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Kaifi Azmi

[Kaifi Azmi (1919 – 2002) a great Urdu poet of 20th Century was a member of the Communist Party of India and of the Urdu Progressive Writers Movement. These associations made him embark on the path of socially conscious poetry. His progressive thinking is evident in one of his most potent poems, Aurat (Woman)]

*Arise, my love, for now you must march with me
Flames of war are ablaze in our world today
Time and fate have the same aspirations today
Our tears will flow like hot lava today
Beauty and love have one life and one soul today
You must burn in the fire of freedom with me
Arise, my love, for now you must march with me*

*Patience will not help you struggle through life
Blood, not tears, sustains the pulse of life
You will fly when you're free and not ensnared by love
Heaven is not just in the arms of the man you love
Walk unfettered on the path of freedom with me
Arise, my love, for now you must march with me*

*Wherever you go sacrifice awaits you
To surrender is a way of life for you
All your charms condemn you
The ways of the world are poison for you
Change the seasons to flourish and be free
Arise, my love, for now you must march with me.*

(continued on inside back cover)

Editorial

The constitution of a state describes the way the state is structured and functions, and identifies with the interests of the dominant social class. Successive constitutions of neo-colonial Sri Lanka represented mainly the interests of its big bourgeois class and their imperialist masters. Despite bourgeois democratic pretences, the constitutions were fundamentally flawed. The Constitution of 1947, with clauses meant to protect minorities against discriminatory legislation, let the Hill Country Tamils (then known as Indian Tamils) to be disenfranchised in 1948; and the Official Language Act of 1956 discriminated against Tamil speaking minorities.

Having the British monarch as formal head of state led to a crisis owing to the Governor General repeatedly exceeding authority vested in him as representative of the British monarch in ways that negated the sovereignty of the country. Meddling with the formation of government in 1956 was tolerated, but his alleged role in the attempted coup d'état of 1962 was not acceptable. Thus, the Privy Council ruling overturning the conviction of the coup conspirators was among issues that forced the SLFP- led United Front that swept to power in 1970 to adopt a republican constitution.

Partnership of the LSSP and CP in the UF government did not make the Constitution of 1972 socialist, despite a few unspecific social democratic phrases. The government, however, took welcome steps like nationalizing the plantations and measures, however flawed, to build a national economy. But the notion that nationalization of small enterprises is a way to socialism helped neither government nor socialism. The constitution which commendably declared the county a republic also pandered to Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism by allocating a special place to Buddhism.

The Federal Party excluded itself from the drafting process on grounds that its proposals were rejected. If that was infantile, the government more than matched it with indifference towards not just the FP but also the grievances of the minorities. Prolonging the life of parliament by two years was irregular and the UNP later capitalized on it for its own abuses.

Following the collapse of the UF in 1975, the UNP returned to power in 1977 with an unprecedented majority and adopted the Constitution of 1978 which undermined the national economy and opened the country to imperialist plunder under a President with executive power. Greed for more power led to a series of amendments which also marginalized the minorities. The constitution also changed the electoral system so that another party could not single-handedly win a two-thirds majority and thus amend the constitution. The constitution also changed the electoral system so that another party could not single-handedly win a two-thirds majority and thereby amend the constitution. However, things went awry for President Jayawardene: escalation of the national conflict leading to Indian intervention dashed his hopes for yet another term from 1989.

The system of district-based proportional representation, as expected, ensured a minimum number of seats for the larger parties. It also enabled smaller parties which could not win a single seat in the earlier system to win several seats. Sadly for the big parties intra-party rivalry of candidates for 'preference votes' often superseded inter-party contest.

Resentment against excessive power in the hands of an individual forced Chandrika Kumaratunge to introduce the 17th Amendment in 2001 to curtail presidential powers through provisions for a Constitutional Council and Independent Commissions. But the proposed changes did not take effect and Executive Presidency continued as before.

President Rajapaksa found a way to muster not just a parliamentary majority but even a two-thirds majority. He bought over opposition MPs demoralized by successive electoral defeats of their party by offering ministerial posts to them. In 2010, Parliament adopted the 18th Amendment which effectively nullified the 17th Amendment to increase presidential powers as well as allow the President to be re-elected for an unlimited number of terms. That became part of the undoing of President Rajapaksa.

An increasingly dictatorial rule, abuse of power and corruption caused the defeat of Rajapaksa in January 2015. The new government formed in

January 2015 pledged to abolish the executive presidency and a reform the electoral system in its proposed Constitution, but spoke nothing of the national question or the rights that the workers were robbed of by the 1978 Constitution. Disputes about the proposed Constitution mainly concern the mechanism of wielding state power and the basis of election. The government quickly nullified the 18th Amendment but made limited progress on other issues, especially electoral reform and reduction of the powers of the President, as safeguards built into the 1978 Constitution were resilient. Thus what the country is likely to have as new constitution is a half-way house between the 1972 and 1978 constitutions which will not resolve issues that concern the unity and sovereignty of the country.

The left and progressive forces cannot influence what will emerge as the new constitution, but have the duty make proposals, confined to the bourgeois democratic system but with a long term view of matters, to urge the right of every citizen to decent livelihood, fair minimum wage, safety and dignity at work, financially secure retirement, freedom from abuse and discrimination based on gender, race, religion or caste and equality before the law. The proposals must demand that the constitution defends the sovereignty of the country against foreign economic, political and military domination. They should emphasize that the constitution could secure national unity only by devolution of power to the people with all nationalities and national minorities placed on equal footing based on the right to self determination and the defence of human rights. They should assert gender equality at all levels including elected bodies, where representation is ensured for all significant ethnic and political identities. They should also urge writing into the constitution protection of the environment and national resources, both human and material, from unfair exploitation by big capital and foreign powers.

The purpose of proposals for the constitution should be with a long term perspective for the left and progressive forces to evolve a common minimum programme in their long march towards social justice.

Understanding Fascism in Context

Desabakthan

Defining Fascism

Fascism, although relatively easy to recognize, is hard to define precisely as the term has had different specific associations in its historical course and context. Haphazard use of the term could thus rob it of its essence.

Fascism has been researched extensively in the social sciences. Despite difficulty in reaching a universal definition, salient features of fascism have been fairly well identified, but with the listed features and emphasis on each subject to class and ideological bias. Several features of fascism, taken individually, could apply to non-fascist states and political organizations, while truly fascist outfits could be lacking in some.

Fascism as commonly understood is a product of European capitalism in crisis, which emerged after the First World War (WW1) and dominated much of Europe until the end of the Second World War (WW2). Dimitrov accurately describes fascism as "an open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, the most chauvinistic, the most imperialistic elements of the financial capital" (Georgi Dimitrov, "The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Struggle of the Working Class against Fascism" Main Report delivered at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International, 2nd August 1935. Accessed as https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/dimitrov/works/1935/08_02.htm). He further explains:

“(Fascism) is not a power standing above class, nor government of the petty bourgeoisie or the lumpen-proletariat over finance capital. Fascism is

the power of finance capital itself. It is the organization of terrorist vengeance against the working class and the revolutionary section of the peasantry and intelligentsia. In foreign policy, fascism is jingoism in its most brutal form, fomenting bestial hatred of other nations.

“This, the true character of fascism, must be particularly stressed because in a number of countries, under cover of social demagoguery, fascism has managed to gain the following of the mass of the petty bourgeoisie that has been dislocated by the crisis, and even of certain sections of the most backward strata of the proletariat. These would never have supported fascism if they had understood its real character and its true nature”.

Thus awareness of the class interests that fascism represents, namely those of finance capital or imperialism itself, is important so that the class nature of fascism is not confused with the petty bourgeoisie or a most backward stratum of the proletariat that fascism uses to seize power.

Dimitrov also points out 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”. Thus, fascism, when politically weak, could tactically resort to parliamentary democracy and be soft towards bourgeois- and social-democratic parties, but not communists. Where the ruling bourgeoisie fear an outbreak of revolution, they enable fascism to achieve unrestricted political monopoly and, as necessary, resort to a reign of terror against all rival parties and groups. When necessary, fascism can combine open terrorist dictatorship with a sham of parliamentarism. Dimitrov further emphasized that the accession to power of fascism is not an ordinary succession of one bourgeois government by another, but a substitution of one state form of bourgeois class domination by another, namely bourgeois democracy by explicitly terrorist dictatorship.

The insight offered by Dimitrov is still relevant. The task for Marxist Leninists is to address the various manifestations of fascism in imperialist

countries, where a fascist bid for power in ways similar to that between WW1 and WW2 is unfeasible, and to confront fascism in the context of Third World 'democracies'.

A large body of writings by Marxist and other progressive analysts exists on the re-emergence of fascism in Europe and the Americas. Hence, this article will deal with that aspect briefly and discuss fascism in the Third World in more detail, with particular emphasis on South Asia where fascist tendencies are on the rise.

Characterization of Fascism

It will be useful to look at what have been identified as common features of fascism and consider the implications of treating them as necessary and sufficient criteria to decide whether an organization is fascist.

Lawrence Britt in his "Fascism Anyone?" in the Free Inquiry Magazine 22 (2), 15 July 2003 (see <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/27/076.html>) listed 14 defining features common to the fascist regimes of Hitler (Germany), Mussolini (Italy), Franco (Spain), Suharto (Indonesia) and several Latin American regimes. The findings are paraphrased below:

1. Powerful and continuing nationalism. (Constant use of "patriotic" mottos, slogans, symbols, songs and other paraphernalia, including flags, by the fascist state.)
2. Disdain for the recognition of human rights. (People are persuaded through the use of fear that human rights can be ignored in certain cases out of "need".)
3. Identification of enemies/scapegoats as a unifying cause. (People are rallied into a unifying patriotic frenzy over the need to eliminate a perceived common threat ranging from social minorities to liberals, leftists and terrorists.)
4. Supremacy of the military. (The military is glorified and receives disproportionately large government funding at the expense of the domestic agenda.)

5. Rampant sexism. (Traditional gender roles are made more rigid.)
6. Controlled mass media. (Mass media may be directly or indirectly controlled by the state through regulation or supportive personnel.)
7. Obsession with national security. (This is achieved through fear induced in the masses by the government.)
8. Intertwining of religion and government. (Fascist regimes tend to use the most common religion of the country as a means to manipulate public opinion.)
9. Protection of corporate power. (The big bourgeoisie often decide government leaders to ensure mutually beneficial relationship between the power elite and big business.)
10. Suppression of labour power. (As the working class is the only real threat to a fascist regime, trade unions are either eliminated or severely suppressed.)
11. Disdain for intellectuals and the arts. (Fascist regimes promote and tolerate overt hostility to higher education and academia.)
12. Obsession with crime and punishment. (The police have almost limitless power to enforce law.)
13. Rampant cronyism and corruption. (This is inevitable since fascist regimes comprise groups of friends and associates who abuse governmental power and authority to avoid accountability.)
14. Fraudulent elections. (Elections, if held, are a complete sham. They are often manipulated by smear campaigns against opposition candidates, assassinations and abuse of electoral procedure.)

Britt's exercise could in part have been a satire on US democracy, as the American state seems to qualify on each count to different degrees. Recent comments by Chomsky in an interview for the Wire, January 31, 2016. (<https://chomsky.info/01312016/>) declaring that "the US is one of the most fundamentalist countries in the world" is relevant in this context.

The Trotskyite website, Marxists Internet Archive Encyclopedia (<https://www.marxists.org/glossary/>) lists the following as key characteristics of fascism.

1. Right wing: Fascists are fervently against: Marxism, Socialism, Anarchism, Communism, Environmentalism; etc. — in essence, they are against the progressive left in total, including moderate lefts (social democrats, etc). Fascism is an extreme right wing ideology, though it can be opportunistic.
2. Nationalism: Fascism places a very strong emphasis on patriotism and nationalism. Criticism of the nation's main ideals, especially war, is lambasted as unpatriotic at best and treason at worst. State propaganda consistently broadcasts threats of attack, while justifying pre-emptive war. Fascism invariably seeks to instil in its people the warrior mentality: to always be vigilant, wary of strangers and suspicious of foreigners.
3. Hierarchy: Fascist society is ruled by a righteous leader, supported by an elite secret vanguard of capitalists. Hierarchy is prevalent throughout all aspects of society — every street, every workplace, every school, will have its local Hitler, part police-informer, part bureaucrat — and society is prepared for war at all times. The absolute power of the social hierarchy prevails over everything, and thus a totalitarian society is formed. Representative government is acceptable only if it can be controlled and regulated, direct democracy (e.g. Communism) is the greatest of all crimes. Any who oppose the social hierarchy of fascism will be imprisoned or executed.
4. Anti-equality: Fascism loathes the principles of economic equality and disdains equality between immigrant and citizen. Some forms of fascism extend the fight against equality into other areas: gender, sexual, minority or religious rights, for example.
5. Religious: Fascism contains a strong amount of reactionary religious beliefs, harking back to times when religion was strict, potent, and

pure. Nearly all Fascist societies are Christian, and are supported by Catholic and Protestant churches.

6. Capitalist: Fascism does not require revolution to exist in capitalist society: fascists can be elected into office (though their disdain for elections usually means manipulation of the electoral system). They view parliamentary and congressional systems of government to be inefficient and weak, and will do their best to minimize its power over their policy agenda. Fascism exhibits the worst kind of capitalism where corporate power is absolute, and all vestiges of workers' rights are destroyed.
7. War: Fascism is capitalism at the stage of impotent imperialism. War can create markets that would not otherwise exist by wrecking massive devastation on a society, which then requires reconstruction! Fascism can thus "liberate" the survivors, provide huge loans to that society so fascist corporations can begin the process of rebuilding.
8. Voluntarist ideology: Fascism adopts a certain kind of "voluntarism"; they believe that an act of will, if sufficiently powerful, can make something true. Thus all sorts of ideas about racial inferiority, historical destiny, even physical science, are supported by means of violence, in the belief that they can be made true. It is this sense that Fascism is subjectivist.
9. Anti-modern: Fascism loathes all kinds of modernism, especially creativity in the arts, whether acting as a mirror for life (where it does not conform to the Fascist ideal), or expressing deviant or innovative points of view. Fascism invariably burns books and victimises artists, and artists which do not promote the fascists ideals are seen as "decadent." Fascism is hostile to broad learning and interest in other cultures, since such pursuits threaten the dominance of fascist myths. The peddling of conspiracy theories is usually substituted for the objective study of history.

