

***Marxist Leninist***

# ***New Democracy***

***October 2017***

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# Words I Never Said

## Lupe Fiasco

It's so loud inside my head  
With words that I should have said  
As I drown in my regrets  
I can't take back the words I never said  
I can't take back the words I never said

I really think the war on terror is a bunch of bullshit  
Just a poor excuse for you to use up all your bullets  
How much money does it take to really make a full clip  
Nine eleven building seven did they really pull it?  
Uh, and a bunch of other cover ups  
Your child's future was the first to go with budget cuts  
If you think that hurts then, wait, here comes the uppercut  
The school was garbage in the first place, that's on the up and up  
Keep you at the bottom but tease you with the upper crust  
You get it then they move you so you never keeping up enough  
If you turn on TV all you see's a bunch of "what the fucks"  
Dude is dating so and so blabbering bout such and such  
And that ain't Jersey Shore, homie that's the news  
And these the same people that supposed to be telling us the truth  
Limbaugh is a racist, Glenn Beck is a racist  
Gaza strip was getting bombed, Obama didn't say shit  
That's why I ain't vote for him, next one either  
I'm a part of the problem, my problem is I'm peaceful  
And I believe in the people  
Yeah

*[Continued on page 72.]*

## **Lessons of the October Revolution**

Some limit the impact of the Russian Socialist Revolution of 7<sup>th</sup> November 1917 (the October Revolution) to its immediate context. Such approach risks concluding that the October Revolution lost its relevance after the collapse of the Soviet Union. But the impact of the October Revolution on the history of the Twentieth Century remains the most decisive, and continues into this century through its direct and indirect consequences.

As the most radical turning point in Russian history it altered Russia's economic, social, political and cultural identity and transformed it from a weak imperialist oppressor of nations in the form of the Tsarist Empire into the leader of the Soviet Union, a voluntary association of formerly oppressed nations founded on the basis of the right to self determination and a social set-up based on equality, justice and communist ideals.

### **Impact within the Soviet Union**

The October Revolution enabled the founding of a state of the working people embodied in the notion of 'dictatorship of the proletariat', a state far more democratic than any bourgeois democratic state of its time.

Economic changes ended private property and led to state ownership of major means of production with workers' control over industries. A centralised, planned economy was introduced, based on the needs of the whole people, especially the working class. The idea of planned economy has since been adopted by many countries of the world.

The October Revolution led to the abolition of landed estates of the crown, church and monastery, and to the transfer of landholdings of big landlords to common ownership by the peasantry. It thus ended the domination and exploitation of peasants by landlords and was arguably the motive force for subsequent struggles for land reform in countries with large extents of private landholding.

Changes in the social and economic lives of the people of Russia forced capitalist societies, largely to meet the challenge of socialism, to adopt welfare schemes. In effect, the idea of welfare state in the West was in response to the October Revolution which attacked the roots of social inequality to lay the foundation for a classless society. But elimination of the exploiting classes proved far more formidable, as acknowledged by Stalin and explained by Mao Zedong and Antonio Gramsci.

The October Revolution elevated the place of Russian women in society through legal reforms equalizing the legal status of men and women and enhancing participation of women in public life. Events in the Soviet Union thus gave impetus, partly via left activism, to the global struggle for gender equality.

The Revolution, was also alert to Great Russian chauvinism, a burden of Russia's imperial past, and acted firmly to ensure equality of nationalities based on the right to self determination, so that nationalities oppressed by the Tsarist Empire became equal partners in socialist construction to overcome social and economic backwardness.

The Revolution separated religion from politics to make religion a private affair. This turned religious establishments with vested interests hostile to the Soviet Union and the Left. But attitudes have changed with greater public awareness of the challenge posed by imperialism to social justice.

## **Global Impact**

The October Revolution inspired all over the world, struggles of colonial people and nations for independence from imperialist rule. It catalyzed national movements all over the world to take definite forms that enabled the early collapse of Western imperial stranglehold in much of Asia and Africa, where imperial supremacy was widespread and most oppressive. Active material and political support by the Soviet Union to anti-colonial struggles accelerated the decline of imperialism and the rise of socialism. Notably the force and to some degree the direction of the Indian National Movement was much influenced by the October Revolution.

The October Revolution was also an important landmark in international relations. It insisted that the people have the right to know the actions of their rulers at home and abroad and argued their right to influence foreign policy through debate and intervention.

The Communist International, an important outcome of the October Revolution, was consistent with Lenin's position that the Communist International must support "national-revolutionary" movements in the colonies, even if their leadership is bourgeois, provided that they are genuinely revolutionary and do not obstruct educating the masses in a revolutionary spirit. This was codified in the conditions for membership in the International requiring Member Parties to "support every liberation movement in the colonies not only in words but in deeds." Thus the International censured French Communists for not supporting national independence in Algeria.

Battles to build socialism in one country by mobilizing workers and peasants through collectivizing agriculture and to defend socialism against imperialist attack and ideological subversion inspired socialist struggle even in industrially backward countries. The Eurocentric view of Trotsky that world revolution— meaning proletarian revolution in advanced industrial countries —is a precondition for transformation to socialism was defeated by the emergence of the Soviet Union as a powerful socialist country that later withstood the onslaught of Fascism in World War 2 . The defeat of Trotskyism was, however, is not complete owing to lingering relics of Eurocentrism within international left and the emergence of modern revisionism, which enabled the return of capitalism to the Soviet Union in the 1960's and undermined the role of the Soviet Union as the bulwark of anti-imperialist struggle.

Setbacks to socialism starting in the mid 1980's too had their roots in the October Revolution, since the victory of revolution did not automatically mean elimination of counter-revolution as the defeated class waits for opportunity to return. The fall of the bourgeoisie from power was not the end of bourgeois ideology whose influence on society and individuals

survived socialist rule. What enabled capitalist revival in socialist countries and even making them potential imperialist powers have been correctly identified by Mao and Gramsci. That was why Mao urged the need to continue class struggle even under socialism.

Imperialists and their allies declared that collapse of the USSR in 1991 was the end of socialism. But within a decade capitalism was found inept to solve the problems of humanity. This century has seen that capitalism makes matters worse and throws the economy into crisis. The fall of the monarchy in Nepal at the hands of revolutionary masses, emergence of left-leaning governments and weakening of US control in much of South and Central America and the Caribbean, and the failure the US to subdue North Korea and Cuba are evidence of the lasting impact of the October Revolution manifesting as the spirit of defiance of the masses.

However, neocolonialism has replaced old colonialism and imperialism is now a complex system seeking domination of the world through its scheme of globalization. Also fascism has re-emerged in novel forms and could be the ultimate weapon of imperialism, which threatens human survival on two fronts: war and destruction of the environment.

Thus the task before the global socialist movement is to heighten the revolutionary spirit of the October Revolution and resist imperialism on every front. Struggles to resist imperialist globalization and to protect the environment should go together with struggles for the right of oppressed nations and nationalities to self determination and against racism and other forms of oppression based on identity such as caste, religion and ethnicity. Struggle for gender equality and centralizing the role of women in the struggle for socialism, and the anti-war and disarmament movements comprise important aspects of the anti-imperialist struggle.

## **The Sri Lankan Experience**

The impact of the October Revolution on Sri Lanka has, despite many features in common with the Third World, especially South Asia, has been unique in some important ways.

The anti-colonial impact of the October Revolution was weak in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) with the local capitalist class siding with the colonialists. Progressive petit bourgeois intellectuals inspired by the Indian national movement founded the Jaffna Youth Congress in 1924, and their call for independence took an all-island character after the formation of Left youth organizations from 1931 and the Suriyamal Movement (1933-35) by left-inclined intellectuals in protest of the Poppy Day. The loyalty of the local bourgeoisie to colonial masters meant that national independence was not born of struggle but as a deal with the British colonialists seeking to ensure a friendly regime in Independent Sri Lanka.

The first Sri Lankan trade union, the Ceylon Labour Union, founded in 1922 under the influence of the British Labour Party, was averse to Marxism. Its leader AE Gunasinghe developed a xenophobic attitude towards Indian (mainly Malayali) workers in Colombo, and his betrayal of the Wellawatte Spinning and Weaving Mills strike of 1933 led to the emergence of a trade union movement of the left.

The left movement was slower to take off than in neighbouring India. The Lanka Samasamaja Party (LSSP), founded in 1935, was dominated by a group of Trotskyites who manipulated it to take a stand opposing the Soviet Union in World War 2. That led to the split in the LSSP and the founding of the Communist Party in 1940. The LSSP, with petit bourgeois weaknesses, being the parent organization, has been more popular than the Communist Party with stronger working class characteristics.

Thus the communist movement, to establish itself, had to first confront Trotskyism, a major negative outcome of the October Revolution.

Despite declarations about world revolution, the LSSP and its offshoots were attracted to the prospect of parliamentary political power. Yet the Left had opportunity to become a mass political force as seen from the mass mobilization in the General Strike of 1947 and the impressive Hartal of 1953. But the allure of electoral politics at the expense of mass political work allowed the national bourgeoisie to take advantage of the mass mobilization of 1953; and the populist SLFP combined anti imperialist

and social reformist ideas of the left with Sinhala chauvinism to win the elections in 1956. The VLSSP led by the founder of Trotskyism in the country failed the Left by joining the SLFP-led alliance.

Modern Revisionism which was dormant in the Communist Party was activated by involvement in electoral politics, the success of the SLFP and the rise of revisionism in the Soviet Union. Experience in confronting Trotskyism came in handy for Marxist Leninists to combat revisionism so that a majority of the Party and trade union membership aligned with them. This advantage was, however, later lost by serious tactical errors.

Experiences with Trotskyism and Revisionism had a positive side since the Marxist Leninists of Sri Lanka produced a thoroughgoing refutation of both erroneous tendencies, which still are still forces to contend with.

The opportunistic approach of the parliamentary left since 1964 towards the national question cost it popular support among the Tamil speaking minorities as well as among the Sinhalese amid surging chauvinism and narrow nationalism. Parliamentary opportunism also meant the betrayal of the working class and the emergence of the chauvinistic pseudo-left JVP as a political force which edged out the parliamentary left. The eventual unprecedented success of the UNP in 1977 plunged the country into submission to neocolonialism as well as a war of national oppression.

The net outcome is that the country faces three major challenges: (i) the unresolved national question which remains the main contradiction obstructing unity of the oppressed masses; (ii) the economic crisis aggravated by yielding to imperialist pressure; (iii) the erosion of hard-won democratic rights of the people. In this context, Sinhala Buddhist fascism has grown into a major obstacle to meeting the challenges; and the lack of vision among minority narrow nationalists only helps to strengthen the chauvinism of the ruling classes.

Thus the challenge facing the genuine left is big and demands learning from the October revolution to rebuild the left movement to lead a broad-based anti imperialist front to achieve national unity and social justice.



# Education in Sri Lanka

## Crisis of School Education

*Dr S Sivasegaram*

*[Primary and secondary education in Sri Lanka, once a leader among Asian countries in literacy and school education, are now in crisis owing to decades of callous neglect.]*

Liberal influences on the thinking of the British colonial rule benefitted colonial Ceylon in several sectors and education was one of them. Thus the country was among Asian pioneers to implement free education in schools, technical colleges and universities.

Free education could not, however, assure everyone access to education or comparable quality of education in all schools. Access, long denied to sections of the people based on caste, class and ethnicity was slow to come. Steps to put right wilful wrongs arrived as a result of popular protest and political change, but with much remaining to be done.

The harsh reality of school education is evident from Ministry of Education statistics in 2013 that only 34% of state-run schools had computer laboratories, 36% had libraries and 74% had toilet facilities. Besides, 15% lacked electric supply and 16% access to water. The most deprived of resources were rural and estate schools as summed up in the comments by Joseph Stalin, General Secretary, Ceylon Teachers Union:

“Teachers are not allowed to talk but it can be clearly seen that school resources are not equally distributed. Students who go to the ‘popular schools’ get everything. Schools in villages do not have enough furniture and most that they have are not in good condition”

“There are 9,905 schools in Sri Lanka and the government is only focusing on developing 1,000 schools. What is going to happen to the rest of them?”

“Today the state is only paying for half of the school electricity and parents are made to pay for the other half...Parents have to spend on school expenses in some form. This is not free education”.

[<http://www.sundaytimes.lk/141123/news/schools-for-scandal-129270.html>]

The need to narrow the urban–rural and rural–plantation divide has for long been pointed out by educationists and eventually accepted by governments. But, much backwardness remains, and satisfactorily resolving the problem needs a different social climate and government committed to eradicating social inequality.

Thus this essay only seeks to identify factors that have led to the failure of school education policy as well as to unhealthy trends to the detriment of education even in schools that are expected to uphold standards.

