

Theoretical Organ of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party

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Poetry: Mao Zedong, Nâzım Hikmet Ran, Bertolt Brecht

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Reascending Ching kangshan

Mao Zedong

(To the tune of Shui Tiao Keh Tou)

I have long aspired to reach for the clouds
And I again ascend Ching kangshan.
Coming from afar to view our old haunt,
 I find new scenes replacing the old.
Everywhere orioles sing, swallows dart,
Streams babble
And the road mounts skyward.
Once Huangyangchieh is passed
No other perilous place calls for a glance.
Wind and thunder are stirring,
Flags and banners are flying
Wherever men live.
Thirty-eight years are fled
With a mere snap of the fingers.
We can clasp the moon in the Ninth Heaven
And seize turtles deep down in the Five Seas:
We'll return amid triumphant song and laughter.
Nothing is hard in this world
If you dare to scale the heights.

May 1965

Editorial

This fiftieth issue of *Marxist Leninist New Democracy* (MLND), earlier *New Democracy*, is being processed at the end of the year in which the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party completed its thirty-fifth year. The journal, founded in 1999 and published mostly at three-month intervals, has fallen behind this year for various reasons. This fiftieth issue, earlier intended to be released in October 2013, was delayed to make it a special issue accommodating a larger number of articles than usual.

It has been editorial policy to accommodate progressive viewpoints, which need not coincide with the views of the Party, and MLND has published articles from intellectuals and analysts whose stands vastly differ from that of the Party. That practice will continue, and MLND welcomes articles on national and global issues that objectively analyse local and international events, and address issues of oppression by imperialism and other reactionaries and resistance to such oppression.

MLND has continued to improve in quality and content and reaches an increasingly wider readership. The editorial group notes that MLND is the only Marxist Leninist English language journal in Sri Lanka and is among the very few political journals with a left orientation. It is thus unhappy about the shortage of fora in Sri Lanka, not only in the English language, to discuss and debate matters of theoretical and practical relevance to socialism and class struggle in the 21st Century.

The MLND shares the concern of the Party that Marxist Leninist parties and organizations in very nearly every country where they exist are divided, often on issues which are too unimportant to stop them from working together against local and global oppressors. Theory is important to understanding the stage of the revolution globally and locally in historical context and to arrive at the appropriate strategic and tactical programmes. It should besides help Marxist Leninists to appreciate reality and adopt appropriate revolutionary strategies and tactics.

To adapt is not to compromise with the oppressor. It requires knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the enemy, namely imperialism and its allies, the ways in which imperialism has adapted itself to change and how it faces the challenges of mass resistance and revolution. For example, imperialism takes full advantage of identity politics; thus to be dismissive of identity issues will be to the detriment of the left. Under imperialist globalization, consumerism, besides being a key aspect of urban life, has also deeply penetrated rural society. The challenge of consumerism cannot be met by merely denouncing it, but needs to be addressed in context.

The concepts of semi-colonial and semi-feudal societies need rethinking. Continued use of the terms is not a flaw in itself if such use does not automatically imply strategies which were valid only in an earlier context. The term semi-colonial applied to states subjected to explicit colonial domination, although not under colonial rule. The emergence of neo-colonialism has changed that picture. The term semi-feudal would apply to societies where feudal relations, although not predominant, comprise a significant aspect of rural production. Feudal production relations have mostly yielded to relations of a capitalist nature. Yet, the absence or weakening of feudal production relations does not mean that feudal thinking and feudal social relations have ceased. They need to be addressed in a context in which they serve imperialism and capitalism.

Arguments exist for adding the contradiction between capitalism and nature to the four fundamental contradictions, namely those between imperialism and the peoples of oppressed nations, between imperialist powers, between the working class and capitalists, and between socialism and capitalism. Whether or not the contradiction between capitalism and nature could be called the fifth basic contradiction, capitalist threat to nature and therefore the survival of humanity is now a major issue. Thus, this contradiction is too important to be ignored by revolutionaries.

The national bourgeoisie once played a valuable role in fighting colonialism and imperialism to a point. But now it collaborates with

imperialism and cannot be relied upon to play a role akin to that under colonialism. Thus the mode of existence of this class and its historical role need serious review, without ignoring the prospect of weaning it away from imperialism in changed circumstances.

Choice between the terms Marxism Leninism, Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought and Maoism is a contentious issue for some parties. But what is often forgotten is that content is more important than a descriptive label. There are parties with no reference to Mao in their name that hold Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought as the Marxism Leninism of the neo-colonial era; and there have been several truly Marxist Leninist parties without even the word Communist in their name. Yet, there are parties with the terms communist, Marxist, Marxist Leninist, and Maoist in their names but are revisionist or reformist in ideology. Several parties have changed name more than once, for good or bad reason. Thus, name is not the central issue while clear declaration of ideological position is.

Does it mean that parties with seemingly significant differences cannot unite in a common programme? Hostility between rival Marxist Leninist (including Maoist) parties makes one wonder whether the quarrelling parties believe in the united front strategy. If Marxist Leninists accept the need for a united front with even bourgeois elements to fight a common enemy, why is no thought given to cooperation among parties with agreement on most of the fundamental issues?

There can be differences among Marxists on the issues besides those raised above. The point is that there is a pressing need for dialogue that will lead to better understanding and cooperation between Marxist Leninist parties at national and international levels. MLND will pursue this aim with greater vigour in the coming years. Changes to the section on international events in this issue have that purpose in mind.

The MLND notes that in the Sri Lankan context, the Marxist Leninist New Democratic Party, having taking into account the changes that have occurred nationally and internationally in the past several decades,

has identified Sri Lanka as a neo-colonial country with strong feudal remnants which find expression in social relations as well as social oppression based on gender, caste, religion and nationality. It has thus reaffirmed class contradiction as the fundamental contradiction of Sri Lanka, and identified imperialism led by the US along with the chauvinist capitalist class, an ally of imperialism, as the common enemy of the toiling masses and oppressed nationalities.

The Party also recognizes that the national contradiction has been transformed into the main contradiction of Sri Lanka by the Sinhala chauvinist capitalist class with the active support of imperialism and assistance from reactionary sections of the oppressed nationalities. In this context and based on its understanding of the relative strengths of the class forces in Sri Lanka, the Party has identified the stage of the Sri Lankan revolution as New Democratic and considers the implementation of a National Democratic Programme as an essential step in the fulfilment of outstanding democratic tasks of the New Democratic Revolution which will lead to the building of socialism under a People's Democracy.

In recognition of the complexity of the tasks of overcoming the existing power structure backed by imperialism, the Party urges a broad-based united front strategy that brings together the oppressed classes and nationalities under the leadership of the working class in a protracted mass struggle.

The Party has always been opposed to dogmatism of any description, and has had the humility to admit mistakes and concede that its position on any issue is open to objective and constructive criticism and correction. It has thus been willing join hands in struggle for just causes, even with organizations which are not necessarily Marxist.

In conclusion, the MLND reminds its readers that it welcomes articles from a wide section of political thinkers on class struggle, socialism, anti-imperialism, and resistance to social oppression of any kind.

The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party in its 35th Year

(Drafted by the Committee for Compiling the 35 Year History of the Party)

The Communist Movement in Sri Lanka

The Communist Movement in Sri Lanka commenced in the last century in the 1940s. The Communist Party of Ceylon was founded on 3rd July 1943. For nearly two decades the party gave correct direction and leadership to the working class and other toiling masses. But since that party took the parliamentary road, a revolutionary Marxist Leninist communist party, which called itself the Ceylon Communist Party, was founded under the leadership of Comrade N. Sanmugathan. Revolutionary struggles took place at various levels between 1964 and 1978 in the South, the North-East and the Hill Country under the leadership of that party, and comprised broad uprisings by the masses including workers, peasants, people oppressed by caste, women and youth.

There were debates and differences in views on the question of steering the party and its forward march through the changed conditions on the basis of the experiences and successes and failures of the past. While there was full concurrence of views within the Ceylon Communist Party led by Comrade Sanmugathan in its revolutionary stand against revisionism, parliamentarism and trade unionism, strong differences emerged within the party on four major issues. They concerned the stand of the party on the 'Three World Theory'; the national question; united front activities; and building the Party as a revolutionary organization based on democratic centralism.

The Founding of the Communist Party of Sri Lanka (Left)

At this stage, the party leadership was afflicted by egoism, dogmatism, obstinacy, lack of democratic centralism, and the cult of the individual. As a result, Marxist Leninists in the Ceylon Communist Party led by Comrade Sanmugathasan were forced to leave and found a new political party. Thus created was the present New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party, founded on 3rd July 1978 as the Communist Party of Sri Lanka (Left). The course of events proved the newly founded party correct in its stand on the key disputed issues, except on the question of the 'Three World Theory'. The Ceylon Communist Party was correct in its rejection of the Three World thesis, and the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party, has since acknowledged its error and made public its self criticism.

Delegates who congregated in Jaffna to establish the Party, besides agreeing on the name, set up an Organizing Committee to conduct the first All Sri Lanka Congress of the Party. The delegates unanimously agreed that the Organizing Committee will act as the founding leadership of the Party until the Congress and elected Comrade KA Subramaniam as the Secretary of the Organizing Committee. The Party which started its journey along the revolutionary path held its First Congress in Jaffna in September 1984. A Central Committee was elected and Comrade KA Subramaniam (Comrade Maniam) was elected General Secretary of the Party at that Congress.

Comrade Maniam and the Central Committee worked with dedication to build the Party organizationally and at a mass level. Activities were expanded in the Hill Country to strengthen the youth movement and through it the Party. The Party had to function amid pressures and threats from rival sectors of Tamil nationalist militant groups as well as the armed forces of state. The presence of the Indian Peace Keeping Forces in the North-East between 1987 and 1991 further intensified pressures. During this period, leading members and activists of the Party were targeted with several detained and tortured, and some killed by the LTTE. Several leading members were forced to flee Jaffna in the face of assassination attempts. Comrade Maniam, while functioning as General Secretary, died in exile in Kandy in 1989 owing to serious illness.

Renaming as New Democratic Party

The Central Committee elected Comrade SK Senthivel as General Secretary until the next Party Congress. The Second All Sri Lanka Congress of the Party was held in May 1991 in Colombo, under the theme "Let us restore national democracy and secure the right to self determination for the nationalities". The Congress resolved to change the name of the Party to New Democratic Party; and elected Comrade SK Senthivel as the General Secretary of the Party, Comrade E Thambiah as National Organizer and Comrade S Thevarajah as Treasurer.

The Party had since recognized the Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Hill Country Tamils as the four nationalities of Sri Lanka and the existence of minority nationalities comprising the Burghers, Malays, and the Attho (the aboriginal people of Sri Lanka) among others; and emphasized the need to address the national question, taking into account the national aspirations of the nationalities as well as the aspirations of the national minorities.

The Party which had boycotted all parliamentary and other elections since its founding had since the Second Congress decided to contest the elections as the only feasible way of taking its political message to the people under the repressive conditions that restricted mass political work. The Party has, however, been clear about the limitations of parliamentary politics and that it cannot be a substitute for revolutionary politics.

The Third All Sri Lanka Congress was held in June 1997 in Colombo and the Congress formally recognized the Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and the Hill Country Tamils as the four nationalities of Sri Lanka and the Burghers, Malays, and the Attho (the aboriginal people of Sri Lanka) among others the as minority nationalities. It emphasised that, while the class contradiction was the fundamental contradiction, the national question had become the main contradiction with the continuation of the war further aggravating the contradiction so that it was important to strengthen the anti-war campaign and emphasize the need for a peaceful resolution of the national question based on the principle of the right to self determination. It was also resolved that the anti-war

campaign will be carried forward in collaboration with friendly left, progressive and democratic forces.

A left front was organized in 1998 in the wake of the Third Congress to address challenges posed by imperialism and chauvinistic capitalism, based on a minimum programme. The organization, named the New Left Front (NLF), comprised the New Democratic Party, the Nava Samasamaja Party, the United Socialist Party, the National Democratic Organization, the Diyasa Group and the Muslim United Liberation Front. The NLF contested elections to the Provincial Councils held in April 1998. Its performance in the districts that it contested was indicative of a return of public confidence in the revived left movement, and Dr Vickramabahu Karunaratne of the NSSP was elected to the Western Provincial Council. The NLF suffered a split in 1999 owing to the unprincipled conduct of the leader of the NSSP in warming up to the chauvinistic JVP, whose sole purpose of tempting the NSSP leader was to break up the NLF, in which it succeeded. As a consequence, prospects for left unity suffered a serious setback from which the Sri Lankan left has yet to recover.

The Fourth All Sri Lanka Congress was held in November 2002 in Jaffna when negotiations for peace with Norwegian facilitation were in progress between the government and the LTTE, following the Ceasefire Agreement between the two parties and the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding. The Party, while welcoming the opportunity for peace, warned about foreign interests taking advantage of the peace process and stressed the need for compromise to ensure lasting peace. The fears of the Party proved correct when dishonesty on the part of the government and the LTTE along with Indian meddling led to the collapse of the peace process and the resumption of war, which was further intensified since the election of Mahinda Rajapaksa as President in 2005 November.

The brief spell of peace during which Party engaged in open mass political activity was sharply disrupted by the resumption of the war; and the intended All Sri Lanka Congress of the Party had to wait until after the end of the war in May 2009.

The Fifth Congress

The Party took the important decision to change its name to New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party in the Fifth All Sri Lanka Congress held in June 2010 in Colombo. The decision was based on discussions with international fraternal parties and in view of the term “new democratic” being used not only by reformist parties but also by reactionary political parties in other parts of the world.