There are significant differences between the above two sets of characteristics since the left-of-centre, but rather empirical, approach of the former stresses bourgeois democratic values while the latter's emphasis is on capitalism, war, voluntarism and anti-modernism.

The latter too is subjective in places and tends to generalize contextual aspects. For example, the comment on religion that "Nearly all Fascist societies are Christian, and are supported by Catholic and Protestant churches" misses Japanese fascism with no Christian backing and the fascistic content of religious fundamentalism, be it Christian, Islamic Hindu, or Buddhist. The fascist dictatorship in Indonesia leaned more on religion than nationalism to target communists.

The Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM) at its Congress of 2002 (<http://www.prisoncensorship.info/archive/text/wim/cong/fascismdef.html>) adopted a definition of fascism based on the writings of Dimitrov (George 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), which characterized 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. The MIM also exposed the hypocritical nature of fascism and pointed to shared features of bourgeois democracy and fascism as class dictatorship of finance or comprador capital and the collaboration between them.

Fascism and Anti-Colonial Movements

While the MIM's characterization of fascism as 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 fascism in industrialized European countries. Whether they qualified or not as fascist, several anti-colonial movements, in the run up to and during WW2 were attracted to fascism, a matter often overlooked in the context of a national freedom struggle. Resentment of colonial domination made

several Arab nationalists, especially the more reactionary sections, to side with the Nazis during WW2. Right wing Arabs (as well as Zionists) were known for their affinity for the Nazis. Such attraction persisted even after the war so that there were parties adopting the Nazi ideology in whole or part in the Middle East, including Iran, as late as the 1950s. Fascination with European fascism faded out after anti-monarchist Arab nationalists seized power in Egypt, Syria and Iraq.

India's anti-colonial militant leader, Subash Chandra Bose (Nethaji), after his effective expulsion from the Indian National Congress by the pro-Gandhi faction and maltreatment by the colonial regime, allied with both German and Japanese fascists. Although that did not mean that he was a fascist, his collaboration certainly weakened the international anti-fascist effort during WW2. Likewise, the brief alliance between Japanese fascists and Burma's liberation leader and fighter Aung San did not make him a fascist. The wisdom of choosing a fascist power as the lesser evil is, however, questionable and collaboration with fascism meant that working class interests were not among the priorities of these leaders.

Attraction of nationalists in the colonies to fascism will be further commented on in the context of fascist tendencies in Asia and Africa.

Post WW2 Fascism in the West

Much has changed since WW2. Fascism though thoroughly defeated in war was not eradicated in Europe and the Americas. Several of the neo-Nazi organizations which sprouted in Europe since WW2 are still alive. Nevertheless, European fascism and its derivatives in Europe and the Americas today cannot muster sufficient electoral support to secure state power as fascism did in post-WW1 Europe. But they are nevertheless a serious reactionary force.

There is a tendency among left and liberal intellectuals in Europe and North America to explain modern day fascism in terms of European fascism and post-WW2 fascist movements with ideological affinity to

European fascism. As a result, they fail to recognize the different faces of fascist ideology seeking to dominate a society or a state.

Rise of Neo-Fascist Politics

Neo-fascists have asserted themselves sufficiently to secure a share in government in several countries. In West Germany, the Deutsche Rechtspartei (German Right Party) was formed in Lower Saxony in 1946. It was the forerunner to the explicitly neo-Nazi Deutsche Reichspartei (German Empire Party) formed in 1950 and dissolved in 1964, leading to the founding of the neo-Nazi National Democratic Party (NPD) in 1964. The NPD never secured enough votes at the national level to cross the 5% minimum threshold for representation in the German national parliament (the Bundestag). But it crossed the 5% threshold several times to be represented in state parliaments. The NPD merged with the smaller neo-fascist German People's Union (DVU) in 2011. After German reunification in 1990, neo-Nazi groups in Germany have gained prominence, with new members attracted to them owing to economic dislocation and social unrest so that violence directed at immigrants and foreigners is on the rise.

In Italy, support for the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI), founded in 1946, rose in the early 1990's following the exposure of pervasive corruption in the governing parties. After the 1994 elections, it became a partner in the conservative government, and dissolved itself in 1995 to become the far right National Alliance (Alleanza Nazionale/MSI) headed by former MSI leader Gianfranco Fini. The National Alliance has since nominally rejected fascist ideology and anti-Semitism and participated in centre-right governing coalitions.

Rick Kuhn writing on the threat of fascism in Austria (Monthly Review 52 (2) June 2000 pp. 21-35) notes that, less than six years after the fascist Alleanza Nazionale/MSI became a junior partner in Silvio Berlusconi's 1994 coalition government in Italy, the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) — a fascist outfit politely referred to as 'right-wing populist' — won the elections in 1999 to secure half of the posts and the Deputy Chancellorship

in its coalition with the conservative Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), sworn in on 4th February 2000. The coalition caused widespread outrage both in Austria and the rest of Europe. Pressure from the EU strained relations in the coalition and led to its eventual break-up in 2002. Support for the FPÖ drastically declined soon after, only to recover since, particularly in the face of the refugee crisis that gripped Europe in 2015.

While the prospect of a fascist takeover of the state in any country in post-WW2 Europe and the Americas is weak, a fascist party got close to capturing state power in France. Western media hesitate to dub the Front National (FN) of France fascist and there is wish to add 'respectability' to it by calling it 'far right' or 'anti-immigrant right'. Cosmetic changes — like shelving its earlier 'Holocaust denial' — by the new leadership that are applauded by the French political and media establishments cannot rid the FN of its neo-fascist essence. It remains a populist party steeped in nationalism and racism. Based on FN's recent performance in local elections, it seems to have the strongest prospect among European neo-fascist parties to be elected to power.

The ultra-right Swiss People's Party (SVP) rose steadily to gather 29% of the national vote in 2015 to be the party with most votes in 16 of the 26 cantons in Switzerland. The SVP, said to adhere to national conservatism, opposes membership of the EU and of NATO, with which the country has a partnership. Its economic policy is neoliberal and its nationalism comprises hostility to Islam and immigration.

Among Nordic countries, neo-fascism is weakest in Iceland but on the rise elsewhere. The anti-immigrant Sweden Democrats are Sweden's fastest-growing political force. The right-wing populist Progress Party has since 2013 been a junior partner in government with the Conservatives in Norway, which is also home for Scandinavian neo-Nazi activities (<http://www.tnp.no/norway/panorama/4554-scandinavian-neo-nazis-make-norway-headquarter>). The anti-immigration, Euro-sceptic Danish People's Party — successor to the Progress Party — came second in the June 2015 general election after promising bigger increases in public spending than

its rivals and restoration of border controls. In Finland, the right-wing populist Finns Party, which secured 19.1% of the popular vote, is now a partner in the ruling coalition.

Interestingly, the resurgence of fascism has been weak in Spain, ruled by the fascist dictator Francisco Franco from 1939 to 1975. It should be noted here that the US forged an alliance with Franco in 1953, despite his fascist dictatorship and support for the Nazi Germany during WW2. Portugal too, ruled from 1932 to 1968 by Antonio Salazar, yet another far right dictator with fascistic leanings, does not have strong neo-fascist groups, despite streaks of racism inherited from the colonial era, which ended with the defeat of Portuguese colonialism in Africa and the overthrow of the fascist dictatorship by revolution in 1974.

In Greece, the fascist 4th of August Party, facilitated and welcomed the US-backed 1967 right-wing military coup, launched under pretext of combating communist subversion. Military rule persisted until 1974, with the approval of the West, which let Greece to remain in the NATO. Greek neo-fascism re-emerged in 1980 in the form of the brutally racist and ultra-right Golden Dawn, with Nazi affinities. Its electoral performance peaked in 2012 with 7% of the national vote but has stagnated since.

British neo-fascists were for long a weak political force despite the inherent racism of British society. The British National Party (BNP), the most successful British neo-fascist party up to the first decade of the 21st Century, collapsed in 2010 shortly after its major electoral breakthrough in local elections in 2008-9. The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), as racist and anti-left as the BNP, gained from the fall of the BNP. It used a campaign highlighting Britain's leaving the EU to overtake the Liberals and then Labour to become the second most popular party in the UK in 2014 and the leading party at elections to European Parliament in 2014.

Fascism re-emerged in Russia and some European member states of the former Soviet Union, notably Ukraine, where the neo-Nazi Svoboda Party entered government in 2014 with the blessings of the US. Among former Socialist allies of the USSR, Hungary, Bulgaria and Czech Republic have

significantly strong fascist parties. Some republics of the former Yugoslavia too have political groups with strong fascist traits.

Character of European Neo-Fascism

Neo-fascism is a post-World War II phenomenon with strong fascist characteristics, and retains the reactionary, racist, chauvinist and anti-left essence of pre-WW2 fascism. Alongside the weakening of the European left, ultra-nationalism and racism became salient features of European neo-fascism which plays on racial prejudices and, as necessary, resorts to populist politics.

It should be noted that neo-fascism in Europe draws on racist values that have taken root in several European countries following a long history of colonial control over what is now the Third World. In West Europe, racism found strong expression in anti-immigrant policies based mostly on colour, but not universally. For example, in Britain, targeting of West Indians gave way to attacks on South Asians. French neo-fascists targeted Algerians and not Black Africans during the Algerian war, and in Germany neo-fascist attacks are aimed at Turkish nationals including Kurds. Anti-Jewish attacks by European neo-Nazis in the first few post-WW2 decades have almost faded out, while the Roma (gypsies) remain a target in much of Europe, particularly Eastern Europe where they are the target of the emergent far right since the fall of socialist regimes in 1989.

What is important about European neo-fascism is that most neo-fascist groups are not residues of the Nazis, and anti-Semitism (really anti-Jewish politics) is virtually irrelevant to neo-fascism. Neo-fascists, despite their nationalistic anti-EU posturing and even criticism of NATO, are part and parcel of imperialism and destined to hinder proletarian revolution. Neo-fascism takes advantage of the political vacuum created by the failure of the European left and uses populist slogans to stir racism among the lower middle and working classes who bear the brunt of the economic crises.

There is tendency among the Western media to apply the label neo-fascist to anti-Semitic organizations and holocaust deniers but exempt

anti-immigrant, ultra-right nationalists who are not anti-Jewish. Although ethnic and racial animosity is more prominent than fascist ideology in the politics of the ultra-nationalist and far right parties of Europe, the identity politics upheld by them has much in common with fascism.

Aversion for fascism is still strong in post-WW2 Europe so that prospects are still weak for an explicitly fascist or fascist-dominated regime in the near future. Also, the propensity for violence among neo-fascists troubles bourgeois democratic regimes. However, the succession of electoral gains by neo-fascists has forced many European governments to adopt, voluntarily or otherwise, neo-fascist racist positions on immigration and rights of immigrants, as evident in their attitude towards the recent influx of refugees caused by civil wars induced by imperialism.

Western political analysts and the media do not attach the neo-fascist label to European ultra-right political parties which espouse versions of fascism but participate in constitutional politics. But this approach ignores the fact the Nazis used electoral methods to capture power.

Neo-Fascism in the Americas

Several small neo-Nazi groups exist in the US, but the biggest source of fascism is the state, which is fully under the control of monopoly capital and implements a fascist agenda within and outside the US in the name of democracy, freedom and most importantly defending the American way of life. The rise of potentially fascist right-wing Christian fundamentalism in the US is no accident; and Barry Goldwater, who unsuccessfully contested the Presidential Election in 1964, and Donald Trump, the aspiring Republican candidate for 2016, are not racist freaks but represent the reactionary white supremacist ideology pervading American society.

The US, pretending to defend democracy and freedom, imposed reactionary fascist dictatorships on much of Latin America in the 1960's and 70's. Fascism in Latin America thus qualitatively differed from that in Europe, where fascists used populist politics to capture power. There have, however, been instances, as in Chile in 1974, where manufactured

dissent among sections of society served as pretext to impose a dictatorial regime through a military coup. Chile endured the notoriously oppressive and murderous fascist regime of General Pinochet from 1974 to 1990. Despite political defeat, fascism still has its footprints in Chilean politics.

What is thus significant about neo-fascism in Latin America is that, unlike its European counterpart, it was not home grown. In South America there were once echoes of European fascism, especially that of Spain, and Nazi ideology thrived among German settlers in Argentina between WW1 and WW2, but weakened since WW2. With the people having experienced brutal US-backed fascistic regimes and the impact of globalization, popular resistance to right wing regimes is generally strong in Latin America, although the threat of right wing coup is not far away.

Latin America has been home to oppression of indigenous people who are also victims of racism and discrimination. However, democratic and anti-US imperialist struggles enabled the indigenous people to have a say in the affairs of the state in several countries, especially Bolivia. But full restoration of the rights of the indigenous people has far to go.

Lessons of imperialist-induced regime-changes in Latin America cannot be forgotten as the US has not given up its desperate efforts to remove any regime with a semblance of social justice or anti-imperialism and replace it with an oppressive right-wing dictatorship.

WW2 and Fascism in Asia and Africa

In pre-WW2 Asia, fascism held power only in Japan, and Japanese fascism, unlike European fascism, had no mass political base. A fascist regime was imposed on the people by a militarist takeover with approval from the monarchy, amid external and internal conditions akin to those in Germany and Italy before fascists seized power.