## **National Expectations**

I will draw attention to some of the proposals of the National Education Commission in its report on general education\*, which recognizes the following among major goals of the general education system:

- Contribution to national cohesion, integrity and unity
- Establishing a pervasive pattern of social justice
- Evolution of a sustainable life style
- Creation of dignified, satisfying and self-fulfilling work opportunities
- Opening up of a variety of possibilities for all to contribute to the development of human resources
- Active partnership in nation building activities to ensure nurturing of deep and abiding concern for one another
- Learning to adapt to changing situations
- Developing capacity to cope with the complex and the unforeseen
- Achieving a sense of security and stability
- Securing an honourable place in the international community

## **Attainment of Goals**

A set of guiding principles for developing educational policies have been proposed by the NEC to help the attainment of educational goals.

The NEC defines any person younger than 18 years as a child and names the school as the central player in the attainment of educational goals and the principal provider of educational services to every child as a right, thus makes the school mainly responsible for:

- providing compulsory education for children from the age of four to sixteen years; and
- the care and protection of children and conform to basic standards in matters of safety and health.

The State is required to

- attend to the interests of children to ensure their physical, mental, moral, religious and social development and protecting them from exploitation and discrimination;
- take all appropriate measures to ensure that discipline is maintained in schools for the well-being of the community in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity;
- recognize and enforce the right of the child to have leisure hours to engage in appropriate play and recreational activities;
- respect and promote the right of the child to participate in cultural and artistic life; and
- recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

The state is required to take suitable steps to assist parents and guardians to implement the rights of a child, in case of need for material assistance and support, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing.

Specific recommendations are made to improve the service provided by the education system to ensure holistic development of the children. Effective coordination between various arms of the education system, pre-service training of all teachers, and decentralization of the continuous professional development of teachers, principals, administrators and

support staff are recommended among other proposal for improving the education service

Also prescribed are special attention, care and protection including relevant legal protection for children with physical and mental deficiencies, and special consideration for children living in exceptionally difficult conditions. The NEC also urges enforcing appropriate measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and reduction of drop-out rates, and warns against the abuse of the Internet and urges monitoring by parents and teachers to ensure that children use Internet beneficially.

While the recommendations are on the whole desirable, their delivery poses problems. The system as a whole has for too long been indifferent to needs of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. That, combined with fierce competition at examinations and for places in institutions of higher learning has led to a tragic situation from which rescue is difficult.

Lack of resources in some types of school can be well addressed if government takes serious interest. But teachers like to work in schools either close to their homes or in urban areas, which are socially more attractive than rural or plantation schools far from home, and teachers serving in remote areas 'under duress' are unlikely to show much interest developing the school. Corruption in the system is a major obstacle to resolving such problems, which are best addressed by advising the local community of the right of children to good education and allowing the community a major say in the running of schools.

Educational authorities have implemented several healthy educational reforms to make school curriculum pertinent to the Sri Lankan context, especially since the takeover of schools by the state in 1960 which led to a significantly more equitable regime in schools. But there was also poorly thought out adoption of Western experiments in pedagogy with adverse consequences, as in the teaching of mathematics and language. Overall, the school curriculum saw broadly welcome changes in overall emphasis, but there are also many negative features including controversial course content in social studies, especially history.

While the current GCE-OL programme is commendably broad-based in course content, it is seriously weak in science content. The GCE-AL programme since some years ago includes a Technology Stream besides Physical Sciences, Biological Sciences, Arts and Commerce streams. But the implementation of the Technology programme is hampered by lack of planning and resources to guide the students into appropriate higher education disciplines. Also little has been done to restore the laboratory work component which was effectively eliminated in the mid 1970's alongside Standardization initiated in 1970. Governments have sought politically expedient solutions for the crisis of education than investing more in education to increase the number of good schools and equip them adequately. What continues to ail education policy is the ad hoc way in which policy makers respond to problems.

Welfare benefits like free textbooks and school uniforms for all children and nutritional mid-day meal and a glass of milk to needy children are welcome and help the poorer children. But the system has yet to assure allocation of competent and committed staff in adequate numbers to backward schools and ensure that allocated resources are properly used. (See, for example, <http://www.sundaytimes.lk/130210/news/rural-education-in-crisis-how-to-take-teachers-to-schools-32672.html>; and <http://www.thesundayleader.lk/2016/08/28/why-are-rural-educational-systems-seriously-neglected-in-sri-lanka/>)

But economic arguments plead closure of schools with small population, to the detriment of many rural and plantation schools without taking remedial action to make the schools attractive to local populations.

### **Issues as commonly perceived**

Despite the gross neglect of a vast majority of state schools, the crisis of school education as commonly discussed refers to the decline in academic quality of school leavers, poor performance in public examinations, deterioration of student conduct, the general lack of discipline in schools— even in the much sought after 'good schools' in the metropolis

and major urban centres —and corruption that pervades the school education system. These highly visible aspects of the crisis have their roots in our flawed perception of the purpose of education, which is also a factor responsible for the neglect of rural and plantation education.

As education is seen only as a means to fulfil career ambitions of the children— or more correctly their parents— emphasis is increasingly on performance at competitive examinations and seeking ways to enable less qualified students to enter their desired programme of study.

A minority of the intellectual elite urge learning and knowledge as ends in themselves, but the community as a whole sees education as a path to personal advancement and a doorway to secure jobs with less toil, better wages and good social status. The attraction of urban schools has been strong for the growing middle class as they offer access to facilities and career prospects, besides the relative comfort of urban life compared to rural life. Such attitude adds to the agony of rural and plantation schools.

The education system still upholds values instilled by colonial rulers who aimed to produce a literate class to serve state administration and a primitive industry to process and handle plantation produce for export. Schools developed since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, initially by Protestant Christian missionaries and followed by Roman Catholic, Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim rivals, were modelled after the British school education system. Secure employment and white collar jobs with preference for state employment was a major driving force. Although the state does no more have monopoly over white collar and professional employment, the old attitude to learning lingers many decades after direct colonial rule.

Educationists have mainly drawn attention to the following issues:

### *Decline in academic quality*

- There has been a significant reduction in the science component of the school curriculum after the GCE (OL) programme was amended to contain a set of six core subjects and two optional subjects (one technical and the other aesthetic or a language) for all students. This

was in the context of a decline in laboratory component of science teaching in schools since the mid 1970's.

- The large course content comprises large volumes of data and students resort to committing information to memory than to study it. This has adversely affected analytical skills among students. The problem is further compounded by ready access to information via the Internet, and a tendency to accept information without question.
- The NEC Report points out that, despite instituting supportive structures for quality improvement, learning in the classroom has not changed much from the traditional knowledge imparting model. This combined with an examination oriented approach to learning is an important contributor to the decline in academic quality.

### *Overburdening of students*

- The work load on students is higher than what it used to be several decades ago; and is made worse by the tendency of parents and many teachers to encourage private tuition for students.

### *Private tuition*

- Private tuition has reached a stage where private tutorials engage in education on a scale comparable with that in schools. Tutorials are purely examination oriented and coach students for examinations, thus hurting incentive for self study and search for knowledge.
- The profit motive of tutorials induces corruption in examinations; and large tutorials rely on the underworld to sustain their business and keep down competition.
- School teachers also engage in private tuition, although not in tutorials, to the detriment of school teaching.
- Most tutorials lack sanitary facilities and function outside normal teaching hours. The lack of monitoring puts the students at risk of exposure to criminal acts including child abuse and use of drugs.
- Private tutors including school teachers also publish textbooks and books of model answers to 'supplement' the textbooks and teacher's guides supplied free of charge by the state. The quality of the material

supplied is questionable, but students are under pressure even from their teachers to purchase them.

- Private tuition has undermined not just proper school education but also the aim of the government to provide free school education for all.

### ***Brand names and oversize schools***

- Reputed schools exist in very nearly every district. The state built over 50 Central Colleges in the five years preceding independence to ensure wide access to quality education. There are now 323 national schools with enrolment above 2000, and leading schools among them have enrolment well exceeding 3000 to be as high as 8000. This is the result of the illusion among many parents that their children receive the best education in the country in these schools.
- Enrolment exceeding 2000 is not conducive to healthy interaction among students. But popular schools meet the demand for admission by increasing class size, nominally at 35 (already a large number by international standards) to exceed 45, with size well exceeding 50 in the lowest form. [<https://www.pressreader.com/sri-lanka/sunday-times-sri-lanka/20160110/283188672388037>]
- Excessive enrolment has also meant inadequate facilities for sports and recreation and a decline in the use of library facilities.
- Demand for admission to leading schools has led to scandalous levels of bribery of school administrators, which undermines their authority.

### ***Mushrooming of International Schools***

- Private missionary schools co-existed with state-assisted schools until the state took over the latter in 1960. Some assisted schools opted to go private and the country now has 33 private autonomous schools and 33 state-assisted non-fee levying private schools.
- The open economic policy of 1978 enabled private education in the name of “International Schools” teaching in the English Medium with curricula not linked to national education goals. These costly profit-oriented ventures do not always assure academic quality.



### *Lack of school discipline*

- Breakdown in student discipline is serious; and notorious in leading schools. Difficulty in controlling large classes is aggravated by political meddling and pressure from influential parents, while private tuition encourages truancy and disregard for school learning.
- Alcoholism prevails among senior students and drug abuse exists in schools. But the school is unable to do much because the teachers as a group seem unable maintain discipline. Practice of private tuition by teachers is a further factor weakening their authority.
- The public tends to blame the education system for the deterioration in moral standards in society. While the school system cannot be blamed for all social evils, it has notably failed to cultivate in students a spirit of tolerance and acceptance towards others.

### *Overemphasis of examination performance*

- A highly worrying aspect of education in the country is overemphasis of performance at written examinations. School children face three public examinations of which the value of two is questionable.
- The Grade 5 Scholarship examination was initially meant for students from backward schools seeking places in reputed schools. In recent years that purpose has been distorted: children from all schools sit the examination, and rather as a talent contest among leading schools. The success rate, based on qualification for admission to National Schools, is low, making a vast majority of children 'failures' with adverse emotional implications.
- The GCE O-L certificate offered employment prospects some years ago. But now the GCE O-L results are used mainly to stream the nearly 50% who qualify to follow the GCE A-L classes.
- GCE A-L results decide admission to institutions for higher education. Despite a success rate of over 60%, less than 17% find places in state universities but, for a vast majority, not for the desired programmes.

### *Implications of competition*

- Children of tender age are made to compete for admission to reputed schools and then at Grade 5. Anxious parents arrange private tutoring for the children at the expense of valuable leisure time, thus distorting their social life and robbing them of play, playmates and social skills.
- Children spend time comparable with school hours in private tuition to prepare for GCE (O-L) and GCE (O-L). Emphasis on learning has given way to committing text to memory to reproduce at examinations and training to solve problems of set pattern.
- Competition has hurt friendly relations between students who see each other as a rival, and led to malpractices such as impersonation and cheating at examinations.

The issues listed above comprise commonly observed issues and are symptoms of an underlying malaise. The NEC Report on General Education draws attention to a fundamental weakness in the education system, namely that, despite students' only learning facts for reproduction at public examinations to obtain high grades, the results are not encouraging. It also draws attention to complaints by employers that the output from the education system lacks basic competencies required by the workplace, and points to the thriving private tuition industry parallel to the formal school system which, besides high cost to parents, is a barrier to children enjoying their childhood, as their leisure time is spent in uncomfortable tutorials, often with anti-social influences. It also notes that children hardly engage in physical exercises or games essential for physical and personality development.

Several other serious consequences of the perversion of school education are not commented on in that context. The rise in obesity among school children has as much to do with lack of physical activity owing to lack of time and space to play as with bad eating habits. Indiscipline and anti-social behaviour too have their roots in the perception of the worth of the school in the education process.

## **Addressing the Crisis**

There is much awareness of inadequate allocation of funds for education, and political parties pledge spending 6% of the GNP on education. (In the past decade, education expenditure fell from 3.3% to 1.8% compared with 2.4 for defence). But there is inadequate public pressure on government to increase education allocation. This is partly owing to the middle class having accepted private tuition, which undermines the very principle of free education as a central aspect of the education system.

Priority is for competition for places in reputed schools and for admission to prestigious university degree programmes. Those with means tend to send their children abroad or admit them to one of several local 'branches' of foreign universities with little idea of the kind of education that the children receive. The controversial arrival of private universities is seen as a less expensive option by many parents.

The root of the crisis lies in the understanding of the purpose of education by parents and children alike and a general lack of imagination about profitable careers other than in well established disciplines in some form of hierarchical order.

