesia, Morocco and the US have annexed weaker countries and France and Britain have not freed all occupied territories, the study stressed that post-colonial national oppression mainly concerns oppression of a nation (or nationality) by another within the same state, both being victims of neocolonial subjugation. Thus ethnic minorities tend to be treated as lesser social groups by the main nationality. This could be a result of viewing the rights of a people to identity from the point of the right to nationhood.

Today's national question is complex and involves more than the co-existence of nations. The principle underlying the right of a people to decide their mode of existence as a distinct entity cannot apply only to ethnic groups that are identified as nations but denied to others.

The term nationality allows putting on par with a nation any community with most of the defining characteristics of a nation but unable to secede for geo-political or other reasons. Using the term nationality in place of nation within the framework of a state de-emphasises secession— often seen as the sole option for nations which find it hard to coexist. It puts on

equal footing nomadic communities which exist as large groups whose territory changes seasonally and communities with well-defined territory.

Republics of the USSR had autonomous regions. Russia itself had 22 autonomous republics and many more autonomous units. Not all national minorities had their own autonomous unit, but there was recognition for all minorities and their rights. Socialist China was a unitary state which recognised even tiny minorities as national minorities and besides its five major autonomous regions it had around 150 sub-units with varying degrees of autonomy and provisions to protect the rights of each national minority. Another good example of devolution is Nicaragua (area 130,375 km²) with 15 Departments and two autonomous regions in which seven indigenous groups (population range: 2,000 to 150,000) enjoy autonomy [“Nicaragua’s Constitution of 1987 with Amendments through 2014” https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Nicaragua_2014.pdf?lang=en]. Such autonomy now exists in several South American countries, following the ascent of left leaning governments.

While ethnicity and ethnic rights are widely discussed, they are also part of the imperialist agenda of ‘Identity Politics’ often promoted through NGOs. Caste politics was promoted in India to the point of placing caste on par with nation, while class and class struggle seemed inimical to identity group interests. The principled Marxist Leninist stand, in contrast, respects identity, opposes identity-based oppression, and urges solidarity among oppressed communities in combating oppression.

While some want ethnic groups to be allowed, if not actively encouraged, to preserve their identity as a distinct social group for as long as they wish, there are others who hold that such preservation is harmful to national unity and urge integration of minority groups into the mainstream or assimilation by a local majority. Marxist Leninists should understand why a group of people asserts its identity, respect its right to its identity, and let the community concerned decide its future.

Hazards of Limiting Self Determination to Nations

Limiting self determination to groups said to constitute a nation hurts the interests of other ethnic groups, some with population exceeding many nation states. The rights of Native American races and tribes who are now refugees on their own soil continue to erode in North America as in some of the troubled democracies of South America. The aboriginal peoples of Australia lack recognition as national minorities. Colonial carving up of Africa created awkward national questions in the continent and adversely affected the way of life of nomadic people who knew no national boundaries. Gypsies and other Travelling People and Jews have been at the receiving end of European nationalism for centuries. The problems of the tribal people of India, highlighted particularly since the Naxalbari uprising in 1967, haunt Indian politics in more than one way.

The oppressed groups listed above cannot constitute nations in the classic sense. Can it deny them self determination? If self determination is read as the right to secession, they cannot exercise that right, which will be a perversion of the spirit of self determination. The right to secession is the highest level at which a nation (or nationality) exercises its right to its chosen mode of existence. Where that option is unavailable, it should have a feasible alternative, subject to the constraints that rule out secession.

Recognition of languages has been a long-standing problem and what distinguishes a language from a dialect is still disputed. For example, in India, Chhattisgarhi— with many dialects of diverse sources —was once declared a dialect of Hindi. It earned language status after a prolonged campaign that led to the formation of the state of Chhattisgarh. The state of Jharkhand was formed based on the desire of indigenous people to assert their identity, but it did not lead to recognition of the languages. The hidden agenda seems to be to let such languages fade away. Indigenous people, despite recognition as Scheduled Tribes, do not make a nation of Scheduled Tribes in the conventional sense anywhere in India as they comprise several groups with different languages and cultural traditions, and lack a common socio-political heritage. The viability of a tribal

homeland is an issue distinct from reasons for the demand, which cannot be wished away. As secession is not an option, the case is strong for the highest degree of autonomy for each community. There is, however, need to consider tribal rivalries which, like those among nationalities, are susceptible to manipulation by the state, the capitalist classes and imperialism. The risk of a tribe seeking hegemony over numerically or economically weaker tribes within an autonomous tribal region is strong under capitalism. There are lessons to learn from the positive experiences of Bolivia, Ecuador and Mexico on the handling of such contradictions.

Some ultra-leftists desire the disintegration of the Union of India and prescribe secession, even of nationalities that do not desire it. Then there are Indian nationalists, unfortunately including several Marxists, oblivious to the reality that India is a multi-national, multi-ethnic state that is unable to meet the aspirations of its minority nations or nationalities, tribes and other ethnic minorities in the face of surging Hindi-Hindu chauvinism and capitalist greed. India is the world's most complex mix of nationalities and ethnic minorities. Carving up the sub-continent into a multitude of nation states is not a good solution. But, however desirable the stability and unity of India may be, it will be unattainable unless the national question is addressed based on the equality of national, tribal and other ethnic communities as well as allowing secession by free choice where there is a historical claim to separate existence.

Nationalism as Oppressor and Liberator

We need to return to the dual nature of nationalism as a liberator and oppressor. Even nationalities struggling for self determination resolutely deny the right of autonomy to minorities within their territory. This was true of Sinhala nationalism from early 20th Century and Tamil nationalism from its embryonic stages.

Discussion of the Sri Lankan national question, at home and abroad, has been confined to the Sinhala and Tamil nationalities, with occasional reference to the Muslims and Hill Country Tamils. The leaders of the four

nationalities take no notice of the aboriginal people of the Island, the Attho (also known as the Vedda, meaning hunters) with their own language, customs and culture, who have lost most of their territory to agricultural development and colonisation. Besides, the gypsy community and the “Rodi” have been traditional outcasts in the Sinhala south. Rights of the Burgher and Malay minorities are rarely spoken of. No minority nationality has the right to subject a smaller minority to hegemony or demand surrender of identity to a larger group. The NDMLP was the first political party to recognise the Muslims and Hill Country Tamils as distinct nationalities and demand national rights of all national minorities.

Tribal populations of India have little say in matters affecting their life and livelihood and are not beneficiaries of projects undertaken at the expense of their traditional grazing, farming and hunting lands. To some they are development projects and to some others a process modernising the tribal people. Most liberals and sections of the left see “economic development” as an end in itself with little consideration for social consequences. Thus they play into the hands of imperialism by letting imperialism define development, which invariably occurs at the expense of the natural and human resources of several oppressed minorities. Environmental activists and several feminist groups in India, correctly, oppose such development. The ‘Naxalite’ movement of the late ‘60s and early ‘70s stood by the tribal people in their struggles against capitalist greed. But, little has been won so far in relation to the right of tribal populations to choose the path and pace of their transition to modernism, when they desire it. Thus the Third World needs to redefine development and democracy in context and in the interest of all sections of the masses.