Access to the emperor and hence power to veto the weak parliament (the Diet) assured the armed forces influence in affairs of the state. Widespread belief that the political parties were corrupt and that the Diet could not solve Japan's economic problems and the global capitalist crisis

leading to the Wall Street Crash of 1929 led to a loss of public faith in parliamentary democracy. Ultra nationalist groups that emerged in parallel to the rising assertiveness of the armed forces did not, however, comprise populist fascist movements. The military fascist takeover in 1932, nevertheless, had mass support amid waning faith in parliamentary democracy and Japan's rivalry with an increasingly hostile West, chiefly the US. The consequent upsurge in patriotism favoured Imperial Japan's aggression in China, and the eventual invasion of north-eastern China in 1931. The return of Japanese militarism in recent decades relates to the residual fascism of the ruling class, which still obstructs apologizing to China and Korea for the mass crimes committed during WW2.

Affinity for fascist Japan and Nazi Germany among leading political movements in colonial Asia and North Africa during WW2 was mostly due to misguided anti-imperialism and elitist narrow nationalism, which faded out after the defeat of Germany and Japan in WW2. But that does not rule out the existence of nascent fascists who would later develop into religious fundamentalists with ideas in common with fascism.

Post-WW2 Fascism and Neo-Fascism in Asia and Africa

The most important post-WW2 fascist event in Asia brought General Suharto to power in Indonesia by a US-backed military coup in 1965. The Communist Party of Indonesia, the strongest communist party outside socialist countries, which also had a strategic relationship with President Sukarno, posed a threat to imperialist interests in South East Asia. General Suharto invoked religion to incite anti-communist violence by the Muslims majority, by raising the spectre of a takeover by atheists. Between October 1965 and early 1966, between 500,000 and 1,000,000 communists and sympathizers were killed by the army, aided by anti-communist militias and guided by US intelligence. Ethnic Chinese too were targeted but not killed in large numbers. While resentment of ethnic Chinese, especially owners of small businesses, was endemic to Indonesia, systematic violence against them, including anti-Chinese riots, followed the fascist coup of 1965 which also led to discriminatory legislation against

ethnic Chinese. The global economic crisis of 1997 contributed to the anti-government riots of 1998 which brought down Suharto; but the riots also involved some of the worst violent attacks on ethnic Chinese.

Annexation of West Papua in 1969 and East Timor in 1976, with the blessings of the US, were important landmarks of the fascist regime. Besides, the Indonesian state pursued cruel repression in the regions of East Timor (1975-99) and Aceh (1976-2005). Even after liberation, East Timor was further punished by violence sponsored by the Indonesian state. The liberation struggle in Aceh subsided in the aftermath of the tsunami of 2004 December which wreaked havoc in the province.

The overthrow of Suharto has not fully freed Indonesia of its legacy of 32 years of fascist rule. Anti-communist prejudice runs deep in society. Religious sectarianism promoted by the fascist regime has since led to the growth of a few but influential hard-line Sunni fundamentalist groups which target Shiite, Ahmadiya and Christian religious minorities.

Another serious fascist development occurred in the Philippines amid growing inability of the ruling big comprador and landlord classes to rule the country under bourgeois democratic norms and the prospect of a strong revolutionary movement following the re-establishment of the Communist Party of Philippines (CPP) in 1968. As anticipated by the CPP in 1969, President Marcos declared martial law in 1972 and extended his rule beyond the constitutional two-term limit in 1973 using as pretext threats of Communist and Moro nationalist insurgencies. It took much public anger and mass protests to be rid of Marcos in 1986. He, like several far-right dictators of the Third World, enjoyed US support during his fascist dictatorial rule and US protection even after removal from power. The fall of Marcos has yet to restore true democracy to the Philippines whose repressive state is subservient to US imperialism, hesitant to negotiate with the National Democratic Front of which the CPP is a key member, and adopts a deceptive approach to the Moro national question.

The only neo-fascist political forces in Africa with European fascist characteristics were in South Africa where Nazism had an early audience.

As an independent White-dominated country, South Africa shared many characteristics with Europe which led to apartheid, an institutionalised form of racism, and was thus fertile ground for the development of groups inspired by European fascism. Pro-Nazis were organized in 1932 as South African Gentile National Socialist Movement, also known as Greyshirts. Its support base thinned after the defeat of Germany in WW2. German Nazism also inspired the Ossewabrandwag, founded in 1939. While the Greyshirts emphasised the Aryan race rhetoric and organized among the various white immigrant communities, the Ossewabrandwag was exclusively Afrikaner. Other smaller fascist outfits too emerged.

The Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging, Vereniging van Oranjewerkers, Herstigte Nasionale Party and the Boeremag are among far right white-supremacist groups restricted to Afrikaners which emerged in the post-WW2 era. The Afrikaner Volksfront, a coalition formed in May 1993 as an umbrella group for white-supremacist organizations unsuccessfully sought to disrupt transfer of power to the native majority by disrupting the elections scheduled for 1994.

White racism still exists 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: one involving the transformation of ethno-religious chauvinism into neo-fascism; the other an outgrowth of religious fundamentalism induced or encouraged by imperialism.

Modern religious intolerance in South and South East Asia goes back to the era of anti-colonial resistance when ethno-religious nationalism, while resentful of colonial domination, had issues with religious minorities, based on rivalry in business and the professions, and at times favoured positions under the colonial rulers, or plain bigotry.

In Sri Lanka, Sinhala Buddhism initially targeted Christians, then the Muslims, Hill Country Tamils and Tamils in that order. Now the Muslims are the main target. While militant organizations such as the Bodhu Bala Sena, Sinhala Ravaya etc. are readily identified as fascists by political analysts and a section of the media, there is, however, reluctance to describe as fascist the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) — or its forerunner, the Sihala Urumaya — whose ideology finds violent expression in BBS, SR and rival outfits which the JHU now disowns.

Myanmar (formerly Burma) has a record of anti-Indian violence since WW1: anti-Indian sentiment peaked during the Great Depression, with riots in Rangoon (now Yangon) in 1930 killing over 200 Hindus and Muslims. In 1942 half a million Indians fled Burma following Japanese occupation; and persecution under General Ne Win who came to power by a military coup in 1962 forced the emigration of 300,000 Indians by 1964. Burmese Chinese too were victims of state-sponsored violence and discrimination from 1967 through the 1970's, which led to large scale emigration of the community. Burma also has a long record of national oppression and armed struggles in response by the minority nationalities.

Buddhist fundamentalist pogroms targeting Rohingya Muslims in the western state of Rakhine — formerly the State of Arakan, an independent kingdom annexed by Burma in 1784 — is a new phenomenon to emerge since the political transition of 2011. The killing of hundreds of Rohingya Muslims and the displacement of over 140,000 in 2012 shocked the world. While persecution of Rohingya Muslims continues at home and in refugee camps abroad, the Arakan National Party — an ethnic Rakhine Buddhist party formed in 2014 by the merger of the neo-Nazi Rakhine Nationalities Development Party with the Arakan League for Democracy — won 22 of the 35 contested seats to the Rakhine State Parliament in 2015, with several hundred thousand Rohingya Muslims denied the right to vote.

The Committee for the Protection of Race and Religion (Ma Ba Tha), founded in 2013 and led by the clergyman Ashin Tilawkar Biwonsa, is successor to the 969 Movement led by the notorious fundamentalist priest

Ashin Wirathu, a key player in the anti-Muslim violence in 2012-2013. It has the goal of creating an exclusively Buddhist state in Myanmar and demonstrated its strong influence on political thought and ideology in Myanmar by persuading Parliament to write into law in August 2015, well ahead of the elections in November, four bills drafted by Ma Ba Tha (the Religious Conversion Bill, the Buddhist Women's Special Marriage Bill, the Population Control Healthcare Bill and the Monogamy Bill) which effectively legalize discrimination against women and Muslims.

The rise of militant Buddhism in Burma and that in Sri Lanka, despite differences in detail, have much in common. What is particularly significant is that the Ma Ba Tha and the JHU developed as independent religious fundamentalist entities playing on the sensitivity of the Buddhists. However, unlike the JHU, which suffered several splits, Ma Ba Tha, for now, dominates Buddhist extremism in Myanmar.

The ultra-nationalistic and anti-socialist Hindu fundamentalism in India had its origins in sections of the Indian national movement which identified India closely with Hinduism. Hindu identity was initially asserted as response to colonial rule and Christian domination but later became an expression of Hindu-Muslim rivalry. Right-wing Hindu nationalists soon adopted the concept of a Hindu India. This tendency combined with communal friction aggravated by colonial rule enabled the emergence of potentially fascist outfits alongside the anti-colonial struggle, with Hindu extremism viewing Muslims as the main enemy.

The term Sangh Parivar refers to the Hindu nationalist movement including the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) and other nominally independent organizations with a diversity of opinion on a range of issues and style of work ranging from social work through active politics to outright thuggery. Despite all differences there is concurrence on the idea of a Hindu Indian state and the concept of Hindutva (Hinduness).

The RSS, the oldest and strongest Hindutva organization, was founded in 1925 'to provide character training through Hindu discipline and to unite the Hindu community'. Despite claims to being an apolitical body, it

has acted as the social arm of right wing Hindu nationalist parties. Its control over the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) — and its predecessor the Bharatiya Jan Sangh — is well documented. Significantly, the present and the previous BJP prime ministers were apprenticed in the RSS stable of Sang Parivar. The RSS had direct links with European fascists and ideologically there is much in common between European fascism and Hindutva. (For a fuller account of fascist links dating back to the 1930's see "Soldiers of the Swastika" by AG Noorani in Frontline, 23 January 2015.)

Another important public face of Hindu fascism is the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), a right-wing Hindu nationalist organization based on the ideology of Hindutva, founded in 1964. It has been notorious for its role, alongside the BJP and Shiv Sena, in tearing down in December 1992 the Babri Masjid (claimed with scant historical evidence to be the birth place of the Hindu god Ram) and the consequent communal violence. Bajrang Dal, founded in 1984 as the militant youth arm of the VHP, has been a key player in anti-Christian violence and countless attacks on Muslims across India, including the Gujarat pogrom of 2002 in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi, then Chief Minister of Gujarat, was implicated.

The Shiv Sena, a Marathi sectarian front founded in 1966, thrived on a hate campaign against South Indian 'immigrants' in Bombay to protect 'Marathi sons of the soil'. Following the weakening of its founding cause, the Sena joined the Hindutva bandwagon in the 1970's. Since 1989, it has been an electoral partner the BJP for the Indian parliament as well as the Maharashtra State Assembly. Dispute over power caused the parties to fall out in 2014 during elections to the State Assembly. The alliance has since resumed, but with visible signs of disharmony. Muslim protests against the state about the demolition of the Babri Masjid were followed by the well planned Bombay Riots of December 1992 led by the Sena, with the police as accomplice, targeting Muslims.

There have been several instances of Islamist acts of terror and militant attacks on public places. Much of the violence by Muslim individuals and groups has been in response to violence by Hindutva organizations and

the State, especially in Kashmir. The fact is that India has no Islamist fundamentalist organization that targets other religious communities.

Thus there is a need to distinguish between Muslim militancy in South Asia, including terrorism with and without Pakistani state backing, which arose as response to issues between India and Pakistan, especially over the Kashmir question, and Islamist fundamentalist and terrorist outfits which emerged in the 1980's under President Zia-ul-Haq, a close ally of US imperialism. They were intended to overthrow the pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan at the behest of the US, but they proliferated and went out of control of the Pakistani state.

Fascism and Political Islam

Modern political Islam which started in the 1970's in response to economic stagnation in several Muslim, mostly Arab, countries had an anti-imperialist (as well as anti-Marxist) content. Later, the US encouraged Islamist fundamentalism and terrorism, as part of its scheme for global domination, with the help of reactionary Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia which was the world's largest source of funds for Islamist militant groups such as the Afghan Taliban and Lashkar-e-Taiba, al-Qaida and now the Islamic State (variously known as ISIL, ISIS, Daesh etc.) whose reach is spreading outside Syria and Iraq, where it was expected to overthrow non-Sunni Muslim regimes. Other Arab sources of militant money include Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates.

While al-Qaida and other externally induced Islamist militant outfits as well as the Saudi-backed Wahabi and salafi organizations act to destabilize secular Arab states and African countries with large Muslim populations, they do not qualify as fascist organizations, as they are not nationalistic and do not represent the interests of capitalism in the countries where they exist. Their fascist potential cannot, however be denied.

The politically loaded term "Islamofascism" serves to discredit Arab mass political parties such as Hamas, Muslim Brotherhood, and Hizbullah

by grouping them with terrorist organizations such as al-Qaida to justify institutionalized harassment of European Muslims, especially immigrants.

The Islamic State, however, differs in objectives from other Islamist organizations, whatever the expectations were of its patrons in the Arabian Peninsula. As noted in a comment in Mondoweiss by Stephen Sheehi (<http://mondoweiss.net/2015/11/isis-fascist-movement/>) that Islamic State “may share some pedigree with the most pernicious of Wahabi, salafi social and political practices, which originated in a reaction against Arab and Ottoman generated modernity in the 19th and 20th century”. He proceeds to explain that salafi and Wahabi movements are not fascist as they are more concerned with juridical and theological issues of Sunni Islam whereas Islamic State, besides its “un-Islamic” conduct, indulges in fascist political, social, and militaristic practices. He also points out that state building by Islamic State is “clearly based on corporatist, capitalist mechanisms, where the ‘state’ and its war machine monopolize revenue through the oil infrastructure, extorted taxes, and tariffs. This corporatism is enforced by a security apparatus and ‘Islamic’ courts that administer a severe penal (not legal) system in order to coerce compliance”.

The observation on al-Qaeda by Jeff Mankoff in History News Network (<http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/29239#sthash.OH3zK6il.dpuf>) that al-Qaeda is a “small, conspiratorial organization whose influence flows more from its ability to inspire small numbers of fanatical followers with its mastery of modern communication technology than from its ability to become a mass movement or a force in electoral politics” is worth noting.

What matters is the direction which an Islamist militant organization would take once it captures power. Islamic states have been severely repressive and thus have, to different degrees, streaks of fascist repression. The danger in dubbing all repressive states as fascist is that one can lose sight of the real fascist threat. It should, however, be noted that Christian fundamentalism has greater fascist potential and global reach than Islamist fundamentalism, especially since the former is an imperialist ally while the latter is just a tool which has occasionally spun out of control.