The school education system is flawed as its emphasis is on the 5% or so who can enter university. The 30% or so of school leavers— eligible for university admission but denied access —are left on their own to seek avenues besides all manner of private higher education. The school and the society see 95% of the students as 'failures'. This matter needs to be addressed from the early years of schooling. In other words, the school should identify for children careers that suit their interests and potential, are beneficial to them, and useful to society.

While investment in school infrastructure and personnel are important, resources can be put to maximum benefit only through instilling in the minds of teachers, students and parents the purpose of education as a social tool for producing responsible citizens with a sense of belonging and commitment to community.

Many educationists have pointed to the lack of knowledge of English among school leavers. They see it as a fundamental flaw because of their perception of English as the sole window to advanced knowledge. But they ignore other countries big and small which are economically and industrially advanced that provide school education in the mother tongue. Freeing ourselves of such colonial mindset is important— but that does not mean rejection of English as a useful language. We need to elevate the use of the native languages to meet the growing demands of modernity. Switching to English medium education has, predictably, failed to produce results since the emphasis on English disregards difficulties faced in learning in an alien language.

This brings us to another badly misunderstood purpose of education, namely producing people who can find employment in the global employment market. This is an unhealthy outcome of the open economic policy followed since 1978, when the notion of a national economy was rejected in the interest of the open economic policy with unrestricted inflow of foreign capital and goods.

While investment in school infrastructure, educational reforms and decentralization of the education system are important, integration of education with national needs should be a priority whose achievement demands a healthier approach to education at public level and greater involvement of the public in education policy and process.

### **Note**

[\* The National Education Commission published its *Proposals for a National Policy on General Education in Sri Lanka* early in 2017. Implementation of the Proposals depends entirely on how seriously the government takes the matter of school education. Recent developments, however, offer no reason for optimism.]

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# Why Our Rulers Created Racism

*Antony Hamilton*

*[Racism is regarded as "natural" or a result of ignorance but the notion of a hierarchy of races has material roots in the birth of capitalism.]*

Racism is one of the most favoured weapons in the arsenal of the ruling class. Whenever there is economic or political crisis, instead of pointing the finger at a banker, a scapegoat is created, a minority to blame. Donald Trump wants to build a wall to keep Mexicans out and ban Muslims from travelling to the US; Theresa May has blamed migrants for falling wages and "displacement of jobs", and has prioritised the Tory promise to reduce immigration in her election campaign to the "tens of thousands".

The ruling class would have us believe that racism is the natural way of things, but this is far from the truth. Racism has a material base in history, which can be traced back to the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The creation of "race" and racism goes hand in hand with the growth and dominance of a new capitalist class.

Before the advent of capitalism there were prejudice and division, of course, but there wasn't systematic oppression of whole groups of people based on the colour of their skin. For example, in ancient Rome people were viewed as "barbarians" or "civilised" but these categories were permeable and depended on whether your empire's lands were

conquered by another, or if you were an active member of the dominant empire. Roman Emperor Septimius Severus was African, and the fact that he was black was rarely if ever mentioned because it was not seen as significant.

## **Hierarchy**

These brutal societies justified slavery on the basis that freedom was seen as a privilege and that it was fair to enslave those captured in wars — but it wasn't connected to any notion of race or racial hierarchy. That idea arose much later, with the slave trade that provided the initial wealth for capitalism to expand.

The Spanish and Portuguese were the first Europeans to exploit the people and resources of the Americas, from the late 15th century onwards. They enslaved the indigenous population — those who hadn't died from contact with diseases the Europeans brought with them — and began to cultivate dyes, gum and rubber to be sent back to their homeland and sold at enormous profits.

For a while they were the dominant power in the region, but interest quickly grew in the raw materials on offer, and soon other Europeans, in particular the British, established their own roots.

These new interests quickly became dominant because, unlike the feudal Spanish and Portuguese traders who had to give over large chunks of their wealth to the crown, they were capitalist enterprises, free to reinvest their profits in expanding the business.

As well as enslaving indigenous people the Europeans brought over indentured servants from Europe — that is, workers who were "owned" by their boss for a set period of time to pay off a debt or prison sentence, or as a way of making a new life in the new world. The traders also began to enslave Africans, though numbers were small at first.

From the beginning slavery required justification. Until the mid-16th century religious reasons were found. In 1550 Juan Gines de Sepulveda

articulated a new, proto-racist line. He said that on account of the Indians' "natural rudeness and inferiority" it was philosophically justifiable to enslave them. This was the beginning of an argument that there are inherent traits carried by certain groups of people which make them inferior.

This was met with resistance from clerics and missionaries who wanted to convert the natives, thereby rendering them equal in the eyes of god. The traders didn't appreciate this interference — some missionaries were thrown overboard or murdered on their journey to the Americas by traders and plantation owners who didn't want to see their profit jeopardised.

Indentured Irish and other poor European labour became a major resource for the plantation owners; however these workers were usually only tied to their owners for three to five years and then would move on, perhaps even becoming competitors.

The turn towards African slave labour on a big scale in the mid-17th century was a breakthrough for the plantation owners who needed to source new labour without the complexities of indentured workers. The great Caribbean historian Eric Williams put it very clearly:

"Here then is the origin of negro slavery. The reason was economic, not racial; it had not to do with the colour of the labourer but the cheapness of the labour. As compared with the Indian and white labour, Negro slavery was eminently superior... This was not a theory, it was a practical conclusion deduced from the personal experience of the planter. He would have gone to the moon, if necessary, for labour. Africa was closer than the moon."

Those capitalist thinkers who held the belief that "all men are born equal" found themselves in a contradiction — if that were true how could they justify the enslavement of millions of people? They could hardly claim they were all captured in "just wars". The simple solution was to argue that Africans were not men.

Trinidadian Marxist CLR James summed this up: "The conception of dividing people by race begins with the slave trade. This thing was so shocking, so opposed to all the conceptions of society which religion and philosophers had...that the only justification by which humanity could face it was to divide people into races and decide that the Africans were an inferior race."

## **Inferior**

Defining black people as an inferior race meant that plantation owners could not only justify the enslavement of the black Africans they captured, but also of their children and their children's children.

This ideology quickly hardened into a new "science" which claimed to prove Europeans' natural superiority. In 1760, when the slave trade was at its height, a 23 volume "universal history" was published. It described Africans as being "proud, lazy, treacherous, thievish, hot and addicted to all kinds of lusts... It is hardly possible to find in any African any quality but what is of the bad kind... If we look at those few manufactures and handicrafts that are amongst them, we shall find them carried out with the same rude and tedious stupidity."

So here lies the basis and creation of racism, but it by no means ends there; the complexity and reach of racism increased by the decade. Despite the eventual end of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, racism continued, morphing into new forms.

Capitalism as a system, even though it had no more use for slavery on the scale of the trans-Atlantic trade, still required racism as a powerful tool to divide the working class. And even though most of the slaves were working in the Americas, the ideology which justified the system permeated the growing capitalist world. The notion of a hierarchy of races suited the British ruling class, for example, as its empire expanded across the globe, violently subjugating whole peoples.

In the US the end of slavery — the defeat of the South in the Civil War in 1865 — was mitigated for the Southern planters by the imposition of



segregation. The white plantation owners were able to feel they had held onto their higher social status, even if they could no longer own black people as property.

And so the concept of race continued to be refined and used to set worker against worker. Segregation required more and more specific, legal definitions of who was "white" and who was "black". Such cases led by 1921 to the following definition being written into federal law:

"A White person has been held to include an Armenian born in Asiatic Turkey, a person of but one-sixteenth Indian blood, and a Syrian, but not to include Afghans, American Indians, Chinese, Filipinos, Hawaiians, Hindus, Japanese, Koreans, negroes; nor does white person include a person having one fourth of African blood, a person in whom Malay blood predominates, a person whose father was a German and whose mother was a Japanese, a person whose father was a white Canadian and whose mother was an Indian woman, or a person whose mother was a Chinese and whose father was the son of a Portuguese father and a Chinese mother."

It sounds absurd and exposes how ridiculous the concept of race is. However, while it was completely made up it had a monumental effect on the lives of millions of people every day.

Similar notions about "race" have bled into the debates about migration. People have always moved around seeking a better or different life, and capitalism absolutely requires labour to be mobile in order to meet its needs. But it also wants to be able to use racism to keep the working class divided and to turn people against migrant workers.

While the ruling class needs to divide in order to rule, the working class holds its strength in the ability to organise collectively. So our rulers recreate and reinvent racism in order to distract, divide and confuse the working class about who is the enemy and who isn't — but they have always faced resistance in this.

Segregation was defeated by the Civil Rights Movement, which united black and white against the racists and their laws. In Britain the anti-slavery movement was strong among workers in the very industries, such as cotton, which benefitted from the trade. Slave revolts in the Caribbean shook the system to its core. And throughout the 20th century different forms of racism have been challenged, from anti-migrant racism to Islamophobia.

Racism is made real by people accepting the ideas rained down on them from above. Racist attacks and abuse are committed by individuals. Even when it is a state institution which acts, such as the racist police, an individual is picked out and called a rotten apple. In reality it is a rotten system.

Racism is not natural; it is not an inevitable outcome of human nature — it needs to be taught and regularly reinforced and the state uses every weapon in its arsenal to do just that. From the classrooms to the courtrooms racism filters through, whether it is being taught "British values" in primary school or black people being given disproportionate sentences. What the ruling class aims to achieve is an acceptance that there is a natural order to capitalism and there are some who are deserving of their position and others who need to be put in their place.

However, people are not sponges; these ideas come into conflict with people's experience of multicultural life. The overbearing conditions which capitalism forces workers to endure mean that people are forced to struggle together, regardless of where they come from.

The fight against racism is absolutely central to the fight against capitalism. They were born from blood and they maintain each other. Racism pulls us all down; we become weaker and easier to exploit when we are divided.

How we fight it today is fundamental and constantly under scrutiny. To resist is the first step, and socialists should encourage whatever forms of resistance emerge as a response to racism. The Black Lives Matter

movement has been an inspiration to a whole new generation of young activists.

## **Heart**

But we should not simply be cheerleaders of the movement. Socialist politics is about connecting together the struggles against the different symptoms of the sickness that is capitalism. That means uniting people across divides and putting anti-racism at the heart of every campaign we are involved in.

Racism is being used from the NHS to the housing sector to pit workers against each other or against service users. We need to stand alongside these workers to fight for a fully funded public sector while flushing out reactionary ideas. That's why campaigns such as Stand Up to Racism are so important at the moment — its "Keep racism out of the election" campaign has provided materials for health workers, teachers and others to put anti-racist arguments and challenge the Tories' and UKIP's lies.

Understanding that it is those at the top who are driving racism will help us to avoid the trap of blaming each other or simply seeing "ignorance" as the root. True liberation from any and all oppression can only come about by fundamentally transforming the society we live in, from one which relies upon oppression to one which can provide the basis for the liberation of all people.

*June 2017*

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# Marxism and Environmental Theory

*Dr Peter Custers*

1.

How to reposition and re-conceptualise Marxism in the age of the crisis of our planetary system?

Marxism when theorised in the 19th century, was conceived as the culmination, the apex, of then existing bourgeois science. When reading the manuscripts which Karl Marx wrote through the decades when he built his own system of economic science, one cannot but be impressed by his efforts to systematically reflect on the ideas which bourgeois economic theoreticians had developed before him. Both in the *Grundrisse*, in *Capital I, II and III*, and in *Theories of Surplus Value* Marx manifested his conviction that a theory for the liberation of the working class needed to build on the ideas which conventional economic theoreticians had hitherto formulated [1].

Marx's theory of labour value, farsighted and original as it was, owed much to the academic efforts which his 'bourgeois' colleagues had made before him.

2.

The first statement, observation, that needs to be made in order to be able to develop a Marxian environmental science, is that the above is no longer valid, does no longer apply to Marxism today. True, as a science

which helps us analyse the exploitation of human labour, Marxism continues to hold an exceptional position among the different theoretical disciplines. No matter how many formerly Marxist academicians may meanwhile have rejected the validity of the Marxian discipline, - Marxism continues to be the true starting point for a systematic analysis regarding the exploitation of human labour under capitalism. Marx's formulas devised to explain that workers are the source of surplus value, of the profits which entrepreneurs and companies invariably search to reap, continues to be a valid starting point for our understanding of capitalism today. Thus, before putting forward my own unconventional ideas on Marxism and environmental science in this essay, I wish to unreservedly re-affirm my support for Marx's achievements.

