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Dossier on Sri Lanka

The agony and the ecstasy

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The government has announced that the LTTE is completely destroyed and all the important leaders were killed. This was accepted by Sinhala society with enthusiasm but in smaller communities, in particular in Tamil society, there was concern, or worse, fear.

The question that was in the latter's mind was whether the enthusiastic crowd will resort to any violence, but nothing of import happened. It appears that the government is now under the belief that the Tamil national problem is over and normalcy is established in the country. Ceremonies and the festive mood take one back to the early chapters of the Mahavansa with King Dutugemunu replaced by Maha Rajinda, great king Mahinda [1]. But in reality the national problem is a specific problem in bourgeois society.

We explained in this column that as Tamil freedom is in the hearts and minds of the Tamil people, unless there is a solution, based on the right of self-determination, there will be no normalcy in the country.

Of course Tamils may not resort to an armed insurrection but the agitation will continue, both locally and internationally. In fact the war has made it an international problem, something akin to the Palestinian issue.

Armed insurrection detached from the people or negating people's participation could be counterproductive, we explained over and over again. It is true that there was mass participation towards the end in the form of Pongu Tamil mass actions, but it was not broadbased so as to attract all trends within Tamil society. On the other hand, there was a continued belief that global capitalist liberals will intervene to resolve this problem in favour of Tamil nationalism. In fact there was reluctance to take this issue to the local and international working class or to Left liberation organisations, as it could offend international capitalist leaders. In the end, all global leaders followed the Indian bourgeoisie to support the suppression of the Tigers.

Again it was proved that the oppressor could be ten times more ruthless than the oppressed and in this case the oppressor's terror surpassed anything of the kind witnessed so far. It was quite evident what was happening, but there was no liberal bourgeois global force to intervene to save the Tamils from defeat and a bloodbath.

Languishing in tears

It is a terrible defeat and is a human disaster with 350,000 people miserably displaced. On the other hand, there are thousands of families of Sinhala soldiers killed or wounded, languishing in tears. No amount of compensation could erase their grief. There are thousands of young wives of Sinhala soldiers killed in combat, who will lose their income if they get married again, and there is no way out for them. All this could have been avoided and the Tamil national problem solved conclusively, if the peace talks were continued and autonomy was granted to the Tamil homeland while the Tamil armed forces was integrated with the Sinhala forces to create a true national army.

Now while the Sinhalese are jubilant, the Tamils are suffering in humiliation and surrender. There is a terrible gulf in between and all attempts for talks will be influenced by the Tamil diaspora and Tamil Nadu activists. Above everything they will go at the new Indian government. It was India that orchestrated the war in Lanka. Indian intelligence agents and military experts were working closely with the Lankan forces in the war zone. They simply hid the truth.

Foreign journalists and aid workers were barred from the war zone and IDP camps. Those who tried to enter and report about the war were kicked out of the country.

Now India may change the tune and call for devolution to the Tamil homeland. It may also demand changes in the armed forces to include a Tamil speaking regiment.

That will be a challenge to the government. At the same time the masses will demand more relief, workers will demand higher salaries and the removal of anti worker regulations.

Maha Rajinda may have to change his friends.

Notes

[1] Mahavansa is a sinhala chronicle written by monks since 5 th century ad. It relates early history taken from other old documents unknown today. Dutu Gemunu is 3rd century BC sinhala Buddhist king fought against Elara, a Hindu conqueror from south Indian Pandyan kingdom. Maha rajinda means mega Regina.

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