Dealing with Fascism

The global left — revolutionary as well as parliamentary — debates if the government of Turkey is fascist. Eric Draitser's comment in *New Eastern Review* (<http://journal-neo.org/2015/09/21/has-turkey-become-a-fascist-state/>) is 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".

Thus there are a many state and political organizations with fascist tendencies which are insufficient to identify the organizations as fascist based the 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 what may be called 'Classical European Fascism'. European neo-fascism has implanted clones within bourgeois democratic parties so that centre-right and even "centre-left" parties, especially in Europe, readily adopt key aspects of the fascist agenda, in relation to immigrants, the working class and the left.

Since WW2, fascism found fertile ground in parts of the Third World, where nationalism, once a progressive force fighting colonial oppression, deteriorated into chauvinism and narrow nationalism — at times drawing on religion as part of national identity. Such identity-based politics, not only bereft of anti-imperialism but also seeking imperialist patronage readily, acquires fascist characteristics or even turns fascist when survival demands repression. Imperialism often turns a blind eye to such developments. Thus anti-imperialist struggles can inevitably become anti-fascist struggles.

Fascist regimes have been imposed through military coup in South America with the connivance of US imperialism, in contexts where conditions had not matured for fascism to come to power using populist methods. Right wing nationalists after capture of power can transform

government into a fascist regime as in Turkey and Singapore, which continue to be seen as 'democratic' by Western imperialism and its media.

There is also a dangerous tendency to identify militant ultranationalist and fundamentalist parties as neo-fascist, while exempting their electoral political counterparts. We should remember that ideologically the Arakan National Party is no less fascist than the Ma Ba Tha or the 969 Movement; the JHU is no less fascist than the BBS or the Sinhala Ravaya; and the BJP is no less fascist than 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, modern day fascism has put into effect its fascist agenda not only as the party in power but also as a partner in coalition government and as a powerful pressure group, both within and outside parliament.

To rely on identification of a political organization as fascist for political counteraction is folly. Identification is important, but action is needed not only against outfits identified as fascist, neo-fascist or proto-fascist but also against organizations with fascist leanings such as ultra nationalism, anti-left rhetoric and pro-imperialist attitudes. One need not wait to respond until fascist violence strikes.

Imperialism is intent on sustaining the swerve to political Right; and global capitalism and bourgeois democratic politics are accommodative towards ultra-nationalism, anti-immigration and anti-Muslim racism. Anti-fascists in the Third World should thus be alert to active as well as passive imperialist support for fascist tendencies, especially in the context of mass struggles for social justice.

The left has to be proactive in acting to prevent fascism of any kind from hijacking the anger of the alienated working class and other oppressed sections of the people.

Post-9/11 Role of Civil Society Organizations in Conflict Resolution in Sri Lanka

T G-Z MeeNilankco

Introduction

This paper examines how the 9/11 attack and subsequent actions by the US influenced the way civil society works in conflict resolution. In other words, has the post-9/11 era changed the dynamics of civil society in relation to conflict resolution? This essay explores the role of civil society organizations in the post 9/11 era with particular reference to conflict resolution in Sri Lanka. This essay examines the role of securitization of aid has in forcing civil society organizations to work for the 'Global War on Terror Doctrine' after aid became based mostly on the counter terrorism strategy. Since 9/11, all major pillars of democracy, including civil society, were placed under one umbrella and security became prime consideration.

Intensified relationship between development and security actors was the emerging trend of this period, which led to the securitization of aid and development. Intense bond between development and security had serious consequences for civil society, which hitherto received little attention. This merits investigation and documenting. It further brought civil society organizations further into the gaze of security institutions, causing governments and donors to be more circumspect about civil society organizations, based on a view of 'good' and 'bad' non-governmental actors (Stokke 2010). The impacts of new counter-terrorism

structures and cooperation efforts on civil society have been ambiguous. While civil society organizations have been a specific focus of concern in post-9/11 security thinking, many governments acted to merge their regulation of civil society organizations with new counter-terrorism structures. The War on Terror induced 'good' civil society organizations to cooperate with government departments and agencies. Thus, government approaches to civil society in the context of counter-terrorism efforts relate not only to the assessment that civil society could be misused by terrorist networks but also to the belief that non-governmental public actors can lend legitimacy to counter-terrorism responses and strategy.

It should be noted that, in general, a discursive distinction has emerged between 'good' civil society organizations serving the transnational agenda of liberal peace-building and 'bad' ones linked to intra-state and international terrorism. Such dichotomization provided a basis for contrasting strategies by the state and international actors: instrumental use of good civil society organizations for liberal peace-building and regulation; and repression of bad civil society organizations as part of counter-terrorist measures (Stokke 2009). The War on Terror consolidated and intensified currents in security thinking and practice to increasingly treat aid and civil society organizations in strategic terms (Howell & Lind 2008). The post-9/11 global security regime has used coercion, co-option and cooperation to build a network of political actors spanning the public and private, governmental and non-governmental, commercial and charitable, and North and South. In a sense, civil society organizations are an integral part of this operation but inimical in another. It is interesting to see how civil society organizations work for or against 'war on terror' in different settings.

The case of Sri Lanka is considered for study for several reasons. In 2002 Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) arrived at an internationally supported Ceasefire Agreement (CFA), facilitated by Norway. This happened alongside the US war in Afghanistan. The US and the "coalition of the willing", wanted a peaceful

South Asia to help them to go ahead with their assault on Afghanistan. During the peace process in Sri Lanka, civil society organizations played an important role in conflict resolution.

On the other hand, global geopolitics played its role, where discourses on security, democracy and development were inextricably interwoven around the nodal point of liberal peace (Duffield 2001; Paris 2004; Richmond 2007). Thus, the question of peace in Sri Lanka became thoroughly internationalized, largely through 'securitization' of aid (Goodhand & Klem 2005). Behind convergence on technocratic concerns with development aid effectiveness lie the more complex and divergent geopolitical interests of defeating terrorism to ensure stability in the region and creating a sound political context for neoliberal development.

The practical geopolitics of peace promotion pursued by Sri Lanka's aid donors reflect post-Cold War discourses on terrorism and securitization of aid. Nevertheless, the design and dynamics of the peace process were conditioned by domestic, military, political, and economic conditions as much as by international geopolitics (Kaplan 2009, Bastian 2007). But, on the whole, conflict resolution failed and the resumption of war signalled the changing patterns and tagging of civil society organizations as 'good' and 'bad' in relation to the Government of Sri Lanka. Civil society which supported the Sri Lankan state's own "War on Terror" were approved and aided by the state. Those critical of the government faced difficulties.

The complexity of these patterns and changing trends make Sri Lanka a useful subject of study.

Pre- and Post-9/11 Civil Society Organizations and Conflict Resolution

Before 9/11, conflict resolution work by civil society organizations was seen as normal peacemaking and peace-building activity. Development discourse understood conflict resolution as another form of conventional aid mechanism like livelihood development and poverty reduction. Growth in peace theory and practice gave more emphasis for conflict resolution by civil society organizations since they could play an effective ground level role (known as Track 3) to build peace. Still this was

considered as part of the development discourse. But the attack on the twin towers and the reaction from the West to it added a different dimension to it. Counter-terrorism policies were formulated and foreign aid and funds received by groups and organizations became a major component of the policy making. In this respect, civil society organizations working on conflict resolution were made to specifically consider the question of “what kind of peace is needed”.

Each donor (especially Western) formulated a policy based on this question. Also aid was securitised in three ways. Firstly, beneficiaries of the aid were carefully selected since donors did not want the money to end up in terrorist hands. Secondly, the security aspect was incorporated into the development discourse and, as a part of it, Security Sector Reforms (SSR), strategic defence partnership and modernisation of the military were introduced as part of development discourse. This was done for friendly states to fight the War on Terror, which was undertaken globally by the US and its allies. Thirdly, donors wanted to use civil society organizations working on conflict resolution for strategic purposes and defence interests. This, on the whole, drastically changed the way conflict resolution based civil society organizations functioned globally.

Theoretical Argument

Returning to the issue at hand, it is clear that the role of civil society organizations in conflict resolution has changed in the post-9/11 setting to become multi-dimensional, based on securitization of aid. It could be said that securitization of aid became central to the working dynamics of civil society organizations since most of them rely on aid. In this context, there is also the question of integrity and trustworthiness of civil society groups. The muted responses of ‘mainstream’ civil society groups to counter-terrorism efforts exposed the depoliticising effects of government and donor financing of this part of civil society. Mainstream civil society groups refers here to the government- or donor-funded sector within civil society that is engaged in service delivery, social welfare provision and the technical implementation of governance reforms. Thus it can be seen that

there has been a change of dynamics in the operation of civil society organizations in the aftermath of 9/11. Another change following 9/11 was the re-absorption of development assistance into national security agendas and the consequences of this for aid policy and practice and for civil society organizations.

The securitization of development policy and practice was evident at a number of levels. At the macro-level, political leaders articulate the view that poverty, deprivation and terrorism are related, with the crudest versions claiming direct causality (Howell and Lind 2008). Duffield (2001) notes how conflict as an issue was increasingly incorporated into development agendas both as an impediment to development and as a development problem that could be addressed with greater quantities and/or more appropriate types of aid.

This argument can be applied to all civil society organizations. Firstly, governments use civil society to simplify an issue as a development problem. Typically, in Nepal, despite donor agencies like USAID, DFID, Norad working for more than fifty years, the country remains among the 50 countries with the highest percentage of poverty. On the other hand, as in Sri Lanka, the state can also use civil society to distort the whole problem. Now the Sri Lankan government claims that the conflict which was transformed into a war lasting 30 years was only a terrorist problem and not an issue concerning the minorities. Thus what Sri Lanka needs now is development, and civil society should assist the state.

Sidel (2004) argues that many regimes have taken advantage of a climate of insecurity to reconsolidate the primacy of the state. This agenda would shift the balance of power away from parliament and public towards an executive while, where possible, curtailing previously enjoyed democratic rights (Sen & Morris 2008; Tiger, 2007). Some governments and political leaders have used the rhetoric of the 'War on Terror' to justify repressive and restrictive practices against political opponents, secessionist movements and opposition groups. In countries where policing and judicial systems are weak, unaccountable and corrupt,

repressive counter-terrorist legislation, policies and practices hit hardest the poor, marginalised and vulnerable groups, who lack the legal knowledge, money and contacts to defend themselves. The point here is that the intertwining of development, security and civil society is not accidental or wholly unintended but an integral strategic element of the War on Terror regime. This is because civil society, as a crucial actor in the constitution of political power and authority to govern, has been identified as a strategic battlefield on which the War on Terror will be won or lost.

The Case of Sri Lanka

9/11 and the US-led 'War on Terror' had implications for Sri Lanka. After the War on Terror operations were launched in Afghanistan, the US and its allies wanted a stable South Asia (Uyangoda 2009). At that point, war in Sri Lanka was in a position of hurting stalemate. This paved the way to the internationally monitored, Norwegian facilitated Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) and peace process, which lasted from 2002 to 2008. The parties returned to the battlefield and the LTTE was militarily defeated in May 2009, since when Sri Lanka is enjoying "peace".

The partisan and ethnic polarization of Sri Lankan society leaves limited space for civil society activity. Early democratization forced upper class politicians into alliances with the rural lower middle class, paving the way to political patronage (Stokke 1998). Against this background, civil society organizations working on conflict resolution played a role during the peace process, as well as in the post war situation. The two settings are, however, vastly different and the impact of securitization of aid on civil society organizations is of interest.

Given recent experiences with elite-negotiated transitions to liberal democracy and structural adjustments to neoliberal globalization, it is assumed that liberal peace can be crafted through internationally facilitated elite negotiations (Paris 2004). The case was no different in Sri Lanka. Civil Society organizations were geared up by donors and the International Community to build liberal peace in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan

civil society organizations used conventional development assistance ranging from infrastructure development to livelihood development. Conflict resolution was thus a new theme, and they turned into a lucrative trade for civil society entrepreneurs in the country. In this period, new forms of peace-building and advocacy-based NGOs mushroomed in Sri Lanka.

Most of the Western donors had an affinity for such NGOs rather than for typical community-based livelihood NGOs. The reason for this is twofold. Peace-building was priority and it was safer to fund peace-building than other typical civil society activism so that funds do not serve making arrangements for war. Both the above considerations are related and connected to securitization of aid. During the peace process, donors preferred advocacy-based civil society organizations working on conflict resolution that build on “Liberal Peace”. The purpose was to ensure relative ‘absence of war’. The question here is why. To the International Community the Sri Lankan war ‘unwanted’. As the US was at war in Afghanistan, it wanted stability in South Asia (Sivasegaram 2009). So, civil society organizations in Sri Lanka were funded to keep afloat the Norwegian brokered CFA. This should also be seen as an effect of securitization of aid.

The idea of giving priority to security in matters of aid had its downside in Sri Lanka during this period. Firstly, the nature of aid led to the neglect of conventional development assistance which makes a real difference among the people, and people did not experience any ‘peace dividend’. Secondly, the conditionality of aid meant that civil society organizations working on conflict resolution would have no grassroots contact. Thirdly, the security aspect of aid enjoyed utmost priority and Security Sector Reforms (SSR) was a major component of funding by Donors in Sri Lanka since 2002. This, in turn, strengthened the state’s military capability and made the security machinery more efficient. Fourthly, the LTTE used its front organizations such as Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO) to tap money from International

donors and others in the name of aid for Tamils in LTTE-controlled areas. The LTTE was most successful in using civil society organizations in this double-faced operation which legalized black money as well used it as a source for further funding (Flanigan 2008). Donors continued to fund these civil society organs to keep LTTE engaged in the peace process.

The failure of the peace process and a change of government led to a change in the general atmosphere in the country in 2006. Undeclared war between the two sides resumed and soon built up to full fledged war in 2008. The new government started to echo the rhetoric of US, including proclamations about 'war on terror'. Counter terrorism laws were passed and measures were taken to scrutinize channels of funding for civil society organizations. By this time the working dynamics of civil society organizations changed rapidly. The LTTE was declared a terrorist organization and banned in the US, UK, Canada, EU and Australia. As a chain reaction TRO and several other LTTE linked organizations around the world also were banned.