The tribal population of India is losing control over its traditional lands partly as a consequence of development as advocated by the elite of India and partly as a result of global capitalist greed. Imperialist globalisation has accelerated the dispossession of tribal and aboriginal people in India and elsewhere. Development projects and extensive mining threaten livelihood as well as the right to homes. Election of the BJP to power in

2014 in India has aggravated the crisis of the tribal people, and attacks on tribal people are likely to intensify on pretext of fighting “Maoist terror”.

The plight of the tribal population in most Asian and Latin American countries is like that of their Indian counterparts. Political change in Latin America in the past two decades or so has made native populations aware of their rights and politically assertive. Such awareness, unless guided by progressive ideology, is easily abused by imperialism to subvert the gains of mass struggle. In other words, empowerment of a nationality or an ethnic group must be accompanied by anti-imperialist political awareness.

Imperialism and Self Determination

Issues of human and democratic rights matter to imperialism only to bully states that challenge its aim of global dominance. Thus the oppressed can depend only on themselves for their emancipation and it is important that issues of class, race, national liberation, women’s struggle for equality, and environment are interlinked and the widest possible unity forged among victims of imperialist exploitation and plunder. Achieving that unity needs amending of the principle of self determination in a way applicable to ethnic groups that are not recognised as nations. This idea needs further consideration in view of the ploy of “internal self determination” adopted by the UN (Equality of Ethnic Identity Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, General Recommendation 21, The right to self-determination (48th Session, 1996), U.N. Doc. A/51/18, annex VIII at 125 (1996), reprinted in Compilation of General Comments and General Recommendations Adopted by Human Rights Treaty Bodies, U.N. Doc. HRI\GEN\1\Rev.6 at 209 (2003) Para 4). “Internal self determination” allows member states to deny the right to secession of people with a claim to nationhood from a member country. Imperialism has, however, facilitated secession in several instances by encouraging secessionists and militarily intervening in the name of defending human rights, now under the “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P), which too has UN acceptance. Thus imperialism plays self determination both ways, letting some states

practice national oppression unhindered while enabling secession to punish or humiliate 'hostile' states.

Bourgeois advocates of centralised state power and large and powerful states resent devolution. Their notions of global economic integration are flawed. Mankind will not be united by negating the identity of any people. The struggle of the oppressed people of the Third World is inseparable from the demand for devolution and self determination which is part of the struggle for global democracy. The practicality and feasibility of the extension of the principle of self determination are challenged mainly by advocates of global integration as imagined by imperialism.

A Positive Approach

Self determination cannot be in isolation from the international context. A study of inconsistencies in the US policy on the national question and its inducing ethnic and other forms of conflict in 'unfriendly' countries will show that the US and its allies cynically manipulate the national sentiment to imperialist advantage. As it is hard to separate the national question from the struggle against imperialism, the left should take the initiative to defend the rights of oppressed minorities to deny imperialism a foothold in any country on the pretext of defending them.

The case for unity and close collaboration between the peoples of the Third World is strong. Such unity is not possible amid national oppression. Thus the expansion of the scope of self determination to cover ethnic minorities will reinforce democracy, enable devolution of power and strengthen the struggle of the Third World for political and economic freedom from imperialist exploitation and domination.

7. Concluding Remarks

The national question became prominent in the context of capitalism developing into imperialism and imperialist domination and oppression of weaker nations. The need to define the nation arose in the context of the right of nations to statehood, and the right of nations to self determination

as proposed by Lenin with the aim to enable nations to coexist as a voluntary union under socialism. The definition offered by Stalin precisely defines the nation in that context and for other general purposes.

The emergence of independent states from colonial rule had no consistent pattern so that the ethnic composition of countries was determined at the whim of colonial powers, with people who would constitute a single nation split as different countries or scattered between several countries as minorities, and with people of diverse identity lumped together as one country. Arbitrarily drawn national boundaries restricted the freedom of mobility of large nomadic populations. Socialist countries provided for communities that would strictly not constitute a nation by offering them autonomous or semi-autonomous status.

The post-colonial context altered the national question in two important ways. Firstly, it led to the emergence of states with a complex of ethnic groups, some qualifying as 'nations' and others not. Secondly, the replacement of colonialism by neocolonialism meant that colonial oppression of a country, yielded to less explicit overall control by neocolonial powers, with contradictions between nations, strictly nationalities, which are themselves neocolonial victims coming to the fore.

Post-colonial inter-state conflicts are rare and, mostly, involve border disputes and unresolved issues from the colonial past. Tendency is strong for a powerful socio-ethnic group, often a majority nationality, to oppress minority nationalities and other 'national minorities'. Also a variety of identity issues, besides gender and race, that often concern tribe, caste, region and religious sect have received prominence.

Imperialism and reactionary forces of Third World countries use contradictions among people, especially the chauvinism of a majority and the narrow nationalism of a minority, to keep the oppressed masses divided so that they can continue to dominate and exploit them.

Since the resolution of the national question is the key to economic development and social justice, it is the central task of the Left in achieving

working class unity and frustrating the conspiracies of imperialism and reaction. Thus the Left and other progressive forces should act with resolve to unite the oppressed masses by resolving the national question.

Summary of Party Recommendations

The NDMLP having taken into consideration the predatory imperialist interest in the national question and identity issues in the Third World arrived at the following conclusions on the resolution of the national question in the neocolonial era:

- The national question in any Third World country is best analysed and resolved in terms of nationality.
- The right to self determination should be applicable to all nationalities to assure to each nationality the maximum feasible autonomy, including the right to secession where necessary.
- The rights of national minorities should be assured based on the underlying principle of self determination, namely the right of a group of people to choose its mode of existence

The NDMLP also notes the desirability of the notion of multi-ethnic nationalities which may share several languages and diverse socio-cultural identities.

The NDMLP urges Marxist Leninists pay attention to issues of identity as essentially friendly contradictions among the people and thus isolate the just causes that underlie identity politics from isolationist agendas of identity politics and address identity issues in ways that protect the oppressed from falling prey to reactionary and imperialist schemes.

The NDMLP identifies post-colonial fascism as distinct from pre-WW2 fascism in important ways. Fascism in Europe and North America manifests mainly as xenophobic racism. Third World fascism, on the other hand, is a client and/ally of imperialism and targets minorities in the name of ethnicity and religion. Thus the struggle against fascism should be

integrated with the struggle for social justice, the resolution of the national question and anti-imperialism.

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GLOBAL TURMOIL

International tutelage and adherence in a time of crisis

Ahilan Kadirgamar

A decade ago, Kethesh Loganathan, one of my mentors and comrades, wrote a column in this newspaper, until he was silenced by an LTTE assassin. Kethesh's writings under his pen name Sathya strove to be committed to the truth, and such honesty is rare today. Intellectual honesty inevitably requires swimming against the current. In this fortnightly column, I will draw on the left tradition and political economic analysis that influenced Kethesh and many like him who have shaped my thinking.