### 3.

Nevertheless, the state of the planet, of nature under world capitalist conditions, forces me to admit the *insufficiency* of the orthodox Marxist framework of analysis today, in the new millennium. Environmental science has meanwhile moved forward to conceptualise the very crisis which our planet is facing. Report after report has been drafted and published in recent years by international institutions and by reputable coalitions of research centres, indicating that the degradation of ecosystems has reached alarming proportions, and that unless policies be devised to halt the further degradation of our natural environment, the capitalist world system itself will be at risk [2]. These reports indeed indicate that we can no longer interpret the present phase of capitalism in the way it was done one hundred years ago (monopoly capitalism/imperialism), but have to conceptualise capitalism's present phase as a phase of continuing imperialist exploitation, carried out in combination with the *ultimate* exploitation of nature's (remaining) wealth.

### 4.

Further, the concepts put forward by environmental scientists compel us to re-conceptualise, rethink, critical economic science itself.

Environmental scientists, no matter how poorly equipped to analyse the exploitation of human labour as they generally lack a training in Marxian ideas, have put forward views and concepts which can well be used to broaden the horizon of Marxist economic theory. For instance, their view is that capitalism is no closed system, moving from inputs to harvest outputs via industrial manufacturing, but a system which depends on the *pre-* and *post-*existence of nature. They hold that *sources* from nature are relied on preceding any manufacturing, and that nature is relied upon to serve as a *dump* for our waste [3]. This view can well be applied to re-adapt Marx's views on individual and social accumulation of capital. Again, while the horizon of both bourgeois and Marxian value theory was limited to analysing the meaning of capitalist commodities, contemporary environmental science has meaningfully advanced the debate on *inherent values* in nature [4].

## 5.

On the basis of this evaluation, assessment, of the positive importance of 'bourgeois' environmental science, of the empirical and analytical contributions made by scientists towards exposing the worldwide environmental crisis existing today.— I suggest to revisit and revise Marx's formulas for the circuits of individual and social capital, as also to put forward a distinct view on the era humanity is living in. In previous writings I have made a beginning with rethinking Marx's formula for the individual circuit of capital. When analysing the problematic of non-commodity waste in the nuclear production chain, I had suggested that we cannot presume the outcome of capitalist manufacturing to always be the creation of commodities with additional value. In some cases, I had posed, the creation of new commodities is accompanied by the emergence of waste that is so damaging to human health and to our natural surroundings, that companies engaged in the given production cannot dispose of this waste without incurring capitalist costs [5].

6.

It is necessary to broaden this initial conclusion. In fact the problematic of *non-commodity waste* is a *general* problematic, the revised formula required to take account of the existence of non-commodity waste in the nuclear sector, in reality is a revised formula with general applicability.

This can be illustrated amongst others by referring to green house gases. The emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>, or carbon dioxide, and of other gases which are known to affect climate conditions on earth, are not just a by-product of one economic sector of our capitalist world economy, but in fact of a whole variety of production sectors, as also of transports, including automobiles, and thus of human consumption (proper). Hence, even though Marx can in no way be blamed for not having predicted the invention of 20th century nuclear production, even though it is understandable that no bourgeois or Leftwing economist in his days posed the question of non-commodity waste.— Today we can no longer deny that such waste is the inevitable by-effect of almost all capitalist production.

7.

Still, a re-conceptualisation of the individual circuit of capital to take account of non-commodity waste, of the fact that industrial extraction and manufacturing does not simply result in a new commodity, but also in waste, thus does not suffice. We further have to admit that the circuit of money capital does not just end differently that conceptualized by Marx, but that to get it started the circuit also is far more dependent on the supply of non-commodity natural sources than Marx cared to admit. Thus, in the case of the mining industries, in the case of logging, as also in the case of industrial fishing, companies and corporations heavily rely on the 'free' availability of natural resources in order to make their profits. Of course, they also benefit from wage-slavery, i.e. thrive on the availability of people's labouring strength not being paid in full. However, it would be foolhardy to deny that companies engaged in extraction — whether mineral extraction, extraction of forest resources, of

fish wealth, or otherwise — build their profits in part on the achievements which nature has scored over hundreds of millions of years.

8.

A further step along with the rethinking and re-adapting of Marx's original formula for manufacturing by an individual entrepreneur, is to pose the issue of *capitalist consumption*, i.e. consumption proper. When drafting his own theory, Marx had spoken of 'consumption' when referring to the manufacturing phase of an individual capital circuit. He rightly suggested that manufacturing cannot take place without consumption of commodities taking place, meaning the consumption of raw materials, of other means of production and of labour power, bought in the first phase of an entrepreneur's circuit. When drafting my theory on militarism, I had suggested that it is possible to conceptualise wars, namely via a formula for the consumption of arms and armaments [6]. This formula emerged from reflecting on Marx's original formula for the individual circuit of capital. Yet we also need a formula for the consumption of *civilian* commodities, and it again can be devised by drawing on the basic formula for capitalist production, which Marx had put forward in *Capital II* [7].

9.

The issue of *consumption proper* needs to be addressed in view of the fact that a production circuit does not simply end with the sale of commodities and the transformation of commodity capital into money capital. As policymakers in industrialized countries have been forced to increasingly realise in recent decades — the mass consumption which is required to keep the system of monopoly capitalism running results in ever larger mountains of waste — waste which does not automatically vanish or disappear, but which unless treated and properly stored, or recycled for re-use, damages the very natural surroundings on which human societies depend. This waste in the form of *consumed commodities*



in some cases may be less damaging than non-commodity waste and social waste, the two forms of waste which I have conceptualized within the framework of my theory on military production. Nevertheless, unless the problematic of consumed commodities be posed via a separate formula, the waste resulting from capitalist consumption will continue to be overlooked.

#### 10.

The amount of rethinking which needs to be done in order to make sure Marxism remains an adequate tool for analysis, as the above comments show, is clearly becoming large. However, a renewed formula for the individual circuit of capital incorporating the effects of production on nature, together with a formula for capitalist consumption, still will not suffice to expose today's world environmental crisis. In order to be able to do the latter, we will also have to return to reconsider Marx's formulas developed to explain the complications of a capitalist business cycle, i.e. his formulas for the social accumulation of capital [8]. Here we may take some clues from Rosa Luxemburg, who felt that in his analysis of 'social' reproduction Marx had wrongly presumed that the capitalist system is 'closed'. Whereas she did not point specifically at nature, the '*non-capitalist surroundings*' which she referred to may be read to refer to capitalism's rapacious relationship with our natural surroundings, the earth [9].

#### 11.

In order to rethink Marx's diagrams for social accumulation, we need to make use of the twin environmental concepts of value, i.e. the concepts of *intrinsic value* and of *negative use value*.

Marx, when making his mathematical calculations about social accumulation, had analysed capitalist production in the very same manner as he did when discussing individual accumulation: he divided the outcome of manufacturing, commodities, into three value parts—constant, variable and surplus capital. Nowhere did he conceptualize the

fact that the products emanating from his Departments of Production could negatively impact on human health and on nature; nowhere in his discussion on the diagrams regarding social accumulation did he pose the question of the detrimental effects of capitalism's by-products, the solid, fluent and gaseous waste churned out by capitalism's industrial sectors. In order to make visible the fact that capitalist production in the various Departments does not just result in surplus value, but in negative use-values resulting ultimately in capitalist costs, we thus need to refine Marx's formula for the outcome of Departmental production [10].

## 12.

Again, just as in the case of individual accumulation, there in the case of social accumulation is the question of the exploitation of nature, which exploitation forms the very starting point and cornerstone of all social accumulation. It is true of course that not all sectors of a capitalist economy draw directly on the resources of nature. Nevertheless, no national economy can be run, without it having access to nature's organic and inorganic resources. The least we can do, in order to expose the fact that capitalism is dependent on nature's labour, is to incorporate into the diagram with Production Departments the fact, that the *inherent values* of nature are transformed into instrumental values, and that the processes of extraction on which national economies depend, affect nature's values, i.e. biodiversity, in numerous unseen ways [11]. Just as we need to pose the fact that the outcome of capitalist production negatively affects our natural surroundings, we also need to pose the fact that nature contributes its own values to make capitalist production possible.

## 13.

There is, lastly, the urgent need to rethink the historical stages of capitalism in view of the present global environmental crisis. In brief: the history of the world capitalist system has often been depicted along the lines of imperialist expansion and domination over peripheral regions of the world. The utterly rapacious character of the system is well reflected

in the way the human and natural resources of Southern continents have for many centuries since the later part of the Middle Ages been drawn on to build and help build central economies. Yet whereas there exist numerous sources on the periodisation of *imperialism*, - the history of environmental degradation under capitalism has rarely been periodised. Today, as the environmental crisis is reaching a global climax, with ecosystem degradation becoming a worldwide concern, with the biodiversity losses taking place at an ever accelerating pace, and with climate change drawing every more alarming observations from scientists— there is a clear need to reflect on the relation between capitalism and our natural surroundings in its various historic phases. In this manner, the earth's present crisis will be understood best.

#### 14.

Marxist economic theory emerged in the 19th century as a holistic theory, as a theory which incorporated many of the finest ideas put forward by Marx's precursors. Today, Marxism needs to struggle, to fight, to regain this position at a time when the future of the earth is at stake. 'Bourgeois' environmental science, as indicated above, has meanwhile made significant progress in mapping the detrimental consequences of capitalist production and consumption. It has moved far beyond the parameters of all classical economic thinking, to expose the enormous risks of unplanned, competitive, exponential growth. At this particular point in time, if judged from an environmental perspective, Marxism is *lagging behind* instead of leading the way. Nevertheless, the potential for building a Marxist environmental perspective in my view definitely exist. If the theory of value be restructured, expanded, to build a labour/nature theory of value, as suggested in this essay, Marxism can regain its former position as a theory equipped to achieve revolutionary change.

(Written: June/August, 2005)

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# North Korea: the Real Concerns

*Mohan*

Whenever North Korea announces the testing of a nuclear device or a ballistic missile, media respond with nervous concern that North Korea is taking the world to the brink of war. While it is the US that is seeking a pretext to wage war on North Korea by claiming that it constitutes a threat to Global Security, the impression created is that North Korea is a poverty stricken rouge state which indulges in military adventure to divert attention of its people from their problems by repeated reference to threats by the US and its client state in South Korea, and that North Korea thereby threatens world peace through its limited stock of nuclear weapons and missile delivery stems.

The concern expressed by the US officialdom and its docile media is that North Korea has acquired the means of an effective self-defence, which makes it a threat to the US. Such attitude is not new and has been the excuse for the US to threaten, subvert, attack and invade countries that it presents to its public as a threat to its security. The list of victims is long. However, Cuba, Iran and North Korea constitute the best remembered cases of prolonged unsuccessful victimization by the US.

It is important to know the history of the conflict in Korea to understand the true situation and recognize who poses a threat to whose existence in the standoff between the US and North Korea.

## **Division of Korea**

North Korea, which is the most heavily sanctioned country, has been the victim of the wrath of the US from the time it frustrated US efforts to

prevent socialism taking root in Korea after the liberation of the country from Japanese occupation in 1945. The US, fearing widespread popularity of the Korean revolution across Korea, immediately created the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) south of the 38th Parallel and made it the sole legal authority until the Republic of Korea (ROK) was formally established on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1948 in South Korea. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) was formed in North Korea on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1948. Thus Korea was divided without consulting the people of Korea and the pledge of fair nationwide elections to enable reunification was not honoured. US military occupation of South Korea has continued despite its becoming a republic; and the US intervened in the elections to impose the right-wing nationalist, Syngman Rhee on South Korea. His murderous regime lasted until 26<sup>th</sup> April 1960, when he was overthrown by a weeklong protest by students opposing police violence and demanding fair elections.

The US used the bitterly anti-communist Syngman Rhee to provoke conflict with the North; and, contrary to the official Western version propagated by the dominant media that North Korea invaded South Korea on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1950, it was the South Korean forces that bombed the North Korean town of Haeju on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> June and announced its capture in the morning of 26<sup>th</sup> June. The New York Times admitted on June 26, 1950 that provocative pronouncements came from the South Korean regime and not the North. Thus North Korea was dragged into a war by the US using its glove puppet regime in Seoul.

## **The Korean War**

North Korea was dragged into war by the US and named the aggressor by the UN, when the Soviet Union boycotted its General Assembly. With the Soviet Union lacking its veto in the Security Council, the US was able to use the name of the UN for its war on North Korea from 27<sup>th</sup> June 1950.

The US scored initial success by inflicting untold destruction on North Korea but failed to accomplish its mission of subduing North Korea. The

war, besides, led to another humiliation of the US when it dragged China into the conflict in mid-October.

China entered the fray when US intervened to drive back the North Korean forces from the positions that they captured in the South and advance into the northernmost parts of North Korea. The Chinese and North Koreans together overcame the South Korean and US forces within weeks putting them on the retreat until January 1951, after which China expressed interest in bringing the conflict to an end. But that was rejected by war mongers of the US establishment like General MacArthur, who even threatened to use a nuclear bomb against North Korea. But MacArthur was soon relieved of his command post in Korea and peace talks started, much against the wishes of Syngman Rhee, at Kaesong on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1951 and continued in Panmunjom from 25<sup>th</sup> October. Armistice was signed on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1953 with the 38th Parallel reset as boundary between the North and the US-dominated South. Cold War tensions continued unabated as the Armistice was not a peace treaty so that, in theory, the war has not ended.