Eventually, the TRO was banned in Sri Lanka and organizations working with it faced problems. This created a schism among the civil society organizations, where there was already a clear divide among the actors with one section supporting the government's War on Terror and other opposed to it, based on principles of fundamental rights and human rights. Counter terror operations in the country meant that numerous human rights violations occurred with the blessings of the government. Division in the civil society got demarcated along the lines of pro- and anti-government positions. The Sri Lankan state made new legislations that would restrict and control activities of civil society organizations, based on security.

A Parliamentary Select Committee was appointed to look into matters concerning civil society organizations, based on aid and sources of aid. As a result the 'Berghof Foundation for Conflict Studies', an international NGO working on peace and conflict in Sri Lanka since 1998 was expelled and visa restrictions introduced for the expatriate staff of NGOs, The

committee further concluded that conflict-resolution based peace-building civil society actors are no more a necessity since the problem in the country concerns terrorism and not peace. The government asserted that the steps taken were in the interest of 'national security'. Measures by the government compelled NGOs to work with government, often work according to a government agenda. Thus conflict resolution was no more on the cards and civil society actors working on conflict resolution had no option but to stop their operations. Here, the security aspect severely affected the activities of civil society organizations, especially matters of conflict resolution as the government was against it. Moreover, vibrant and robust nationalistic organizations labelled those which talked of peace and conflict resolution as 'traitors to the nation'. The government kept insisting that its war was on terrorism and refused to discuss conflict resolution. This made irrelevant the idea of conflict resolution work by civil society organizations.

During armed conflict, the government adopted a hard-line approach towards civil society organizations working towards conflict resolution. Interestingly, during the peace process, civil society organs working for conflict resolution were encouraged and funded by donors, based on securitization of aid, in keeping with doctrine of global War on Terror. The Sri Lankan version of 'War on Terror' faced its civil society organizations using the logic of 'national security'. Since the end of the war, the government's attitude towards this sector of civil society organizations hardened and civil society organizations were seen a counter weight and threat to the government (Manoharan 2006). In a recent development, NGO Secretariat — the coordinating body for all civil society organizations in Sri Lanka — was brought under the Ministry of Defence.

The post war period saw more politically motivated violence on civil society actors critical of government, all of which was done on the pretext of addressing the threat to the national security. The government has created a situation where civil society organizations can work in Sri Lanka only if they accede to the agenda set by the government (MeeNilankco

2010). The dilemma for civil society organizations was whether or not to go along with the government. Donors, especially western donors who were proponents of securitization of aid, faced a difficult choice. The question they had to ask themselves was whether or not to provide aid to the local version of 'Global War on Terror' and, if not, how to justify that decision within the paradigm of securitization of aid.

Discussion and Conclusions

It has been argued above, based on the experiences of Sri Lanka, that post 9/11 developments have changed the working dynamics of civil society organizations in all ambits of operation. It was shown that securitization of aid has been the main driver of change of the working dynamics of civil society organizations. Most organizations, especially those in developing countries, rely on aid, and development assistance has always been used as a foreign policy tool to lever support of governments. Donor funding is the key for the success of any civil society organization success in general. In this respect, it can be safely said that donor agendas supersede the goals of the organization. Major donors are the ones whom are conducting the global War on Terror and part that regime, so it is imperative that they will use their funds to utilise their intended goals. Pressures of resource competition, bureaucratic procedures and increasing scrutiny of civil society organizations – especially charities – in the War on Terror have led mainstream groups to focus on their own survival and interests rather than speak out in support of defending the spaces and actors of civil society, in particular for human rights and liberties. Further research is needed to assert this in global terms.

As shown in relation to Sri Lanka, the 'securitization of aid' concept and linking security to aid has been used by states that fight their own War on Terror to suppress civil society organizations. Sri Lanka case is a classic example how the interconnection of aid and security enables the state to get away with gross violations without criticism as civil society organizations which protest were targeted as proponents or supporters of terrorism. The greater definition and ambit of terrorism and the ease with

which the governments labelled any group or person as terrorist made it hard for the civil sphere to function. Mutual suspicion and fear of being wrongly labelled played a role in civil society activism and coordination. This has almost played into the hands of the states which openly exercise repression and violence in the name of counter-terrorism, especially where civil society actors lacked coordination among them and could not play the role of a counter weight. It is true that the role of civil society organizations as a pillar of democracy will one day be questioned against the post-9/11 backdrop. But the question of who a terrorist is and who is not will for long remain within the civil space also.

A valid answer could be: "One man's terrorist is another's freedom fighter".

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GRAMSCIAN CONCEPTS

Gramsci's Use of the Term 'Civil Society'

Peter Custers

[What follows is an excerpt from 'Introducing Gramscian Concepts: Towards a Re-Analysis of Bangladesh's Political History' from Aritro, quarterly magazine of Bangladeshis in Germany, October-December, 2000. We publish this as a mark of respect to the late Dr Peter Custers and to familiarize our readers with the depth of his Marxist theoretical understanding. We are grateful to Ms Sumati Nair for her permission for us to publish his article in part in this issue and in full in the next issue of MLND.]

3. Gramsci's Use of the Term 'Civil Society'

Let's now try to delineate the meaning of each of Gramsci's concepts separately. The term civil society can be traced to the great 19th Century German philosophers. It was used both by Marx and by Hegel, from whom Marx borrowed (a part of) his method of analysis. Hegel had used the term civil society to refer to all *pre-state* relations, i.e. to all relations beyond the immediate sphere of the state. Thus, for Hegel, the term civil society included all economic relations. Further, Marx too had employed the term civil society in his writings, but contrary to Hegel had restricted it to refer only to the *economic base* of society. It can be very confusing to compare the definitions given by various philosophers for the same concept. Nevertheless, for a proper understanding of Gramsci's system of thought it is necessary to know that the definition of the term civil society has historically evolved, and that Gramsci transformed the meaning of the term to suit his own theoretical ends (see footnote).

To repeat for the sake of clarity, what has been briefly stated in the section above: Antonio Gramsci, contrary to Hegel and Marx, used the

term civil society exclusively to describe and conceptualise the *superstructure*, and in particular those institutions of the superstructure which do not (or not officially) form a part of the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state. They include church institutions; the educational establishments, ranging from primary schools to the academia; the media such as newspapers, journals and the radio; trade unions and political parties; and all other intermediate institutions that play a distinct role in the intellectual and moral life of society. In short, the term civil society covers *all the institutions located in the intermediate sphere of class society*. Gramsci realised, perhaps more sharply than other theoreticians of the workers' movement in his time, that the 'weight', the influence, of these institutions expands gradually as capitalist society evolves.

Further, there were concrete historic reasons impelling Gramsci to conceptualise capitalist society in the given manner. Gramsci believed that the failure to achieve a revolutionary transformation in countries of Western Europe after World War I needed a specific explanation.

After all, the expectation of imminent revolution had been quite widespread, reflected for instance in the theory of more or less automatic 'breakdown' of capitalism. Gramsci from his side believed that (then) existing Marxist analyses of revolutionary transformation were one-sidedly '*economistic*': they wrongly presumed that a crisis in production relations, in the base of society, would inevitably result in a revolutionary outburst, in the conquering by the working class of the institutions of the capitalist state. As Gramsci argued, Marxists had underestimated the influence which institutions belonging to civil society hold over the thought processes of subaltern classes. These institutions serve to ideologically reinforce the subservience of society's oppressed.

In other words, Gramsci's theoretical ideas were grounded in his analysis of European history, and it would not be wrong to state that the '*Prison Notebooks*' which contain his mature theoretical ideas, are Eurocentric in content. When comparing the political processes in France, Italy and other European countries, Gramsci primarily addressed the

increasing complexity of superstructural institutions and relations in so called 'advanced' capitalist societies. Yet, as we will see in the second part of this essay, the term civil society and other Gramscian concepts can very well be used to analyse the political evolution of East Bengal/Bangladesh during the twentieth century. Though most institutions belonging to the intermediate sphere were erected only in the later part of British colonial rule or more recently — they have in course of the previous century come to exert a crucial influence upon the intellectual and moral life of East Bengal/Bangladesh.

Lastly, it is necessary to emphasize once again that Gramsci considered civil society to be an arena of class struggle. It is here that different classes compete for ideological hegemony in society, and their competition can take a variety of forms, including both non-violent and violent forms. In recent decades, the concept of civil society, while neglected by Marxist parties, has been much *abused* by reformist propagandists, who aim at mystifying social relations and at confusing the public. Non-governmental organizations, for instance, project civil society as their arena for participation in bourgeois politics. Yet for Gramsci, the use of the term civil society was closely related to his conceptualisation of class society. He used the term not to weaken or undermine, but precisely to strengthen the class struggles of the proletariat and other classes striving to achieve liberation from exploitation, from oppression and from ideological domination by the bourgeoisie.

Footnote:

The differences between Hegel's and Marx's usages of the term *civil society* on the one hand, and Gramsci's on the other, have been discussed in depth by Norberto Bobbio, *Gramsci e la Concezione della Societa Civile* (which essay appeared in a Dutch translation in the Dutch Marxist journal *Te Elfder Ure* No.28, January 1981, p.367); here Bobbio argued that the theory of Gramsci heralded a fundamental renovation vis-a-vis the whole Marxist tradition; as Bobbio stated: in Gramsci's conceptualisation 'civil society does not belong to the base but to the superstructure (p.378).

Tribute to Comrade Subramaniam

Comrade KA Subramaniam lived with Determination and Honesty as a Politician for the People

Tamilmahan

The political arena of Sri Lanka has seen many a politician. A majority of them entered politics out of desire for power. Desire for power did not spare many of the exceptions. It was only the principled few who lived for their policy to the very end. Among them, of those whose voices rang out against authority as the voice of the toiling masses, a most remarkable voice was that of Comrade KA Subramaniam.

Comrade KA Subramaniam was the Founder Secretary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party — then the Sri Lanka Communist Party (Left) — and he played a distinct role in leaving the Ceylon Communist Party led by Comrade N Sanmugathan and building the new party.

His initiatives as the leader of the new party are memorable. The new party was founded, based on the decision that the path of liberation of the people of Sri Lanka comprised two revolutionary stages, namely the New Democratic Revolution and the Socialist Revolution, and that the party of the proletariat should carry forward the revolution.

When the liberation of the nationalities was put forward as a part of the programme for the New Democratic Revolution, Comrade Subramaniam asserted the position that the struggle against national oppression and a minimum solution for the national question should be included in the immediate programme for national democracy.

The Party acknowledged that, although the armed struggle that arose from amid the Tamil people of Sri Lanka cannot be considered a revolutionary struggle, it was a national democratic struggle against national oppression. Based on that, his contributions extended to initiating mass struggles against the Government's military actions against the Tamil people and showing the way to the setting up of the Mass Movement for Human Rights.

His interest and competence in building a revolutionary party, carrying forward mass struggles, and adapting Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought to the conditions prevailing in the country, and analyzing the national question were commendable.

It was because he had in him clear thinking, firmness, composure, courage, simple living and defiance of the enemy class to the very end, which are desirable characteristics for a communist fighter to possess that he was able to successfully perform his leading role in building a party of the proletariat and guiding it.

It will be appropriate to remember two important attributes of his leadership. The first is his carrying forward a struggle to build a communist party that was correct in both ideology and practice. This struggle has thus far been arduous in the context of the historical impact of Trotskyism on the left movement in the country.

Prospects for building a proletarian party appropriate to the specific conditions of the country were retarded by the mistakes made by the parliamentary left under the influence of Trotskyism. Yet Comrade Subramaniam struggled resolutely to his very end to build a correct communist party and successfully laid a foundation for it.

Secondly, rather than wait for a correct communist party to be built in order to carry forward mass struggles, he actively pursued revolutionary mass struggles for problems of the repressed people.

The value of the historical role played by Comrade Subramaniam will be understood if evaluated in the context of the events of that period against the above background. There are many lessons to learn from the history of the Communist party of Ceylon and the history of the Sri Lankan left movement in general. The success of the Hartal of 1953 was the success of united struggle. But it was not followed by the building of broad based unity led by the working class. The price that the left movement paid for that lapse was heavy.

If the Sri Lanka Freedom Party could destroy the unity of the workers, based on the 21 demands put forward by the powerful Joint Committee of Trade Unions Organisation, by tempting the left leaders with a few portfolios, it nothing but evidence of the sad state of the leaders of the left movement.

If right opportunism betrayed the working class struggle in that manner, the strength of the Marxist Leninist Communist Party which showed a steady growth between 1963 and 1968 was gradually depleted by dogmatic application of Marxism, using right opportunism as pretext. The rise of Sinhala chauvinism and of Tamil narrow nationalism as response to it also contributed to the weakening of Marxist Leninists.

One cannot deny the contribution of the shortcomings of the leadership to enable a movement like the JVP to project Sinhala chauvinist politics with an illusive impression of Marxism. We need to view the policy of Unity in Struggle comprising unity and struggle as an important lesson to learn from the 80-year history of the left movement. Comrade Subramaniam takes pride of place as one who practised it with clarity, both in theory and practice. That was why he was able to demonstrate that a Marxist Leninist party could be built in Sri Lanka, even after the severe setbacks suffered by the left.

A most important landmark in the history of the Sri Lankan left movement is the struggle against casteism. Comrade Subramaniam deserves credit for successfully leading and guiding the struggle. Revolutionary mass struggles arise from practice. Thus, the 'Mass Movement to Eliminate Untouchability' emerged from the uprising of 21st October 1966. During the struggle against casteism, some indulged in betrayal and some others in compromise with the enemy. On the other hand, a bogus left extremism sought to isolate the struggle by transforming the struggle against casteism into a struggle between castes.

Amid these, Comrade Subramaniam demonstrated through his deeds that the struggle for the people oppressed by caste, by working in collaboration with even those who upheld erroneous views, based on the line of Unity and Struggle, could transcend the caste barrier to achieve a class dimension and a character of broad-based mass struggle.