Writing in this tradition necessarily engages the lives of ordinary people, and involves listening to rural protests and urban resistance. It is critical of the powerful, the wealthy, the rulers and the state. It opposes forms of oppression whether it is gender, caste, ethnicity or class. But the powerful classes and regimes that direct state power are part of a system that is both national and global. This global system, stitched together under the dominance of imperial powers, has historically gone through periods of chaos and anarchy as with the two world wars.

At a time when the international order is again unravelling, whom do we turn to address the challenges facing our economy and society more broadly? What are the avenues for reconstruction and economic development in such a time of crisis? How do we engage a constitutional political solution and the legacy of war-times destruction and abuses? Is

there room to consider the concerns of people on the margins and write on the ways of the world from the periphery?

International Terrain

With the welcome democratic overthrow of the authoritarian Rajapaksa regime, the Sirisena–Wickremesinghe Government sought the path to reclaim a respected place in the international arena. That process, they claimed, involved strengthening relations with the West, a renewed commitment to international law and embracing the United Nations and its many institutions. This liberal standing in the world, the Government hoped, would bring in Western investment and open markets for its exports.

However, these international political and economic structures themselves seem to be falling apart.

The global economy has not recovered from the Great Recession of 2008. Brexit signalled last year the tremendous backlash against neoliberal globalisation and the rising tide of anti-immigrant and racist forces in Europe. With the election of Trump, the American mask has come off, and its naked exploitative interests are bound to undermine international treaties and laws, which for better or worse, maintained a certain global order and stability. Furthermore, even the emerging power China is in a deep economic crisis, as its debt driven construction boom has reached its limits.

It is hard to hide the lunatic character of the leadership at the helm of the US and UK. If we were worried about Rajapaksa, the Western leaders are fast surpassing him in their populism and racism. Nevertheless, the facade continues with liberal respectability when officials from these very countries preach about international obligations and the virtues of the global economy.

If the political leadership in the West is too much to stomach, there is always the bureaucracy of the international organisations whether it be the

UN, the IMF or the World Bank. The buck does not stop there, when these international agencies lose their legitimacy with repeated political and economic crises – as with the war in Iraq and the anarchic fallout in the Middle East or the global economic crisis of 2008 – there are the metropolitan academic centres for coaching, whether it be Harvard or Oxford. So, for countries like Sri Lanka, it is not a question of what advice is sort or given, rather how and through what institutions, the same imperial policies are pushed and received gratefully by our elite.

Economic Advice

The most far reaching international disciplining of Sri Lanka in recent years is the IMF Extended Fund Facility Agreement in June 2016. However, even as the IMF demanded liberalisation of capital markets to allow for the free flow of capital into Sri Lanka, that very month, three senior researchers of the IMF wrote an article titled ‘Neoliberalism: Oversold?’ about the risks of such policies.

They argued that the chances of financial crises and inequality increased with such capital inflows. The IMF researchers were forced to question such policies after the IMF’s failed interventions in Europe, particularly in Greece.

But in practice, the IMF works with double standards, one for the West and another for the Global South. Furthermore, such financial flows are also encouraged by the Asian Development Bank, which provided a massive US\$ 250 million loan to expand capital markets in Sri Lanka last year, and a week ago the Cabinet decided to top it up with a US\$ 75 million loan from the World Bank.

Since January 2016, there is yet another advisor: Harvard’s Center for International Development (CID), invited by the Government and funded by the global financier George Soros. Professor Ricardo Hausmann and his CID team’s management has focused on diversifying Sri Lanka’s exports, but have had little to say about the falling demand for exports; nothing about the rise of protectionist regimes in the West nor about the global

economic downturn. Not surprising since most mainstream economists had little to say about the global economy and its crisis conditions before the Great Recession of 2008. As Sri Lanka stumbles along on the knife edge of an economic crisis, the advice we receive pushes us towards a deeper crisis.

Critique and Struggles

So, when it comes to the economy, the Government runs to the IMF, ADB and World Bank, and now to Harvard, even if these very actors have aggravated rather than solved problems around the world.

The meaningful possibilities of rebuilding our still rural economy is rejected with the fantasy of becoming a financial centre like Singapore. When it comes to refashioning our constitution or addressing the abuses with the war, we are fed models of Western constitutions or told to seek the support of the international human rights groups and transitional justice think tanks. Meanwhile we disregard the long deliberations on constitutional reform as with the “devolution debate” here and the work of movements for democratic rights such as the Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE), a membership organisation that emerged in the late 1970s with the support of trade unions and local associations.

On the other end of the political pendulum, the Joint Opposition is equally bankrupt. They repeat their calls to protect sovereignty, forgetting it was under the Rajapaksa regime that the country started selling sovereign bonds! Many of the problematic economic projects today, from the Port City to increasing privatisation of health with SAIM were initiated by them.

And the previous President, despite claiming to be the son of the soil, was tripping over himself attempting to get an audience at Oxford, which repeatedly came to naught. Hypocrisy aside, neither nativist xenophobia nor the entrenchment of the statist worldview are the answers to the problems. If we leave it to the lunatic fringe of nationalists in both the South and North, who seem to be the happiest of friends for their own

survival, we will only end up deeper in the pit of polarised stagnation that has been the tragic history of our country.

With Sri Lanka at the crossroads in a time of global turmoil, it is high time we eschewed our colonial mind-set of looking for solutions in the West. Rather, we must learn from struggles in other countries like ours, against their neoliberal states enriching their elites and critiques of similar forms of Western tutelage. More importantly, we must listen carefully to the protests of our people for land and housing, for sustainable agriculture and fisheries, for free healthcare and education, and for permanent work and decent working conditions.

These notes I hope can begin to sketch the alternatives that ordinary people themselves are seeking through their courageous resistance. And that necessarily entails a critique of the international order, the state and the rising nationalist forces.

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(This article was earlier published in the Ceylon Daily Mirror, 3rd March 2017)

Free Maruti Suzuki Workers

Marxist Leninist New Democracy and the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party have been firm supporters of the struggle of the Maruti Suzuki workers from 2012, and reaffirm the support by reproducing a comment in Marxist Leninist New Democracy 46. That is followed by a summary of events that led to the unjust life sentence on the 13 Maruti Suzuki workers and a statement by the People's Alliance for Democracy and Secularism (PADS) demanding justice for the convicted workers of Maruti Suzuki as an expression of identity with the ongoing international to free the Maruti Suzuki workers.

Maruti-Suzuki Workers' Struggle

The harsh anti-worker anti-trade union approach of the management of Maruti Suzuki India Ltd precipitated industrial violence following an incident of casteist abuse at the Maruti-Suzuki's Manesar plant, leading to the unfortunate death of a senior manager on 18th July, 2012. The management, instead of resolving the problem, launched a vicious witch hunt with the support of the Haryana state government. The prolonging of the crisis by Maruti Suzuki has only helped to highlight the unlawful anti-worker practices of the company.

(See <http://www.countercurrents.org/cgcp120812.htm> for a comment by the Communist Ghadar Party).