The Congress discussed the international and national political situations in great depth, reviewed the experiences of the Party — especially since the Fourth Congress — and published an extensive Political Report which reasserted class contradiction as the fundamental contradiction in the country with imperialism and the reactionary chauvinist capitalist and bureaucrat capitalist classes, which retain several of their feudal characteristics, as the main enemy of the toiling masses. It also re affirmed the national question as the main contradiction which, besides being used by the ruling elite to divide the oppressed people of the country is also used by imperialist and hegemonic forces to interfere in the affairs of Sri Lanka. The Congress while asserting the need to politicise the working class and resolve the fundamental contradiction through Proletarian Revolution, emphasised that, in order to advance towards socialism, the New Democratic stage of the Revolution had to be fulfilled, with the peasantry and other toiling masses united under the leadership of the working class. The Party firmly committed itself to work towards a broad united front of left, progressive and democratic forces led by the working class to address the immediate issues facing the country and the people.

The Fifth Congress elected Comrade SK Senthivel as the General Secretary of the Party, Comrade V Mahendran as National Organizer, Comrade E Thambiah as International Organizer and Comrade S Thevarajah as Treasurer.

Facing Oppressive Politics

It is remarkable that, during most of the thirty five years since its founding, the Party has passed through a period of severe economic crises, political repression, and national oppression transformed into war. The present constitution with the executive presidential system was established in 1978 by JR Jayawardane and the UNP who were elected to power in 1977. The present constitution and the Party are of the same age, but they have remained poles apart. From the very outset, the Party has opposed that constitution and warned of its grave dangers.

That constitution paved the way to transforming the economy of the country into a neo-colonial economy and reinforcing the neoliberal economic policy through liberalization, privatization and globalization. That economic trend is still being carried forward, and JR Jayawardane, R Premadasa, DB Wijethunga, Chandrika Bandaranayake Kumaratunga and now Mahinda Rajapaksa have presided over it by wielding state power as executive presidents.

At the same time, each of the executive presidents, none less than the other, has presided over the unleashing of cruel chauvinist oppression against the Tamil people through the transformation of the national question into war. No initiative was taken with even a minimum of political honesty to find a political solution to the national question. While chauvinism has been the basis for that failure, ruling class attitude has also been an important factor. The forces of big capitalism in the country and foreign imperialism have been together in carrying forward the war of national oppression.

The war served as a shield for the big capitalist ruling class to implement liberalization, privatization and globalization under a neoliberal economic policy for the country. While many thousands of Tamils were killed on the broad landscape of a national question transformed into war, the economy and resources of the country were being appropriated behind the scenes by local big capitalists and profiteering foreign multinational companies and the imperialist powers housing them. That trend persists even after the end of the war.

The comprador bourgeois forces of the country, while implementing their ruling class stand dictatorially in ways characteristic of fascism, also unleashed chauvinistic military oppression against the Tamil people in the form of a cruel war. Both of these have over the past 35 years been like two sides of one coin. It is through this period that the Party has undertaken its political journey in accordance with its class allegiance. The Party has, amid most severe political pressures and repression, functioned as a Marxist Leninist party that has kept its good sense.

Even with repression under the state of emergency and anti-terrorism legislations, the Party faced the repression to carry out mass political work among the people. Thus far, the Party has held five congresses on an all island basis, which have analysed the problems of the country and possible solutions at the political, economic, social and cultural levels based on a Marxist Leninist class approach; and has formulated its policies and programmes accordingly.

The Party has made it clear that the fundamental contradiction of the country remained the class contradiction while the national contradiction which had been transformed into war is the main contradiction. It pointed out that the worsening economic crisis is aggravating the exploitation and oppression of the toiling masses of the country including the workers and peasants, based on class. The Party has besides exposed and opposed the tendency of the state to use anti-democratic and anti-people means to nip in the bud public opposition to such moves. It also opposed the continuing denial of a political solution to the national question which had become the main contradiction and been transformed into war.

The Party has adopted the Marxist Leninist approach to analyse the national question in the specific context of Sri Lanka. In particular, the Second All Sri Lanka Congress of the Party recognized the existence of four nationalities in the country, namely the Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Hill Country Tamils and national minorities comprising the Malays, Burghers and the Attho, among others. The Party adopted a sober approach on the national question in defining and explaining the national question and putting forward a solution to it. It put forward

as its political solution autonomous structures for the Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil nationalities based on the principle of the right to self determination. The proposals were further enriched in successive congresses of the Party. In particular, the 15-point proposal of the Party for the solution of the national question emphasized not only the rights and livelihood of not only the Tamil and Muslim people in the North-East but also of the Sinhalese who have lived there for generations.

It was a challenge for a sincere Marxist Leninist party to function on the basis of its stand of class struggle without opportunism or compromise and without isolation or capitulation amid the chauvinistic military oppression of comprador capitalism on the one hand and struggles of narrow nationalists with their demand for Tamil Eelam. The Party, while confronting state oppression, had also to face the anti democratic tyranny of the LTTE. The Party had to conduct its activities in regions under the control of the LTTE by adopting a variety of appropriate tactics; in the process, a number of leading comrades and supporters had to face various crises and threats.

Comrade S Thuraisingam and party supporter S Nadesu, both of Changkanai, were abducted by the LTTE which after detaining them for several months announced their killing. Also, party comrades from various regions had been tortured in the name of 'inquiry'. The General Secretary of the Party, Comrade KA Subramaniam who escaped attempted murder by the LTTE by a hair's breadth was forced to live undercover in a village in Kandy. Other leading comrades too, having cheated death, had to embrace clandestine life. Most of the armed organizations for Tamil Eelam were incapable of coming to terms with the ability of the Party to continue to function as a Marxist Leninist party.

In February 2007, the government, in the name of action against the LTTE, used its mechanism of oppression against democratic forces as well as extra-parliamentary left forces. Five comrades of the Party from the Hill Country were arrested and suffered prolonged detention under remand. In 2008, a comrade from Vavuniya too was arrested and remanded. All but one of these six comrades were released without charge

after two to three years of detention. Comrade Suhesanan, after prolonged detention, was sent for rehabilitation for a period of one year and released in September 2013. All six of them were young Party comrades. It is remarkable that even after their imprisonment they still at one with the Party and Party activities.

Facing the Current Political Climate

Firstly, in a climate in which, the economic activities of the country, as said earlier, have been fully surrendered to foreign forces over the past 35 years, the political, social and cultural spheres of the country too have been transformed to suit that climate. Secondly, the transformation of the national question into war has thrust forward chauvinism and Tamil narrow nationalism; and secured for them a place in the political arena. Thirdly, the snare of de-politicization put into operation by NGOs and the advent of modern communication systems have had an adverse impact on the lives of the people. Overall, the left movement and working class activity had become isolated as a result of liberalization, privatization and globalization. Trends of identity politics were on the upsurge. Each nationality built a fence around itself. Past experiences impressed upon the Party the challenges and hardships that a Marxist Leninist party faces in keeping itself alive under such circumstances.

The Party has carried out its political work based on its class stand as well as its activities in the fields of art, literature and culture in the North, the Hill Country and Colombo. It has by that means been able to deliver its Marxist Leninist politics to the people. It has through mass organizations carried out political work among the people to the best of its ability. Despite lack of resources and financial difficulties, it has published its Tamil political periodicals "Paattaali" (1978) "Cempathaakai" (1979) "Puthiya Poomi" (1987) and "Puthiya Neethi" (2012). The theoretical journal of the Party, "New Democracy" (1999) is since 2012 published under the title "Marxist Leninist New Democracy". The Party has also, from time to time, published a number of books and booklets on theoretical and current political issues. The Party supports the Deshiya Kalai Ilakkiyap Peravai to function as a people's art and literature forum and the publication of its magazine "Thaayakam".

The Party through establishing mass organizations for people's issues has played its role in addressing the problems faced by the people. These and other mass political contributions of the Party will be documented in fuller detail when the 35 year history of the Party is compiled.

At this stage we remember with sentiment departed comrades, Founder General Secretary Comrade KA Subramaniam who worked with dedication at the forefront to establish the Party, Politburo Member S Navaratnam, Central Committee Member RK Soodamani, Hill Country Regional Committee Member P Chandrakumar, Northern Regional Committee Members Comrade Mahadevan (Lingam), Comrade K Rasiah, Comrade T Tharumalingam and Comrade S Thuraisngam. Among comrades who are remembered with revolutionary sentiment are Comrades S Thuraisingam, M Kandappillai, S Rasadurai, P Ratha, P Pasupathi and K Paramu who were all members of the Party.

Every comrade who has over the 35 year history of the Party has through his/her abilities and dedication contributed to the defence and development of the Party deserves to be remembered with honour. Of them some are not with the Party today and continue as separate individuals. The Party has never rejected them. Although they may have distanced themselves from the Party for various reasons, the Party remembers with respect their contributions at various stages.

The Party is proud to be a Marxist Leninist Party that has been functioning on this soil for 35 years. This pride is not a matter of complaisance. The Party takes joyous revolutionary pride that it has been able to stand with its head erect as a Marxist Leninist party of the proletariat amid opposition, accusations, abuse and negative criticism in an adverse international climate and a deteriorating domestic situation.

We wish to conclude with the assurance that this brief account of the 35 year history of the Party will soon be followed by an extensive document recording the history of the Party.

[Edited translation of text in Tamil]

Imperialism and Nationalism in Sri Lanka

Comrade S. K Senthivel

General Secretary
New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party

Comrade Lenin in 1916 defined imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism. By analysing the causes and consequences of the First World War, Lenin identified the immense growth of capitalist production and rivalry for markets for the products as the basis for the war. He declared the period as the beginning of the imperialist era. This view was borne out by the break out of the Second World War. This imperialist era still persists.

The capitalist mode of production while using modern technology and science to increase production has with its greed for profit stretched across the world. Imperialism, which is leading this process, is sleekly implementing its programme of imperialist globalization by imposing on countries the neoliberal economic and political line which it adopted in the 1980s. It is under that scheme that liberalization, privatization and globalization have been thrust on all countries. The process has been admitted by not only the countries that were under neo-colonial domination but also by former socialist countries. The sprouting national economic bases of Asian, African and Latin American countries referred to as economically backward or developing countries were knocked down and brought under the agenda of globalization. Unable to resist this trend, the leadership of the ruling classes of these countries fully surrendered to the agenda of imperialist globalization.

It is in the merciless nature of imperialism to plunder the resources of the countries of the world and to fiercely accumulate profit through multinational corporations. It is also its practice to wage aggressive wars against countries that refuse to submit to or stand in the way of its will. Besides, in countries that could be in conflict with it, it acts to escalate local contradictions to the point of hostility and war, and supply arms and armaments to the warring sides.

Even today, imperialist forces implement their economic, political and cultural infiltration in many ways with the aim of global domination; and US imperialism provides leadership. Imperialist global hegemony is about bringing all countries of the world under the imperialist expansionist umbrella of the US. Its aim is to wipe off the face of the world Marxist socialism which is the opposite of and the alternative to capitalism. To achieve that aim, imperialism has been firm and consistent in devising, from time to time, means by which the land-owning and capitalist elite classes continue in power in the different countries.

The prime task of imperialism in any country big or small is to prevent the emergence of unity, solidarity and fellowship among people, in order that it could establish itself and ensure its interests in the country. Based on that, it heightens differences among people based on race, language, religion and region to transform friendly contradictions into hostile contradictions and thus fulfils its purposes and interests.

It is not in the least the concern of imperialism if because of such conflicts people shed blood, die or suffer great pain, for imperialism thrives on war, bloodshed and heaps of corpses. A scientific and historical view of current international events will show that imperialism headed by the US is today the main and ruthless foe of the people of the world.

Imperialism has throughout the past century safeguarded its existence and continuity in Sri Lanka. A review of the history of Sri Lanka will show that imperialism did not establish itself here as a result of an unforeseen event in the country early in the last century. Imperialism has unbroken continuity with the colonial past. Direct European colonial

rule which introduced capitalism and later imperialism has a nearly 450-year history. During their long period of rule, the colonialists sustained themselves in this island with the collaboration of the feudal elite. Including neo-colonial domination since independence from direct colonial rule in 1948, foreign domination has lasted over five centuries.

The British colonialists established themselves in Sri Lanka following the Portuguese and the Dutch. During their one and a half centuries long presence, they did not develop their capitalist mode of production into one with modern industry. Instead, the emphasis was on capitalist production in the agricultural sector with tea and rubber produced on a very large scale, ensuring massive profit. Thereby, they established themselves securely in the country and held the entire island under their control. In this period, British capitalism had developed internationally as imperialism and Britain became the prime imperialist power, a position which it enjoyed until the Second World War.

Following the First World War in the in the early years of the era of imperialism, the Russian working class led by the Bolshevik Party with Comrade Lenin as leader carried out the great October Revolution which led to the founding of the Soviet Union. This event paved the way for popular uprisings for independence and freedom in colonial and semi-colonial countries. As a result, British colonialism lost its direct grip on government in its colonies. It was, nevertheless, able to sustain its hold through economic domination. But, with the weakening of British imperialism in the circumstances following the Second World War, US imperialism came to the fore.

British colonialism, capitalism and their outgrowth, British imperialism, and, since the 1950s, US imperialism have retained their presence and continuity in Sri Lanka. In this climate, the upper class elite of feudal lineage and the capitalist class that developed subject to limitations have served as loyalists and stooges of imperialism. This situation represents a continuation of the colonial era. This servile faith in the whites has always stood in the way of the national independence

movement of Sri Lanka surging against colonialism, capitalism and imperialism. The elitist Sinhala and Tamil upper class leadership have colluded with and served the imperialist forces to this day.

The capitalist class that emerged among the Sinhalese since the start of the 20th Century developed a form of Sinhala nationalism which did not have its roots in anti-colonialism, anti-capitalism or anti-imperialism. That nationalism took shape upholding Buddhist renaissance and emphasizing ethnicity, language, culture, antiquity and civilization. It was pushed forward not as fully-fledged bourgeois nationalism but as one that assimilated feudal conservative ideology. This Sinhala nationalism with loyalty and subservience to foreign imperialism surged forward to become a majoritarian nationalism hostile to the Muslims, Tamils and people of Indian origin.