The wanton damage inflicted by the armed forces of the US on the people of North Korea has been variously estimated. Between 20 and 30% of the North Korean population of a little over eight million were reported killed mainly by indiscriminate US bombing which destroyed 78 cities and thousands of villages and demolished nearly all power plants and most of the industry in North Korea.

US bombing of North Korea comprised 635,000 tons of bombs including 32,557 tons of napalm, compared to 503,000 tons of bombs dropped by the US in the entire Pacific theatre of World War II. (This record was surpassed several fold during the Vietnam War with napalm and Agent Orange defoliants usage exceeding napalm usage against North Korea by a factor of ten.)

Such wanton destruction is adequate basis for North Korea to view every move of the US in East Asia with strong suspicion. Actions of successive US governments have done little to diminish the fears of North Korea.

## **Keeping Korea Divided**

North Korea was, however, very keen on the reunification of North and South Korea as were the people of both parts of the country divided by US imperialism. Reuniting the North and South by peaceful means would mean that the US will not be able to station its troops in South Korea for long as well as leave few excuses for the presence of US troops in East Asia including Japan. Hence the US was interested in not only keeping the country divided but also maintaining a permanent state of hostility between the divided parts.

Even Syngman Rhee, like Kim Il Sung, all along wanted a united Korea. A reunited Korea is the dream of all Koreans. The real obstacle to reunion has been the US which resents the idea of rapprochement between the North and the South and exerts pressure on South Korean heads of state whenever they seek closer ties with the North. Even today there is bitter conflict between US President Donald Trump and South Korean President Moon Jae-in about the need for dialogue with the North, unlike his corrupt predecessors Park Geun-hye and Lee Myung-bak who pursued hostility towards the North at the instigation of the US while paying lip service to reunification.

The global media works overtime to present an image of a democratic South Korea struggling against an aggressive North Korea which plans to destroy the South. A reading of the history of democracy in South Korea will dispel such illusion.

Syngman Rhee, the first ruler of South Korea was a dictator overthrown by student protest in 1960, only to be soon followed by direct military rule from 1961 to 1963 by General Park Chung Hee who got himself elected twice and in 1972 declared himself President for Life. His dictatorial regime ended in 1979 with his assassination. He was followed by the dictatorial regimes of Major General Chun Doo-Hwan (1980-1988) and General Roh Tae Woo (1988-1993).



Kim Young-sam, elected president in 1992, served as the first civilian president of the country from 1993 to 1998 and sought to improve relations with the North. He also ensured that the two former presidents, Chun Doo-Hwan and Roh Tae Woo, who were guilty of bribery and corruption, were sentenced to imprisonment. He was followed by Kim Dae-jung (1998-2003) whose actions to reconcile with North Korea culminated in reunions of the separated families of the Korean War and a summit talk with North Korea's Leader Kim Jong Il. That was resented by the US and a hostile policy came into effect following the election of Lee Myung-bak as the next President and lasted even more vigorously through the presidency of Park Geun-hye who was formally impeached in 2017 for corruption. President Moon Jae-in who swore in on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2017, although desirous of friendly relations with the North, is constrained by the unhealthy climate created over the past 14 years.

The US has kept Korea divided by promoting the illusion that North Korea is a threat to the South; and the international media portray North Korea, the only country in recent history to lose a quarter of its population in war, as a threat to global security. The current theme is the nuclear threat posed by North Korea, ignoring the sources of such threat.

## **Nuclear Weapons in South Korea**

South Korea admitted to the IAEA in 2004 that its scientists had secretly been enriching uranium. In the early 1970's, fearing the effect of US troop reduction in South Korea, the Weapons Exploitation Committee of the government decided to develop nuclear weapons. The programme appears to have continued until October 1979. South Korea has admitted to secret activities that began in 1979 and continued through 1987 without declaration to the IAEA, in violation of its NPT commitments. Whether or not the scientists were working with higher-level approval is unknown. But the scientists belonged to the state funded Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute. [See: <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/41928-correcting-history-five-things-no-one-wants-to-say-about-korea>]

South Korea, although not a producer of nuclear weapons, was provided with nuclear weapons by the US which decided on their type, quantity and location. The US Army deployed Nike Hercules surface-to-air missiles to South Korea in 1961 for possible use as surface-to-surface missiles to lay a carpet of radioactivity along the DMZ. Also in 1961 the US Army in South Korea added a surface to surface missile with a 200 kiloton nuclear warhead. Tactical nuclear recoilless rifles provided with nuclear artillery shells were in service in South Korea from 1962 to 1968.

At the height of the Cold War, US nuclear deployment in South Korea was approximately 950 weapons of all types. However, by the 1970s the US Army and Air Force had phased out all nuclear rockets, surface to surface missiles and cruise missiles from South Korea, leaving behind artillery shells and gravity bombs as the only tactical nuclear weapons, until removal of all nuclear weapons was ordered in 1991. The US arsenal of nuclear gravity bombs in South Korea had Air Force F-4D Phantom II fighter jets as delivery vehicles with tactical nuclear weapons deployed at a high state of readiness against surprise invasion by North Korea and for an all-out nuclear war. [See: <https://scout.com/military/warrior/Article/The-History-of-US-Nuclear-Weapons-in-South-Korea-107229766>]

## **Nuclear Build-up in North Korea**

Not long after the Korean War the US was at war in Vietnam following the ignominious defeat of the French colonialists in 1954. US involvement grew to the point of committing US troops in 1965 and the war ended in a humiliating defeat for the US in 1975.

Besides, the 1970's also saw strong anti-colonial and anti-imperialist upsurges in the Third World which put imperialism on the retreat. But US influence in East and South East Asia was strong among its allies such as Japan, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Taiwan and South Korea which fought alongside the US in Vietnam. However, threatening North Korea was not easy while a militarily strong Soviet Union sided with North Korea, which was also friendly with China. Yet, as explained

earlier, the US stockpiled tactical nuclear weapons across South Korea until 1991. Despite US claims that it has no nuclear weapons in South Korea, it is likely that they are held in ships offshore.

North Korea's interest in nuclear technology began in the 1950's. It received knowledge and technology from the Soviet Union to found its Atomic and Nuclear Physics Research Institute in 1955. Agreement was made with the Soviet Union in September 1959 on the use of nuclear power. A research reactor was set up in 1963 and became operational in 1965. Through subsequent independent research, North Korea upgraded its Soviet-built reactor to 8 MW and installed home-built power plants and uranium-ore processing and fuel-rod fabrication plants. North Korean light-water reactors met the growing demand for electric power.

In 1985, North Korea signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), but refused inspection of its nuclear sites by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) while nuclear weapons remained in South Korea. It was in this context that the US removed its nuclear stockpile in South Korea in 1991 so that pressure could be mounted on the North to prevent its developing nuclear weapons.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US escalated its nuclear threat against North Korea, whose nuclear crisis began in February 1993 when General Lee Butler, head of the US Strategic Command, announced that he was retargeting strategic nuclear weapons meant for the old USSR, on North Korea (among others). Also, CIA chief James Woolsey testified that North Korea was 'our most grave current concern' and by mid-March 1993, tens of thousands of US soldiers carried out war games in South Korea which involved B1-B bombers, B-52s and naval vessels carrying cruise missiles. North Korea, in response, pulled out of the NPT. [Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History*, W.W. Norton & Co. 2005. pp 488-489 cited in <https://gowans.wordpress.com/2017/07/05/the-real-reason-washington-is-worried-about-north-koreas-icbm-test/>].

In 1994, North Korea signed the US-North Korea Agreed Framework with the United States and under the terms of the 1994 framework, North

Korea agreed to freeze and ultimately dismantle its nuclear programme in exchange for full normalisation of political and economic relations with the US. This meant:

- By 2003, a US-led consortium would build two light-water nuclear reactors in North Korea to compensate for loss of nuclear power.
- Until then, the US would supply the North with 500,000 tons per year of heavy fuel.
- The US would lift sanctions, remove North Korea from its list of state sponsors of terrorism, and normalise the political relationship, which was still subject to the terms of the 1953 Korean War armistice.
- Finally, both sides would provide formal assurances against the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

Despite the testimony to the US Congress in 1998 by officials involved in implementing the agreement with the US and the IAEA agreeing that there had been “no fundamental violation of any aspect of the framework agreement” by North Korea, the US failed to honour its pledges. [Source: Maria Ryan in the Independent, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/north-korea-missile-test-us-1994-agreed-framework-pyongyang-programme-kim-jong-un-donald-trump-a7876446.html>]

In July 2005, following a meeting between the US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs and North Korean Vice Foreign Minister, North Korea announced its return to the six-party talks (involving North Korea, South Korea, China, Russia, Japan and the US) based on the understanding reached that the US side clarified its official stand to recognize North Korea as a sovereign state, not to invade it and hold bilateral talks within the framework of the six-party talks.

Agreements reached in 2005, like in 1994, bound the US to stop threats against North Korea, act to normalize relations, and plan work on a light-water reactor that would produce fuel but not weapons. But, as pointed out by Noam Chomsky (see ‘What We Say Goes: Conversations on U.S. Power in a Changing World’ by Noam Chomsky and David Barsamian, Metropolitan Books, 2007) diplomacy's failure lay once again with the US

and not North Korea. President Bush broke his light-water reactor promise and launched economic warfare on North Korea. In June 2008 North Korea stated that it had begun to dismantle its nuclear programme and declared that it would turn over all of its plans to the international community. But the six-party talks broke down in 2008 owing to the US insisting that international inspectors be allowed into North Korea with no assurance on its part about escalation of tension in the region. Clearly, the US did not want a negotiated peace in Korea which would mean an end to US military occupation of South Korea.

Complaints about the North Korea's nuclear tests in 2006, 2009 and 2013 fail to take into account the provocative escalation of US military activity in the region and harassment through economic sanctions. North Korea has learned from history on how to deal with US imperialism. It realizes that the possession of nuclear weapons and ability to deliver them across a long distance comprise its only deterrent against attack by the US. It also realizes that it can rely on neither China nor Russia for its defence against US subversion and aggression.

### **US Threat to North Korea**

The threat posed by the US since the Korean War is multi-faceted. The pretext for the annual South Korea-US joint military exercises— which North Korea accuses are preparations for war —was until recently the security of South Korea. North Korea has repeatedly offered to freeze its nuclear and missile tests if the exercises are suspended. But the US and South Korea have kept rejecting the offer, claiming that the drills are legitimate defence exercises that have been conducted for decades.

The US maintains an elaborate system of military bases and locations throughout South Korea. Currently 37,000 US troops are stationed at 100 military installations, including four major Air Force bases, two naval bases and a number of US Army camps clustered in several locations. The headquarters base for the US-ROK combined forces, and the 8<sup>th</sup> US Army, is at Yongsan in downtown Seoul.

The US has escalated its economic war against North Korea by imposing a series of punitive sanctions in the past two decades besides what it pushes through the UN. The theme for the anti North Korea policy of the US has now been shifted with the help of an obliging media network from a threat to South Korea to nuclear threat against the world.

It should be noted that the US, besides using the nuclear threat against several countries, is the only country that launched a nuclear attack on another country. It also used highly radioactive depleted uranium in its war on Iraq and insists on the use of such material in future if necessary. Stubborn refusal by the US not to adopt a no-first-use policy regarding nuclear weapons and the arrogant declaration that it reserves the right to use nuclear weapons first in the case of conflict clearly show that the US is the real threat to the world.

### **North Korea's Stand**

It is claimed that North Korea refuses to negotiate away its nuclear weapons program. That is untrue. Recently, North Korea's Deputy Ambassador Kim In-ryong clarified to the UN Secretary General António Guterres that "As long as the US hostile policy and nuclear threat continue, the DPRK, no matter who may say what, will never place its self-defensive nuclear deterrence on the negotiating table". Thus North Korea only asserts that it will not negotiate away a deterrent until guarantees are there that obviate the need.

The fears of North Korea are based on reality. It was the US that violated the armistice agreement of 1953 which prohibited bringing new weapons into the Korean Peninsula by placing nuclear-tipped missiles in South Korea in 1958 which remained there for 33 years until 1991.

As a country traumatized by the wanton destruction by the US during Korean War, North Korea has been understandably sensitive to threats ranging from US nuclear missiles in South Korea and the clandestine South Korean nuclear weapons program, to explicit threats contained in the "Axis of Evil" declaration by the US and being named a country the

US should be prepared to drop a nuclear bomb on. The threat has been kept alive by the US-South Korean military exercises on the North Korean border which include simulation of nuclear attacks on North Korea. Recent threats by President Donald Trump include a military option to destroy North Korea.