The response of workers in other plants has been one of total solidarity with the dismissed workers. The actions of the management has also alerted progressive sections of the society, and protests are building across the country, including the joint protest demonstration demanding immediate reinstatement of the 546 expelled workers, an end to the witch hunt, demilitarisation of the workplace, end to custodial violence against workers, security of employment of contract workers and implementation

of labour laws. Hundreds participated in that protest organised by more than thirty workers' and students' organisations at the Maruti Suzuki headquarters during the visit by Osamu Suzuki, Chairman and CEO of Maruti-Suzuki Corporation. (See <http://sanhati.com/articles/5472/> for the text of the press release). An earlier Workers and Students demonstration was held on 9th August in Delhi.

The response of the capitalist media, while reflecting anticipated attitudes, is informative about the surge in workers' protests across India, The Financial Express on 30th July noted that "Industrial disputes leading to strikes and lockouts are on the rise, after registering a decline in 2011.... and officials expect the labour unrest trend to worsen in the coming months....

"The latest data points out why the private sector is more worried about labour troubles. Though there have been more strikes in public sector firms in the first five months of this year, all lockouts have exclusively happened in private companies. Labour ministry officials expect the year as a whole could see a rise in such disputes compared to 2011".

The Wall Street Journal on 27th July noted that "Since 2009, industrial action has stalled output at Honda Motor, Hyundai Motor and several auto parts makers.... There has been significant, lengthy and costly industrial action in the past two years" and warned that although India's long-term growth story, especially rising incomes, is a big draw for foreign investors there are plenty of reasons to be concerned about investing in India such as the woeful performance of the rupee, a slew of recent corporate scandals, and the stalling of policy reforms to encourage more investment in retail and insurance".

(MLND July-September 2012)

Maruti-Suzuki Struggle: A Brief History

Maruti Suzuki India Ltd has two production plants in the state of Haryana: one in Gurgaon and the other in Manesar, and a long record of labour-management conflict. After crushing a strike by the workers in

1999- 2000, the management set up its pocket union Maruti Udyog Kamgar Union (MUKU) in Gurgaon. Working conditions and negative attitude of the management were key sources of workers' resentment. Management Interference with the registration of the Maruti Suzuki Employees Union (MSWU) at the Manesar Plant triggered a wildcat strike from 4th to 17th June 2011 involving around 2000 young workers despite the Haryana state government declaring the strike illegal on 10th June. The management climbed down and engaged in talks with union representatives and reinstated the eleven trade union leaders terminated during the strike. The management followed up with creation of obstacles to production, blaming them on the workers and declaring a lockout. Despite the strong impact of a spontaneous two-day factory occupation on 14th and 15th September in support of the MSWU in three other factories of the Suzuki group, the management took a hard line. The union relented to let the workers sign good conduct bonds and resume work. The management, seeking to deliver a definitive blow to the struggle, refused entry to contract labourers along with the returning permanent workers.

On 8th November, permanent workers occupied the factory demanding the return to work of contractual workers. On 15th November, the company got a High Court ruling forcing the workers to vacate company premises. For want of support from major trade unions and pressure of the state-backed management, workers' representatives yielded. The workers resumed work, and the entire union body and 30 other workers resigned their jobs with compensation.

Despite the setback, the workers united to form their union and the management retreated, and the union was registered at the end of February. But the management remained spiteful. When the union took a strong stand on issues of safety and welfare and the company abiding by labour laws, the management was out to send out the message to the workers that their trade union ineffective. The incident of July 18th was a spontaneous revolt against this climate.

Events of 18th July 2012

A quarrel between a floor supervisor and Jiya Lal, a worker in the Manesar plant, led to the suspension of Jiya Lal, accused of assault by the management; but worker witnesses to the incident accused the supervisor of hurling casteist slur at Jiya Lal. Talks between the union and the company's human resources team failed. Violence followed, which the workers insist was instigated by private security personnel in the premises. A fire broke out gutting down a section of the factory and killing the General Manager (HR), Awanish Kumar Dey and injuring 90 others.

The police rounded up the factory workers and arrested and charged 148 workers for the incidents and imprisoned them in the Gurgaon jail. The company briefly locked the factory and reopened it on 21st August 2012. The management dismissed 546 permanent and 1800 contract workers without enquiry. Following this, a Provisional Working Committee of the union was constituted to carry forward and lead the struggle to provide legal aid to the jailed and fight for the reinstatement of the dismissed workers. The workers maintained the leadership of their struggle to bring to light the daily reality of deep exploitation and injustice in the company amid the false campaign against them.

The Media

Soon after the violence, the media, based on the company's version of events, portrayed the workers in unfavourable light and denounced them for the violence and called the event a black mark on India's economic image. Narendra Modi, then CM of Gujarat, used the opportunity to make a deal with Maruti Suzuki to set up a new factory in Gujarat.

However, in-depth analysis soon followed, raising issues of wage disparity, work pressure and managerial models. An article in Tehelka reported the stories of some of the workers who were rounded up. The Peoples Union for Democratic Rights published a report implying police torture of arrested workers and calling for independent judicial enquiry.

The Legal Struggle

A number of issues were raised on evidence to the investigation including alphabetical listing of names by witnesses, identical witness testimonies and other such anomalies. Though bail is the norm, the Sessions Court and Haryana High Court refused bail for the workers. Extraneous factors had been at work in the rejection of bail, as evident from the statement of the Haryana High Court which claimed that the incident had adverse implications for foreign investment in India for fear of labour unrest.

Eventually, the Supreme Court granted bail to two workers in February 2015, followed by further granting of bail in lower courts. The manner of prosecution and the snail's pace of the trail led the International Commission for Labour Rights, to criticise the Labour Department for failing in its duty to serve as an impartial and effective administrative and adjudicatory body in labour matters and call for the immediate release and reinstatement of the workers, and an impartial judicial inquiry. It took two more years for the Sessions Court in Gurgaon to deliver its unjust verdict. The press release by PADS below summarises how the legal system has worked against justice for the workers.

People's Alliance for Democracy and Secularism Press Release

19th March 2017

The Sessions Court in Gurgaon on 18 March 2017 sentenced 13 workers of Maruti Suzuki to life imprisonment for murder. Twelve of these are the erstwhile leaders of the Maruti Suzuki Workers' Union. Eighteen others were sentenced from three to five years for rioting and causing grievous injury. Cases against these workers were filed in July 2012 after violence in company's Manesar plant during which one official unfortunately lost his life. On company's complaint police arrested 148 workers and charged them with conspiracy and killing the company official.

The court ruling after a four-and-a-half year trial is based on flimsy evidence. The prosecution failed to establish even circumstantial evidence

to show that any of those convicted caused the violence that took place, leave alone the death. The ruling also goes against the forensic evidence and post-mortem report that was placed before the court. Critically, officers of the company, who were produced before the court as prosecution witnesses denied they were present at the time of the incident. Some of them even admitted that they were acting under Maruti-Suzuki management direction.