Imperialism which was only concerned with its presence and control proceeded hand in hand with that nationalism, in fact, endorsing and even nurturing it. They subtly implemented their endorsement through their political reforms and eventually the Soulbury Constitution drafted by them for an independent Sri Lanka, and thereby quietly induced splits among the people based on ethnicity, language, religion and region. Following the transfer of power in the name of independence, the imperialists enabled the strengthening of Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism.

From the early 1930s, the anti-imperialist movement among the Sinhalese was carried forward by the left. It was popular and made a substantial impact on the Sinhalese. The mass movements and struggles carried forward by the left movement comprising the Lanka Samasamaja Party (LSSP) and the Communist Party (CP) among the people, especially the working class and other toiling masses, were of serious political consequence. Imperialism took the initiative to arrest the growth of the left movement by defending and nurturing the growth of the comprador capitalist United National Party (UNP) to which it handed the reins of power when Sri Lanka was granted independence. When the UNP adopted a strongly Sinhala Buddhist nationalist posture, imperialism backed it from behind the scenes.

One matter deserves noting in this context. When SWRD Bandaranaike parted company with the comprador capitalist UNP which was an imperialist stooge to found the SLFP and adopt a limited anti-imperialist line, he also resorted a Sinhala Buddhist chauvinist line, which indirectly served imperialism. When the national bourgeois SLFP introduced the 'Sinhala Only' Act in parliament, imperialist forces were pleased by the prospect of that legislation driving a wedge between the Sinhala and Tamil people, especially the toiling masses, and weakening the left forces. As recent history of Sri Lanka has demonstrated, their expectations came true.

Thus, like Sinhala chauvinism refraining from opposing imperialism, imperialism too has been supportive of Sinhala Buddhist chauvinist oppression of minority nationalities, as has been clear from the thirty year war against the Tamil people. Buddhist religious and cultural organizations too, like the chauvinistic political forces, have sided with imperialism. It should, however, be noted that there have always been some left-oriented Buddhist clergy who have been opposed to imperialism as well as to national oppression.

Now strong suspicion exists that certain organizations functioning in the name of Buddhism and members of the clergy in leading positions there are acting with the backing of imperialist agencies. Thus, it is historically clear that imperialism, in order to sustain itself and safeguard its economic and political interests in Sri Lanka, has been colluding with Sinhala Buddhist chauvinists. Therefore, in a situation where imperialism and chauvinism are marching hand in hand, any genuine left organization with claims to opposing and overcoming imperialism has to correctly identify chauvinism and dare to reject and combat it. Without it, any claim to anti-imperialism will be barren in content.

Under such conditions, Tamil nationalism has developed into narrow nationalism on the pretext of opposing national oppression by Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism. Nevertheless, an organization called the Jaffna Youth Congress did take up the Tamil national cause on a progressive political basis. It had anti-imperialist and Sri Lankan nationalist features,

but lasted a mere ten years, as it was overcome by conservative Tamil nationalism in the 1930's. From then on, the path of Tamil nationalism has been defined by conservative narrow nationalism.

Tamil nationalism, on the pretext of opposing Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism in the South, has pushed forward the politics of ethnicity, language, narrow nationalism and racial hostility. The assertive elitist upper classes of feudal descent remain as political leaders in the name of Tamil nationalism. They have never opposed imperialism or supported a single anti-imperialist struggle.

What is significant is that the stand of Tamil narrow nationalism, both during its non-violent struggles and during its armed struggle, was supportive of and relied on imperialism and Indian expansionism. They are still wishful that imperialism will secure self determination for the Tamils and thereby fulfil their cherished dream of a separate Tamil Eelam. We have seen the tragic price paid for this blind faith in Mullivaikkal in 2009 with many thousand ordinary Tamil people killed. The price continues to be paid even now.

Even today, we witness Tamil nationalist leaders in the North looking up to the US and Western imperialists as their saviours, even after the annihilation of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) — which was a strong military outfit — with the aid and assistance of US and Western imperialists. This leadership, while having opposed the entire Sinhala population with bitter ethnic, linguistic and religious hatred has preserved unity with the Sinhala upper class elite. Meanwhile, the attitude of this leadership towards the Muslims and the Hill Country Tamils, who now assert their status as distinct nationalities, has historically been one of exclusion and neglect.

Narrow Tamil nationalists have from the outset had an attitude that lacked care, interest or sympathy towards the toiling Sinhala masses in the South, much resembling their lack of a spirit of anti-imperialism. Tamil nationalism is still taking a most reactionary stand in failing to distinguish between the proponents of Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism and the ordinary Sinhalese people comprising workers, peasants and

other toiling masses and thereby rejecting the Sinhalese people as a whole. The dominance of such politics has led to the recurrence of the sidetracking of the Tamil people leading to despair and destruction.

Thus, while Sinhala Buddhist majoritarianism or chauvinism in the South and Tamil nationalism in the North-East seem to oppose each other, the respective leaders of these tendencies remain members of the upper class and upper caste elite of feudal descent. In this respect, they have similar characteristics and social practices as well as class solidarity.

Thus, the nationalists of both kinds, through the concurrence of class interests and shared subservience and loyalty to imperialism, transcend the ethnic divide to function in a common sphere of class interest. They nevertheless remain at the forefront of fooling the people of their ethnicity, language and religion on the basis of identity. It should, however, be noted here that if one were to exclude the supporters of the left, anti-imperialism has a broader base among the Sinhalese democratic and progressive forces than among Tamils.

In the present context, there is a pressing need to awaken and mobilize the people of the country to launch uprisings and struggles against imperialism and its strategic partner, Indian regional hegemony, which are waiting to gobble up the whole country and bring the people under their total control. It is the need of the moment for genuine left organizations and democratic and progressive forces to come together and act with solidarity and dedication for the purpose.

Cultural Ideology as a Tool of Oppression

Comrade K Thanikasalam

Globalized consumer culture and the ideology that rationalizes it are spreading rapidly among the people. The proliferation of consumer goods as an outcome of the neo-colonial mode of production is transforming the condition of "products for the people" to "people for the products". Highly appealing advertisements induce in people the desire to accumulate consumer goods that are not only available in markets and stores but also follow them to their doorsteps. People, in the process of earning the money to obtain these goods, are losing family and social bonds. Love and care for others have now become scarce to the point that people are pushed to a state of alienation from society.

The lofty ideal of "One for all and all for one" and lifestyle emphasizing interpersonal love characterizing developed human civilization are being demolished in a planned way. The notion that each, driven by the declared capitalist sentiment expressed in the watchword of capitalist society "Each for himself and God for all", could according to his or her ability vie in the competitive free market to obtain what one wants, even at the cost of trampling upon others, is being imposed on the people as the ideology of globalized consumer culture. Imperialist globalisation has temporarily succeeded in applying its vulgar interpretation of the evolutionary concept of 'the survival of the fittest' to human existence.

Globalization is only the opening up of countries to exploitation by imperialist countries and multinational corporations and enhancing the power of the local ruling classes over the people in order to serve that end. Doors were swung open for their entry to Sri Lanka by the

Jayawardane government that came to power in 1977. While suppressing the trade union and left movements that could oppose this move, it also deflected the attention of the Sinhala masses from related issues by unleashing an oppressive war against the national minorities with the declaration "If it is war it is war".

This consumer economic culture which has since 1978 been imposed on the people outside the North-East is being imposed on the people of the North-East since the end of the war. Rather than establish factories and increase employment opportunities, highways are being built to bring in consumer goods with ease and a variety of state and state and private banks and credit companies are being opened in all villages to obtain the goods on credit. These organizations offer abundant loans to people at "attractive interest rates". As a result, houses are cluttered with goods and vehicles obtained on bank loans and on lease.

Following recent increases in electricity tariff fridges, washing machines and other such items in many homes have become objects of display rather than goods for use. With the rise in consumer prices making it hard for people to meet their daily needs, people are pushed to a situation where they cannot repay their loans. Bank and credit company employees make house by house visits to demand capital and interest and repossess goods on failure to settle. As a result, people are pushed to sell their possessions and to borrow at high interest rates to become further indebted.

In recent years, twenty traders and many members of the public have committed suicide, owing to the burden of debt. Under the global economic system there are mechanisms by which countries that have gone bankrupt are bailed out by others that have not. But no mechanism exists to rescue the people who are exploited by them. The ideology of globalized consumer culture has left for them only the impulse and knowhow for suicide.

The social system hardly cares about people dying in large numbers across the world owing to poverty, disease and war even in this era of

electronic information technology. Nor does it allow people to take an interest in such matters. Instead, it diverts their attention with the help of the modern media to carry out cultural and ideological oppression. Media such as the cinema and television that can readily reach the people are used to promote violence, sex urge and individual perversion as well as to encourage ignorance, superstition and conservatism.

It is thus clear that, as Antonio Gramsci has pointed out, besides the state and its armed forces, oppression through cultural ideology plays a major role in safeguarding the social structure with its social and economical imbalances. Oppression by means of cultural ideology in our context comprises the unchallenged continuation of feudal, male chauvinist, caste-based ideology, practices, religious rituals and customs in the name of culture. Although caste and gender are challenged today, the foregoing is the cause for their continuance to date.

Culture does not stop with mere rituals and way of life but goes further to offer the people a global outlook according to which they understand the world. That is a world outlook that will always protect the interests of the ruling classes. Hence, those wielding state power nurture and protect religion and conservative culture, and act to ensure that the people willingly accept these chains of gold that bind their thinking.

Buddhism, which is based on love, is effectively the state religion in Sri Lanka. A majority of Tamils have as their religion Saivism, a faith that holds conceit — and hence selfishness — as an evil to be purged. People also follow the faiths of Islam that emphasizes brotherhood and Christianity that requires one to love one's neighbour as one's self. Over 90% of the population of Sri Lanka is literate and the country has electoral democracy that has given every adult the right to vote. Despite these, the people have been persuaded to heap not only dirt but bombs and bullets as well on themselves. Why do leaders of organizations on either side of the conflict frequently crown themselves? Does the ideology behind such rituals support the freedom and well being of the people? Are these leaders dragging history backwards or thrusting it forwards?

It is clear here that the ideological base for popular culture is not in the hands of the people. It is explicit that only the culture and ideology for the ruling classes are being preserved. That is what has been happening all through the history of humanity. Those who laid the foundations for the Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Indian and Chinese civilizations were the slaves who constituted the majority. The numerically smaller ruling class has been able to dominate over them not by armed force alone but also by the force of the ideology of "rules laid down by heaven". It was for that reason that the fictions of heaven and hell, paradise, salvation and so on were presented by ruling class intellectuals alienated from material production. New forms of ritual and worship have been imposed on ordinary people who once worshipped natural phenomena.

The Arthashastra by Kautilya which declared that "If people have no faith in the next world, the king has no protection", also listed the methods that could be used to immerse people in ignorance in order that the state remains secure. The well known Machiavelli who lived in what is now Italy had also in his classic "The Prince" published in early 16th Century explained how the people should be kept down in order that the ruler can maintain his rule.

Religious philosophies justified social differences and oppression based on the claim that 'even serfs are God's children and it is God's will that they remain that way'. This shows that the state structure has from the outset used cultural ideology as a powerful tool to prevent the people from awakening in protest against it.

The Roman Catholic Church, once a bastion of defence of feudal rulers, imprisoned and tortured Galileo in early 17th Century for his scientific discovery that challenged its geocentric view of the universe. (The Church apologized belatedly for the mistake in 1987.) Those who put forward scientific views that contradicted religious ideology have been burnt on the stakes. The bourgeois class that emerged as a powerful force after the industrial revolution saw the feudal monarchies and the cultural and religious ideologies that they upheld as hurdles to its

advancement. Hence the works of bourgeois intellectuals of that period such as Voltaire, Montesquieu, Diderot, and Rousseau in the 18th Century sought to direct the attention of the human mind that was until then directed towards the heavens to worldly matters. They sought to divert the faith in God towards faith in humanity.

The capitalist class led the French Revolution of 1789 in alliance with the peasantry which was severely oppressed by the feudal monarchy in France and the newly emergent working class. The declaration "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" of the French Revolution inspired calls for social reform not only in Europe but also outside Europe. Yet, the capitalist class, being the oppressive class that it was, soon compromised with the feudal elite and used the old feudal cultural and religious ideologies to oppress the toiling masses.

On the very soil that gave birth to the French Revolution, the workers of France mobilized against bourgeois oppression to establish the Paris Commune in 1871. Although the Commune lasted only seventy two days, its lessons, along with the experiences of popular uprisings the world over including the French Revolution, as compiled and presented by Karl Marx, became a source of strength to subsequent revolutions.

The first working class revolution took place in Russia in 1917 under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party led by Lenin. For the first time on earth a state was created in which the oppressed classes could live freely. Owing to its impact, working class governments were established in several countries in Europe as well as in China, Korea, Vietnam and Cuba. These revolutions gave further impetus to the liberation struggles of countries under colonial rule. From 1917 until into the 1970's, countries advanced towards a cultural change that rejected conservative ideology, ignorance and superstition and opposed oppression based on caste, race, religion and gender, in favour of a new liberation of humanity.

Since the 1980's, and especially since the fall of the Soviet Union, the US is intent on imposing capitalist ideology and the imperialist economic culture of consumerism upon the world with the help of modern information technology. Besides, it readily takes advantage of any

conservative ideology that does not stand in the way of its profits. A significant example in this respect is its cynical encouragement and support for the Muslim fundamentalist Taliban and Bin Laden who led the Al Qaida in the 1980s in its bid to be rid of the pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan.

Under the pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan, it was possible for women to secure university education without compulsion to wear the purdah. Since liberation with the help of the US, we have witnessed a situation in which girl's schools have been destroyed by bombing. Besides, there is no secret about US links with conservative religious groups in Tibet and other parts of China as well as in India.

