

Progressive Voice

Volume I

Number 1 may 1979

into the future

Regular readers no doubt will be wondering why the monthly Newsletter of the GUES (London Branch) has not appeared for sometime. The answer to this question is in your hands. The decision to publish, what is essentially a newsletter and at the same time expand to on the content, was taken by the Executive committee immediately after the publication of the last newsletter.

As a result of this decision and the endeavour to present our readers with material of quality, we have published the newsletter as PROGRESSIVE VOICE in its present form.

The objective of Progressive Voice is four fold.

**We shall attempt to give an objective analysis of the events in Eelam.

**To juxtapose the Eelam National Liberation struggle with other national movements around the world and seek to co-ordinate and cooperate with them in the struggle against imperialism in general.

**To voice the opinion of progressive individuals and institutions on relevant issues.

**To debate and discuss theoretical problems arising out of practical issues on the Eelam question.

-Editorial collective-

local elections

people elect TULF mandate reaffirmed

In the recent local government elections held in the Northern and Eastern provinces (Eelam) the Tamil United Liberation Front scored an unprecedented massive electoral victory over all other parties.

This is a tremendous boost to the morale of the liberation front, as the only slogan employed during the campaign was that of an 'independent Eelam'.

This decisive mandate is seen as a clear reaffirmation of the will of the Tamil speaking masses to exercise the right of self determination.

The elections were held in Jaffna, Mannar, Vavunia, Trincomalee, Chavakachcheri, Valvettithurai and Point Pedro local councils. In the other important town Batticaloa, the election was not held. Our political correspondent Mustafa Khalid in Eelam adds;

A communique issued by the TULF before the local government elections, on who the Tamil people in Sri Lanka (outside Eelam) should support, stated that "In the forthcoming local government elections the Tamil speaking people residing outside Eelam should support a political party, which recognises the traditional homelands, the national identity and the right to self determination of the people of Eelam and would work towards the establishment of a socialist state in Sri Lanka."

Though this statement could be construed as being non committal, in the light of the fact that the LSSP, JVP, and the RCL have declared their recognition of the right to self-determination, it is justifi-

fied because hitherto they have only paid lip service to this.

Even though this is a clear mandate from the people of Eelam, there is a general feeling amongst the masses verging on near disillusionment, that thus far the TULF has not put forward a clear practical political programme to make, cry for Eelam a reality.

IN OUR
NEXT ISSUE

JEYAKUMAR'S



PRISON DIARY

Editorial

A lot has been written about student movements all over the world over the past two decades; and that unhappily, includes a lot of nonsense. There has been occasions when a luridly romanticized figure of the student some times doing battle with the police with their bare hands and yet at other times armed with a gun, was presented, as offering 'all the answers', to the external world, both local and international: only to reveal, amid cries of foreseeable disillusionment and disgust, that the student had no 'answers' or none worth listening to.

And yet the history of the last two decades has also shown that the 'student' could have, and in certain notable cases probably has had, unique and effective roles to play in particular political situations. These roles have been, in certain cases progressive in character and at other times reactionary in essence. For example, in the years 1967-69 in western Europe and in the USA we witnessed a great deal of militant student activity inclined towards the 'left' and in 1965 the Indonesian students in their reactionary wave of violence helped the government in the 'witch hunt' of the communists.

It is not the purpose of this short essay to delve into the character of student movements in general, but to attempt to expound the role of Eelam students particularly in the context of the Eelam liberation struggle with the limitations of a student body in a revolutionary struggle in mind.

The experience of the student movement in recent years confirms

that, as a collective body, they are unable to act as the leadership of the revolutionary struggle. With this historical truth in mind the Eelam students must form a correct strategy to play their particular role in the struggle. Individual students will undoubtedly come forward and become part of the vanguard; and as Marxist influence grows the number emerging in this way will grow. But the role of leadership is a class question. However many talented individuals will come forward from the student ranks to take their place in the struggle, albeit they cannot change the objective fact of the role of classes in society. Student militancy and courage are great positive virtues; and so is their readiness to challenge the shibboleths of capitalist society. But the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois origin of most of them, their upbringing, their function in society in the future, result in the constant danger of sections of students submitting to confused ideas, of fluctuating between extreme militancy on the one hand and deep depression and disillusionment on the other. It is only in close association with the working class movement and the peasant movement, and especially in its advanced revolutionary sections that the students can overcome the built in dangers that arises from the particular position in the society.