117 of the arrested workers have been acquitted of all charges, though there was a common charge against all 148 workers. The acquittal of 80% of the accused workers shows that mass terrorisation of workers was one of the main motives of police action in this case, and that courts were wrong in denying them bail. These workers were forced to spend 31 months in prison for no fault of their own. Their fundamental right to life and liberty was attacked, yet no one is going to be punished for it.

The Maruti verdict is the latest in a series involving violence at plants of Pricol (Coimbatore), Graziano (Surajpur) and Regency Ceramics (Yanam) in which workers working for their unions have ended up being charged with murder. While all governments show little interest in attending to violations of existing labour regulations by employers, retribution against workers has been severe and swift. It is an indication of the class nature of justice in the country that courts have convicted workers on trumped up charges and have gone out of their way to deny them justice. In May 2013 the Punjab and Haryana High Court had denied bail to Maruti workers with the argument that if bail is given foreign investors are not likely to invest in India out of fear of labour unrest, as if citizens' right to justice were subservient to foreign investors' confidence. This is a clear example of the degradation of criminal justice system and its failure to stick to first principles of justice. It should be a matter of grave concern for every Indian that while the leaders of some of the most heinous pogroms in independent India have not been even touched by criminal justice system, workers of Maruti Suzuki have been sentenced to life imprisonment on flimsy evidence. Another development is the use of private armed guards

by employers for threatening workers. According to workers of Honda scooter plant in Alwar, Rajasthan, their strike last year was broken by the management with the help of armed thugs, who had assaulted them inside the plant, and also in the city in full public view. Maruti Suzuki workers have also alleged that on the day of violence large number of hired bouncers were roaming inside the plant and threatening workers.

Working class movement is a great bulwark of democracy in any society. People without property were able to get voting rights and other democratic rights only after sustained campaigns by working class organisations. Working class politics tries to build solidarity among working people across regional, linguistic, religious and caste divisions. On the other hand, the right wing politics is a politics of hatred which divides people. In India, Sangh Parivar has been spreading hatred against minorities for decades, and indulging in violence against them. Working class struggle to get all workers together and form independent trade unions that can challenge capitalist depredations is a direct challenge to Hindutva game plan.

Maruti Suzuki workers have braved through sinister schemes of management, government, and police, and are standing firm in their commitment. All the workers sentenced to life imprisonment by the court were below thirty when arrested by the police. Their commitment for working people's rights needs to be contrasted with the violence of activists of Sangh Parivar against minorities, Dalits, and students and teachers of universities with full support of Modi government. It should be clear to everyone that the future of these workers is the future of democracy in India. And now that these young men have been sentenced to life, it is the democracy in India that stands on trial.

PADS condemns the collusion of management, police and prosecution in the Maruti Suzuki case. It condemns the arrest of people who had gathered in front of Haryana Bhavan in Delhi on 16th March to express their outrage against the court verdict. It also condemns Haryana government for imposing Section 144 in the Gurgaon Manesar industrial

belt and trying to prevent workers from protesting against this mockery of justice. It calls upon the higher judiciary to urgently give justice to wrongfully convicted workers. We salute the valiant struggle of Maruti Suzuki Workers' Union. We appeal to all democratic central TUs to come forward unitedly to urgently resist this blatantly pro-management decision which attacks the legitimate rights of the working people under the guise of criminal convictions. We salute the workers of the Gurgaon-Manesar belt who in their thousands have been taking solidarity actions against the court verdict, and have vowed to intensify their struggle in coming days.

Battini Rao, Convenor PADS (battini.rao@gmail.com)

Solidarity with the Penalised Workers

Maruti workers at the Manesar plant continued with financial, emotional and moral support to the imprisoned workers. Maruti Workers observed 1st March every year in commemoration of the formation of the union and to affirm support for the imprisoned workers. This year, the response was strong as the verdict was due shortly. At a massive meeting held near the plant, thousands of workers including delegates from 20 unions joined to demand the immediate release of the workers.

Police violence intended to rein in labour unrest failed as issues persuaded more and more workers to protest and form unions to defend their rights. The surge in workers' struggles in the Gurgaon-Manesar region show increasing class polarisation.

While police brutality and anti-democratic tactics to curb democratic protest have risen, the resolve of workers to unite in struggle too has risen in proportion. Demands for the release of the Maruti Suzuki are gathering strength across India, while the unjust verdict has led to mounting international criticism of Maruti Suzuki, the Indian judicial system and the Modi Government of India, and demands for the release of the 13 workers.

May Day 2017

Press Release

29th April 2017

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

Throttled by problems of livelihood under the Maithri—Ranil regime, the entire working people including workers, peasants, fishers and women are undergoing untold suffering. It was said that a change of government and change in persons occupying positions will resolve all problems. But little good has come out of the 'Good Governance' regime. No firm steps have been taken to provide solutions for the economic crisis of the country and the national question. What go on instead are dithering and shamming plastered over by empty talk. Muslim and Hill Country Tamil parties are holding positions as partners of the regime only to fool the people. At the same time, the TNA is supporting and propping up the regime in the name of politics of accord. Meanwhile the Mahinda Rajapaksa faction has taken hold of chauvinism in its bid to return to power.

Clearly, both government and opposition act merely to gain power, parliamentary positions, vote banks and positions, and benefits thus accruing, and are not ready to solve the economic, political and social problems of the people. On the national question especially, the chauvinist stand of the ruling classes is reiterated as in the past instead of offering a solution. In short, the Maithri—Ranil regime is implementing a hidden dictatorship under democratic cover in place of Mahinda Rajapaksa's open dictatorship. In all matters decisions are taken to accord with the Army.

Under the conditions it is necessary for the workers, peasants and other toiling masses to unite among themselves and carry out mass struggles based on a common programme. The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist

Party is putting forward this thought as its rallying call for the May Day. The Party joins hands with the workers of the world to celebrate May Day in the centenary year of the Great October Revolution.

The imperialist agenda implemented through liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation has been instrumental for the economic crisis face by the entire people of the country and for the war that resulted from the national question. The continuation of this agenda over the past thirty eight years provides the background for concealing all the inflicted cruelty. Exploitation of labour and plunder of resources are continuing according to that agenda. US imperialism and its allies are waging wars to pursue those interests. The US has been pursuing its war in Syria following its wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. The fascist racist President Donald Trump now takes decisions with total disregard for the people of the US and the world. US imperialism through its preparations for war on North Korea is exposing its true self. Hence it is mandatory that we should oppose the comprador capitalist chauvinist regime of our country and US imperialism and the Indian regional hegemon which are acting to keep the regime within their embrace. Hence on this May Day, the day of struggle of the working class of the world, the Party calls upon the people to mobilise along the revolutionary path of the Great October Revolution to oppose all oppression and win people's power.

SK Senthivel
General Secretary, NDMLP

Garbage Mountain Disaster

Press Release

15th April 2017

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued on behalf of Central Committee of the Party the following statement of tribute to the dead and expression of condolences to the families of the victims on the Kolonnawa Meethotamulla disaster which struck them during New Year felicitations.