Another important attribute of Comrade Subramaniam was his ability to identify friendly forces and joining hands with them. All people have skills and capabilities, but they are not identical. Each of a variety of abilities, when encouraged in its own sphere, helps the advancement of society. Likewise, a communist party should make use of the abilities of people for the growth of the party and in its struggles.

It is a major responsibility of the leadership of a party to use the abilities of not merely those in the party but also those outside it. In that respect, Comrade Subramaniam identified the abilities of a wide range of people and used them for the benefit of the Party and its struggles.

He classified them into three groups as ones in the Party, friends of the Party and people at a distance from the Party but not hostile to it in conducting hid work. He studied the abilities of members of all three categories and patiently encouraged their capabilities. He had the knack to obtain from them in a systematic manner work that they could do for the party.

Of relationships that he maintained in this manner, that with Professor K Kailasapathy was important. Although there was a bond with Professor Kailasapathy from earlier on, it was the relationship with Comrade Subramaniam that was responsible for the continuous publication of articles by Professor Kailasapathy in the poetical journals of the Party.

Many who would not agree with the positions taken by the Party remained friendly forces. An instance where Comrade Subramaniam obtained useful inputs concerns his friendship with AJ Canagaratna.

Comrade Subramaniam was not a communist only in name or one who advanced his personal life by going along with the cruelties of society. Nor was he one who made dogmatic utterance of Marxist phrases.

One who take a political stand opposed to those in power and those who believe in military might needs exceptional courage. It takes more than courage to avoid being swept away by waves of narrow nationalism while rejecting the majoritarian racist positions. It takes determination, unfailing confidence and clear vision. Comrade Subramaniam was a fighter combined all these attributes in him.

It is no exaggeration to say that Comrade Subramaniam was a great communist fighter who guided others through living a revolutionary life in word and deed.

Fascism: Making it in India

The Indian corporate media holds the Hindu fascist fringe comprising the RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal and some in the BJP responsible for hate speech and whipping up of communal frenzy which are deflecting Modi regime's focus on development. They seek to establish that the Modi regime and the Hindu fascist fringe are separate entities. The truth is far from it.

Modi owes his position on the one hand to the Hindu fascists, both fringe and core, and on the other to the pro-West media who crave close ties with the US, based entirely on big capitalist interests. The print and electronic media were rallying points for the urban middle classes who imagined that they will have a stake in the new economic order of unlimited privatization and opening up of national resources to imperialist plunder, with a section of that class even willing to accommodate the Hindutva agenda of the BJP. They also expected 'clean and efficient government', and Modi seemed to start with a bang. But endemic incompetence and corruption got the better of him. Soon he could not even pretend to run a clean or efficient government.

The Anti-Muslim Agenda

The fascist agenda did not, however, lose direction, and proceeded independently of the plans of the Modi regime for the Indian economy. The Modi regime knowingly yielded to the Hindutva agenda and let state governments with the BJP and its Hindutva allies in control have a free hand in imposing the Hindutva agenda as well as turn a blind eye to anti-Muslim violence provoked and sustained by the Hindu fascist fringe. There was, as a result, an overall rise in anti-Muslim violence. Hindutva forces in positions of power acted to undermine the nominally secular nature of the Indian state. None of these, including attacks on Christian churches and communities, affected imperialist interests in India because

imperialism — despite its anti-Islamist agenda, partly a consequence of its colonial past and partly of its mischievous use of Islam to serve its global political ends — has turned a blind eye to religious fascism in Asia as long as the fascist agenda did not hurt imperialist economic interests.

The RSS has again stirred up the issue of introducing a uniform Civil Code for all citizens irrespective of religion or ethnicity, as already in practice in BJP-ruled Goa. The proposed uniform Civil Code was aimed at the Muslims and designed to build the impression that existing laws allow Muslims to be a nation within a nation, which is unacceptable.

At a national executive meeting of the RSS at Kochi in October 2013, Joint Secretary Hosabale called on Hindus to have more children. The RSS stirs the fear that Hindus will be a minority in India in the not-too-distant future. The purpose is purely to pander to existing anti-Muslim prejudices feeding on the paranoid anti-Muslim campaign which gained momentum, following the decline of the Congress to the advantage of the BJP.

The question of cow slaughter — an issue which rose and fell some decades ago — was revived as part of the anti-Muslim agenda, in ways similar to the anti-beef and anti-halal-labelling issues in Sri Lanka a few years ago. While there is restriction on cow slaughter across most of India, ban on beef is a recent move, designed to target Muslims more politically than economically in states where the BJP took power. While Christians, Dalits and some of the tribal (Adivasi) population have no inhibitions about beef consumption as do a rising number of urban ‘upper caste Hindus’. Since Modi took office, hard-line Hindus have been trying to force a national ban on beef sales – a key industry for many within India’s poor, minority Muslim community. This drew public attention following the Dadri Lynching of 28th September 2015, where a BJP mob bludgeoned to death Mohammad Akhlaq, a Muslim after forcibly entering his house. It also seriously injured his son.

BJP’s arrogant attitude was such that, following a national furore, government and BJP personalities offered callous utterances like “this is just an accident” (Mahesh Sharma, Minister of Culture); “it is not the

Hindu community's responsibility to maintain peace" (BJP MP Tarun Vijay); the lynch mob comprised "children barely 10-15 years old" (local BJP leader Nawab Singh Nagar); the police should take "legal action against those people, who are engaged in cow slaughter" (local BJP leader Vichitra Tomar); the police did not take action and "some people got agitated" (BJP district president Thakur Harish Singh); "This happens every day. When we hurt people's sentiments, such clashes take place." (Shrichand Sharma, vice-president, western UP unit of BJP). (For more details see: http://www.huffingtonpost.in/2015/10/01/bjp-leaders-dadri-murder_n_8225574.html?1443711117&utm_hp_ref=india). BJP's Manohar Lal Khattar, Chief Minister, Haryana, who wanted Muslims to stop eating beef out of respect for the sentiments of Hindus, beat a retreat — after his words received global publicity — to plead that his words "have been misconstrued and twisted" (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Haryana-CM-denies-saying-Muslims-have-to-give-up-beef/articleshow/49402529.cms>). But the damage was done.

Modi broke his silence on 8th October, avoiding condemning the murder (The Hindu, 9th October 2015). That encouraged Hindutva goons. On 16th October in Haryana a village mob beat a Muslim man to death with sticks and injured four others, but the police arrested the four surviving victims of attack for alleged animal cruelty, not the attackers.

The ban on beef used for lynching Muslims was hypocritical since, despite BJP's long campaign for a complete ban on cow slaughter, India is now the world's largest exporter of beef. Also, Sangeet Som, BJP MLA for Meerut — an accused in the Muzzafarnagar Riot of August–September 2013, that killed at least 62 including 42 Muslims and 20 Hindus, injured 93, and displaced more than 50,000, mostly Muslims — who brazenly justified the murder of Akhlaq and demanded the release of the arrested, claiming that they were "innocent". Sangeet Som, interestingly, was the director of the Meat Processing Plant 'Al Dua' which, according to Alibaba, a major e-commerce website, exports beef and buffalo meat. (<http://cpim.org/views/myth-hindutva-fringe>). Such is Hindutva hypocrisy.

The Anti-Secular Agenda

The BJP regime's march towards fascism has another priority in its agenda, namely suppression of secular thought. This has manifested at different levels. The project to saffronize text books started in earnest early this century. The RSS gave importance to rewriting of history as a major strategy, and adopted a two-pronged approach.

In 2002, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government sought to change school textbooks published through the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) by using a new National Curriculum Framework, which aimed to highlight the profile of Hindu cultural norms, views and historical personalities in school textbooks as well as a distorted picture of Indian history and Indian culture (for example, "Vedic science"). The Congress-led United Peoples' Alliance that came to power in 2004 reversed the process and pledged to "de-saffronize" textbooks and curricula nationwide to restore the secular character of education with new NCERT textbooks, based on the texts used before the controversial 2002 updates. Following the return of the BJP in 2014 with a massive parliamentary majority, BJP's old agenda is back on track.

Senior RSS leaders had instructed ministers from the BJP to lay emphasis on education, ensuring that textbooks reflect the 'real' history and to find a place for Sanskrit in the school curriculum. With the new government education policy set to be announced in early 2015, right wing bodies and ideologues, especially the RSS have been on overdrive to demand changes to rectify 'the flawed history narrative taught to students across the country'. In November 2014, the NDA government controversially decided to replace German with Sanskrit as the third language in Kendriya Vidyalaya schools (source: Hindustan Times, Nagpur, Internet edition, updated: Dec 18, 2014).

The more important attack on secularism, however, lay outside textbooks. Publication of textbooks takes time and serious historians and credible authors of textbooks mostly lie outside the reach of the BJP. The electronic media and the entertainment industry have proven to be more

effective in popularizing the Hindutva myth. Using great Indian classics the Ramayana and Mahabharata, their subtexts and Hindu mythology as entertainment is not new. But the recent trend of tampering with the text to modify the source beyond recognition has added a new dimension. 'Ancient-science fiction' could be an appropriate term to describe them. These as well as children's books on Indian history designed to propagate Hindu arrogance in the name of cultural pride have an even stronger impact on young minds than school text books do.

Tampering with history has been necessary not only to brainwash the young Hindu minds about the 'glorious Hindu past' which was laid barren by Muslim conquerors but also to justify acts of vandalism like the demolition of the Babar Masjid on pretext that it was located near the birth place of the mythological Hindu god Rama, and the sectarian project to erect a temple for Rama in its place (**Censorship: A World Encyclopaedia**, ed. Derek Jones, Routledge, 2001, p. 154). Secular thinkers are obstacles to any sectarian agenda and need to be weeded out by any means possible. Among many instances are the resignation, under political pressure, by Ram Reddy as editor of the highly regarded Economic and Political Weekly in December 2015 well before his expected retirement date of 31st March 2016, and before a successor was found. The resignation led to a strong protest by 101 globally acclaimed academics and contributors. (<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/epw-editors-exit-101-academics-write-dreze-quits-board/>).

More violent means comprised physical attack and murder in the name of defending Hinduism to silence prominent secular activists. It started with Dr Narendra Dabholkar (20th August 2013), and was followed by communist and trade union activist Govind Pansare (attacked 16th February 2015, died 20th February) and Prof MM Kalburgi (30th August 2015) . However, it was the beef lynching of Mohammad Akhlaq that triggered the returning of Sahitya Academy, national and state awards in quick succession. The BJP's efforts to attribute sectarian political motives to this strong response of leading literary the impact served only to dent

the credibility of the BJP regime, both nationally and internationally. (<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/oct/14/indian-writers-return-awards-in-protest-against-climate-of-intolerance>)

Hindu fascism was not easily deterred, the campaign of intimidation of public personalities persisted. Sudheendra Kulkarni, chairman of the Observer Research Foundation, suffered an ink attack on 12th October 2015 in Bombay, ahead of the launch of “Neither a Hawk Nor a Dove: An Insider's Account of Pakistan's Foreign Relations” by Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, former foreign minister of Pakistan. The attack was by the BJP's ally Shiv Sena which, according to Kulkarni, had opposed the event and threatened to disrupt it.

Anti-Intellectual Attacks

Fascist fear of free opinion found explicit expression in the withdrawal of recognition in May 2015 to the Ambedkar-Periyar Study Circle (APSC) by IIT-Madras which lets several right-wing organisations, ranging from RSS groups to bodies like the Vivekananda Study Circle function unhindered. The APSC was given ‘notice of de-recognition’ within an year of its founding, following a complaint by RSS students to the Ministry of Human Resource Development which took up with IIT-Madras “the distribution of controversial posters and pamphlets in the campus” and “creating an atmosphere of hatred among students by one student group” as well as sowing disaffection against the Prime Minister and Hindus. It took a sustained nationwide campaign for IIT-Madras to relent.

That was barely the tip of the iceberg. Worse followed in 2016. On 16th January, Rohith Vemula, a Dalit student, committed suicide following disciplinary action by the Hyderabad Central University (HCU). He was a member of the Ambedkar Students' Association (ASA) at the HCU, which ran afoul of the Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), an RSS affiliated student outfit, because it organized a prayer meeting on 30th July 2015 for Yakub Memon following his execution by the Indian government for his alleged role in the 1993 Bombay blasts. (Memon's trial and

sentencing, like Afzal Guru's, was controversial, and even intelligence officials questioned the fairness of the verdict and the decision to execute.) The ABVP, with BJP's backing, ran a campaign of harassment against the ASA, and compelled the HCU through the Ministry of Human Resource Development to suspend Vemula and four others. The punishment was later amended in December 2015 to expulsion from hostel and debarring from student political work. Vemula committed suicide soon after, leaving behind a deeply poignant suicide note that read in part: "The value of a man was reduced to his immediate identity and nearest possibility. To a vote. To a number. To a thing. Never was a man treated as a mind." (<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/dalit-scholar-rohith-vemulas-suicide-letter-clarity-of-a-suicide-note/article8130703.ece>) The death provoked weeks of public discussion and protest about the continuation of caste oppression in India. His suicide note was a serious indictment of the institutions of higher education in India which sustain discrimination against depressed communities, some overtly and others covertly.

The ABVP waited its turn, which arrived when the students of the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) held an event titled "The Country Without a Post Office" on 9th February 2016 campus, attended by representatives from most of JNU's political outfits. The event, organised in solidarity with the struggle of the Kashmiri people for their democratic right to self-determination and, among other things, to protest the 'judicial killing' of Afzal Guru, took place despite the JNU administration cancelling permission following a complaint by ABVP members, who called the activity as anti-national. A scuffle between the ABVP and the Left organisations followed the event. It is true that there was provocative sloganeering by some at the fringes of a gathering but not from the meeting itself. The JNU administration erred in letting the police enter the campus without provocation, when there was room for dialogue. (See: <http://sanhati.com/articles/16181/#sthash.ll4Hg42S.dpuf>). The build-up to the crisis was rapid, and there is reason to believe that it was carefully orchestrated.