Therefore, it is the duty of the Eelam students to ally themselves with the peasant and working class movements under their leadership. This task befalls this generation more than any other as the historical necessity demands that all progressive forces must work towards a concrete solution.

international NEWS

PALESTINE

The General Union of Arab Students held a week of solidarity with the Palestinian people from the 14th to the 18th May.

This event which was held at the Commonwealth Institute, marked 31 years of the expulsion of the Palestinian people from their homeland and the beginning of the Arab resistance to the Zionist state of Israel.

The programme included a series of films, lectures and seminars together with an exhibition of Palestinian culture and art.

Delegates from various workers parties, liberation organisations and students unions, including the GUES expressed their solidarity.

The events came to a climax with a massive demonstration in the Hyde Park and a march to the Embankment. At the meeting preceding the march a representative of the GUES also addressed the gathering and expressed their solidarity.

We print below excerpts of the message.

'At this juncture of the struggle of the Palestinian people against Zionism and Imperialism we, the General Union of Eelam Students salute the liberation fighters of Palestine and offer our unconditional support and demonstrate our solidarity.



We perceive the historical importance of the struggle of the Palestinian people as having a three-fold importance.

Firstly, it is a struggle against Zionism which is reflected in the struggle

against colonialism as a whole and the introgressive world capitalism.

Secondly, it is reflected by the endeavour for the unification of all the Arab people against imperialism.

Thirdly, the struggle of the Palestinian people stands out as a symbol for positive action, for all the oppressed nation peoples of the world in their own struggles for national self-determination and to break away the chains of imperialism and to seek freedom from the exploitative yoke of world capitalism, and they derive from the Palestinian experience a rich nourishment in theory, political strategy and practice.

We condemn the Zionist and the racist regimes of the world and offer our fullest support and co-operation to the Arab people of Palestine in their fight for the full restoration of all the rights to their homeland, which is fundamentally their inalienable rights to self-determination.

We condemn the Sadat-Begin treachery and their effort to undermine Arab

Continued on page 3 Col.2

'hartal': No Nonsense

General Union Eelam Students organised a meeting on the 3rd of March 1979 at RACS hall, Tooting. The meeting was organised to express its solidarity with the students and masses of Eelam who staged a 7 day school boycott and one day "Hartal" (mass general strike).

Comrade Fadakka, a United Nations consultant and an Economist on third world development, expressed his solidarity with the Tamil speaking people in their struggle for national emancipation. He said that the National Liberation struggle in the third world has become a major political phenomena and the struggle for national independence is an inalienable right of every oppressed nation.

S.S. Durai, who presided the meeting gave a lengthy account on the success of the strike. The excerpts from the speech is given below:

We are pleased to say that the struggle launched by the Tamil students became a tremendous success. It is because the Tamil speaking masses as a whole rose in revolt to support the youths. It

assumed the dimension of an uprising of an oppressed nation expressing its moral horror to an irrational racist dictatorship. It was an unprecedented historical event, since it was the first time in



Tamil political history that the Tamil speaking masses expressed widespread political protest in support of the leading Tamil political parties. This event clearly shows the importance of the Tamil bourgeois political leadership and their

insignificance in the freedom struggle of our people. This event also shows the widespread frustration and anger of our people against the Government and their urge for political independence against national oppression.