It was North Korea that took the initiative to propose denuclearization of the region. In 2014, President Obama rejected a North Korean offer to freeze missile testing if the US freezes its joint military exercises with South Korea. The offer was repeated in 2015 and again rejected.

In January 2017, North Korea offered to sit with the U.S. anytime to discuss US war games and its nuclear and ballistic missile programs. North Korea proposed that the US should contribute to easing tensions in the Korean peninsula by temporarily suspending joint military exercises in South Korea and its vicinity, in which case North Korea will take responsive steps such as temporarily suspending nuclear tests. The proposal was supported by China and Russia and later by South Korea's new president Moon Jae-in. But the US rebuffed the proposal, refusing equivalence between 'legitimate' US-led war games and North Korea's 'illegitimate' missile and nuclear tests.

The point to note is that North Korea, unlike Iraq under Saddam Hussein and Libya under Muammar Gaddafi, has successfully resisted the schemes of the US, which exercises a global dictatorship and claims the right to intervene in any part of the globe, in order that the US has total control over the political and economic affairs of countries.

### **The International Duty of Left and Progressive Forces**

There is tendency among some on the Left to place on par the nuclear weapons programmes of the US and that of North Korea based on a desire for denuclearization. This ignores the context in which North Korea chose to develop nuclear weapons. It will be useful to consider why China chose to develop nuclear weapons in the early 1960's. Development and possession of nuclear weapons by the US and North

Korea differ not only in scale but also in their respective approaches to the use of nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament.

The central issue concerns the continuing military threat against North Korea by US troops based in South Korea. Withdrawal of US military presence in South Korea is a precondition for peace in the region and for fulfilling the long cherished ambition of the people of the North and the South to reunite Korea as one country.

It is the moral responsibility of all left and progressive forces to defend North Korea against US attempts to subdue and control North Korea by undermining its economy using sanctions as a weapon. Thus there is need for a coordinated campaign demanding that the US stops its economic and military harassment of North Korea and puts an end to all military exercises in Korea and its waters.

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## Of Cemeteries, Caste and Communists

*(Interview of Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary, New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party by Ahilan Kadirgamar, Daily Mirror, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2017)*

Caste relations and conflicts have taken varied forms at different times in Jaffna. The recent conflicts around upper-caste cemeteries in proximity to oppressed caste dwellings resulted in a major protest on May 13th, opposite the Jaffna Bus Stand. In Kalaimathy village in Puttur, historically a Communist stronghold in Jaffna, some 23 villagers are in remand custody and 30 people including 11 women are out on bail, following an intensified struggle against a cemetery in the middle of their village. A Satyagraha campaign is continuing for weeks now in Kalaimathy, calling for the removal of all cemeteries next to people's settlements. People from other oppressed caste villages are also participating in the Satyagraha and many others are coming to express their solidarity. S. K. Senthivel, General Secretary of the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party, shared his views on this recent conflict, their work in Kalaimathy village lasting close to four decades and the history of anti-caste struggles in Jaffna.

**Q: You have a long relationship with Puttur and particularly Kalaimathy village that is in the heat of struggle today. Could you elaborate on this conflict?**

**A:** The people of Kalaimathy village, which has about 700 families making a population of about 4,500 people, are continuing with a Satyagraha struggle supported by the Mass Movement of Social Justice. With the demand that all cemeteries next to people's settlements should be removed, large sections of the Puttur people from Kalaimathy village

are participating day and night and taking forward a powerful conscientious struggle. These villagers have taken a collective decision, that even as they continue their daily wage work, each day, different persons are taking days off and contributing their energies towards organising this struggle.

Those who observe this struggle, wonder about the commitment of the village people towards this struggle, including the history and tradition of this village. And it is indeed, a different kind of activism here, compared to other villages. While there is one consistent leadership in this village for the Community Centre, Women's Society, Sports Society and other village institutions, there is also a politics to the thinking of these people. The basis of their struggle is that for hundreds of years, the people in this village have been oppressed on the basis of caste.

**Q: Can you speak about the history of this cemetery that people want removed?**

**A:** The cemetery is very old. But in those days, there were no settlements near it. The lands next to it were not used for agriculture with wild over growth. But few decades ago, there was a government settlement scheme which also used some of the cemetery land amounting to 15 lachams (150 perches) and settled some of the villagers. Eventually other villagers also started building houses on the cemetery land as land was scarce and there was no boundary.

As people settled near the cemetery, some practical environmental problems came up in the 2000s. As bodies were burned in the cemetery, the ashes and the smoke began to trouble the people. Animals ran around with half burned body parts that remained. The people began to oppose the existence of the cemetery, and by the 2010s there emerged a widespread opposition to the cemetery. The last body was perhaps burned three or four years ago.

Early this year, one body was brought and it was turned back by the villagers who convinced them to burn it in another cemetery close by,

which was distant from people's settlements. That a dominant caste body was turned back has troubled some people, and they want to prove a point. Next, another family had tried to bring a body, this was of an oppressed caste person but backed by the dominant castes, and this became confrontational. The courts and the police have intervened. The Judge wanted a high wall built with a gas incinerator. As the confrontation escalated, the villagers broke the half-built wall around the cemetery that was being built in defiance, creating a tense situation and further police action.

**Q: What is the education level in this village and how do they earn their living?**

**A:** It is only in recent times that students have begun to study O/L and A/L, which reflects the educational backwardness of this village. Until 1975, they could not even attend the Puttur Somaskanda College that was just half a kilometre away, and so their educational access had remained low. They mostly ended their education with grade five, but now there is a young woman who has finished her university education from Kalaimathy. There is now a thirst for education in this village.

The village people are involved in many forms of day wage labour. An interesting characteristic of Valikamam East is that it is a red soil region. But there are stones on top of that soil, and these villagers go as groups of four or five and break and remove the stones and prepare it into farm land. Then there are tree climbing workers. Currently, there are over hundred men who are involved in marketing fish on bicycles. Thus such bodily labour is what they depend on for their incomes. We can also see hundreds of women from this village who go for wage labour in the red soil region of Achchuveli and Valalai.

**Q: I have seen women go in groups to work in such farms. What are the social and economic conditions of workers and how are their wages?**

**A:** Agricultural work has been necessary for women, because they are unable to sustain their families with the wages of men. The women are involved in planting and harvesting onions. However, there is a great difference in the wages received by men and women. If men receive around Rs. 900 a day in wages, women may only receive half the wage.

The important issue in this village is that they have been landless. And landlessness, caste oppression and economic deprivation, lead to class oppression including low wages.

In this background, in 1979, there was a serious incident of caste violence. Casteist thugs claimed the oppressed caste people had drawn water from their wells and beat them mercilessly.

The oppressed caste people lived in fear, they would say, we work on their land, we live under their trees, we cannot oppose them.

It was with this incident that our Party started working in that village. About twelve youth from that village, with strong anti-caste views, came and spoke to us about their predicament. We talked to them about possible efforts, and that, without the support of more people from their village, we cannot do anything; we cannot oppose caste oppression, we cannot gain land, we cannot raise the wages.

When they go for work, they are given bread and tea, but tea is given in coconut shells, or half cut bottles. But the people won't oppose such practices at once. We had to first organise and work with the determined youth, and we advised them to start a community centre. Those youth were convinced, and they formed a youth group and worked with us. The community centre became effective, and was run by both the youth aligned with the Party as well as others in the village.

**Q: What kinds of struggles were first taken up in this village?**

**A:** At that time, there were about 500 families in that village, and we saw that they needed a path for the village. If a sick person or a pregnant women had to be rushed to the hospital, they had to be carried on

footpaths through people's gardens before reaching a vehicle. We asked the landowners for the path, we also asked government officials, we even called MPs and asked them, but all of them said nothing can be done.

Then we explained the situation to the village people, we drew a possible map for the road. Some people who had a humanitarian consciousness gave us part of the pathway. Then one night about 1,000 people, both men and women, worked all night. We arranged ten tractors of sand, and in one night laid the road, with the people spreading the sand through the lands of landowners.

The next morning the landowners were shocked and created trouble. They called the police. A woman called Sinnamma was arrested and remanded by the police, but then the women in the village got even more involved with a sense of responsibility. Eventually, the landowners could not do anything. We opened the road and named the village Kalaimathy.

The next struggle was to form a co-operative store in the village, because most of the villagers used food coupons, which had to be used in different shops. But the co-operative officials refused to create a co-operative store. Eventually, we approached the GA at that time, Devanesan Nesiah. He said, he can help us create an AD (Government Authorized Dealer) shop. So, we formed an AD shop and the villagers brought all their coupon stamps to this shop. The shop worked around the clock, including to serve the workers who returned home late at night.

The success of the struggle for the road and the co-operative store, gave the people confidence. They began to believe they can achieve anything with the leadership of those youth, the support and direction of the Party, and the unity of the people. That was a major victory for us.

**Q: What kind of struggles were there for land? And how and when did they gain their housing land in Kalaimathy?**

**A:** The people had absolutely no land. Most of the land was owned by a powerful landowning family called Malavarayar. The people who were squatting on their land, even if they gained some savings, and wanted to build even small cement houses, they would not be permitted by the landowners. By the 1990s, the village was mobilised around the land issue, but there were different perspectives on how to approach it. Ultimately, the land deeds were owned by the landowners. So, it was decided that the people would offer to purchase the land. The landowners could also see that the people were organised and they could not be evicted. So, they agreed to sell the land for a small price. The Party suggested a cap of two lachams per family to buy that land, so that all the people in the village could have housing land.

The village had a reputation of high alcoholism and other abusive substances. We tried to direct the village through various activities. We introduced sports in a major way, particularly football and volleyball. We also started adult literacy classes. It is through such daily activities that the village was transformed.

**Q: The Communist Party led major anti-caste struggles for temple entry and equal seating in the 1960s and early 1970s. There were struggles in many villages, but anti-caste and progressive mobilisations in many of those villages did not continue. While your party has a base in Puttur, what is the reason for the decline of the Left in the other villages?**

**A:** Long before we started working in Puttur, the Communist Party launched the anti-caste campaign in October 1966. Over one thousand people from various villages participated in those struggles. In villages like Changanai, Maduvil, Karaveddy, Neliyadi, Alvai, Point Pedro, Manthuvil and Polikandy, we had people linked to our party. There were about 15 people who died in those struggles that took place between 1966 and 1971. Rising on the strength of those struggles the Party wanted to launch major land struggles, land for the landless and for livelihoods.

But the JVP insurrection of 1971, resulted in tremendous repression of our Party. Many of our leaders were arrested and many of us went into hiding for close to a year. Tamil nationalism was also on the rise in the 1970s, with standardisation and the rise of the Tamil students' movement. Next, many backward Tamil nationalists like Amirthalingam, Sivasithamparam and Naganathan lost in the 1970 elections.

They in turn put forward the Tamil Eelam call. They wanted to push a narrow ethnic politics and also defeat the Left with such a call. When Tamil youth took up arms, the already militant oppressed caste youth joined the armed groups that were putting forward Leftist slogans. With the open economic policies, many people from the villages also migrated abroad. With the political space shrinking we used the space where we could. Our work in Puttur focused on the needs of the people and to provide our support to the people. The village people also take their important decisions after consulting us.

**Q: What kind of solidarity are you expecting from people of other communities and the South?**

**A:** We are a Left party and we have connections with other Left parties in the South. We have been informing them about our struggles. Just as we support progressive struggles in other parts of the country, we want them to see this struggle and support it. We want them to bring out this issue and put pressure on the Central Government.

This is a just and democratic struggle. It is not just about one village, but about all those who are oppressed by caste in different forms.

This is about the daily life of people, and the people in this village have supported progressive struggles. When a people like that are struggling, Leftists, people who work with peasants and all progressives, have a far-reaching responsibility to support this struggle.

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# Settlements around Cemeteries

## Social, Environmental and Cultural Awareness

Tendency for people of the country to take to the streets to fight on issues confronting them is on the rise. It is an expression of public response to the failure of the ethnically-centred 'representative democracy'. Such mass campaigns may be considered as the beginnings of a participatory democratic process. They have brought to the streets many problems faced by the people that ethnically-centred politics either intentionally sidelines or fails to notice. The demand to remove cemeteries in the middle of human settlements can be considered to be one of them.

### **Social awakening**

Although people who for long were compelled to reside near cemeteries have woken to the environmental impact of the cemeteries, a majority did not realize the fairness of the demands of the affected population until it took the form of a campaign. Even the media initially gave a negative image of the campaign.