Maheish Giri, BJP MP from East Delhi, on 11th February lodged an FIR against 'anti-national' students of Jawaharlal Nehru University who opposed the death penalty to parliament attack convict Afzal Guru. On 12th February, Home Minister Rajnath Singh warned of "strongest possible" action against those involved in raising anti-India slogans the JNU campus; and SAR Geelani former Lecturer in Arabic at Delhi University was arrested for sedition (and later released) in connection with an event at Press Club of India, where a group shouted slogans hailing Afzal Guru. Kanhaiya Kumar, president of the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students Union (JNUSU) was arrested in a case of sedition and criminal conspiracy by the Delhi police acting in connivance with ABVP to target the "entire Left". The JNU debarred eight students from academic activities, pending disciplinary enquiry. The whole episode was scripted and staged to punish the left-dominated student's union and subdue the JHU with a reputation for left and secular thinking. (Read more at: <http://www.oneindia.com/feature/jnu-timeline-protest-over-afzal-guru-hangingsedition-row-who-said-what-explained-2014876.html>).

In their push for overkill, the Hindutva conspirators, with support from a section of the police, doctored a video of the address by Kanhaiya Kumar to ensure prolonged detention. But that attempt misfired following the exposure of doctored video, which expedited Kanhaiya Kumar's release on bail and dented the credibility of the Delhi Police. His arrest and the organisation of "anti-JNU" demonstrations in Delhi by the BJP and by Hindu organisations on 12th February were political moves to assert and violently protect a conservative social morality. The aggressive identification of an enemy of the nation, specifically within universities, briefly distracted attention from the demands for social change provoked by Vemula's death. (<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/03/india-students-jnu-protest-narendra-modi-bjp/>)

In both the HCU and JNU, Hindutva fascists manipulated the death penalty issue to mobilize popular sentiment and foment Islamophobia. In the HCU, ABVP's attack on Dalit students laid bare the pretence of Hindu

nationalism which has for long tried to court Dalits to pit them against Muslims in the name of a single Hindu majoritarian identity. But their deeply entrenched casteism came to the fore in the hostile response of Hindu nationalism to the radical Dalit movement, demanding the annihilation of caste amid devastating critiques of Hinduism.

The Way Forward

A positive outcome of the two events is the bonding between HCU and JNU students. One of the suspended HCU students attending a rally at JNU underlined the similarities between both instances of right-wing repression. On 23rd February, many JNU students marched alongside HCU students and Dalit activists in Delhi to protest injustices faced by Vemula and demand the introduction of a law to end caste discrimination in educational institutions. In a speech on the JNU campus, Umar Khalid, a JNU Marxist Leninist student activist cited Vemula's suicide note, saying that he had never considered himself a Muslim until the media reduced him to this identity, and that students would fight together to ensure the tragedy of Vemula's death would not be repeated.

Further, these are not the only solidarities being forged at the moment. As the JNU saga unfolded, workers at a Honda factory just south of Delhi went on strike, the latest instance of labour militancy in this restive industrial belt. Several of the striking workers came to the JNU campus and spoke of their movement, their support of the JNU students, and the need to build stronger connections between workers and students. (<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/03/india-students-jnu-protest-narendra-modi-bjp/>)

Historically, the relationship between Dalit movements and the left has been uneasy, especially since Dalit entry into parliamentary politics in which the Old Left has fully immersed itself. Dalit activists, including Vemula, have rightly criticized the Old Left's habit of dismissing caste issues in the name of class analysis, and the domination of the two main left parties by the upper castes. The Revolutionary Left, however, locates

struggles against caste and national oppression within the framework of class struggle while, in given contexts, even placing them on par, with class struggle.

These are positive developments on which the anti-fascist movement should build. There is, however, the need to bring together various left, progressive and democratic forces under one anti-fascist, anti-imperialist umbrella, as the link between fascism and imperialism is strong and hence the anti-fascist and anti-imperialist cannot be isolated.

The anti-fascist agenda should not be oversimplified as secularism, although it is an important or even an integral part of it. It has to accommodate seemingly centrifugal tendencies based on identity issue without denouncing such tendencies a sectarian. Thus to develop a broad-based anti-fascist mass movement there is a need to have a general programme for the whole of India which will accommodate sector-wise programmes to address issues specific to different regions and communities.

As a first step, the Marxist Leninist left which is the most qualified to politically lead and organizationally mobilize the Indian masses as an anti-fascist, anti-imperialist mass movement for the liberation of the India from the clutches of imperialism and its fascist accomplices backed by big business, should free itself of some of its old ailments.

The concept of a broad-based mass movement needs to be reactivated among left movements and sectarianism raising its head in the name of ideological purity should be firmly resisted. Ideological purity is of no use in isolation from the masses and is as bad as populist opportunist policies which lack principle. The Marxist Leninist left should have confidence in its political line to the point that it does not feel threatened by working with organizations with ideological differences, but are even potentially anti-imperialist and anti-fascist.

Dissent will grow louder

Manisha Shastri

**"Dissent will grow louder,
Louder and Louder,
Even their deaf ears
Will be forced to listen,
The scream for justice,
Will grow louder and louder.**

**How many will you kill?
More of us will rise,
Onto the streets we will spill
Fight with all our might.**

**Our causes may be different,
But our enemy is one,
In solidarity we all stand.**

**Our dissent will grow louder,
Louder and Louder
Your deaf ears will be forced to listen**

**The country will see,
Its own version of the Arab Spring,
Gone are the days of silence,
Quiet we will not stay.**

**Violent peace a lasted too long,
It's time to throng the streets,
Let's sing our revolutionary songs!"**

(Rohith Vemula's suicide on 17th January 2016 in protest against caste discrimination in the Hyderabad Central Universty stirred nationwide protests. The writer of this poem dedicated to Rohith and fighters for justice across India is active in the fields of disability, mental health and child rights. Source: <http://lsh.re/X234>, via Liberation News Service.)

A Government Edging Towards Disarray

Having had 68 years of parliamentary government, people of the country have little reason to hope for good parliamentary governance. But they vote, at times by habit, at times by temptation, or out of sheer boredom.

Being rid of a regime which was accelerating in the direction of a corrupt, family-controlled fascistic dictatorial regime was a relief to many. But, for certain, Mahinda Rajapaksa — now not the insuperable national leader that he was throughout to be after winning the Presidential Election of 2009 — is the most popular politician around. He misjudged the worth of Sinhala chauvinism, and aligning with fascist thugs like the BBS cost him the Presidential and Parliamentary Elections of 2015.

The alliance cobbled together to defeat Rajapaksa at the Presidential Elections had no serious political agenda, except to address what were perceived as the most salient faults of the Rajapaksa regime. As for the concerns addressed in the election manifesto of the common candidate Maithripala Sirisena, serious attempt was made to fulfil just one, namely elimination of the executive presidency. The Supreme Court ruled that the elimination of the executive presidency would need a referendum. Thus the plan to transfer much of the executive power from the President to Prime Minister was curtailed. Short term interests subverted consensus on reform of the electoral system. The pledge to restrict cabinet size to 25 ministers was stillborn in the face of the need to secure a parliamentary majority. Action against corruption and steps to punish past offenders were weak and at most partial.

When the “Good Governance” manifesto for the Presidential Election pledged a balanced foreign policy, the putative national government led by a UNP-SLFP alliance was expected to distance the country from China

and locate it politically and economically close to the US and the West. But objective reality dictated otherwise. Every minister who made strong anti-China utterances was soon humbly pleading for more Chinese investment.

On the other hand, India — whose performance *vis-a-vis* the Indo-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement of 1998 led to strong resentment among the professional and business communities of Sri Lanka — could not get the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) proposed in 2008 — to rectify the flaws in the FTA and strengthen economic ties — off the ground despite strong pressure from India. The Indian government then came up with the Indo Sri Lanka Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement (ETCA) in 2015, following the visit of Prime Minister Wickremesinghe and plan to have the agreement signed by May 2016.

Despite heavy canvassing on the part of the Sri Lankan government and its professional agents, ETCA faces stiff resistance from large sections of the professional and small business communities, although the big business represented by the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce has been won over. Prime Minister Wickremesinghe and President Sirisena have so far failed to quash suspicion that ETCA is a fresh attempt to re-introduce CEPA. The recent surreptitious introduction of an Indian ambulance service has not helped alleviate public suspicions about Indian intentions and connivance of the Sri Lankan government.

What is significant here is the prospect of India being used as a component of the planned Indo-Pacific regional “pivot” of the US to contain China. The US, for now, feeds the great power ambitions of the Indian ruling elite to thoroughly integrate Sri Lanka economically, militarily and politically. Thus the seemingly casual remarks by Prime Minister Wickremesinghe about a land link between India and Sri Lanka cannot be lightly dismissed.

The government, despite declaring an even more liberal economic policy than its predecessors by letting foreigners own land in the country and offering massive tax concessions has thus far failed to attract investment that will lead to economic development. On the other hand,

efforts to privatize higher education and public health are gathering speed.

Nationally, the pledge to release political prisoners has not been honoured. The government has justified continued detention of political prisoners by declaring that there are no political prisoners and that those in detention are held on charges of terrorism. It seems that the government feels obliged to please the Sinhala Buddhist chauvinists whose support it used to secure power.

Inquiries into political murders and kidnappings under the previous regime are proceeding at snail's pace and legal action against corruption and abuse of power are slow and selective, and appear to be timed to bring political pressure on opponents rather than to inquire into misdeeds and punish the culprits. The latter is hard to achieve as the government relies on members of the former government to sustain its overwhelming majority in parliament.

Matters that once irked the public include the abuse of the position by members of the government as well as children and other members of the family. There was expectation that 'good governance' will be free of such abuse. The President violated a basic principle by taking his son Daham Sirisena with him to the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2015. On 13th March 2016 Daham Sirisena went one further to land onstage during the awards ceremony of the 137th Royal-Thomian cricket match.

Between the two episodes, parliamentarian Hirunika Premachandra was accused of abduction and assault of a person on 21st December and Minister Champika Ranawaka of driving a hit-and-run vehicle on 28th February. Police action was slow in both cases. Since 1978 massive bribery, corruption, nepotism, links between politicians and the world of crime and abuse of privilege have assimilated to the political culture of the country. It will be folly to expect that changing personalities soaked in that culture to change bad habits. Thus matters of law and order are likely to worsen as the government further consolidates power.

During the elections, no major political alliance declared its position on the national question, although there has been a secret understanding between the UNP-led alliance — which includes some of the worst Sinhala Buddhist chauvinists — and the TNA, the Muslim and Hill Country Tamil leaders. But there has been nothing concrete. For political reasons Tamil nationalist leaders are demanding an international inquiry into war crimes. But the government has only secured remission and not release from the prospect of an international inquiry being imposed on it.

Besides the continued detention of political prisoners, vexing issues for many thousands in the North and East include prolonged delays in returning army occupied land, continued military presence in areas with a large civilian population, denial of the right of fishermen to go to sea along certain stretches of the coastline and inability of the displaced to return to their homes and denial of livelihood. To add to their frustration, the government has — partly under Indian government pressure and partly based on the indifference of Tamil nationalist political parties — been lax in dealing with poaching by Indian trawlers in Sri Lankan waters in the north and northwest of the country's territorial waters. Poachers arrested by the navy and occasionally by local fishers are promptly released, on demand by the Indian government.

The economy seems rudderless so that the budget proposals had to be revised several times in the face of middle class protest. Recent announcement of increase in the VAT and other indirect taxes will burden the low income groups, especially the peasantry denied of subsidies, plantation workers denied of a wage increase, and private sector employees whose modest wage increases are resisted by employers.

That the government will be repressive has been made clear by the brutal handling by the police of protests by students. That is inevitable since the government has no economic development policy except the sale of local labour on the cheap to foreign exploiters.

Will We Remain in Slumber or Awaken to Struggle for Our Rights?

None can deny that tea production plays an essential role in generating the national income of this country. But who is behind this tea production? That neither government nor plantation companies care about their living conditions is a matter of anguish. Plantation workers with over 75 years of trade union history are neglected in matters of wage, land ownership, housing, drinking water, health services and education among others.

Estate management still indulges in the practice of deceiving workers by paying very low wages as overtime on working days and holidays. On the other hand, the trade unions which survive on their membership subscriptions have from time to time let them down and betrayed them while living a life of luxury at their expense.

Trade unions were started essentially to secure the well being of workers and their rights. But everyone knows that, as far as plantation workers are concerned, from the very outset, they have been used as pawns in the politics of trade unions. Leaders of all trade unions which are based on plantation workers talk about the rights of plantation workers only during elections. The moment polling is over and they secure their positions, they function on behalf of the ruling classes.

In the current context, the cause for the dragging on of the question of wages of plantation workers is the lackadaisical attitude of the trade unions. While the wages of employees of all sectors including government employees have been increased in accordance with changing times and rising cost of living expenses, the wages of plantation workers alone remains neglected. It is opportune now for the plantation workers to take the crucial decision whether they continue as members of trade unions which have not secured their rights or leave them and struggle independently for their rights.

Rally to the Hill Country Mass Organization for Social Justice, which is ready to fight for your rights and secure them. Unity is strength!

Marx Prababakar

Hill Country Movement for Social Justice, Haputale

1000 Rupees Wage for Plantation Workers can be Won Only Through Mass Struggle

It is well known that the Collective Agreement expired on 31st March 2015. There were hollow struggles and showers of statements pledging to secure a daily wage of Rs 1000. The claims warmed up during the season of elections. Arumugm Thondaman promised a daily wage of Rs 1000 if Mahinda Rajapaksa won. Digamparam, without committing himself, challenged Arumugm Thondaman to secure a wage of Rs 1000. At the closing stages of the elections, the Progressive Tamil Alliance pledged that they will secure a wage of Rs 1000.

Had only the question of wage for the plantation workers been resolved in favour of the Employers' Federation prior to the General Election, the people would have voted in much smaller numbers. That could have had a serious impact in the parliamentary political scene. Knowing this well, the plantation trade union leaders too, in their reactionary diplomatic style which strikes at the belly of the plantation workers, pledged that they will secure the wage after the elections.