In our country too globalized consumer culture and conservative culture based on religion are in partnership. On the one hand, the conservative ideology that protects differences and oppression based on caste, race, religion and class continues to be imposed on the people as Sinhala Buddhist chauvinist ideology, with the help of the state, while on the other, narrow nationalist ethno religious cultural identity is being imposed seemingly in opposition to the former.

It was against this cultural ideology and in the context of India's liberation that the reputed Bengali poet and thinker Rabindranath Tagore denounced conservatism as a centuries-old burden of evil that stood in the way of progress and urged its prompt rejection in order for India to march forward alongside the rest of humanity. The Sri Lankan Tamil poet Murugaiyan expressed a similar view in calling for the riddance of the "two-thousand years old burden" on the back of the Tamils.

Thus, for people to be free of this conservative cultural ideology which is the tool of various forms of oppression against the people, it is important for them to adopt a new cultural ideology that concerns the liberation of humanity and to develop the spirit of working towards a truly secular society.

Investment in Education as Strategy of Social Development

Comrade Siva Rajendran

It is the right of an individual to secure education to serve in one's personal and public life. It is a prime duty of the state to provide such education. It is necessary for the state to allocate a fair share of the revenue that it collects by taxation and from the toil of its citizens for investment in education. Yet an overview of the countries of the world shows that not many states give adequate prominence to education and development of human resources. This has led to the worsening of economic stagnation, poverty, unemployment and deficiencies in human development.

Investment in education is essential to ensure economic development, productivity, social development and social equality. Economic and educational policies of a country decide the proportion of its gross national product or its gross domestic product that would be allocated for education. However, a global overview will indicate that only a small number of governments design their economic and educational policies in ways beneficial to the entire population of the country.

Today globalized capitalism is fast converting education into a marketable commodity. This will certainly result in the denial of appropriate education to a large section of the population and place the future of educated youth at the mercy of market forces. Education under socialism in the 20th Century was planned in terms of social and economic needs of society so that it imparted not only knowledge and skills but also social responsibility and a sense of purpose to the young student.

Diminishing educational investment in a country, while on the one hand hampering economic development, leads on the other to

aggravation of issues affecting society, culture and the environment of the country. Such countries will eventually harvest human misery.

The economy and educational policies of a country influence social issues related to education. When policy makers adopt positive decisions on education, the decisions will have a favourable impact on socio-economic and cultural matters. Without policies in the public interest or with policies that are essentially anti-people, the fruits of education can be socially counterproductive.

Alongside long and short term educational plans, their implementation, methods and techniques for their implementation, and design and implementation of educational programmes, the advancement of the educational system, administration, management, research and physical facilities require a good educational policy and sufficient investment. Given below is a schedule showing educational spending as a fraction of the Gross Domestic Product for a selection of countries:

Country	Educational spending (% GDP)
Cuba	18.7
Lesotho	10.4
Mongolia	9.0
Guyana	8.4
Sweden	7.7
Kenya	7.0
Jamaica	6.1
USA	5.7
UK	5.3
India	4.1
Nepal	3.4
Rwanda	2.8
Bangladesh	2.4
Sri Lanka	1.97 (UNESCO Report)
Weighted world average	4.9

(Source: United Nation Human Development Programme)

Investment in education develops the capabilities of the workforce. As a result it becomes possible to achieve quality production. Education also enhances the knowledge and motivation of the workers and, by combining these gains with research and development and increased investment, even more advanced results could be achieved.

It is interesting to note that investment in education has been a high priority in countries with socialist government, and since that investment yielded great economic and social returns the scale of educational investment has been retained even where the socialist economy has been weakened. For example, China reserves 9.5% of its financial allocation for education-related research and development. It has made plans to innovate education in order to achieve an innovative society by 2020 and to be the leading country in the world in science and technology by 2050. Likewise, Vietnam has increased its investment in tertiary education by 16%.

Cuba allocates US\$ 2752 million of its earnings to education, and has 100% literacy. Besides providing free education, it has instructed that class size in schools be kept below 25. It has also successfully implemented a child care programme for families unable to address the educational needs of their children. It also provides education through a Mobile Teacher for children in circumstances where they cannot attend school.

In contrast, in India, adult literacy is 72% for males and 58% for females. Although 86% of rural children have access to primary education, there is general complaint that educational activities have not adequately reached the villages.

Countries that allocate only a small fraction of the GNP for education do not offer quality education. As a result, children are denied their fundamental rights. Data for September 2013 points out that 774 million people aged 15 or above are illiterate and two-thirds of them are women. Continuing illiteracy causes the worsening of ignorance, unemployment, poverty, social inequality, disease, cultural decay and other social ills. A situation is created where the rulers can have no idea of the economy, education, policies and practices of the country.

The schedule that follows shows the world rankings for science and mathematics in schools. It is not the same gloomy picture in all capitalist countries. Some of them pay attention to educational investment

and the result is evident in the performance of children at middle school level as evident from the table below, which also shows four former socialist countries among the top ten.

Country	World Rank	Science Rank	Mathematics Rank
Singapore	1	3	1
Taiwan	2	1	2
South Korea	3	2	4
Japan	4	5	3
Hong Kong	5	4	5
Hungary	6	6	6
UK	7	7	5
Czech Republic	8	11	7
Russia	9	8	10
Slovenia	10	12	6

(Source: *International Mathematics and Science Study, 2006*)

Although it is said that the literacy rate in Sri Lanka is high at 98%, Professor Chandra Gunawardane has expressed doubt about the figure. The investment of only 1.9% of the GNP in education in Sri Lanka does not seem indicative of educational growth. Unemployment, poverty, cultural decay, drug addiction and child abuse are symptomatic of the ills of the kind of education provided.

As education is essential for developing human skills which comprise the most precious resource of the world and to use it in ways beneficial to humanity, those who desire the advancement of a country, under any social system, should give priority to investment in education. Educated people who are socially conscious should lead the people in the struggle to secure the right of every child to appropriate education, guarantee equality in education, and ensure highly effective education.

Human Existence and Identity

S. Sivasegaram

Introduction

Human identity is a fundamental identity that affirms human existence and is essential to human beings. All others are secondary.

The most important human identity based on nature is that of gender. Nature also permits the birth of human beings with physical and mental characteristics that deviate from what is considered 'normal'. Some deviations may indicate special attributes, some certain deficiencies, and yet others orientations different from what is 'normal'.

The living environment of the evolved human being, geographic factors especially, and genetic changes have contributed to differences in physical appearance and variations in abilities. While such variations in human identity are seen in terms of race, all races belong to one and the same species and are capable of mixing. As a result, humanity has developed into a mosaic of a multitude of ethnic groups widely varying in appearance. But none of these differences can be said to be a natural obstacle to people living together a community.

There have been conflicts, both individual and collective, among human beings. Such conflicts have not occurred because people generally desire them. Individuals and groups of people engage in conflict with others mainly when their survival is perceived to be under threat. We have come a long way from such existence as primitive communities. Today, it cannot be said that any human being or a group of human beings has an inherent need to destroy another human being or group for its survival. Yet, in the past hundred years, mankind has witnessed many cruel wars. Weapons for the destruction of humans by humans have grown in scale of cruelty, might and number; and a substantial

portion of human production is dedicated to the destruction of humanity.

Leaving aside the harm that mankind causes to its environment and other beings in that environment in the name of development and in the name of perceived human needs, if we consider human activities designed for the destruction of human by human, we will recognize that identity has played a prime role in dividing humanity as well as in the destruction of humanity by conflict.

Greater Identities

Among natural identities other than gender, those based on physical features and general appearance of human groups seem the most important. Yet, there has been much mixing between racial groups so that no group could declare that it is racially 'pure'. Nevertheless, differences based on skin colour have persisted since the uprooting of people from their soil through slave trade and as bonded labour. Colour consciousness has remained in the human mind, even after the unequal social system and the modes of production that sustained slavery and bonded labour ceased to be, and even after the social structure that accommodated racial hegemonic ideology has been dismantled. It could be said that colour and colour-related racial identity still play an important role in contradictions based on identity. But it should also be emphasised that the social basis for its sustenance is not really colour but the imperialist capitalist politico-economic system with a global reach.

The day to day existence of human society has been based on small social groups. But the expansion in human needs and of production and consumption related to these needs has led to growing interaction between social groups. At the same time, it has been possible for a social group that lived across a large land mass to grow and branch out into sub-groups and for interaction to cease between some sub-groups. If we look at the development of languages, the nature and closeness of the interaction between communities has led to the emergence of common languages. Equally, there have been instances where, without the need

for a common language, dialects of a language have taken separate paths of development to become languages in their own right.

Language has been an important social identity, and the reason is readily understood since language has a prominent place in inter-relationships within the community. We have also seen that, in the course of social development, the use of more than one language within a community, even in a restricted way, in specific fields of activity. The language of prime importance to an individual may be determined by his position and role in society. Nevertheless, in general, one language takes precedence over the rest in identifying a nation or a nationality. At the same time, several languages or dialects could be shared with comparable importance within a community. This feature is evident not only in certain urban communities but also among tribal communities moving towards a common or group identity.

It cannot be said that **religion** has always been the dominant ideology in any society. Religious beliefs and rituals with religious significance have considerable influence on the culture and the day to day life of people. Although, following the emergence of capitalism, there was the possibility of religion losing its social importance, so that the practice of religion within a community would be inadequate for its assertion as a social identity. We see that individuals who advocate religious fundamentalism are not necessarily genuine adherents of the religion. However, it has been possible for religion to be a social identity of an individual even without religion having any bearing on his/her everyday life. In some circumstances, religion has, together with cultural and other social features, been asserted as national identity.

Caste has been an extension of class identity in the feudal society of South Asia. In circumstances where feudal production relations persisted, it nearly coincided with class identity. Now, even after feudal production relations have largely weakened or ceased to be, caste continues as an extension of feudal ideology. Caste identities that have sustained themselves through a system of intra-caste marriage still persist even in urban environments.

Identity based on **culture** changes faster than any of the aforesaid identities. Yet, those who emphasize culture to assert the uniqueness and glory of their community seldom wish to recognize changes undergone by their culture. Over emphasis of cultural aspects with little relevance to the social existence and practices of people has more to do with emphasising a difference in identity than with preserving a culture.

Those who differentiate culture as Western and Eastern miss the extent to which culture changes with changes in the modes of social production and production relations. What is now called Western culture is a product of capitalism. It is not a cultural extension of ancient Greek thought. The capitalist culture that emerged from European feudal culture has further transformed as capitalism developed into imperialism.

The roots of many aspects of culture that are hailed as Indian have their origins outside the subcontinent. Thus, it will be more appropriate to consider each of what is referred to as Chinese culture or any other Asian culture as one that developed under the impact of various cultures than as formed of a unique culture.

Thus, of identities that people claim to be theirs to the point of dividing themselves and fighting each other, none is pure or absolutely unique. There could be uniqueness in the way aspects of identity are blended, but we can see that every aspect of identity is shared in whole or part by several identity groups.

Religion and nationalism are important among identities that divide people most. While people clash in the name of religion, many 'religious leaders' unfailingly declare that all religions preach the same thing. Nothing is further from the truth. Whatever is common to religions will fall under the category of humanitarianism or moral and ethical codes that are essential to the social existence all humanity. Hence, the preservation of such values does not need religion, and people do not crave religion for any such need. Religion, rather than finding the reasons for human burdens and the means to overcome them, offers consolation and temporary emotional relief. Thus, as long as life remains burdensome, many could need religion, at a personal level, as a crutch to hold on to.

Yet, when religion transcends the boundary of individual faith and becomes a means to divide people, it becomes a dangerous force. It is here that politicized religion and its extreme forms become a social menace. We have recently seen that any religion could be so transformed.

Nationality is not an identity that represents the normal existence of human beings. The concept of nation is historically recent. Capitalism needed to identify the state and the country as a nation. As a result the identities of many nationalities went extinct or were exterminated. Importantly, many languages died out or were wiped out. Such cessation also affected culture. The decimation of the identities of human groups was not confined to the national boundaries of the bourgeois state and has occurred outside it as well.

Thus nationalism does not merely preserve a given socio-political-economic order but can go further to attack and destroy other nations. Cruel wars are being waged in the names of nation and national interests. Today, nationalism serves to split countries with a backward capitalist mode of production by making people fight each other in the name of nationalism. Conflicts between nations and nationalities benefit only the big bourgeoisie. It is worth noting that multinational corporations have promoted such wars and that neither multinational corporations nor their capital has a nation. They identify themselves with the stronger nation states, weaken and split weaker nation states, and when necessary resort to war to dominate the latter.

Lesser Identities

This term refers to identities of small groups that exist within a larger identity comprising a human society or a part of it which could function as a distinct socio-economic-cultural entity. They concern deviations from what are considered natural and personal preferences which bring individuals together as a group. Some refer to such groups as fringe groups. But it is hard to say that each of the groups identified here locate the members of the group on the fringe of society. Yet, it is true that people with such identities can be subject to discrimination.

Although many countries that once considered the practice of **homosexuality** to be criminal now treat it as acceptable, discrimination persists because of social prejudices.

Society generally treats people with physical and mental make-up that deviate from the 'normal' with a degree of hostility. Although people are kind and courteous to the **physically and mentally handicapped**, especially among family and friends, not all societies are ready to afford them equal opportunity. The question remains whether there is equality even where there are concessions. While avoiding terms such as cripple, deaf, blind and lunatic when referring to the handicapped — at times, referred to euphemistically as "differently-abled" — can be well intended, change in terminology alone is inadequate to overcome social prejudices. Even left-handers are not treated equally in all societies. We seldom notice that, many objects, ranging from door handles to tools in common use, are designed for right-handed people.

Besides the above minority identities relating to the physical and mental make-up of individuals, identity groups like widows, prostitutes and petty thieves, who are the creations of social pressure, are considered and treated in a lowly manner, especially in backward societies. Today, a large number of the elderly too have entered this category.