All the credit goes to the organisers who took the radical and indepen-

dent decision to launch this struggle. The 7 day strike called by the organisers in the early part of February became a successful event. Students from all parts of Eelam boycotted the schools and colleges for seven consecutive days. Many thousands of teachers also joined the strike in solidarity with the students. On the 7th of February the peasants, the workers, and shop owners and various strata of the society held a successful mass strike, a general Hartal. This event signified the collective will of a Nation of people who are determined to oppose oppression; It also signifies the revolutionary spirit of our people to fight for National Independence.

Special Laws for North

"The Sri Lanka government may have to enact for the Jaffna peninsula laws different from those prevailing in other parts of the country to prevent innocent people from being butchered" said J.R. Jeyawardene while addressing a meeting in Horana.

This comment comes at a time when the law supposedly directed against the Tigers, but actually gave the President unlimited powers to ban any movement and imprison any individual without trial, in the president's opinion, and his opinion alone as a threat to national security, expires in May.

This has much wider implication than it appears to be. These 'new laws' could easily be directed against any progress-

ive movement, trade union or individual in Eelam to attempt to undermine the liberation struggle.

PALASTINE.....Contd. from page 2.

unity, and we pledge our support in fighting these agents of imperialism.

We pledge our solidarity with all the progressive liberation forces of the world.

GUES IN BERLIN

General Union of Eelam Students has established a branch in Berlin, Germany. T. Wilson has been appointed as the representative of GUES in Berlin.

GUES IN BURMA

The Burma branch of the General Union of Eelam Students held a meeting in Rangoon in May. They have decided to publish a monthly Newsletter. M. Mathiyalagan, international committee member of GUES presided the meeting.

SANDINISTA.

The latest News coming from Managua and Costa Rica confirms that the Sandinista National Liberation Front has begun their final assault to oust the barbaric regime led by the infamous General Somoza. Fierce battle between the National Guard and the Sandinista is reported to be taking place in many cities and towns. The fall of Somoza would be a big blow to Yankee imperialism. The victory to Sandista is a victory to all the oppressed masses of the World.

CHAUVINISM not SOCIALISM :

J.V.P and the TAMIL QUESTION.

' A socialist of any of the oppressor nations... who does not recognise and does not struggle for the right of the oppressed nations to self-determination i.e. for the right to secession, is in reality a chauvinist, not a socialist '.

-V.I.Lenin-

Dear Comrades,

JANATHA VIMUKTHI PERAMUNA (People's Liberation Front) has been parading itself with a falsely painted political self-portrait. In its self-distorted image, it attempts to characterise itself as the authentic Marxist-Leninist revolutionary party in Sri Lanka. We wish to challenge such a claim to socialist authenticity and radicalism and will attempt to show that the Movement's stand on the Tamil National Question is reactionary in its essence, prejudiced with political opportunism and national chauvinism.

It is obvious that national questions and the national liberation struggles for political independence have become dominant issues in the contemporary world politics. A burning national question is besetting the island of Sri Lanka the homeland of two historically constituted nations, who are caught up in a historical contradiction as the oppressor and the oppressed, as the dominating and the dominated, which finally erupted into a revolutionary struggle for political independence on the basis of a fundamental socialist principle, a nation's inalienable right, that is, a nation's right to self-determination, which is the right to secede and form an independent state.

The liberation struggle of the Tamil speaking people of Eelam demanding political independence on the basis of that nation's right to self-determination, arose primarily from the contradictions of national oppression. This oppression perpetrated against the small nation of Eelam by the national chauvinism of the big nation, the Sinhala nation, has a history of thirty years, a history recorded by infamous events of inhuman violence. This vicious oppression was aimed at the gradual strangulation and the final destruction of the

national identity of Eelam people, the cumulative effects of which made joint political existence under a unitary state structure absolutely intolerable. Forced into the inevitable political choice of national independence, the Tamil speaking people decided to secede. The general elections of 1977 insofar as the Tamil speaking people were concerned, was primarily a referendum on the decision to secede. The Eelam people opted overwhelmingly in favour of secession, exercising their right to self-determination. This decision of the oppressed Tamil nation to secede became historically inevitable and politically necessary and in Marxist-Leninist theoretical perspective, a revolutionary move against the reactionary forces of oppression. In the objective conditions of intolerable oppression, Lenin held, a decision to secede by the oppressed nation is a progressive political action which will advance the class struggle. To quote Lenin in this context:

' From their daily experience the masses know perfectly well the value of geographical and economic ties and the advantages of a big market and big state. They will therefore, resort to secession only when national oppression and national friction make joint life absolutely intolerable and hinder any and all economic intercourse. In that case... the freedom of the class struggle will be best served by secession '.