As expected, the trade unions and the new government, let down the workers, and now say in a confusing manner that the wage will be Rs 770. This not the real full day's wage, and is inadequate to meet living expenses. The government's indifference on the issue that has dragged on since 31st March has proven that the new regime is no different from the old. This attitude has strengthened the hands of the Employers' Federation.

Working class forces should realize that the unions, like government, are siding with the employers, and we call upon them to reject reactionary trade unions and come forward on a broad basis to struggle for a daily wage of Rs 1000. If the workers struggle for a wage of Rs 1000, they can win it and matters will forever be in favour of the workers.

S. Mohanraj

Matale District Secretary, Hill Country Movement for Social Justice

NDMLP Statement to the Media

1st March 2016

Release Tamil Political Detainees

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued the following statement on the delay in releasing Tamil political detainees.

The so-called “Good Governance” government continues to refuse the release of Tamil political prisoners who have been detained without trial for a long time. This makes one ask whether the intention of the government is to kill them in prison. Tamil detainees have frequently launched hunger strikes to press their demand for release. They are presently on one such protest. As a result their health has deteriorated. Their struggle demanding release is fully justified. The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party urges that the Maithri-Ranil regime which talks much about reconciliation, humanitarianism and democracy should at least now release Tamil political prisoners without delay.

The NDMLP, through the National Organization for the Release of Political Prisoners comprising the Party and other left, progressive and democratic parties and organizations, has conducted a number of mass activities to secure the release of Tamil political prisoners. Recently a Party delegation visited Tamil political prisoners at the Magazine Prison and inquired from them of their conditions. The same day, the delegation visited the Human Rights Commission and had discussions about the plight of the prisoners and about the prospects of taking legal action. During the discussions we pleaded for the urgent release of the detainees.

There are long sagas of sorrow of prison life behind every political prisoner. The physical and mental health of political prisoners has deteriorated owing to prolonged detention. Their parents, siblings and spouses are suffering. Anti-terrorism legislation is blocking the release of

political prisoners. Hence the Party re-emphasizes rescinding the legislation. The UN Commissioner for Human Rights who visited the country recently said that General Amnesty for political prisoners is not possible and that the law has to be followed. This too turned out in favour of the government. The Tamil leadership remains silent on the matter. Why is the Tamil leadership hesitant to point out that political prisoners have been granted General Amnesty thrice before in Sri Lanka.

The Party strongly condemns the indifference of the government when there is room for the release of political prisoners under General Amnesty or through legal procedure by the Attorney General's Department.

SK Senthivel
General Secretary
New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party

NDMLP Statement to the Media

26th December 2015

Experts' Report on Chunnakam Water

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued the following statement on the Report of the Northern Provincial Council's Committee of Experts on Chunnakam Water.

The Committee of Experts appointed by the Northern Provincial Council has failed to give a clear answer to the question whether the water in the wells surrounding the Chunnakam electrical power station is potable. As a result, there is suspicion whether the Committee of Experts is attempting to conceal the truth from the people. Hence the Northern Provincial Council and the Government should break their silence and provide the due answers. The President should directly intervene in the matter and affirm the right of the people to clean water.

During the past year up to 500 wells in the four Regional Secretariats surrounding the Chunnakam electrical power station have been polluted with waste oil. Mass campaigns were conducted to demand clean water and to determine who was responsible for the contamination. The Water

Supply and Drainage Board and activity groups for clean water published reports which said that the water was not potable owing to waste oil contamination. The matter of waste oil contamination of groundwater went to the law courts. Suspicions were that Northern Power, an electric power generation company was responsible for the contamination. It was at this stage that the Northern Provincial Council appointed its Committee of Experts. The Preliminary Report of the Committee was woolly.

The present Final Report also seems to conceal the truth. This report by the Committee of Experts rather than comment on the contaminated groundwater in Chunnakam draws attention to faecal matter and nitrates in the groundwater of the Jaffna peninsula. This is barking up the wrong tree. Thereby the Committee of Experts appointed by the Northern Provincial Council appears to be concealing the truth. At the same time the silence of the Provincial Council and the Ministry concerned are causing stronger suspicion among the public.

On 13th April 2015, the Party explained to the President by urgent letter the problem of water contamination. The Presidential Secretariat informed it that the Water Supply and Drainage Board will take the necessary steps. The Party hence urges the Central Government and the Provincial Council to take necessary steps to provide the people with clean water.

SK Senthivel
General Secretary
New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party

NDMLP Media Briefing at Matale

28th November 2015

The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party held a media briefing at Matale on Saturday 28th November 2015 at the auditorium of the Serico Restaurant, Matale. NDMLP General Secretary Comrade SK Senthivel who participated in the briefing made the following statement:

The Rajapaksa government conducted its one-man dictatorship in a fascistic manner for nine years and the NDMLP, like other democratic,

progressive and left forces, struggled alongside the ordinary working masses to bring down the regime. The coalition referred to as the regime of “Good Governance” has been in power for eleven months. But the reality is that the little faith that the people had in it gradually declining. The absence thus far of a pro-people solution for the economic crisis and the national question — the two major issues confronting the people — deserves criticism and condemnation. Good governance exists only in name, but what goes on in practice is a continuation of the old order. Ranil Wickremesinghe through his economic schemes is affirming that he is a legitimate successor to JR Jayewardene.

Ours is essentially an agricultural country with a 75% rural structure. Planning should be according to objective conditions in the country and consider geographical, political, social and cultural features. The country cannot be developed by imitating other countries. Today, 43% of the population is living on two US dollars (Rs 260) or less per day. This is due to the success of the open economic policy and neo-colonial practices pursued since 1977.

The present budget is based on the advice of experts from the World Bank, the IMF, the US and countries of the West. It appears that attempts are afoot by the regime of the UNP, the SLFP and their allies to curtail state welfare, cut grants, impose further taxes on the people, and lay hands on the Employees Welfare Fund and the Employees Trust Fund. Further, devious moves are noticeable in the name of modernizing pensions. The revolutionary budget of the ‘Good Governance’ regime while increasing charges for testing motor vehicles to test combustion and smoke has removed obstacles for foreigners to buy land.

Distant lights are shown that there will be a solution for the national question in the proposed new Constitution. How can we expect a government which is reluctant to devolve power to provincial and local government to put forward a just solution? It is said that the government by enabling R Sampanthan to become Leader of the Opposition than let the opposition elect the Leader of the Opposition seeks to achieve

reconciliation. Then, why is no effort made to build reconciliation through the unconditional release of political prisoners?

The good governance regime is only implementing a programme to please big capitalists and the US, Western and Indian masters. The good governance regime, through attacking students, has declared its position that it will suppress mass struggles.

Women's Day Event

On 12th March 2016 a Women's Day celebration event was held at the Kavignar Murukaiyan Auditorium of the Deshiya Kalai Ilakkiyap Peravai, Jaffna. The meeting was chaired by Ms Srilekha Perinpakumar. Following the address from the chair Ms Vaideki Balamurali delivered the keynote address followed by special addresses by Mr M Mauran and Ms Vahni Kathirkamanahan. A debate followed on the theme of modern day woman, addressed by Ms Vidurshika Sivaramachandran, Ms Kejika Sritharan, Ms Dilakshana Thangaraja and Ms Dilajni Ratnasingam.

Street Blockade by Plantation Workers to Protest Non-payment of wages

Workers from five divisions of the Sembuwatte Estate, Elkaduwa, Matale District have been on a demonstration from 10th December obstructing the main road since their wage dues remained unpaid by 10th December. Local and foreign tourists visiting the Sembuwatte Lake, a noted tourist attraction, had to be turned back as a result.

The workers held placards demanding payment of outstanding wage after deducting the Deepavali festival advance, an increase of daily wage to Rs. 1000, the provision of infrastructural facilities, submission to the public accounts for the more than two million rupees earned from tourists visiting the Sembuwatte Lake, tidying of the plantations and payment of wages on schedule, among others.

The people of the plantations said that if the outstanding wage was not paid by 11th December, they would launch massive campaigns in Matale by bringing together the 20 divisions of the nine estates belonging to the Elkaduwa Plantation Company. They also declared that they will teach a proper lesson to politicians and trade union leaders when they come to canvass for votes in elections to come.

The Hill Country Mass Organization for Social Rights supported the campaign by the workers.

Release of Political Prisoners

Demonstration in Matale

28th November 2015

An awareness demonstration was held at the Clock Tower Junction, Matale on Sunday 15th November 2015 by the Hill Country Mass Organization for Social Rights demanding the release of political detainees on continuous hunger strike in various prisons in the country. Members of families of detainees and members of the New Democratic Youth League, New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party, Frontline Socialist Party and the National Movement for the Release of Political Prisoners participated in the demonstration.

Human Rights Day Demonstration

A demonstration was held on Human Rights Day, 10th November 2015, demanding due answers regarding those who have been disappeared, freedom for political prisoners, nullification of ant-terrorism legislation and respect all human rights was held in Vavuniya. Participants in this demonstration organized by the Committee for Investigation of Disappearance included the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party as well as the Vavuniya Citizens' Committee, The Nava Samasamaja Party the Tamil National Alliance and the Tamil National Peoples' Front.

A procession from the Vavuniya Bus Station to Vairavapuliyankulam followed the demonstration with massive participation by the people, and the day's events concluded with a conference.

Comrade KA Subramaniam Commemorated

Colombo

The 26th commemoration of Comrade KA Subramaniam, revolutionary forerunner of the communist movement and founder General Secretary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party, was held in Colombo at the Kailasapathy Auditorium of the Deshiya Kalai Ilakkiyap Peravai, Colombo 6 from 4.00 p.m. on 29th November 2015.

Comrade Tharmalingam Sriprakash delivered the keynote address titled "Politics of Accommodation and Politics of Antagonism in the Resolution of the National Question" at the meeting chaired by Comrade TG-Z Meenilankco.

The meeting was also addressed by Comrades M Mayuran and David Suren who commented on the keynote address. A discussion followed.

Jaffna

The 26th commemoration of Comrade KA Subramaniam was held in Jaffna at the Kavignar Murukaiyan Auditorium of the Deshiya Kalai Ilakkiyap Peravai, Jaffna from 4.00 p.m. on 12th December 2015.

Paramsothy Thanges, Researcher in Social Anthropology at the East London University delivered the keynote address titled "Contradictions, Exile and Caste Transformation" at the meeting chaired by Comrade K Thanikasalam. The talk was followed by a discussion.

Comrade Klaus Wallenstein in Sri Lanka

Comrade Klaus Wallenstein, a longstanding member of the Central Committee of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany (Marxistisch-Leninistische Partei Deutschlands, MLPD), visited Sri Lanka in February 2016 and had cordial discussions with leading comrades of the Marxist-Leninist New-Democratic Party in Colombo, Jaffna and the Hill County.

Particular attention was paid to the strengthening the bond between the NDMLP and the MLPD and exchange of views on all matters of common interest. Among issues discussed were the overall international situation, the global economic and political crisis, solidarity with liberation struggles, the environment and gender issues. Discussions also covered specific issues relating to the political climate in Europe, and Germany in particular, and the prevailing situation in South Asia and Sri Lanka.

Comrade Wallenstein also addressed invited members of the public in Colombo, Jaffna and Matale and discussed a range of issues with them.

The NDMLP is thankful to Comrade Wallenstein for spending time with the Party and for his encouragement and support and promise of extended cooperation between the two parties.

Thanking Comrade Stefan and Welcoming Comrade Monika

International Coordination of Revolutionary Parties and Organizations (ICOR), of which the NDMLP is a member organization, announced late in 2015, that Comrade Stefan Engel, owing to health problems, would like to step down as Main Coordinator of ICOR, but will continue to play an active role in ICOR in keeping with his state of health. ICOR also proposed the name of Comrade Monika Engel as the new Main Coordinator. Both proposals were overwhelmingly adopted by member organizations.

The NDMLP at the intimation of the new development in ICOR expressed its salutations to Comrade Stefan for his outstanding contribution to the revolutionary cause as Chairman of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany (MLPD) and Main Coordinator of ICOR, and endorsed his decision to step down based on personal circumstances, and welcomed Comrade Monika as the new Main Coordinator of ICOR and pledged to continue its fullest cooperation with ICOR.

(continued from inside front cover)

*History has not known your worth thus far
You have burning embers too, not merely tears
You're reality too, not a mere amusing anecdote
Your personality is something too, not just your youth
You've to change the title of your history
Arise, my love, for now you must march with me.*

*Emerge out of ancient bondage, break the idols of tradition,
the weakness of pleasure, this mirage of fragility
these self-drawn boundaries of imagined greatness
the bondage of love, for this too is a bondage
Not merely the thorns on the path, you have to trample on
flowers too
Arise, my love, for now you must march with me.*

*Shatter these resolve breaking suspicions of sermons
these vows that have become shackles
this too, this necklace of emeralds
these standards set by the wise men
You have to turn into a tempest, bubble and boil over
Arise, my love, for now you must march with me.*

*You are Aristotle's philosophy, Venus, Pleiades
You control the sky, the earth at your feet
Yes, raise, fast, raise your forehead from the feet of fate
I too am not going to pause, nor will the time
How long would you falter, you have to be firm
Arise, my love, for now you must march with me.*

(The translations are by Nasreen Rehman)

ON THE SUICIDE OF THE REFUGEE W.B.

BERTOLT BRECHT

(for Walter Benjamin)

I am told that you raised your hand against yourself
Anticipating the butcher.
After eight years of exile, observing the rise of the enemy
Then at last, brought up against an impassable frontier
You passed, they say, a passable one.

Empires collapse. Gang leaders
are strutting about like statesmen. The peoples
Can no longer be seen under all those armaments.

So the future lies in darkness and the forces of right
Are weak. All this was plain to you
When you destroyed a torturable body.

*In 1940, at the age of 48, Walter Benjamin, German Jewish
philosopher and cultural critic, committed suicide in Portbou
at the French-Spanish border while attempting to escape
from invading Nazi forces*

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