Although members of the 'lesser' groups cannot struggle in ways possible for those belonging to 'greater identities', it is possible for them to struggle for their rights under conditions of high social awareness. Nevertheless, in any struggle for fundamental social change and just causes, the struggle strengthens itself by taking due account the demands of the 'lesser' groups.

The Struggle for Human Existence

Healthy and stable survival of the humanity is possible only when the human society is just and equal. As long as differences in identity are based on inequality, dominance, oppression and exploitation, identity-based hostility will be inevitable.

Thus, production relations in class society, based on the exploitation of the many by a few, are essentially hostile. Class contradiction has been the fundamental contradiction of human existence and a hostile one as well. Capitalism has taken advantage of all social contradictions to prolong its system of exploitation. Imperialism, the highest form of capitalism, in its urge to put the world in the control of a handful of big capitalists, has been exploiting national, religious, ethnic and other identities to divide people.

Imperialism, besides, uses postmodernism and theories that follow from it to over emphasize smaller identities in order to divert attention from bigger issues. Imperialism, in addition to controlling the states of backward countries through the neo-colonial system and thereby the uprisings of the people, is also undermining the united struggle of the people through the agency of non-government organisations. Thus it is important to realise that all differences in identity other than gender are nonessential to human existence and that letting gender difference allow discrimination and male domination is harmful to humanity.

Under these conditions, what can people who care for the wellbeing of humanity and the healthy and stable survival of the humanity do? Can they dismiss all contradictions other than the fundamental as illusory? Can they offer consolation that all contradictions will be resolved once the fundamental contradiction is resolved? NO. Such indifference will only encourage identity-based hostility and consequent conflicts.

Thus we have before us the need to deal with any identity related contradiction based on justice and fairness so that it is resolved amicably. Struggles that arise when justice and fairness are denied are fair, and human survival demands their interlinking and reinforcement.

Differences in human identity are not harmful by themselves. The big challenge facing humanity is finding the means to ensure that they remain friendly contradictions.

(Based on a Tamil article in Cempathakai April-June 2013.)

A Class-Based Approach to the Sri Lankan National Question

MeeNilankco Theiventhran

Introduction

Many Third World Marxists emphasize that the national struggle is a matter of class struggle. The national question in Sri Lanka which became political issue around the turn of the twentieth century has since developed in terms of ethnic majority and minority. What many analysts have failed to note is that class issues underlie the development of the national question. Failure to recognise the central feature that the political forces that advanced the cause of Sinhala Buddhism were representatives of the ruling classes with a feudal-capitalist lineage could blind one to the class relationships inherent to the national question. The class content at the core of the national question could be understood only through an analysis of the objective realities of the Sri Lankan social structure. Emphasis of the class perspective is in my view the way forward since, over the past twenty five years, the liberal and nationalistic perspectives have failed to offer feasible solutions for the Sri Lankan conflict.

The main problem facing the country is finding solutions for problems that concern the political and economic affairs of the country; and every socially and politically conscious person will necessarily be deeply concerned about the living conditions of the entire people, problems faced by the nationalities, and the future of the country. There is a need for alternative political thinking appropriate to the particular conditions

of Sri Lanka, policies that derive from it and practices that would carry forward the policies. Fresh thinking is therefore needed in each of the spheres of politics, economy, social affairs, and culture.

In this context, a historical perspective and analysis are important to appreciate the political developments in Sri Lanka. Such an approach will enable one to recognise relationships that the economic, social and cultural spheres have with the political sphere. Such approach is also necessary to identify the causes for each of the problems that has manifested itself as adverse situations, serious crises and bloody tragedies. Thus a historical outlook based on scientific social analysis becomes an essential precondition to address the issues and will unavoidably draw to considerable extent on a Marxist outlook.

Serious approaches to historical development and the various aspects of politics, economics, social affairs, and culture from a class perspective have been based on scientific social analysis (Crachedi, 1989). While it is undeniable that the national contradiction and national oppression have developed to take a place of dominance, class contradiction and class oppression continue to be the basis and the fundamental driving force in social dynamics.

Thus, whether one were to review the development of the political history of Sri Lanka or to examine the current political situation, it is not possible to exclude the question of class. Class contradictions continue to exist among the Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil nationalities. Hierarchical differences between the propertied and un-propertied classes, the exploiting and exploited classes, and the ruling and ruled classes continue to exist. Such class identity cannot be easily got rid of.

Class in the Sri Lankan context

Sociological explanations of social conflict by Karl Marx, who posited a class struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie intrinsic to capitalist, industrial society, are among the most useful tools of conflict analysis (Wetherly, 1988). The power of the Marxian approach rests on its being

dynamic, intuitively persuasive, and fitting well with history, and its ability to provide in one package an explanatory and even predictive description as well as remedies for contemporary problems.

There are six elements of class conflict in Marx's view.

- Classes are authority relationships based on property ownership.
- A class defines social groupings with share life situations, thus interests.
- Classes are inherently antagonistic by virtue of their interests.
- Imminent within modern society is the growth of two main antagonistic classes and their struggle, which eventually absorb all social relations.
- Political organization and power is an instrumentality of class struggle, and reigning ideas are its reflection.
- Structural change is a consequence of class struggle.

One cannot approach the Sri Lankan national question in a superficial and detached manner or based on subjective desire and ignoring objective reality. The breadth and the depth of the national question has to be identified through the historical circumstances in which the seeds of national conflict were sown and nurtured before as well as after formal independence from colonial rule. It is through them that the historical role of the nationalities and classes, their relationships and contradictions could be understood.

The Marxist approach has, since the emergence of monopoly capital, been developed by the Leninist tradition to identify how the dominant local ruling classes and the forces of imperialism that together preserve their interests have enabled the national question to develop into hostility and conflict in the respective countries, and to identify the class nature of the forces that have contributed to its development into war (Wright, 1999). Thus the current state of war could be seen as one where the state of contradiction and conflict between nationalities has grown into something that determines the future of Sri Lanka.

The Marxist Leninist approach asserts that, while class contradiction remains fundamental, the national question which has reached heights of hostility and found expression as a cruel civil war has developed into the main contradiction of the day; and therefore demands resolution. It sees no inconsistency between the Marxist approach based on class and class struggle and its analysis that sees the national conflict as a manifestation of class struggle that has taken centre-stage (Zeitlin, 1984).

The above approach based on class struggle has the merit of not being dogmatic or rigid and the benefit of devising policies appropriate to the social structure existing in each country, and the identification and development of class alliances that will be the driving forces of history in the immediate context.

The Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL), after waging an undeclared civil war for two years, gave notice on 2nd January 2008 that it is formally withdrawing from the ceasefire agreement of 2002 with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). This decision set the stage for further escalation of fighting aimed at destroying the LTTE militarily; and effectively ended the prospect of peace talks and a negotiated resolution to the 25-year conflict.

During the peace talks that commenced in 2002, steps towards arrangements for power sharing with the LTTE were not seriously considered owing to electoral political concerns arising from the impact of the conflict on the ordinary people. Notably, it was the UNP, which represented the interests of the corporate elite and was responsible for launching the war in 1983, that took the peace initiative. The peace initiative was a result of the realisation that the war discouraged foreign investment and hindered the assimilation of the island to the burgeoning economic development in South Asia, India in particular. The peace talks, from the outset, came into conflict with the political methods of rule, namely resorting to anti-Tamil chauvinism, on which the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie has rested since independence.

Neither the faction pursuing the so-called peace process in the hope of transforming the island into a cheap labour platform, nor its opponents who would rather plunge the country back into civil war had in mind the interests of the ordinary working people.

Far-reaching regional and international economic and strategic shifts had compelled the Sri Lankan ruling elite to attempt an abrupt change in its basic orientation. In particular, the upsurge in US militarism especially since 9/11 had a powerful impact on the Indian subcontinent and affected Sri Lanka. Protracted conflicts in the region, which Washington had all but ignored for decades, soon became obstacles to its geopolitical and economic ambitions. The US and other major powers began to pressurise Colombo and the LTTE to reach a power sharing deal that would end the war so that the ruling Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim elite could intensify their exploitation of the workers to serve the interests of the US and other economic powers.

This "peace process", however, came up against entrenched Sinhala chauvinism, which formed the ideological basis for the Sri Lankan ruling class since independence. And the peace process failed to deliver anything for the ordinary people in the country.

The ordinary working people in Sri Lanka cannot remain as onlookers of this crisis. Sooner than later they will need to evolve means to intervene independently to defend their interests and to resist the capitalist ruling classes that are driving them into increasing misery. To undertake this task, however, they need to be armed with the strategic lessons of its past struggles and draw on the experiences of the oppressed nations and people elsewhere.

The working people need to free themselves of all forms of nationalism and racialism that had led to two decades of war and the consequent misery. The inability if not incapability of the parliamentary political parties to find a way out of the present impasse is not only a reflection of an acute crisis of bourgeois rule but also of the non-viability of the existing nation state system. The formally independent state of Sri Lanka

established in 1948 depended on the peculiar conditions of the post-war boom and the limited expansion that occurred within a nationally protected economy. The development of globalized production has, as elsewhere, completely undermined the basis for national economic regulation in Sri Lanka.

The fresh surge in socialist thinking raises important questions:

- Does the immediate emphasis on the national question imply that the working class should abandon class struggle in favour of the 'national' struggle?
- Can socialist objectives being shelved in favour of a struggle for 'bourgeois democracy'?
- Which is the class that can play the vanguard role in a democratic revolution?
- Above all, how can the independent class role of the working class be protected in a period of necessary inter-class alliances?

The answer to these questions and a good grasp of the relationship between the class and national struggles are essential to the determination of the appropriate strategy and tactics for the struggle to resolve the national question in the interests of the ordinary working people. To those seeking social justice, the questions if posed in terms of whether the immediate struggle is to be a national struggle or a class struggle will lead to wrong answers. Thus the questions need to be preceded by a more fundamental question: what is the relationship between these two categories? Failure to see the class component of the national struggle and the national content of the class struggle in existing conditions will hold back the democratic as well as the socialist transformations that they seek.

The immediate objective of the struggle against nationalist tyranny flows from the concrete realities of the existing situation. The concept of national oppression cannot be seen as some form of mystification aimed at diverting attention from a class approach. National oppression infects

every level of class exploitation, and indeed divides the working class into ethnic compartments (Wright, 1979). Thus, the unusual categories such as 'Tamil working class' and 'Sinhala working class' need to be rejected as they are 'unscientific' and do not match reality.

While the national question is now the main contradiction in Sri Lanka, one should remember that the contradiction has been conditioned by class interests and that various vested interests have been at play in transforming it into war and in prolonging the war. Although the war is visibly between the armed forces of the Sinhala-dominated GoSL and the LTTE claiming to represent the Tamil nationality, a satisfactory resolution of the national question needs to address less known but nevertheless important contradictions that are an inseparable part of the national question.

Sri Lankan National Question: A Historical Perspective

An examination of the historical development of the national question in Sri Lanka, will demonstrate the superficiality of the claim by some parliamentary politicians that the problem developed over the past half century as a result of political rivalry (de Silva, 1998). While it is true that the national question has been used for securing and sustaining parliamentary political power, what is fundamental is that certain class forces have nurtured the problem to serve and further the interests of their respective classes.

Viewing from the class perspective, one could see that measures have been taken from as early as the dawn of the twentieth century to create hostility between nationalities and thereby serve certain class interests. Poisonous seeds of sectarianism that had been sown here and there on the basis of race among the Sinhalese, now said to comprise three-quarter of the population, were not obviously recognisable (Imayavaramban, 1988). Views such as "*We are the majority*", "*This country is ours*", "*Our Buddhist religion is sacred and it is our responsibility to nurture and defend it*", and "*Our culture has to be preserved*" began to be voiced from the south of

the country. While these views were anti-colonialist, they also embodied the elements based on which chauvinist arrogance subsequently emerged.

Those who advanced these views were the up and coming classes such as traders and small estate owners among the Sinhalese, some of whom belonged to the feudal elite classes. While they seemed to be the forces of an emergent national capitalist class, they, rather than oppose colonialism, collaborated with it to preserve their self interest.

It was the inherent nature of business rivalry that made these forces resort to communal violence against the Muslims in 1915. The anti-Muslim riots marked the first major national confrontation in Sri Lanka. The accompanying climate of violence was taken advantage of by the colonial masters, who also used it as yet another exercise in their strategy of 'divide and rule'. Leading members of the Tamil elite sided with the Sinhala elite in an expression of elitist solidarity rather than on the basis of far sighted analysis of the development of this form of anti-colonialism and its implications for people with other religious, linguistic and national identities: their elitist thinking did not allow room for that.

However, the very same feudal Sinhala elite opposed and frustrated, entirely on communal grounds, the plea for Tamil representation in the Western Province. Thus, the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim elite pleaded with the colonial masters for positions of power without offending the colonial masters and submitting to them as necessary. It is significant that the anti-imperialist mass movements and struggles demanding complete independence for Sri Lanka surfaced only with the emergence of the left movement in the 1930's. The first public call was by the Jaffna Youth League which also called for a boycott of the elections to the State Council in 1931. Meanwhile, elitist forces from among the Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims collaborated with the colonial masters to abort the above trends before they could develop into a struggle like the Indian independence movement. In return, the colonial masters transferred power to them with confidence.

Thus, sectarianism was an inalienable aspect of the limited political reforms and economic development activities carried out under colonial rule. The sectarian positions adopted were such that, in the long run, they ensured that the Tamil and Sinhala speaking masses who should have united on the basis of class would remain divided with enduring hostility. Specifically, planned colonisation of Sinhalese was carried out in the North and East, and chauvinistic practices were adopted in the utilisation of land and water resources. What the Marxist Leninists see here is the affirmation of long-term class interests of the elite in the pretext of chauvinism. The recommendations of the Lands Commission of 1938 and its practices were based on a long-term chauvinist view. Leftist leader Philip Gunawardana spoke against the colonisation schemes, pointing out that the intention was to divert attention from need for land reform in the south. One cannot miss the grave ethnic conflicts in these settlements and the consequent antagonism between the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim people leading to divisions that stood in the way of unity between class forces.