The statement held the government responsible for the death of over twenty people and rendering destitute of around 600 people belonging to nearly 100 families by the collapse of the garbage mountain in Kolonnawa Meethotamulla. The statement added:

The people of Meethotamulla have from time to time brought to notice their sufferings caused by the garbage mountain. Since there was no solution on offer they took to the streets in protest in 2012. But the government responded with military force. They conducted a massive demonstration in 2014, and the response was again by the Army and the Police. The government turned a deaf ear to the most reasonable pleas of the people. The present Good Governance regime which used pro-government ruffians to quell the struggle of the people of Meethotamulla, was wishing a prosperous Sinhala and Tamil New Year in 2017. While the rulers were busy showering good wishes, the garbage mountain collapsed on 14th April to kill many and destroy property. Would the disaster have occurred had the government used its might in time to put an end to the garbage mountain?

The Party urges the government to rid itself of the habit of talking about the people for a week or two and each returning to his business and act to compensate the affected and find a lasting solution to the problems of the people. It also calls upon the government to act on people's problems without waiting until people kill themselves to explain their problems.

SK Senthivel
General Secretary, NDMLP

Mass Protests 2017

Press Release

1st April 2017

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

People are launching mass struggles at various levels in many parts of the country, including the North, East and the Hill Country. They have resorted to such struggles because the government led by Maithri and Ranil has not offered solutions to their problems more than two years since coming to power. The demands put forward in those campaigns are entirely just. Hence the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party not only supports them but also participates in them. The Party also urges that the demands made by the people, workers and students should be addressed and due solutions found.

When the Maithri—Ranil government was formed two years ago declaring itself the “Good Governance” regime, all sections of the people were hopeful that their problems will be solved. But, while the people have been deceived, the current regime is showing its real face. It is being demonstrated that this regime is a continuation of the past four decades of pro-imperialist comprador capitalists. Even in the matter of the national question, the government has not taken any effort with concern to offer a political solution.

None of the present rulers are new to government. They comprise the ruling class forces that have relished state power. Policies of liberalisation and privatisation implemented thus far under the neoliberal globalised economy continue. Exports fall owing to the crippling of the national economy. Meantime, liberalised import has led to an upsurge in consumer economy. By this, foreign and multinational companies, big businesses and local comprador capitalists make massive profits. Meanwhile, severe government taxation and offloading of the burden of local and foreign government debt on the people has led to a rise in cost of living and a fall in standard of living. The prices of essential foods including rice, coconut and sugar remain high. Those affected most by these are the workers, peasants and other toiling masses. Such people have been pushed to the state where they have no choice but to take to the streets.

People of Vavuniya, Kilinochchi, Maruthangkeni, Mullaitheevu, Trincomalee and Batticaloa are on hunger strike campaigns on rotation

basis demanding answers on what happened to those who went missing during the war in the North—East and after, the release of political prisoners from detention and the annulling the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Likewise the people of Kepapilavu are conducting chain protest campaigns opposite the army camp. In Kilinochchi landless people are conducting a continuous protest campaign demanding the return of 57 acres of land that they once occupied in the Pannangkandi village. At the same time graduates in the districts of Batticaloa, Amparai and Jaffna who have been unemployed for five to six years since graduation are conducting day and night campaigns demanding due employment. The Good Governance regime within six months of coming to power granted permission for setting up an alcohol distillery in the Kalkudah electorate of the Batticaloa District and construction is in progress. People are demanding that the project is halted. Media personnel who went to gather news on the developments have been attacked. People object to the leaders of the Good Governance regime who preach prohibition showing the green flag to the alcohol distilling plant.

There are mass struggles in the Hill Country launched by plantation workers demanding land, housing and wage increase. Over the past few days, Workers of the Hairpark Estate in Hunnasgiriya, Kandy are on a day and night campaign opposing the handing over of the land of their plantation to private developers. The Hill Country plantation workers are putting forward their just demand of two acres of land to cultivate and twenty perches of land for residence.

All university students are continuously struggling demanding the closure of the private medical college of SAIMT and privatisation which undermines free medical education and free medical service. Already, human resources employees of Sri Lanka Telecom have been on a three months' long day and night chain struggle.

Under these conditions, the Party endorses all the struggles of the people and cooperates to enable the securing of their demands. The party also

strongly denounces the government for ignoring the demands of the people and preserving disingenuous silence on the issues.

SK Senthivel
General Secretary, NDMLP

Northern Province Teachers' Struggle

Press Release

14th February 2017

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued the following statement supporting the ongoing struggle of the teachers of the Northern Province on behalf of the Party Politburo.

We see those who come to position by bowing and scraping before the public during elections and high officials enjoying big salaries and perks of office at the cost of taxes paid by the public, once in seats of power, acting with ego and arrogance of power. They also indulge in abuse of power and corruption, thus compelling people to put forward demands and launch struggles at various levels. In Kepapilavu–Puthukudiyiruppu there is struggle targeting the government on to recover land. Meanwhile opposite the Ministry of Education of the Northern Provincial Council on Chemmani Road, Nallur teachers and conducting a continuous awareness campaign protesting injustices to them. Their demands and the struggle are entirely just, and the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party offers them its fullest support and cooperation. Besides, the Party appeals to other teachers, parents and students to support this struggle to lift the suspension of three teachers by the Ministry of Education of the Northern Provincial Council and urging the transfer of teachers from schools where they have completed their period of conditional service and help the affected teachers to receive justice.

Teachers have pointed out at various levels that those who have completed the conditional service period in other districts have not been transferred for months since completion of service. The Ministry of Education has taken no notice of it, and that is why teachers resorted to their awareness campaign opposite the Ministry. Unable to bear it, the

Ministry has made false charges against three teachers who were at the forefront and vindictively suspended them. The suspension order has not been withdrawn so far and no inquiry has been conducted. As a result the teachers have not been paid their wages. In objection to this injustice, teachers belonging to the Ceylon Teachers association have mobilised in continued struggle opposite the Ministry of Education of the Northern Provincial Council. Their demands and continuous struggle are fully justified. It is important that all socially concerned people do their part for the success of the struggle.

SK Senthivel
General Secretary, NDMLP

October Revolution Centenary Seminars

The Party organized a series of twelve monthly seminars to mark the Great October Revolution Centenary (1917-2017) to inform the community of the impact of the October Revolution on world history and encourage Marxist study of society and social phenomena in the light of the October Revolution to gain fresh theoretical insights and enhance revolutionary practice. The first five well-attended seminars were held at the Kavignar Murugaiyan Auditorium, Deshiya Kalai Ilakkiyap Peravai, Kokkuvil, Jaffna:

12.1.2017: The historical importance of the October Revolution and its impact on Sri Lanka

(The seminar discussed the Marxist basis of the revolution, the role of the Bolshevik Party, class struggle, Marxism Leninism and Marxist Trotskyism and their implications for Sri Lanka.)

12.2.2017: October Revolution and the Liberation of the Working Class

(The seminar addressed Class struggle, the role of the Red Army in the revolution.)

12.3.2017: October Revolution and the Liberation of Nationalities

(The seminar discussed the place of the right to Self Determination and the Marxist Leninist approach to the national question.)