The Marxist political practice as advanced by Lenin upholds that the national liberation struggle of any oppressed nation is revolutionary in its potential since it provides a ground for mass struggle, a struggle directed against the ruling classes of the oppressor nation. Therefore it is the historical duty of all proletarian revolutionaries, particularly the revolutionaries of the oppressor nation to uphold and support the progressive struggle of the oppressed nation to political independence. National oppression is the enemy of the class struggle and the ruling bourgeoisie utilise this devious method to divide and weaken the solidarity of the working class movement. The revolutionaries of the oppressor nation who uphold the revolutionary doctrine of

Marxism and Leninism should realise that without the emancipation of the oppressed the working class unity of the oppressor and the oppressed nations is unattainable and therefore, they should not hesitate to give unrelenting support to the freedom struggle of the oppressed nation.

J.V.P and the National Question

Having failed to comprehend the true proletarian perspective on the national question of an oppressed nation, having failed to free itself from the hegemony of a big nation's chauvinistic ideology, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna's (JVP.) stand on the Tamil issue has been, in the past as well as in the present, reactionary in essence and shaped by political opportunism. Calling themselves as Leninists and carrying a progressive mantle as revolutionaries, the leadership has neither advanced a Leninist political strategy nor a radical revolutionary stand on the struggle of the oppressed Eelam masses, but rather chose to undermine the genuine democratic struggle of the oppressed by opposing their right to self-determination.

On the concept of self-determination the JVP attempts to practice a calculated distortion to cheat the Tamil nation on one hand and to placate the Sinhala chauvinist elements on the other. They claim to 'support' the right to self-determination of the Tamil nation yet oppose the to secession. Dear comrades, those who are familiar with the Marxist-Leninist discourse know perfectly well that self-determination is a clearly defined concept which in Leninist formulation means an inalienable right of an oppressed nation to secede from the oppressor nation and form an independent state. Lenin repeatedly defined the concept in several of his theoretical articles on the national question. To quote an example:

' Self-determination of nation in the Marxist programme cannot, from a historic economic point of view, have any other meaning than political self-determination state independence, and the formation of a national state '.

One shouldn't think that the JVP is innocently caught up in a theoretical muddle by supporting the right to 'self-determination and opposing the right to

continued

THE APRIL REBELLION AND THE JVP: Janatha Sangamaya

(A self critical appraisal)

"...Minority nations in Ceylon, like the Tamils..., are subjected to great oppression as nationalities. In our classes we did not speak even one word about this oppression. We did not speak about the immense injustice caused to these sections of the masses who use the Tamil language, by the Tamil language not being a state language along with the Sinhalese. We abused the LSSP for having opposed Sinhalese only as the state language. Thereby, we did not refrain from speaking a word about this national oppression. We had approved....."

(From page 15 main text)-paragraph 4.

"As a solution to the national question, we said that we would disperse the Tamil people throughout the country in order to intermix with the Sinhalese. Think whether there is any difference between our solution and the colonisation of the Northern and Eastern provinces introduced by D.S. Senanayake.."

(From page 16 main text) paragraph 4.

"... We said that if the plantation workers did not accept our revolutionary programme, we would do what Ne Win did to, the Indians in Burma, namely expulsion to India. Those who attended the political classes of the JVP know that these ideas, advanced by our leadership had been accepted by the membership..."

(From page 16 main text)-paragraph 2.