Thus, the basis for the disenfranchisement of the Hill Country Tamil working class of Indian origin has to be viewed from the standpoint of class. Again, while the enactment of the law making Sinhala the sole official language in 1956 had a chauvinistic motive, its basis was the need to divert the attention of the Sinhala masses from class-based issues. Also, to this day, the leaders of the Tamil elite exploit the language issue to serve their parliamentary political ambitions as well as to prevent the ordinary Tamil masses from uniting with their counterparts among the Sinhalese.

It is true that the constitutions of 1972 and 1978 further marginalized the Tamil nationality and other minority nationalities. However, the fact that these constitutions were also designed to oppress the working people of all nationalities on a class basis has somehow not been adequately emphasised from a class stand transcending nationalism (Jayasuriya, 2005).

The objective realities of the Sri Lankan social structure do not on their own reveal the class content forming the essence of the national question. Limiting one's self to the current political framework, the executive powers of parliament within that framework, and legislation will not help one to appreciate the national and class aspects of the national question. It is also not possible for one to see the national question in its entirety when one's political existence is based on parliamentary political power, parliamentary seats and the ruling class interests served through them. Thus, it is useful to explore how chauvinistic oppression in Sri Lanka is intertwined with the development of class forces in the country and the endurance of their political power.

Firstly, it is necessary to take a close look at the respective class roles played by the comprador bourgeois United National Party (UNP) and the national bourgeois Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) to transform the national contradiction into a hostile contradiction and developing the contradiction further. The 25 years long war was the consequence of these two parties pushing nationalism towards chauvinistic military oppression. At the same time, chauvinism has become institutionalised in combination with the fundamentalist thinking and actions linked to the protection of Sinhala Buddhism in this country. Religious and nationalistic fundamentalist claims such as *"This country is ours"*, *"We have no other country"* and *"Buddhism has to be protected"* have been carried forward by both major parties as well as by Sinhala Buddhist organisations. More recently, we see a tendency for organisations such as the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) to advocate extreme nationalism. Thus, we observe a tendency for Sinhala Buddhist chauvinist ideology to come to the fore at all levels. Besides, the way in which forces of imperialism have thus far taken advantage of chauvinistic oppression and its consequences and the new ways in which they are preparing to put them to use in future need closer study.

It should also be noted that traditional leftists, who in the 1960s had failed to expose the ruling elite class features of the forces associated with the chauvinistic ideology nurtured among the Sinhala masses,

have since degenerated (Imayavaramban, 1988). Owing to their interest in safeguarding their parliamentary seats and the good things that go with office, they kept silent in the face of chauvinism and even compromised and submitted to it. Especially when they had to oppose the UNP to secure their parliamentary seats, they did not hesitate to resort to chauvinism. Yet, it should be conceded that they did not go as far as the JVP has to adopt explicitly chauvinistic positions. However, their position on the national question remains a parliamentary opportunist position as opposed to a Marxist Leninist position, and one more degenerate than that of social democracy. We could see their pathetic situation in identifying the mine attack on the army by the LTTE in Thirunelveli, Jaffna on 23rd July 1983 rather than chauvinistic military oppression as the source for the intensification of the national contradiction. Thus, even today, several people who call themselves leftists argue that the national question was transformed into an ethnic war because a section of the Tamils wanted a separate state.

Class-based Marxist explanations that fail to take into account the historical context in which the Tamils of the North-East were subject to military oppression in their homeland would be dogmatic if not dishonest. However, Marxists cannot dismiss lightly the class characteristics of the Tamil leadership evident in their reactionary stand on the national question. The leadership emphasised the rights of the Tamils only to the extent that it served Tamil elitist interests. They have never championed the cause of the Tamil workers, peasants, the depressed community or women. Whenever possible they demonstrated their class solidarity with the chauvinistic UNP; and in the same spirit embraced the forces of imperialism and regional hegemony in the belief that they were their allies.

Even after Tamil nationalism assumed the form of armed struggle, the militant youth movements failed to recognise the class nature of chauvinistic oppression and the close links that it had with imperialism. That situation continues to this day. The understanding that LTTE has

about the attitude of imperialism or regional hegemony towards the right to self-determination of the Tamil people is questionable. There is reluctance to identify who the friends are and who the enemies are of the Tamil people's just struggle.

The main reason for this plight seems to be the notion that nationalism transcends class. Nationalism has often restricted itself to opposing national oppression. Beyond that, no nationalism can transcend class (Laclau, 1977). Tamil nationalism has the choice between uniting with the workers, peasants, depressed communities and women, and forging links with the Sinhala masses as its allies; and siding with the upper class elite among the Tamils, embracing the imperialists, and compromising with the Sinhala big bourgeoisie. Thus, Tamil nationalism has arrived at a juncture, where it has to decide on the path to take. Without the right strategy there can be no progress in the struggle for self-determination.

The Marxist Leninist position on the national question in Sri Lanka has been unambiguous. It has historically identified the development of chauvinism and its development into military oppression and has recognised the national contradiction as the main contradiction in Sri Lanka. At the same time, it has asserted that the fundamental contradiction is that between the feudal-capitalist-imperialist forces and the toiling masses. It is important to recognise the relationship between the main and the fundamental contradictions and to distinguish between them. The silence of the leftists in the South in the face of chauvinist assault was an inevitable consequence of parliamentary political opportunism. On the other hand, when the Tamil youth took to arms, the Marxist Leninists, despite their faith in armed struggle, were not tempted to follow them. There were exceptions, comprising a few individuals frustrated by the setbacks suffered by the left since the 1970's who got close to the Tamil youth movements in the hope that class forces could be advanced within the nationalist movement, only to end up in political wilderness. Some youth movements inspired by Marxism

but unwilling to abandon nationalism took the unrealistic route of trying to divert the nationalist stream along the lines of class struggle, only to lose their left identity and annihilate themselves politically.

The Marxist Leninist approach to class struggle cannot be dogmatic or rigid if it were to arrive at policies appropriate to social reality and based on the course of development of its dynamic forces, especially class forces. Hence, the Marxist Leninist position on the national question to be valid should look closely at the development of the national question. The national question today has entered a phase where national oppression involves local and foreign elements.

Liberation Struggle: A Class Analysis

When a nation, a nationality or a community is oppressed as social group, it is inevitable that its struggle against oppression will be based on its identity (Eder, 1993). Marxist Leninists have held that to deny the right to such struggle is to support social oppression. It is on this basis that they have supported not merely anti-colonial liberation struggles but also the liberation struggles of oppressed nationalities and social groups.

When the struggle of Afro-Americans against racial oppression in the US surged in the 1960's, Mao Zedong expressed unqualified support for the struggle. This distinguished the Marxist Leninists from those who adopted the parliamentary path. Equally, Marxist Leninists not merely supported but led mass struggles against caste oppression and untouchability.

Tamil nationalism has been a product of history and has assumed different forms and identities. Several social, economic and historical factors have contributed to the development of the Tamil identity into a Tamil national identity (Imayavaramban, 1988). We could easily recognise major differences between the Tamil national identity of today and those that are said to have preceded it.

The first call for national upsurge based on a Ceylonese identity came from the Tamils of the North. The call for national independence as a political demand was from the left movement of this country. Those who spoke then on behalf of the Sinhala or the Tamil community did not have in mind the entire Sinhala or Tamil community. The leaders who then spoke on behalf of an entire people, while acting on the basis of differences in class, caste and region, represented the interests of the well to do social groups.

What was for long emphasised as Tamil identity was primarily the identity of the Tamil Vellala caste, initially the Saivaitees and subsequently including Vellala Christians of the Jaffna peninsula. The leaders who projected this identity gave no thought to joining hands with the Tamils who lived in large concentrations in other parts of the island, and had no real need to think in those terms. That did not, however, make an identity based on language altogether meaningless or meaningful in itself.

The more recent call to reinforce Tamil nationhood is for the purpose of reinforcing the struggle against national oppression, and to that end is correct and welcome. But such reinforcement requires that the contradictions that divide the Tamil nationality be handled correctly. That does not, however, mean that the contradictions could be resolved overnight.

What is meant here by the correct handling of contradictions within the Tamil nationality is ensuring that friendly contradictions do not develop into hostile contradictions. It is therefore important not to neglect the contradictions among the Tamil people or pretend that they do not exist.

The major contradictions among the Tamils include class, caste and gender. Besides these, there are regional, religious and other such contradictions. The first three explicitly concern a hierarchy of power as well as oppression. While regional and religious differences may

involve notions of superiority of one group over another, they really manifest as means to other ends and as tools that serve self-interest rather than as predetermined hierarchical relationships. Thus there is the need to distinguish between contradictions that involve oppression and contradictions that do not. There is always a difference between steps taken to resolve contradictions that involve oppression and steps taken to resolve contradictions that do not involve oppression (Ginsburg, 1979). When handled incorrectly, a contradiction that does not involve oppression and therefore could be resolved easily may develop into a hostile contradiction.

Reinforcing nationhood cannot be an end in itself, but at best a means to strengthen the struggle of the Tamil nationality against national oppression. A correct analysis of the internal and external contradictions can lead to the correct recognition of enemies and friends, the determination of short- and long-term goals, and the development of appropriate tactics and strategies.

The deterioration of the national question into prolonged war was due to collaboration between the chauvinistic ruling classes and imperialist as well as hegemonic interests, and hence the struggle for liberation cannot be separated from the struggle against imperialism. Thus the liberation struggle needs to be carried out on two fronts, one against chauvinist oppression and the other against imperialist and hegemonic domination (Imayavaramban, 1988).

Since the oppressors aim to divide the Tamil people and isolate the struggle for liberation, the liberation struggle should aim to isolate the oppressors and their international backers. This implies an approach that unites the many against the few by identifying, at every level, issues that unite the majority comprising the oppressed masses. The unity of the Tamil nationality for its liberation, through identifying itself with the struggle of other nationalities for liberation from national as well as class oppression, expresses its solidarity with the struggle of the peoples of the world against imperialist and hegemonic oppression and exploitation. We should not forget that every genuine national liberation

movement has had anti-imperialism at its core, and that every compromise with imperialism has led to the surrender of hard-won freedoms.

Although a liberation struggle based on an elite or vanguard group may make gains in the short term, the prolonged nature of the struggle requires it to be democratic to the point that the masses are not only part of the struggle, but also a driving force, and finally the masters. This is where the Marxist Leninist concepts of mass line and people's war become relevant. Wherever they have been understood and applied according to needs of the situation, they have made the liberation struggle a double triumph for the masses, against their immediate oppressors and against their foreign masters.

The strength and success of the liberation struggle will mainly be determined by the extent to which the masses are inspired and motivated (Bhattarai, 1998); and that requires upholding the principles of self determination, democracy and unity on the basis of social justice.

Conclusions

The hard line taken by Sinhala chauvinism and the recklessness response of the Tamil nationalists have contributed heavily to increased domination by foreign forces; and sadly the national question which is the main problem faced by the country has been left in the hands of foreign forces. As a result of Sinhala domination and its oppressive approach, the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil nationalities and other national minorities have been subject to untold suffering, cruelty and oppression. The struggles of the oppressed Tamil people have owing to a combination of circumstances become centred on the LTTE, whose armed activities have been on the rise.

The constitution, the presidential system of government, and the parliamentary system have failed to protect, among other things, the welfare of the people of Sri Lanka, their honour and self respect, their

wealth, and their democratic and human rights. The police, the armed forces and the judiciary seem to be concerned with serving the ruling classes and protecting their interests, and defending the upper class Sinhala hegemony. Meanwhile the workers, peasants, and the employed middle classes are getting ready to take a stand against the exploiting classes and face the challenges.

Under the prevailing conditions, any reasonable person will protest about the way the ruling classes are governing this country. The people as a whole have reached a stage where they look forward to an end to the present anti-people form of government and its replacement by a government that gives prominence to the interests of the people.

The people have lost faith in the ruling classes. The old system of government and administration of the ruling classes have reached their limit of incompetence. The ruling classes have forfeited their eligibility to continue to rule the people. Under these conditions, the people of Sri Lanka are affected in many ways, directly and indirectly. Even the comfortably off middle classes and people with considerable wealth are beginning to feel insecure. The current Sri Lankan situation demands the transfer of power from the hands of the ruling classes to the true representatives of the people. Major changes are required in the form of state power to achieve it.

The strongest force against the ruling classes is the might of the people. For that force to be effective it needs to be mobilised; and that requires the building up of a mass movement through mass struggles. Every form of just struggle supports every other form of just struggle and it is necessary to affirm the support of those not associated with the struggle by linking up with their struggles (Anderson, 1943). There is need for unity within specific struggles and between struggles. That unity should be based on confederation and be democratic. Confederation cannot only be a concept; it should also concern practice and organisational structure.

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Northern Provincial Council: Expectations and Possibilities

Asvaththaamaa

Introduction

The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) won a landslide victory in the recent elections to the Northern Provincial Council (NPC), which is now functional. The clear verdict of the Tamil people in the North also carried a strong message. Yet problems persist in the interpretation of the verdict. The leadership and most members of the TNA read it as an endorsement of the TNA. Could the people have voted overwhelmingly for the TNA merely to endorse its politics? This question fares prominently in the face of the post-poll fallout within the TNA. There are three aspects to the electoral success of the TNA: firstly the campaign promises of the TNA to the people, secondly the people's expectations of the TNA when in power, and thirdly a reality check on what is possible and achievable within the provincial council (PC) system. The three issues are overarching and intersecting. The Tamil political leadership, however, does not see them in that light, and treat the three as distinct spheres. Besides, there have been quarrels within the TNA about portfolios and positions. This essay is an attempt at a fresh perspective of the people's expectations of the NPC and what is attainable through the PC system, examine why they are mutually exclusive and why the TNA politicians want to keep the affairs of the NPC exclusive rather than inclusive.