10.4.2017: *October Revolution and the Socialist Structure*

(The seminar discussed the New Economic Policy, planned economy, and health, education and culture under socialism.)

10.5.2017: *October Revolution and Liberation from Castism*

(The seminar discussed the basis of caste ideology, relationship between caste and class, and caste and Tamil nationalism.)

The following seminars are scheduled to be held in the coming months at the same venue.

8.6.2017: *October Revolution and Imperialist Intrigue*

(Conflict between imperialism and the socialist movement since the October Revolution will be discussed in historical perspective.)

8.7.2017: *October Revolution and Women's Liberation*

(The seminar will concern the Marxist view on women and organization of women.)

7.8.2017: *October Revolution and the Second World War*

(The emergence of fascism and Nazism in the context of WW2 and the role of the international working class movement will be analysed.)

5.9.2017: *October Revolution and the Environment*

(The contrast between capitalist and socialist approaches to production will be discussed in the context of the environment.)

5.10.2017: *October Revolution and Revolution for a New Culture*

(The lessons of the October revolution for replacing the morbid conservative culture with a progressive culture will be discussed.)

3.11.2017: *October Revolution and National Liberation Movements of Asia, Africa and Latin America*

(The implications of the October Revolution for national liberation movements and its impact on liberation process will be discussed.)

3.12.2017: *The Success October Revolution and Setbacks*

(The achievements of the October Revolution, setbacks suffered by socialism in the final decades of the 20th Century and the way forward will be discussed.)

NDMLP May Day Processions and Rallies

The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party organized three May Day Rallies each of which attracted enthusiastic and highly motivated crowds. A notable feature of the May Day slogans is that they included a declaration of solidarity with the 13 unjustly sentenced Maruti Suzuki workers of India and demanded their immediate release.

Jaffna

The NDMLP May Day procession commenced at Kokuvil Junction and proceeded to Veerasingam Hall the venue of the May Day Rally organized by the Northern Regional Committee of the Party. The Rally was chaired by Comrade Selvam Kadirgamanathan and addressed by Comrades SK Senthivel, K Thanikasalam, S Thevarajah, K Panchalingam, P Murugesu, T Sri Prakash, E Thavarajah, N Pradeepan and S Thanujan

Vavunia

The NDMLP May Day procession started opposite the Vavuniya Tamil Madhya Mahavidyalayam and concluded at the Urban Council Cultural Hall, the venue of the May Day Rally organized by the Party and friendly trade unions. Comrade N Pradeepan chaired the Rally addressed by Comrades SK Senthivel, SJ Rohan Rajkumar, S Thevarajah, K Mahendran, P Chandrapadman, S Nanthamohan and S Don Bosco.

Matale

The NDMLP May Day procession started at Raththota bus station and proceeded to the auditorium of the Matale Municipal Council, the venue of the May Day Rally organized by Hill Country Regional Committee of the Party. Comrade V Mahendran chaired the Rally which was addressed by Comrades S Panneerselvam, David Suren, S Mohanraj, M Mayuran and Mohana Dharshini.

Hunnasgiriya Plantation Workers' Struggle

Press Release

1st April 2017

Comrade David Suren, Hill Country Regional Coordinator of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued the statement below in support of the ongoing struggle of Kandy Hunnasgiriya plantation workers against mismanagement of the estate.

Plantation workers at the Hunnasgiriya Estate of the State Plantation Corporation are struggling against laying waste of an estate on which they have toiled for 150 years. Workers who learned that the estate is being ruined by maladministration and corruption of the state company stepped to the street to fight the forces of destruction that have reduced them to workers offered between 5 and 8 days of work per month, earning less than Rs 2000 per month. The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party expresses its fullest support to the just struggle of the workers of the eight divisions of the estate opposing the hasty sale of the Hunnasgiriya Estate to the private sector, after not depositing the EPF and ETF for over ten years.

The workers of Hunnasgiriya have put forward a clear demand to the government and the plantation management. They oppose the sale of plantations to the private sector and demand 25 days of work per month to assure their livelihood. If that is not possible, they want the plantations to be distributed to the workers to establish their livelihood rather than hand over the plantations to foreign and local capitalists. The workers accuse the so-called new leadership of the plantation workers acting to wreck their struggle. While Minister Mano Ganesan says that the Premier told him that the plantations will be distributed among the workers, the Premier has not said a word on the matter to the media. It is deplorable that the Red Flag Union representing the workers in the matter was kept out by the State Plantation Corporation. It is encouraging that the people are persisting in struggle and it is important for democratic, progressive and left bodies to unite to strengthen the mass struggle of the workers.

David Suren
Hill Country Coordinator, NDMLP

Support for the Struggle for the Disappeared

The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party expressed its fullest support to the campaign organized by the Movement for Equal Rights opposite the Colombo Fort Railway station on 20.3.2017 to urge the immediate release of political prisoners, answering questions concerning the disappeared persons and the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which are among issues important to the Tamil people. Comrade SK Senthivel and supporters of the NDMLP personally expressed solidarity with the campaigners and were joined by the Mass Movement for Social Justice.

Supporting the Struggle for Return of Land

Press Release

26th February 2017

Comrade S Mohanraj, Secretary, Hill Country Mass Organization for Social Justice, issued the following statement supporting the struggle of the people of Kepapilavu Pilavukkudiyiruppu in and Puthukkudiyiruppu for the return of their land.

Seven and a half years after the end of the war, why should the Army still remain on a land which a people lived on and developed? The ongoing struggle of the people of Kepapilavu and Puthukkudiyiruppu shows that the government which came to power by talking of goodwill and coexistence is only a continuation of its predecessor.

Last Sunday, we as delegates of Hill Country Mass Organization for Social Justice ((HMOS) visited the sites of the campaign to express our support. The struggle of the people is very just. Disappointed after a long wait for good to happen, the people have on their own chosen to struggle for change. HMOS expresses its full support for the struggle.

The government has declared that the problem cannot be solved overnight. But the government can certainly release overnight the 52 acres of land in Pilavukkudiyiruppu belonging to the people. There is nothing

besides the Air Force, a razor-wire fence and a building. In such a situation, what is the point in holding on to land belonging to the people?

Likewise, what is the justification for the Army occupying, since 2009, 19 acres of land in Ward 7 of Puthukkudiyiruppu on which 50 families lived? What is the difficulty in returning the lands of the people of Ward 7 who have now stayed with relatives for more than 5 years?

HMOS asserts that victory is assured if the people take the lead in their struggles and pledges support for their struggle.

S Mohanraj
Secretary, HMOS

Struggle for Return of Land

Press Release

8th February 2017

Comrade S Don Bosco, Vavuniya District Secretary of the Mass Movement for Social Justice issued the following statement expressing support for the ongoing struggle since a week ago by the people of Kepapilavu Pilavukkudiyiruppu demanding the return of their land.