CHAUVINISM continued

secession. They are certainly aware that the right to self-determination is nothing other than the right to secede and form an independent state. But they lack the intellectual honesty to uphold an authentic socialist principle because of their political opportunism and ingrained chauvinism. We accuse them of chauvinism because they fall precisely into the category Lenin characterises when he proclaimed that socialists of the oppressor nation who do not struggle for the right to self-determination, i.e. the right to secession, are in reality chauvinists, not socialists.

Instead of championing the right of an oppressed nation to secession as true socialists would do, the JVP, in their political programme as well as on the public platforms has been carrying out a malicious reactionary campaign that 'they are opposed to the division of the country'. Rohana Vijeweera, in an interview in London, exposed his Tamil antagonism when he declared that in the event of a civil war arising out of the Tamil struggle for liberation he would neither support the Tamils nor would oppose any military action by the Sri Lankan bourgeois dictatorship to suppress the freedom struggle. This attitude, we say, is not socialism but chauvinism.

Dear comrades, the JVP from its inception as a political movement has always succumbed itself to a national chauvinistic ideology and thereby politically alienated itself from the wider section of the Tamil masses. During the pre-insurrectionary period (before 1971) when the movement advocated an adventurist path to socialism, Tamil antagonism predominated its chauvinistic policies. The JVP not

only excluded the Tamil plantation proletariat and the Eelam Tamils from its secret insurrectionary programme but carried a vicious campaign against the Tamils. Instead of mobilising the plantation Tamils, the vanguard for a socialist revolution, the JVP in their political classes, accused them of being the instruments of Indian expansionism. Such were the Chauvinistic slogans of the heroes of the 1971 uprising.

Having emerged after severe destruction and defeat, having paid an enormous price in life for its political misadventure, having been deserted by the majority of its comrades (who have now formed another party called Janatha Sangamaya), the new JVP is advocating a parliamentary road to socialism. This strategy in Sri Lankan politics means class collaborations, party alliances and playing to the tunes of the petty-bourgeois chauvinistic elements who are a dominant political force. It also means subjugation to reactionary political ideologies which are predominantly chauvinistic. The old left, the LSSP and the CP, attempted to travel the same path and betrayed socialism and the working class movement and finally disappeared into political oblivion. The main guide to the parliamentary path, as far as the Sri Lankan political scene is concerned, is none other than political opportunism. It is the secret guide behind the JVP's fraudulent stand on the Tamil national question.

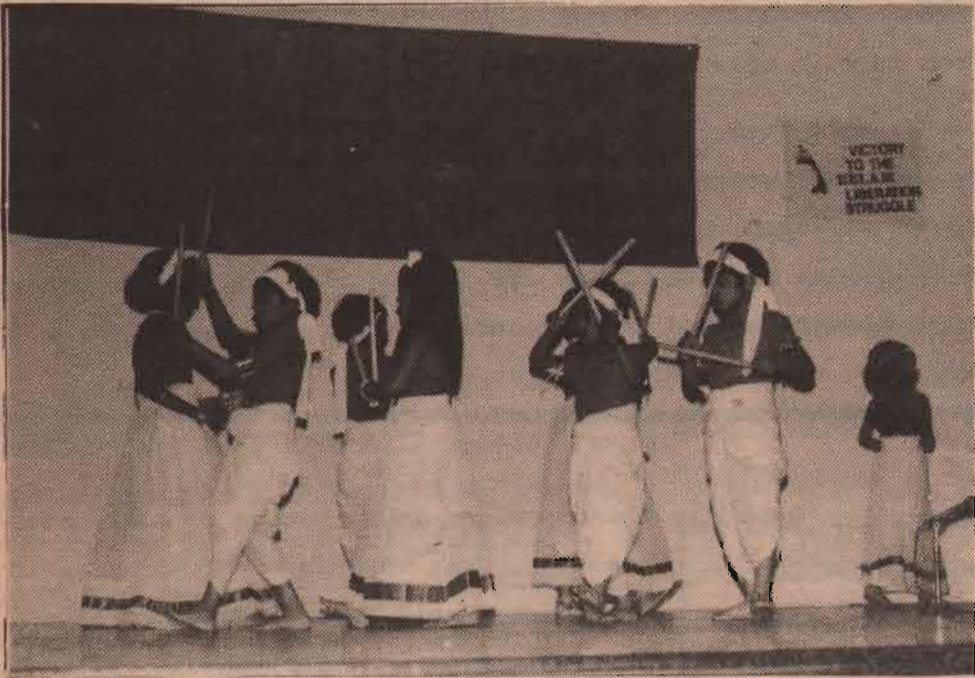
Finally, we wish to say to the comrades of the JVP that unless their political movement recognises, without reservation and without distortion, the right of