The election campaign of the TNA dwelt on the claim that Tamils should govern Tamils and if people give the TNA a mandate to govern, the TNA will be able to win everything for the Tamil people. The manifesto

which did not, however, contain a programme to achieve it was instead an idealistic Tamil nationalist boast lacking in concrete proposals and political options. Yet people took the trouble to vote for the TNA. This is where the powerful message from the people needs recognition. This recognition is vital to understanding the dynamics of voting patterns and people's expectations in the context of political reality.

The TNA campaign emphasized lost Tamil national pride and argued that voting for the TNA would return the days of past glory. It cannot be forgotten that caste and class play a central role in Sri Lankan politics, especially within the Tamil community. The failure of the TNA manifesto to address pressing concerns of the ordinary people in the North has to be seen against the backdrop of class and caste politics. The absence of a concrete work plan and the failure to acknowledge the problems faced by the resettled population in the North are expressions of the class outlook of the TNA hierarchy. The current crisis of the TNA derives from the inability of the wealthy elite to share power with the lowly. It will help in this context to refer to the role of caste and class in Sri Lankan politics and in particular in the selection of candidates by the TNA.

Intertwining of Caste and Class in Sri Lankan Politics

Politics and political parties are subject to individual likes and dislikes and, in the Sri Lankan context, parties represent classes and class interests with each party upholding the interests of one or another social group. Caste and class have dominated the politics of the country since before independence from colonial rule, and political parties which uphold race, language, caste and region do not transcend class.

While caste identity is determined at birth with implications for matrimony and social exclusion, class identity refers to relations of production in society with private ownership of means of production. Class and caste belong to distinct categories despite the close link between them, their co-existence, class society allowing the perpetuation of the caste system and caste protecting class structure.

The caste system prevails among the Sinhalese, Tamils and Hill Country Tamils of Sri Lanka. While the Sinhalese do not practice untouchability, there is caste hierarchy and caste-based discrimination and partiality, mainly in rural society and within the religious hierarchy. The impact of caste is stronger among Tamils, with the Jaffna peninsula notorious in this respect. Caste discrimination and untouchability were practiced openly until a mass struggle (1966 to 1972) led by the Marxist Leninist faction of the Communist Party dealt a heavy blow to casteism and ended untouchability. Caste differences are strong among the Hill Country Tamils and implicit caste-based discrimination exists in matters of religion and culture, despite the nature of their work and the system of housing in the plantations militating against caste hierarchy.

It should be noted that Sri Lanka, despite mass resentment of foreign domination, did not have an independence struggle. Except for the left movement in the 1930s, which was severely persecuted by the colonial rulers, no one who is credited with clamouring for independence had worked towards a mass movement against colonial rule or adopted an appropriate form of struggle. The Sinhala and Tamil 'upper caste' elite who enjoyed the friendship and trust of the colonial masters and held high administrative positions to dominate politics, did not go beyond pleading with the colonial rulers for political reforms. The Tamil elite, guided by caste and class considerations and lacking in vision, collaborated with the Sinhala chauvinist feudal-capitalist elite in the transfer of power to the latter by the colonialists in 1948.

Two leading political parties have alternately held the reins of state power during the past sixty five years, led by heirs to feudal families and guardians of capitalism who have by and large been submissive to imperialism. Thus far, with the single exception of President R Premadasa, only members of the feudal capitalist elite class have occupied the highest office in Sri Lanka.

The upper caste, upper class elite dominated Tamil parliamentary politics for four decades since independence, through the Tamil Congress, the Federal Party (FP) and the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF),

in that order. The arrival of armed Tamil youth movements at the fore of politics in the late 1980s did not fundamentally alter the situation, with each armed Tamil movement bearing a caste label, and no political stand transcending caste and class considerations.

Post Poll Chaos: Crisis in the Making

The TNA manifesto for the NPC polls avoided reference to the prevalence of class and caste oppression as crucial social issues. The TNA is deeply divided since its electoral success, with partners openly critical of the leadership. The crisis is twofold: one concerns the lack of power and authority for the NPC and the other the benefits that provincial councillors are entitled to. The infighting which began with the nomination of candidates worsened with the allocation of NPC portfolios. Constituent parties went public with the issues to no avail and, by the time the dust settled, the damage was done. One useful outcome is that the Tamil voters now have an idea of the interests that their representatives serve.

Electoral politics in the North, like elsewhere in Sri Lanka, has also been a family affair. Sadly, after three decades of war which has left the Tamils devastated and deprived, the leadership seems preoccupied with family politics. The TNA gave precedence to family members in nominating candidates, which in turn led to problems in the appointment of ministers. Interestingly, the Chief Minister, who denounced the family politics of collation partners and lambasted selfishness in his swearing in speech, on the very next day, appointed two close relatives as his joint secretaries.

Family and Class Politics

Well before universal franchise and elected government, the upper caste, upper class Sinhala Buddhist elite in power identified itself with its Tamil counterpart. Tamil leaders resident in the capital city of Colombo claimed to represent the Tamils throughout the island while they loyally served the colonialists and, in the process of reinforcing their upper caste, upper class status in society, they fell for the colonialist divide-and-rule

conspiracy. To this day, this elite group enjoys a central place in the recorded history of Tamils.

Bourgeois parliamentary democracy was put in place by the British colonialists sixty five years ago under the Soulbury Constitution of 1947. That was followed by the constitutions of 1972 and 1978 drafted by the Sri Lankan ruling classes. But for declaring Sri Lanka a republic and asserting the primacy of Sinhala Buddhism, the latter constitutions did not in their essence and fundamentals transcend the boundaries set out in the constitution of 1947, but sought to entrench more deeply the interests of the Sinhala Buddhist elite. The constitution of 1978, went a step further to serve the interests of imperialism at the expense of the entire population. None of the constitutions was aimed to ensure equality for minority nationalities and national minorities or to inspire confidence in them. Parliamentary democracy has failed to produce a genuinely democratic constitution addressing the needs and aspirations of the people.

The Provincial Council System: What to Expect

The Provincial Council (PC) system was a non-starter since introduction in 1987. It was an alien concept to an unfamiliar public and the PCs lacked the closeness of local councils to the people and the power of parliament to legislate and decide policy. Devolution under the PC system strictly conformed to the power structure of a unitary state and comprised rehashed centralization and not devolution. The constitution stipulates that a PC, in exercising its constitutional authority, should abide by the national policy guidelines laid down by the Central Government.

With the NPC in place, the TNA should know well that its pre-poll declarations and pledges cannot be fulfilled through NPC. Yet there are things that it can do to help the people whose lives have been stolen by war. The 13th Amendment provides PCs with powers in the sectors of education, health, agriculture, roads and rural development among others, which bear on basic livelihood support for affected communities.

For the exercise of these powers the TNA has to pass the necessary statutes in the NPC and act on them. Even the limited amount of useful work possible requires good planning and implementation. The snag, however, is that PCs depend on state funding, and only 10% of the government allocation to PCs is for development work while the rest is for recurrent expenditure, salaries and maintenance.

On the other hand, the Sri Lankan government agenda of development is as misleading as it is tempting. Most of the minority nationality parties see collaboration with the government as the way to secure development for their communities. The TNA which is aware of its weak bargaining position is trying hard to mobilize foreign support to exert pressure on the Sri Lankan government for a political solution while trying to work with the government to get the benefits of development to the North. This mutually exclusive two prong approach of the TNA is likely to lead it along a political blind alley from which return is difficult.

Conclusion

The current political impasse suggests that Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict is far from over; major structural faults of the state will cause the problem to endure and re-emerge in fresh form. As long as economic development overshadows political reforms and dialogue on devolution, Sri Lanka will get no closer to a pluralistic state. It is important for the NPC to work hard to expose the pitfalls of the system, which can be a painful and frustrating exercise. But the TNA has no viable option since they won the polls based on promises which the TNA might rue in time to come. The Sri Lankan government will consciously avoid dialogue on devolution while the NPC is ruled by the TNA. The more serious challenge for the TNA is to admit that the PC system is not the political solution that the Tamils need and begin to address the national question in terms of a political solution concerning all ethnic communities in Sri Lanka. Eventually, ball will be in the TNA's court. Whether it serves an ace or a double fault, the outcome cannot be to the comfort of the Tamil people of Sri Lanka.

Reference Document

The National Question and Marxists

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New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party

Introduction

The national question in Sri Lanka has taken the form of a full blooded war. It has overtaken the fundamental class contradiction of the country to be seen as the main contradiction today. This major contradiction has on its one side the chauvinistic military oppression and on the other the liberation struggle of the oppressed Tamil nationality.

Throughout this century which is nearing its end, the ruling classes have actively encouraged the development of the national problem. The national question has served them well to deflect the attention of the people from the fundamental contradiction between the wealthy exploiting classes and the exploited classes under their rule. During the colonial era as well as the period following the so called independence, oppression of the nationalities has been intensified to ensure the existence and survival of the ruling classes. As a result, people of all nationalities have gradually become polarised on the basis of race, religion and language, and have been pushed to a state where they are unable to recognise their real enemy. The local ruling elite and their imperialist supporters have thus been able to safeguard themselves and secure their position.

Even in the current situation in which the national question has taken the form a war and wreaking havoc, there is a tendency to wilfully ignore the gravity of the situation. There is still no

recognition of the need to take into account the objective situation in the country and bring the war to an end by finding a minimum solution to the national question.

Aggravation of the National Question

When trying to solve any problem, it is necessary to identify correctly the historical development of the problem. Historically this country has been one comprising several races, languages and religions. But the fact that this country has a multi-ethnic national character has been denied by differentiation on the bases of first settlers and subsequent settlers, aboriginals and non-aboriginals, majority and minority, descendants of the rulers and others, the age of Buddhism and of other religions in this country and so on. From early this century the notion that Sri Lanka belongs to the Sinhala people and the Buddhist faith has been vigorously promoted so that, even during the colonial era, it was communal thoughts and deeds that were cultivated instead of the carrying forward of anti-colonial liberation struggles. This parochial approach manifested itself in several forms and, after independence, surged forward as blatant communalism in the political arena.

As a result of the above trend the Tamils, Muslims, Hill Country Tamils, Burghers, Malays, the Veddas and other sections of the people were subject to discrimination and marginalisation. Their traditional homelands, economy, education, employment opportunities, religion and culture were seriously affected. Democratic demands put forward against this social injustice were ignored by the ruling classes who wielded political power. At the same time the leadership of the Tamils, Muslims and Hill Country Tamils sought to safeguard its class interests by preserving its ties with those in power. But the people who were long subjected to national oppression gradually found expression to their resentment, and their struggles were put down from time to time.

When their just demands were not taken note of, the Tamil people were attracted to Tamil nationalist extremism. While the Tamil people were forced to fall victim to the illusion that it was right to demand

a separate Tamil state, those in power continued to carry out planned acts of violence against the Tamil people. The ethnic violence of 1983 was a major high point of the anti-Tamil policy of the chauvinist government. The 1977-1994 period of United National Party rule ensured that the Tamil people were totally subjected to chauvinistic military oppression. This period also witnessed the development of the armed struggle of the Tamil youth opposed to national oppression. While communalism developed into chauvinism and then into military oppression, moderate Tamil nationalism became a relentless armed struggle. The resultant cruel war, inherited from the UNP by the People's Alliance government, is today being carried further on an even more elaborate scale.

Addressing the National Question

Under these conditions there are some who argue that the national question is an issue distinct from the war and that the national question is only a matter of some grievances and minor problems of the Tamils while the war concerns terrorism and is therefore inevitable. One need not be shocked to hear such utterances made by spokespersons of the parties of the ruling classes or by the chauvinists. But when such statements are made by people representing some parties which call them-selves Marxist, we need to take note of it.

Dialectical materialism is the basis of Marxism and Marxists look at history in accordance with it. They see every issue historically and from the point of view of class struggle. As a result, the Marxist view of matters of economics, politics, society and culture is objective. They do not let their subjective likes and dislikes to influence their recognition of the nature of contradictions. The Marxist view and position relating to truth, honesty, humanity, and social justice are scientific. The socio-scientific historical approach to class struggle provides the basis from which they approach all problems. It is because of this that every Marxist communist of the world puts forward solutions to problems facing him or her to suit the particular circumstances of his or her country.

Marxists do not accept feudal values or religious standards or conservative thought, nor do they accept the concepts of bourgeois

ideology. A Marxist, in the course of his or her development, gains a clear view of this world, about the inter-action of its contradictions and about his or her role in that process. Such a Marxist does not only become a social thinker but also establishes himself or herself as a sound revolutionary with the potential to transform this world.

Bogus Marxists and the National Question

It will be useful to examine on the above basis the kind of views that the Marxists and social organisations of our country have about the problems facing us. Especially in the matter of the national question and the context of its transformation into a war that is rocking the whole country, one finds a serious lack of clarity among many of the Marxists. On the other hand, this does not mean that honest Marxists have failed to put forward a clear policy on the national question.

Fundamentally, it is essential for a Marxist or a Marxist party to take a position consistent with the Marxist world outlook. It is not possible for a Marxist to have a Sinhalese position, a Tamil position or a Muslim position. Such positions are not Marxist but nationalist. But what is saddening is that those who call themselves Marxists tend to classify positions on the national question as Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim positions and put forward policies designed to suit each of them in turn as Marxist policies.