Although it is over seven years since the end of the war than land of the citizens have not been returned. People have launched campaigns in different regions of the country for the return of their lands. Two years since it came to power pledging to return the lands, release political prisoners, revoke terrorism legislation, answer questions on those who went missing, solve the national question, the 'Good Governance' regime has continued to neglect the demands of the people; and is reluctant to fulfil its promises.

To refuse to return their land, instead of elevating the livelihood of war affected people and promoting their goodwill, is an act against promotion of goodwill. We urge the government to accept the demand of these people and hand over the lands to them.

We also wish to point out that the silence of the TNA, which obtained the votes of these people to enter parliament, is not a healthy approach to the future of the Tamil people. Hence we have decided to launch an awareness campaign at 9.30 a.m. on Friday 10.2.2017 opposite the Vavuniya Bus Station, and appeal to all political parties, public organisations, progressive forces trade unions and members of the public who are supportive of the struggle.

K Don Bosco
Vavuniya District Secretary, MOSJ

[The awareness campaign in support of the people of Kepapilavu Pilavukkudiyiruppu took place under the leader of S Don Bosco, Vavuniya District Secretary of the MMSJ. N Pradeepan Vanni Regional Secretary of the NDMLP, members of the Party, Chandrapadman, Chairman of MMSJ, members of the Auto Union, members of the Organization for Missing Persons, and writer Melakumaran joined the public and the affected people to express opposition and condemnation.]

Support for the Shut-down Campaign in the North-East

Relatives of persons who were arrested by had surrendered to the Armed Forces of the Government are conducting campaigns in many parts of the North-East seeking to know the plight of the persons who have gone missing. Vavuniya District Secretary of the Mass Movement for Social Justice (MMSJ), urged the Good Governance regime to provide due answers for their queries.

The campaign is going on through Kilinochchi, Vavuniya, Maruthangeni, Trincomalee and Mullaitheevu. But the government, instead of responding to the issues raised is procrastinating. Representatives of the government who meet the demonstrators from time to time say that if particulars of the disappeared are provided they can hand it over to the parties concerned and secure a solution. But nothing seems to be done. It

is now eight years since the end of the war and two years since the Good Governance regime assumed power. It appears that the government has not even compiled the data on the disappeared. Is it the thought of the government that it can avoid answering by procrastinating until the relatives are dead and gone? These are not people who went missing in a crowd or a carnival. They were in state custody. Are they dead? If so, the cause of their death must be stated. If they are alive, we demand that their whereabouts and when they will be released should be declared immediately.

The organizations leading the campaigns should not view the problem as one concerning the disappeared alone and— bearing in mind that it is an anti-people activity committed against society, outside legal limits —and dare to bring together the struggles and transform them into a mass struggle uniting the broad masses. Besides, the Mass Movement for Social Justice expects that the struggle is not abused by individuals or local or foreign organisations for their self-interest.

The MMSJ also expresses its fullest endorsement of the full closedown campaign in support of the people's campaigns demanding the release of political prisoners and for a solution for the question of missing persons.

MMSJ Seminar: Should Free Education and Free Health Service in Sri Lanka be Protected?

HMOS organised a seminar in the Sangarappillai Auditorium of the Colombo Tamil Sangam on 11.2.2017 with a view to continue discussion on the need for Free Education and Free Health Service in Sri Lanka.

Ms Niyanthini Kadirgamar (Collective for Economic Democratisation), Fazil Yakubin (University of Colombo), Najith Indika (Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo) and TGz MeeNilankco (Visiting Lecturer University of Colombo) addressed the seminar chaired by Dr S Sivasegaram. The talks were followed by a lively discussion.

(Continued from inside front page)

Our fingers fail to touch
an anguished young mother
Looking for a child
Jews, Christian, Muslims wail
The lost humanity to no avail
the generals must have their joy
to test their newest toy
in Gaza white phosphorous back in use yesterday
impunity from war crimes thanks to the US of A
billionaires must make more dollars
zealots must sacrifice children at altars
Gabriel can stay a knife but not drones
And hate can murder a thousand Julianos
While the apathetic multitude watch TV
Obliviously focused on their shopping spree
Bypassing love and responsibility
Chasing gadgets, hate, and vanity
Next news bulletin.... get the experience
Next anniversary...awaken the conscience??

Today (9 April) is the anniversary of the massacre at Deir Yassin. On 9 April 1948, my mother's friend in school (both studying to be school teachers in Jerusalem) chose to go back to her village of Deir Yassin. That was the last time my mother saw her young friend Hayah Balbisi and this victim of Zionism remains etched in memory of my 84 year old mother. Deir Yassin was not the first, last, or the largest massacre committed by Zionist forces during that era of ethnic cleansing. But it was prophetic and emblematic for us because its deliberate effect was magnified to scare the villagers (even some survivors were paraded in the streets of Jerusalem and loudspeakers

told of more impending massacres). Dar Al-Tifl Al Arabi orphanage was created to house the surviving orphaned children. Dozens of massacres were committed just in the six weeks leading up to Israel's creation and dozens after. Over 500 villages and towns were depopulated in the bizarre 20th century attempt to transform a multi-cultural/multi-religious Palestine to become the "Jewish state of Israel". And the price tag is still being paid in areas like Iraq, Yemen, Syria, and Egypt.

Today also saw terrorists bombing Christian Churches on Palm Sunday over 120 were killed or severely injured. Our condolences to the victims and our thoughts and prayers with the injured. I look back at seven years ago on a Palm Sunday when we breached the wall of apartheid (at least for a short while before we got arrested). Please see this video

https://youtu.be/wsX3P_ADk34.

Jesus rode a humble donkey into Jerusalem then. Our donkey and mule (and accompanying humans) were all arrested on that Palm Sunday 9 April 2010. What would Jesus do in our troubled world today? Alas, so many lies flood our airways, so much misinformation, so many deluded people (some Palestinians even supported the US bombings in Syria and Yemen). I will end with a poem I wrote in 2011 when we commemorated Deir Yassin as Israel bombed Gaza killing so many civilians. Then I need to go back for the long nights as we prepare to open our museum and botanical garden [palestinature.org].

*The Jenin Freedom Theater and Juliano in his own words (excellent video by Jen Marlowe <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQGqmLyunm0>)

**Nichsayon: Hebrew for (Ethnic) cleansing

Stay human

Mazin Qumsiyeh

A Bedouin in cyberspace, a villager at home Professor and (volunteer) Director, Palestine Museum of Natural History, Palestine Institute of Biodiversity and Sustainability, Bethlehem University, Occupied Palestine.

<http://qumsiyeh.org>; <http://palestinature.org>.

Join me on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/mazin.qumsiyeh.9>

[Published with the kind permission of the author]

A people which oppresses another cannot emancipate itself. The power which it uses to suppress the other finally always turns against itself. As long as Russian soldiers remain in Poland, the Russian people cannot free itself either politically or socially.

F Engels, 1874

Published by V Mahendran of 15/4 Mahindarama Road, Mt Lavinia
Phone, Fax: 011 2473757; E-mail: newdemocraticmlparty@gmail.com
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Printed at Comprint System, HL ½ Dias Place Colombo 12
Phone: 011 7201738