the oppressed Tamil nation to self-determination, that is, the right to secession they cannot call themselves socialists or revolutionaries. They should realise that the recognition of the right to self-determination is fundamentally necessary to advance proletarian internationalism.

They should realise that the Tamil speaking masses will never subordinate a national struggle to the false slogans of the chauvinists. As long as the objective conditions of national oppression prevail the class unity between the oppressed and the oppressor is a vague political dream and the oppressed masses will always be poised for a national liberation struggle. Therefore, it is the bounden duty of the socialists of the oppressor nation to uphold the right of the oppressed nation to self-determination i.e. the right to secession. Only the emancipation of the oppressed will lead to proletarian internationalism.

Even though each liberation struggle has its own historical specificity, the freedom struggle of our people, insofar as it is articulated within the universal democratic principle of the right of self-determination is concerned, is similar to the revolutionary struggle of the Palestinians, East Timorians and several other oppressed nations who are determined to die for the noble cause of national liberty. The JVP who pretend to support such struggles of the oppressed nations should, first of all, show their true socialist sympathy and support to a neighbouring nation of people who are struggling for a just cause ●

IMAGES



POLITICAL DIARY

The revolutionary political theory of Marxism gives importance to the unity of theory and practice. Marx used the concept 'praxis' to mean the concrete union of thought and action. It implies that theory is necessary for concrete action, for concrete political practice.

Lenin always remarks that Marxism demands a concrete theoretical understanding of concrete situations for concrete political action. Lenin further said that 'without theory there cannot be political practice'. For Marx, philosophy should not be a speculative theory but a programme for action.

Philosophies that describe and interpret the world without providing a guideline for action and change, in Marx's view, are speculative. That is why Marx, in his eleventh thesis on Feuerbach proclaims that "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways, the point is to change it".

In Marx's view, knowledge, that is the product of theory, should be revolutionary in its essence, it should have the revolutionary potential to change the world. Therefore, revolutionary action demands a revolutionary theory, a theory that should be able to provide a correct understanding of the situation for a revolutionary action to be possible. Therefore, Marxist concept of praxis advances the truth that knowledge and action, or theory and practice, are inseparably combined.

For Marx, praxis is a tool for changing the world, for changing the course of history. To transform the existing reality, an adequate understanding of that reality and human action are fundamentally essential. Theory and human action in relevance to revolutionary ch-

ange is aptly described by Marx in the following words:

"Material force can only be overthrown by material force, but theory itself becomes a material force when it has seized the masses".

Amongst the Marxist philosophers it is Gramsci who develops the Marxist notion of 'praxis'. In Gramsci's 'philosophy of praxis' theory becomes a creative political instrument, an organising principle for a mass struggle and should be utilised as a guiding principle for revolutionary process itself. Theory, according to Gramsci, should impart conscious knowledge and direction to political struggle and theory becomes only important when it is translated into collective political force capable of political action and social transformation.

Eelam NEWS IN BRIEF

One track mind SUNIL

The M.P for Polgahawela, Sunil Jeyakodi tabled a motion in parliament for debate on bringing a charge of treason and punishing those who call for Eelam. The motion is as follows:

"Those individuals or institutions which forward the cry for 'Eelam' are attempting to divide the country to the detriment of the majority. Therefore this act of these individuals or institutions should be considered treasonous and they should be flogged in public and their civil rights withdrawn".