Under bourgeois democracy, problems of people affected at various levels tend to be ignored if those affected constitute a minority. Not merely in questions of living environment of the toiling masses as in the case of the cemetery, even in the national question of Sri Lanka, its being one concerning minorities has played a part in the failure to address it. Still, even after the resultant catastrophe, lessons have not been learned to develop a political line that will unite the people oppressed based on race, religion, caste, gender and class in order to weaken chauvinism based on majority identity, although such a political line would bring about a democratic system of government in the country. But the Tamil



nationalists, instead of counting on the strength of mass mobilization, are for their own survival pursuing the line of pleading with global imperialist powers to mortgage the country and the people. What goes on in the South is not very different, and policies for public welfare remain empty slogans amid opportunities to line the pocket with income from bribery and corruption on top of allowances from the state. It is contest for seats and posts that constitute politics today in the North and the South, and it is not surprising that the politicians do not notice mass struggles like this which concern the livelihood of the people.

The mass struggle of the people forced to live in the vicinity of a cemetery calling for the removal of cemeteries located amid human settlements is just. Members of families including infants, children, students, pregnant mothers and elders should be freed from an environment in which they inhale fumes of cremation. Being victims of illnesses caused by it and being subject to the unhealthy environment of cemeteries should be avoided. It should also be considered that, in a context in which various electronic media propagate superstitions about ghosts, demons and spirits, those living close to cemeteries— children and students in particular —could be emotionally injured.

It is sad to note that our political awareness has fallen to a level where persons in responsible positions in the Northern Provincial Council, instead of approaching the issue of cemeteries amid human settlements in a rational and humanitarian way, release statements to the media making an issue of whether the cemetery or the people came first. Care for fellow humans has got detached to the point where which came first is made the issue in place of verifying whether people are affected or not. Likewise, the politics of the country has drifted from the need to protect all nationalities of Sri Lanka to the question of who arrived first. Such issues play a big role in deceiving the ordinary working people who constitute the majority of the country, sowing differences among them, and dividing them. It is also the basis for narrow nationalist politics. It is hardly surprising that harming of the needs and interests of people

dominated by them does not matter in their politics where descendents of those who once ruled desire to rule again. Bogus democracy which does not have public interest at its heart finds expression as bribery and corruption and contest for positions.

Those in responsible positions raising the issue of whether the cemetery or the people came first seem to forget that it was persons like them in responsible positions in state organizations who established the human settlements adjoining cemeteries about which issues are raised now. Examples of such actions include cemeteries of Kintuchitty in Putthur (with an ongoing campaign to be rid of the cemetery), Tidatpulam, and Paalpannai in Thirunelvely.

The state and state organizations while spending massive sums on modernizing cities ignore rural infrastructure. In villages with rising population, people face issues of location of cemeteries and of drinking brackish water and water contaminated with faecal matter. State bodies with responsibility to protect land, water, air and the environment stop at pandering to those who uphold customs and traditions which serve the interests of the ruling classes. Consequently, there is minimal implementation of rural infrastructural development schemes that need to be carried out to meet the current and future interests of the people. The present cemetery issue should be seen as a consequence of such indifference.

In a capitalist social structure based on social and economic exploitation based on social inequality, emergence of big cities is accompanied by the growth of slums in the periphery that constitute the dwellings of the toiling population. Also, during the development of our 'traditional' villages, those who were obliged to work for the wellbeing of the land owners were for ages settled in lands at the fringes. Land owners who donated large stretches of land to temples, like for example the Temple of Shiva in Chithamparam in South India, kept as landless the people who toiled for them. When the families of the toilers grew, cemeteries were set

up amid human settlements. It was the toiling masses who had been compelled to settle near cemeteries in much of the North of Sri Lanka.

It is strange that Tamil nationalist politicians, to whom politics has for long been the affirmation of the traditional homeland of a nationality, fail to notice a campaign in a region under their authority by toiling masses to protect the environment of their residential area. The problems and sufferings faced by toiling workers, peasants and fishers are silenced by ethnicity-centred slogans.

### **Cultural Awakening**

In much the same way, some years ago, when the cruelty of untouchability sharpened, no Tamil nationalist politician took notice of the sorrows of the affected people who resorted to struggle under the leadership of the Movement to Eradicate Untouchability to establish their rights. Besides, the people also carried out the great task of creating a cultural awakening which to at least some extent cleared the chaff and dust of the Tamil cultural heritage.

Even today, notions of tradition, antiquity and customs are put forward by important Tamil political leaders to negate the call for a healthy living environment. Not surprisingly, what underlie the Sinhala chauvinist and Tamil narrow nationalist politics which seek to secure their authority based on vote strength are these very notions of tradition, antiquity and customs, based on religion, without concern for the wellbeing of the people, and resisting change. Such cultural hegemony plays strong role in the endless prolonging of the social, economic and survival problems of the toiling workers, peasants and fishers and in the blunting of broad knowledge and sense of unity among the people. Public opinion generated by the media under their control also does not transcend these boundaries.

Mass struggles like this enable the social, environmental and cultural awakening, despite restrictions imposed on them. The situation cannot continue forever where the toiling masses reconcile to their plight of

suffering oppression in the belief that it is God's will. Such mass struggles remind us that there are people who dare to think and act with new scientific cultural consciousness with confidence that they can transform the sorrowful life imposed on them by the ruling classes.

## **Environmental Awakening**

The campaign launched by the people of Kalaimathi village demanding the removal of the cemetery located amid human settlements in Putthur West is not just about the environment of the cemetery. It also has an environmental awareness basis.

The people of the village who in the past forty years and more were predominantly landless resolved their land issue through their own effort and built a road which cut through the village without a road before. Guidance based on Marxist thinking and the firm unity of the people of the village served as fundamental strength. Besides, through their own effort, they established the Kalaimathi Community Centre, Kailasapathy Library, Kalaimathi Pre-school, Kalaimathi Public Auditorium and volleyball and football grounds.

Besides, the youth and the public of the village do not confine activities to their village and have contributed to the struggles of all oppressed people. They joined hands with the Mass Movement for Social Justice in the struggle of the people of Kepapilavu against national oppression as well as struggles that heighten environmental awareness among people such as those against waste oil contamination in Chunnakam, the establishment of a coal power plant in Trincomalee and starting the nuclear power plant in Koodankulam in India. The struggle concerning the issue of the cemetery amid human settlements also aims to heighten awareness against caste oppression as well as of environmental issues.

This campaign against activities that pollute the environment is also one to draw public attention to other environmental hazards. We see everywhere signs of the current neoliberal economy and consumerist culture polluting the air, water and soil essential to human life as well as

poisoned food and water. The natural environment that sustains human and other life on the planet is rapidly deteriorating as a result of global warming and climate change. As a result, there is doubt about existence of a living space for future generations. Hence, the protection of people from such hazardous developments is possible only through making the people environmentally alert and act with foreknowledge.

It is also in view of such matters that a demand was put forward for the removal of cemeteries amid human settlements. A pamphlet was distributed among the people by those affected by the cremation of the dead in the Kintuchitty Cemetery in Putthur West explaining the environmental harm caused to those living in its vicinity and appealing to the public not to use the cemetery for cremation. The fairness of the plea was recognized and many cremations were done in other cemeteries in adjoining regions.

It was only after a few individuals stubbornly insisted that the remains of a deceased person should be cremated there that the people of the village mobilized against the move. Although their protest was peaceful, the Police and Courts intervened to preserve the existing social order, following which there were several acts of provocation of the people which led to the prolonged custodial detention of people from the village in large numbers. Response to this took the form of a Satyagraha campaign of awareness that has gone on for more than fifty days and street demonstrations in which people participated in large numbers. They clearly expressed the determination of the people. Attendance and participation by socially responsible intellectuals, creative writers and artists, media personnel and political activists as well as their expression of support in electronic social media added strength to the demand of the people.

This cannot be seen as a struggle merely to remove a cemetery. It is a struggle that concerns accepting the right of fellow human beings to freedom and wellbeing and advancing one's life and that of humanity through supporting that right. It seeks to broaden the spirit of caring for

fellow human beings. This struggle aims to broaden that spirit through creating social, cultural and environmental awareness among the people.

Some who understood the implications of waste oil contamination expressed their concern well before contamination was noticed on a large scale. It was the lack of such awareness among officials and others concerned that cause pollution of water on a large scale.

The garbage mountain in the South grew despite public protest. Some of the protesters were arrested and punished by Courts. Not long after, the garbage mountain collapsed killing over thirty people, including infants, children and women. There the people were alert but law and justice were not.

The Science Faculty of the Jaffna University is currently closed after a student died of dengue. Such things have happened before and death by dengue is rising in the North and the South. While shortcomings of the state comprise a factor, lack of public awareness is a cause for the rise in such avoidable deaths.

However well garbage management may function, lack of public awareness enables selfish actions leading to unhygienic disposal of waste.

Lack of public awareness harms the wellbeing of the people and is responsible for many deaths. Hence, our environmental awareness should be strengthened to the point that we ensure the cremation of not only our relatives in ways that are quiet and harmless to the environment but also of our own bodies in such fashion.

Such attitudes will help in the total elimination of cemeteries amid human settlements as well as help people to live with good physical and emotional health.

(Translation of a comment by Paamaran, 4<sup>th</sup> September 2017)

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## **Use of Armed Forces to Control Crime**

### **Press Release**

*2<sup>nd</sup> August 2017*

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued the following statement on behalf of the Politburo of the Party criticizing the Government's handling of crime in the North.

The Government by summoning the Army, Navy and Special Task Force to deal with the continuing incidents of sword attacks and shootings in the North has forfeited the last remaining faith that the Tamil people had in it. This action has caused consternation to the people who until then have attended to their daily affairs without much fear or anxiety. At the same time this move appears to have been designed to mollify Sinhala chauvinists in the South as well as an attack on the notions of political solution and reconciliation. The Party therefore sees the move as a continuation of chauvinist oppression.

It is undeniable that the frequency of criminal acts such as sword attacks, shootings, smuggling of cannabis and drug abuse and other anti-social acts has increased. Deterioration of political, economic and cultural values is the basic reason for such escalation. An important reason for the deterioration of values is the assimilation by the youth of degenerate movies from the West and India— which are freely imported under the open-door economic policy —and the scenes of violence and perversion contained in them. Besides, the excessive circulation of money made available by members of the Tamil diaspora also contributes to the loss of direction of the youth. Improper conduct, bribery and corruption, unjust and biased actions by those who implement law and order are also important reasons. Thus the Party considers that to making an excuse of

the wrongs of a small section of the youth in the North to unleash the Army, Navy and Special Task Force among the public is totally unacceptable.

SK Senthivel  
General Secretary, NDMLP

## **Police Killing of Youth**

### **Press Release**

*13<sup>th</sup> July 2017*

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued the following statement denouncing the brutal conduct of the Police in shooting to death a 24 year old youth from Thunnalai.

The death of a 24 year old youth from Thunnalai in the Kudaththanai region of Vadamaradchi East in shooting by the police three days ago demonstrates continuing police highhandedness and reckless use of firearms. It is evidence in broad daylight of rising police violence against members of the public. To claim that the shooting happened because the vehicle transporting sand illegally did not halt when the police stopped it is poor excuse. The question is whether it is within the law to shoot at a vehicle for failing to halt when stopped by the police. Last year two university students were killed by police shooting in Kokkuvil. The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party therefore condemns very strongly the continuing violence against the public by the Police and the killing of the youth from Thunnalai.

Under the Mahinda Rajapaksa regime, there was police violence and highhandedness which crudely transcended the limits of law and justice. As a result, many lives were lost throughout the country. The present government came to power pledging that there will be an end to all of that under its regime of "Good Governance". But police violence and



killings continue. Therefore the Party urges the entire people to demand in one voice that the murderous use of weapons by the Police should be stopped immediately.

SK Senthivel  
General Secretary, NDMLP

## **No to Medical Education for Profit**

### **Press Release**

*30<sup>th</sup> June 2017*

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued the following statement on behalf of the Politburo of the Party supporting the demand by university students, parents and doctors that the South Asian Institute of Technology and Medicine (SAITM) should be taken over by the state.

The demand by university students, parents and doctors that the operations of SAITM should be halted and the Institute brought fully under state control is fully justified. The action of the present government wearing the mask of 'Good Governance' to unleash police repression on protesting students, in much the same way as the Mahinda Rajapaksa regime that preceded it, deserves to be strongly condemned. The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party, while opposing the stand of the Government seeking to revengefully put down the demands of the students and their struggles in pursuit of the demands, expresses its fullest support to the campaigns of protest by university students, parents and doctors. It also urges the immediate release of all student leaders arrested in connection with the protests.