'still undecided'

There is yet again a difference of opinion within the Youth Federation. It is understood that the difference stems from the question of working with the TULF or to operate as an independent body.

success

May day was celebrated in a grand scale in Jaffna. A joint meeting and a demonstration was held by the Tamil trade unions, the women's league, the youth Federation and the Red Tamils movement.

free again

The "Kannatti 12" were released from prison a few weeks ago. They were arrested while working in the Kannatti cooperative farm with refugees of the 1977 riots. The administrative Manager of the farm Jeyakumar and the other youths arrested, were the first people to attempt cooperative farming amongst the dispossessed poor.

The plot

There is a move by the Government of Sri Lanka to amalgamate three assistant government agent divisions in Sri Lanka with Vavuniya in Eelam. It is expected that the situation in Vavuniya might deteriorate. The object of the exercise seems to be the colonisation of the Eelam lands by the Sinhalese.

attacked

Tamil officers of the Mahara prison in Ragama were attacked by the Sinhala officers on 30-3-1979. It is understood that on this day and the following day the Sinhala officers violently attacked them while senior prison officers stood by and witnessed this brutality. The attacks on the Tamil officers in the Army, Police, prisons by racially prejudiced government forces have become common occurrence.

A group of Tamil students appearing for the G.C.E(A/L) examination were attacked at the examination centre (Nalanda college, Colombo) by a group of Sinhalese students.

Whispering Wind

While addressing a meeting in South Vasavilan, the general secretary of the Red Tamils movement V. Ponnampalam said, "Not a single left party in Sri Lanka has hitherto recognised the right of self-determination of the Tamil speaking people. It is an illusion to expect those leftists who have not recognised this right and not considered them as a nation people, to protect the rights of the Tamil people".

Suspicion

"Hindu", an Indian national daily, reports that a recent meeting between the pro Moscow Communist leader Mr. Pieter Keuneman and the TULF General Secretary Mr. A. Amirthalingam has touched off speculation about possible Soviet assistance to the Tamil movement in Sri Lanka.

Abandoned

Mr. S. Thondaman, leader of the Ceylon Workers Congress, complained that the governments of India and Sri Lanka had been treating the Ceylon plantation Tamils as inanimate objects. These "living souls with feelings and passion" had been reduced to mere numbers, he said.

The heart of the problem

A mammoth meeting organised by the TULF was held in the stadium in Mannar. A. Amirthalingam, M.P for KKS, K. Yogeswaran M.P for Jaffna, T. Sivasithamparam M.P for Vavuniya, M. Sivasithamparam M.P for Nallur, R. Sampanthan M.P for Trincomalee, R. Rajalingham M.P for Udupiddy, Janab K.S. Afdeen and several others leaders addressed the meeting.

The whole City was decorated and the leaders were brought on procession to the stadium.

The leaders of TULF were unanimous in attacking the present bourgeois dictatorship in Colombo. They also reiterated the slogan that the National Liberation of Eelam is the only way forward for the Tamil speaking masses.

arrest.

The number of Tamil political prisoners in Sri Lankan prisons is increasing. Four Tamil youths have been arrested in Jaffna recently. The Tamil political prisoners are kept in Bogampara, Vellikadda and Annuradapura prisons in appalling conditions and are subjected to regular torture.

an integral part

"The government is not obliged to place before the Tamil people an alternative to the demand for a separate state. The only alternative is a unitary state, which is what we have".

This assertion has been made by Mr. Athula Mudali, cabinet Minister of the oppressive Sri Lankan government, while explaining the government's view point on the Tamil demand for an independent state.

new possibilities

"The GUES has been conducting GCE advanced level classes in the Eastern Province devastated by the recent cyclone. The classes were a great help to the students who were appearing for the examination in April, as the government had refused to postpone the examination in the cyclone affected areas" reported the "Veerakesari".

The Youths who have been conducting the classes have led the struggle to reestablish education facilities, where the government had failed.