It is a blessing to the country that free health service still continues in Sri Lanka, its universities produce doctors through the free education system, and the vast majority of the working people enjoy the benefits. It is with the aim of burying these benefits that a grave has been dug in the

name of SAIMT Medical Faculty. If this grave is not sealed off, free health service and free medical education will be gobbled up by the private sector. It is because of the realization of this danger that all by university students, parents and doctors are campaigning against SAIMT. Political parties and organizations of the Left have expressed their support for the campaign. But the “Good Governance” regime is unleashing police repression on the students who are at the forefront of the struggle.

The Police used a recent occasion when students went on a demonstration to surround the Ministry of Health to press their demand to brutally attack the students. More than eighty students had injuries, some of them severe. The Police seeking to arrest protesting students have arrested and remanded student leaders Lahiru Weerasekara, Sugathananda Thero and Faizan Mohammed.

Such police repression is a continuation of what happened under the Mahinda Rajapaksa regime and goes to demonstrate that the present regime wearing the mask of “Good Governance” is only interested in pursuing with vigour the policy of privatization followed by earlier regimes. Therefore, the Party supports the demand by students, parents, teachers and doctors that the SAAITM private medical college should be closed and thereby free education and free medicine should be protected.

SK Senthivel  
General Secretary, NDMLP

## **The NPC Vote of No Confidence**

### **Press Release**

*16<sup>th</sup> June 2017*

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

of no confidence on the Chief Minister by Northern Provincial Council members from the Federal Party.

The vote of no confidence against Chief Minister CV Wigneswaran planned by the Federal Party leadership and NPC members from the FP only shows the utterly reactionary nature of the FP. The decision taken by Chief Minister Wigneswaran based on the committee of inquiry into corruption and abuse of power by Ministers of the NPC is fair and courageous. The Party condemns the moves by the leadership of the FP, which seems unable to accept the findings, to protect ministers found guilty of corruption are anti-people and based on its authoritarian political attitude.

The Chief Minister had appointed a three-member committee to examine the charges against four ministers of the NPC by members of the NPC. The committee conducted an unbiased inquiry and submitted its findings to him. It was an act of courage by him to take action against the four ministers. This decision of the Chief Minister sets an example to the remaining eight Provincial Councils. But the move by the leadership of the FP and the FP members of the NPC to protect ministers guilty of corruption and abuse of power merely demonstrates their ugly faces of selfishness, desire for positions and authoritarian politics.

Besides, the current happenings have exploded the myth propagated by leaders from SJV Chelvanayakam to Mavai Senathirajah that problems will be resolved if Tamils are ruled by Tamils. The conduct of the FPO has once again proven that money, positions, self interest and accumulation of wealth constitute the basis of the authoritarian politics among the Tamils.

The Party appeals to the Tamil people and the youth that they should think and act in progressive ways and in a broad-based fashion.

SK Senthivel  
General Secretary, NDMLP

# No to Cemeteries amid Human Settlements

## Press Release

30<sup>th</sup> May 2017

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued the following statement on behalf of the Politburo of the Party made the following comment on the question of maintaining cemeteries in the middle of human settlements.

During recent months the people of Kalaimathi Village in Putthur have launched several awareness campaigns calling for the removal of the cemetery amid their settlements. As a consequence, three days ago, there was a tense and confrontational situation prevailing between the police and the public, triggered police firing.

It is a matter of concern that deserves condemnation that the Jaffna newspaper Uthayan, in its news report, went to the extent of covering up the above biased and revengeful conduct of the police and pinning the blame on the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party and also editorially attacked the Party. The act of the newspaper in failing to recognize the just nature of the humanitarian plea of the people and writing in a manner that empathized with the conservative authoritarian forces who think that the oppressed people deserve to inhale the fumes, ashes and dust issuing from the cremation of corpses, and accusing the Party of instigating the protest from behind has exposed the fallacy of the claim of the newspaper to impartiality.

The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party is not only a party for the workers, peasants and other toiling masses but also a party for all people oppressed by social inequality.

The people of Kalaimathi Village in Putthur have during the past three decades shattered one after another the chains of slavery that bound them to secure their rights. No Tamil authoritarian party has participated or assisted them in their initiatives to struggle against social injustice. It should be stated here that these parties merely seek their votes, but do

not see them as fellow human beings or even as Tamils. The people of the village secured land and an economy for themselves, educational and health services and developed a social culture through struggle against conservative authoritarianism. Meanwhile, they have remained a disciplined village comprising a people and a generation of youth who are socially concerned, and free of anti-social acts, thuggery and rowdyism and the culture of gun wielding. The Party has played a guiding and contributory role in this matter.

Frontline activists of the village who have been functioning with selfless dedication for the uplift of the people of the village are remarkable. It should be said here that the youth and the people of the Kalaimathi Village have actively participated with a progressive political stand and social concern in a variety of struggles against chauvinist oppression in the North.

It is in context that the people of Kalaimathi Village are putting forward their plea that the cemetery in the middle of the village with a population of around 5000 people should be removed and other cemeteries located far from human settlements be used instead. Their firm stand is that the above cemetery which causes inhalation of fumes, ashes and dust issuing from the cremation of corpses and leads to unhygienic conditions and environmental pollution and to illnesses in infants, children, pregnant mothers and elders should be removed.

The Party supports the above plea of the people of the Kalaimathi Village who comprise agricultural labourers and daily wage earners because it is humanitarian, just and pro-people. Likewise, the Party has been urging that cemeteries located amid human settlements in various parts of the Jaffna Peninsula should also be removed.

Antiquity, customs and tradition which stand the way of the daily lives and development of toiling masses living in a backward rural environment should be basically rejected. The entire Tamil society will advance as a result. The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party calls

upon all progressive and socially concerned individuals and pro-people parties and organizations to support the people of the Kalaimathi Village.

SK Senthivel  
General Secretary, NDMLP

## **Address by the General Secretary**

### **News Release for the Media**

*27<sup>h</sup> June 2017*

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party addressed the Plenum at the conclusion of the Annual Meeting of the Plenum. The text of his speech is as follows.

The development programmes put forward by the regime of “Good Governance” headed by Maithri and Ranil cannot bring relief from the surging economic crises facing the government. Equally, The New Constitution that is being drafted will not bring about an appropriate solution to the national question which is still the main contradiction facing the country. To expect a solution out of it will be in vain.

Inviting foreign capital and investments for development schemes and making pious declarations about ethnic harmony and political solution are not intended for the country to prosper and the people to live free of hardship, but instead to reinforce neoliberal economic programmes under the US imperialist programme of globalization. It is to conceal this truth that in the past the forces of the ruling classes and foreign imperialist and hegemonic forces enabled the transformation of the national question into conflict and war.

These very forces are now play-acting in the name of ethnic harmony. In this situation, chauvinist politics is used as a means to capture political power. Seemingly as a counter to it, initiatives are taken in the North to project narrow-nationalist authoritarian politics. It is thus important that the Tamils, Muslims and Hill Country Tamils who comprise the oppressed nationalities put forward just demands for their basic rights

and that the people are enlightened politically and mobilized with a long-term perspective. But to carry on with the politics of emotion without self criticism of past policies and practices will lead to wrong conclusions and only help the authoritarian political forces to secure their respective vote banks. Meanwhile, the people, besides continuing in abject conditions unable to compensate the losses so far, will face fresh forms of losses.

This is not to say that people should not mobilize and struggle against oppression. What it means is that just demands and correct struggles should embrace the entire people. It means that, while presenting the national rights of the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil nationalities, basic rights of the workers among the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil nationalities should also be emphasized. Besides, a solution should be sought for the resolution of the caste-hierarchical ideology prevailing among Tamils and the accompanying economic, social and cultural issues. Demands for justice by women subjected to gender oppression and denied of their rights should be upheld.

Also, there should be no foreign intervention in the economic and political issues of the country as well as in the national question. It is important that suitable policies are developed to avert the recurrence of the tragedies of the past as a result of such foreign intervention.

The Party, in the current political context, includes these considerations to recommend Progressive Nationalism as a policy that will fit in with an alternative political path. Such Progressive Nationalism is proposed an alternative to the political paths followed thus far comprising identity politics and conservative and reactionary anti-people politics induced by foreign forces.

It is therefore the challenge of the hour for all progressive, democratic and left forces who can be united to put forward such Progressive Nationalism and unite on the basis of a common programme to address the national question.

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# Centenary of the October Bolshevik Revolution

The International Coordination of Revolutionary Parties and Organizations (ICOR) of which the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party is a member is holding an International Seminar in October 2017 to mark the Centenary of the Great October Revolution. ICOR has also planned activities to promote dialogue, cooperation and solidarity among fraternal Revolutionary parties and organizations belonging to ICOR as well as other friendly organizations.

The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party is sending a delegation led by Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary, NDMLP to the ICOR Seminar and other programmes.

## Book Launch

Articles written in Tamil by Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary, NDMLP critically analyzing the politics of the period between the Vaddukkodai Resolution of May 1976 and the tragic end of the armed struggle led by the LTTE in May 2009 and serialized in the Party journal Puthiya Poomi (later Puthiya Neethi) between 2009 and 2016 have been compiled by the author and published by Puthiya Neethi Publishers under the title “Vaddukkodai muthal Mullivaikkal varai” (From Vaddukkodai to Mullivaikkal).

It can be said with confidence the book is thus far the most objective analysis of the tragedy of the Tamil national struggle.

The book released in Jaffna on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2017 was well received by the public and book releases have since been held in Colombo on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2017 and Matale on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2017. Book release events are scheduled to be held in other parts of the country.

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## NDMLP Seminars Marking October revolution

A series of twelve monthly seminars was planned by the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party to be conducted in Jaffna on the following themes from January to December 2017 to mark the centenary year of Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917.

- *The historical significance of the October Revolution and its impact on Sri Lanka*
- *The October Revolution and the liberation of the working class*
- *The October Revolution and national liberation*
- *The October Revolution and socialist construction*
- *The October Revolution and elimination of casteism*
- *The October Revolution and the struggle between capitalism and socialism*
- *The October Revolution and women's liberation*
- *The October Revolution and the Second World War*
- *The October Revolution and environmental concerns*
- *The October Revolution and the new cultural revolution*
- *The October Revolution and liberation movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America*
- *Setbacks to the victories of the October Revolution and recovery*

Of the planned seminars the first ten have been conducted as scheduled and the remaining two are due to be completed by early December 2017.

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*[Continued from inside front cover.]*

It's so loud inside my head  
With words that I should have said!  
As I drown in my regrets  
I can't take back the words I never said

I can't take back the words I never said  
Now you can say it ain't our fault if we never heard it  
But if we know better than we probably deserve it  
Jihad is not a holy war, wheres that in the worship?  
Murdering is not Islam!  
And you are not observant  
And you are not a Muslim  
Israel don't take my side 'cause look how far you've pushed them  
Walk with me into the ghetto, this where all the Kush went  
Complain about the liquor store but what you drinking liquor for?  
Complain about the gloom but when'd you pick a broom up?  
Just listening to Pac ain't gone make it stop  
A rebel in your thoughts, ain't gon' make it halt  
If you don't become an actor you'll never be a factor  
Pills with million side effects  
Take 'em when the pains felt  
Wash them down with diet soda  
Killin' off your brain cells  
Crooked banks around the World  
Would gladly give a loan today  
So if you ever miss a payment  
They can take your home away

It's so loud inside my head  
With words that I should have said!  
As I drown in my regrets  
I can't take back the words I never said, never said

I can't take back the words I never said  
I think that all the silence is worse than all the violence  
Fear is such a weak emotion that's why I despise it  
We scared of almost everything, afraid to even tell the truth  
So scared of what you think of me, I'm scared of even telling you  
Sometimes I'm like the only person I feel safe to tell it to  
I'm locked inside a cell in me, I know that there's a jail in you  
Consider this your bailing out, so take a breath, inhale a few  
My screams is finally getting free, my thoughts is finally yelling through

It's so loud inside my head  
With words that I should have said  
As I drown in my regrets  
I can't take back the words I never said

*[Wasalu Muhammad Jaco, an anti-establishment American rapper, record producer, and entrepreneur better known by his stage name Lupe Fiasco. Courtesy: <http://www.metrolyrics.com/words-i-never-said-lyrics-lupe-fiasco.html>]*

**The Soviet system is one of the most vivid proofs, or manifestations, of how the one revolution develops into the other. The Soviet system provides the maximum of democracy for the workers and peasants; at the same time, it marks a break with bourgeois democracy and the rise of a new, epoch-making type of democracy, namely, proletarian democracy, or the dictatorship of the proletariat.**

**V. I. Lenin**

*Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution*

**First Published: Pravda No. 234, 18 October 1921**

Published by V Mahendran of 15/4 Mahindarama Road, Mt Lavinia  
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Printed at World Vision Graphics  
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