CULTURAL FESTIVAL - The theatre of politics

The day of the Tamil New year also witnessed the beginning of a new era in the cultural dimension of the lives of Eelamar in London.

For the first time a progressive cultural festival was staged in London that depicted the proletarian culture of the popular masses of the Eelam nation and reflected their day to day struggle against local reaction and national oppression. The credit for such a revolutionary move goes to the General Union of Eelam students who organised this cultural festival at Mahatma Gandhi hall, YMCA building, in London on the 4th April 1979. Members of various overseas students unions and Liberation movements participated in this festival. This occasion was a success and was well attended.

The festival in its essence gave an expressive form to the social and material life of the Tamil speaking masses of Eelam. It depicted the distinct way of life of the Eelam proletariat and peasantry. For several years London was a stage for Tamil bourgeois cultural dominance. It is the GUES who has launched a new ideological struggle against bourgeois cultural hegemony by introducing this revolutionary cultural festival. Both culturally and politically it was a radical move since it portrayed to an international audience, the social and political dimensions of mass struggle in Eelam.

The festival started with the singing of the national Anthem of Eelam 'Long live Eelam' followed by 'Kollatam' and peasant's dance, the latter was an expression of the festive mood of the peasants during and after the harvest. Both items were presented by the children belonging to the Tamil Artist Group.

Raul Valencia, a Chilean refugee, sang revolutionary songs such as 'Cuba Si', 'Yankee no' and 'Guanthela Mehra' which were appreciated and applauded by the audience. When Raul Valencia appeared on the stage slogans 'Long live Allende, Down with Pinochet' were chanted by the Youths.

Folk Drama (Nattu Koothu) was about 'Pandara Vannian' the last Tamil King who fought against European invaders for more than fifty years. It was presented by a Filomena-GUES combined group.

Following the interval, a revolutionary poem was read by the Irish representative of GUES. When he finished reading the poem, a group of students chanting 'Down with Sinhala chauvinism' 'Long live Eelam National Liberation struggle' appeared on stage and the audience joined the youths in chanting the slogans which swept the hall.



Villuppattu (Folk song) and National songs were presented by the Tamil Artists Group.

Declaration of EPCA

At this historic juncture in the lives of the Tamil speaking people of Eelam it is imperative that any cultural organisation reflects in its endeavour, to express the National liberation struggle and the colonialist oppression of the ordinary masses.

In an effort to fulfill this role We announce the formation of the Eelam progressive cultural Association. The following are the declarations of the Association:

(1) Culture cannot be abstracted from the Politico-Socio-Economic life of the nation. Therefore this Association will support the national liberation struggle, class struggle and the struggle against the imperialist reactions. On these issues, it is essential that we have very close relations with the GUES.

(2) We shall also work in close cooperation with progressive International literacy & cultural organisations and with the British Tamil Artists groups.

(3) Our primary and important role would be to reflect and put forward the issues concerning the Plantation workers, the peasants of north and east, the oppressed casts, the oppressed women due to the Socio

The final programme was a combination of a mime on stage with a poem read on the background expressing that the emancipation of one oppressed nation can only be achieved only after the destruction of both the Sinhalese armed forces and the Tamil capitalists. On stage this was depicted by few members of GUES portraying the masses, moving against two persons standing on a table - one in Police uniform reflecting the Sri Lankan occupying Army and Police and the others reflecting the Tamil land-owning class, and throwing them to the ground showed Victory signs with clenched fists.

The GUES expresses its sincere appreciation to all those who contributed to the success of this festival, particularly to the Tamil Artists Group and to Sugunasabesan who is the active organiser of the Eelam progressive cultural Association.

-Economic structure, the unemployed and the progressive intellectuals.

A temporary committee of five was elected to implement these decisions.

1. Sugunasabesan
2. Soori Nalliah
3. Yogasangary
4. Balasubramaniam
5. Richmond Kulapragasam

Address: 165, Hermitage Road,
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