The reason for their taking such flawed positions is that they had fallen victim to bourgeois parliamentary opportunism. Instead of carrying forward revolutionary struggles and mobilizing the masses on a broad basis, they chose to take the wrong road in the belief that socialism can be achieved peacefully along the parliamentary route. Those who set foot on the slippery road of parliamentary politics slid to its very bottom. These so called Marxists abandoned all their Marxist policies for the sake of gaining a few votes to secure their parliamentary seats. They did not hesitate to fall at the feet of religious leaders, carry flower baskets to places of worship and participate in religious observations.

Efforts to speak circumspectly in a way that did not offend the forces of race and religion led subsequently to positions which were based on

considerations of majority and minority along the lines of race, religion and language. On the occasions when Sinhala Buddhist supremacy was asserted through the constitution, its strongest advocates included some who called themselves Marxists. The parliamentary Marxists of today have degenerated to a level that they not only show a lack of courage to speak up against Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism but also lend support to it. While they continue to wave the red flag in ritual fashion, their plight appears to have plunged below that of social democrats

It is absurd for anyone who lacks the courage to oppose chauvinism and Buddhist supremacy to call himself a Marxist Leninist. The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, which calls itself the alternative force and Marxist, is unable to take the correct Marxist position on the national question. The reason for this is not only the poverty of their Marxist ideology. They are driven to uphold the opportunistic pro-chauvinist position developed and put forward by their former leader because of the temptation of the chauvinist vote bank. They look at socialism and self determination dogmatically and therefore say that we have to wait for socialism to find a solution to the national question. They fail to see chauvinist military oppression as oppression by the ruling class.

Dangers of Neglecting the National Question

Oppression by anyone in any form should be opposed without reserve by Marxists. Again, on the question of war, Marxists distinguish between just and unjust war. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam are fighting from a purely nationalistic position, using some methods which are unacceptable. Their lack of democracy, intolerance to different points of view and assassination of individuals are not acceptable to Marxists. But the fact that their demands include the genuine aspirations and the future survival of the Tamil people cannot be rejected by any honest Marxist. Also, no Marxist can accept the waging of war against the entire Tamil people of the North-East by branding the LTTE as terrorists and claiming to fight to eliminate the LTTE.

The national question is not something unique to us. It is the outcome of the cultivation of nationalism to reach positions of extremism and has taken the form of struggles and war in the Third World. The October

Revolution transformed a Russia which was a prison house of nationalities to give the nationalities freedom, liberty and autonomy under socialism. The Chinese and the Soviet examples demonstrated to the world how nationalities can enjoy freedom and prosperity under socialism. But the fall of the Soviet Union and socialism in east-ern Europe led to negative contradictions between the nationalities. Forces of imperialism cleverly created situations in which the nationalities waged war against each other. In addition, the leadership of the ruling classes pursued a chauvinistic line, and sought to oppress other nationalities, and fell victim to the imperialist conspiracy. Yugoslavia serves as a good example for this.

Yugoslavia, once a good example for socialist advancement and unity of nationalities, was splintered into several countries as a result of conflict and war between nationalities. Recently the oppression of the Kosovar Albanian nationality by the Milosovic regime paved the way for US aggression. The chauvinist Milosovic is hailed as a socialist by the JVP who demand the 'return of socialism' to Yugoslavia. The failure of these so called Marxists to notice the genocide and national oppression committed by Milosovic will prove to be a major mistake. It is really a failure to recognise the current international significance of the national question and the fact that the imperialists are using the national question as a major weapon in their hand. Marxists by viewing the national question as merely a question of the relationship between the majority and the minority and failing to recognise the severity of the issues involved will only strengthen the hands of chauvinism. Activities to popularise chauvinism among the Sinhala masses are being carried out on an unprecedented scale. It seems that Marxists do not appear to have the ability to halt it.

The social structure of Sri Lanka is in the grips of the alliance of feudalism, big capital and imperialism and being subject to neo-colonialism. National oppression is an essential tool to ensure the continuation of this situation. The chauvinistic war is being carried out under the guidance of US imperialism under the false pretext of safeguarding the Sinhala Buddhists and salvaging the country from terrorism, in order to justify national oppression and deflect the attention

of the masses from the real issues. This course of action will only subjugate the entire country to the US imperialists.

Taking a Principled Stand

Genuine Marxist Leninists have therefore already put forward their understanding of the national question and their position on it. Their position is marked by a Marxist view of history and an approach based on class struggle. They have put forward proposals for solving the national question on the basis of short term and long term programs. Also, they have developed the concept of self determination dialectically in a way that meets the current situation as opposed to taking a static view of it. To thus study and analyse the national question from a Marxist Leninist position and apply the findings in practice is the need of our time. Those who mask their real intentions by using the name of Marxism cannot do so for long.

The tendency for the forces guided by Marxism Leninism Mao Zedong thought, the ideology that will enable the Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil people to transcend differences of race, language, religion and nationality and stand up to their oppressors, to close ranks is becoming increasingly evident. This will put right the current erroneous trend of going along with nationalism and giving Marxism a bad name.

Under these circumstances, all genuine Marxist Leninists should dedicate themselves to the task of strengthening principled policies on all issues including the national question on the basis of the objective reality of the country and free from the illusion of bourgeois parliamentary politics.

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Reference Document

Minimum Proposals of the Central Committee of the Sri Lanka Communist Party (Left) for an Interim Solution to the National Question

The Sri Lanka Communist Party (Left) released the following statement containing the minimum proposals of the Central Committee of the party for an interim solution to the national question. The statement has been signed by the General Secretary of the Party, Comrade KA Subramaniam on behalf of the Central Committee of the Party. The statement reads as follows:

The people of the entire country are undergoing the painful effects resulting from the serious situations for which the present government has been responsible.

The national oppression committed particularly against the Tamil people has resulted in unbearable sufferings. The economy of the country has deteriorated and the living standard of the people has eroded considerably.

Defence expenditure incurred per day is approximately Rs. 20 million. The entire burden is borne by the working class. Several persons of the UNP have come to realise that the national question cannot be solved by means of war.

The entire people including Tamils desire a peaceful life. They eagerly await an interim political solution. No one expects that such an interim political solution will be lasting solution to national question. But failure to pay attention to a short term solution as well as a long term solution may lead to more serious problems. To perceive Sri

Lanka's National question merely as a racial problem between Tamils and Sinhalese will lead to a dangerous situation.

National oppression by the present chauvinistic government leads to international threats to the country's independence through direct and indirect intervention by neighbouring countries. The UNP since 1977 has been trying to barter our independence to American imperialism.

The intention of the UNP government to lease facilities of the Trincomalee harbour to America was thwarted by Indian intervention. Systematic and planned communal violence and pogroms in July 1983 against the Tamil people by the present government has resulted in direct Indian intervention in Sri Lanka's internal affairs.

The attempt of the Indian government to find a political solution to the national question acceptable to both parties is appreciated. However, the Indian government should not impose a solution to meet its regional political interests.

The targets of liberation struggle should not be to worsen the country's national question. It will lead to the loss of sovereignty and independence of our country. The threat to Sri Lanka's independence and sovereignty is increasing, and it is being felt by all sections of the people.

That is why all sections of the people are pressing the government for an urgent political solution to the problem without worsening the crisis. All forces fighting for the emancipation of Tamils should take into account that an interim political solution through negotiations will thwart the emergence of a military dictatorship, put an end to genocidal military violence against the Tamils and also give a chance and time to build up a mass organisation by democratic forces and Tamil liberation forces against the UNP's right-wing parliamentary dictatorship.

The SLCP(Left) has acknowledged and stressed that the Tamils have a traditional homeland and that they constitute a distinct nationality. Our party recognizes the traditional homeland of the Tamils by rejecting the government sponsored planned Sinhala colonisation.

The Party Central Committee stresses that an interim political solution should incorporate the following proposals with a clear guarantee:

1. The traditional homeland of the Tamils — the Northern and Eastern Provinces — should be granted regional autonomous status and autonomous bodies be set up.
2. These autonomous bodies should have the right to merge and if necessary function separately if they so decide.
3. The regional autonomous bodies should have maximum independence to manage the affairs of economy, employment, internal security, education, culture, health, social services etc. without the intervention of the Central Government
4. The Muslims, the people of Indian Origin and Sinhalese who reside within these areas should be given the right to establish inner autonomous bodies and thereby ensure their basic human rights, and language and cultural rights.
5. The autonomous bodies should, in the absence of external aggression, be responsible for the security of the autonomous areas.
6. The autonomous bodies should have the freedom to set up colonisation schemes within the area. At the same time, the autonomous bodies should have the right to accept or reject any colonisation scheme of the Central Government within their area,
7. Concrete steps should be taken to eradicate discrimination based on nationality, language or caste at the national and regional levels.

8. Basic rights of plantation workers, Tamils and Muslims who reside outside North and East should be recognised by setting up inner autonomous bodies.
9. There should be a guarantee to hold elections at the national and regional level without the intervention of the government, armed forces and others.
10. Depressed communities and backward sections of the society should be given institutional guarantee by way of concessions and facilities in the fields of economy, employment and education for their social uplift.

While stressing the above proposals as basis for arriving at an interim political solution, our party emphasizes the necessity of taking steps to solve the problems that arose in recent years owing to the warlike situation.

To ease the present turmoil in the country, our party emphasises that the following steps should be taken without any further delay:

1. The Prevention of Terrorism Act be withdrawn, the state of emergency be lifted and all persons detained under the act and regulations be released unconditionally.
2. Those persons who are wanted under Prevention of Terror-ism Act and Emergency Regulations be pardoned unconditionally. Charges against them and those who were arrested prior to the enactment of the Act or its promulgation be withdrawn completely.
3. The freedom of expression of the Tamils be respected by withdrawing the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution.
4. Government troops be withdrawn from populated Tamil areas and the camps be closed based on a time table.
5. Home guards be disbanded and disarmed, and that establishment be scrapped.

6. Government should give compensation to those affected for losses caused by the troops and home guards by way of murder, arson, and burglary.
7. The government should give facilities to people who were forced to leave their homes and villages by the excesses committed by the government troops and home guards, and those displaced be allowed to return to their homes and restart their vocations peacefully.
8. Government troops and home guards who committed excesses be tried before an impartial commission of inquiry.

The above actions are minimum expectations of the Tamils for the security of their lives and property. If the government tries to keep its troops and political thugs in the Tamil areas, the interim solution will not be genuinely implemented.

The SLCP(Left) calls upon mass organisations, personages, patriotic forces, democrats and others to firmly press the government to take steps on these lives.

Our party is very clear that this interim solution will not be a lasting solution to the problems within the present social set up, and until the advent of power of the working class through a mass revolution there cannot be a lasting solution to the national question. However, our party's stand is that the solution we suggest will to an extent ensure that there will not be repetition of the present situation in the near future and bring about sanity for the present.

21-12-86

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The Sri Lankan Scene

The CHOGM Tamasha

Hosting the Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meeting (CHOGM) from 15th to 17th November 2013 was a mixed blessing to the government which hoped to make political capital of it locally by claiming that a large international body of sovereign countries endorses the sovereignty of the country and, by implication, that there is international support against 'conspiracies to target and isolate Sri Lanka'. Another but weaker expectation was that the lavish spending to impress the visitors would secure international support for the Sri Lankan government to preempt targeting of Sri Lanka by the 'International Community', especially at the forthcoming session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) which has already passed two resolutions requiring Sri Lanka to address issues of human rights violations and charges of war crimes committed during the war against the LTTE that ended in 2009.

The CHOGM meeting was preceded by some theatre about non-participation by key Commonwealth countries. British Prime Minister Cameron who last year hinted at the possibility of non-participation changed his mind and decided to attend amid protests at home. India's Manmohan Singh was stopped from attending by domestic pressure from virtually all political parties in Tamilnadu including his own Congress Party. A carefully timed letter from the Chief Minister of the newly formed Northern Provincial Council inviting him to visit Jaffna failed to impress anyone in South India. Thus, days before the event it was decided that Foreign Minister Salman Khurshid will represent India. Prime Minister Navin Chandra Ramgoolam of Mauritius, to the glee of Tamil nationalists, announced just ahead of the meeting that his country will not be attending and thereby forgo hosting of the next CHOGM. Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, besides declaring his intention to keep out and asking others to boycott, accused Commonwealth Secretary Kamalesh Sharma of deceiving member states by deliberately not informing them of the abuse of the legal system in Sri Lanka, an issue which has always been important to the Commonwealth.

The Sri Lankan government shot itself in the foot by allowing the maltreatment of the Channel-4 team to which it granted a visa, seemingly to impress the international community about its democratic credentials. Cameron appears to have done a little more than what he threatened to do and thereby spoil the party for the host.

In the wake of the fiasco, questions are being raised about the cost of the event. The UNP placed the cost at 15.8 billion rupees, including the import of luxury vehicles and infrastructural development. It also argued that the attendance by heads of government was a poor 35 compared to the usual 40 to 45. The JVP pointed out that the Commonwealth was a far less important international group than the SAARC and the Non Aligned Movement and that the CHOGM only provided an opportunity for an international group to criticize the country and influence its decisions.

The claim that the massive expenditure will be justified by benefits by way of new investment was dismissed by economic observers who noted that the Commonwealth Business Forum that took place from 12th to 14th November did not attract many businesses and, of the three big deals signed, China signed the biggest to the tune of 1.3 billion US dollars followed by Austria and Hong Kong, none of which are Commonwealth countries and did not need the Business Forum to complete the deals. The only Commonwealth businessman to take advantage of the event was the Australian gambling business magnate James Packer who used the Forum to promote his much hated casino business in Sri Lanka.

Transforming Victory into Defeat

Elections were held for the Northern Provincial Council (NPC) for the first time since the dissolution of the North East Provincial Council (NEPC) in 1989 by the then President Premadasa and the de-merging of the NEPC into Northern and Eastern Provincial Councils by Supreme Court order in 2006. Although elections were held for the Eastern Provincial Council only months after the end of the war in May 2009, the government showed no interest in holding elections for the NPC, the main reason being its reluctance to have a Provincial Council (PC)

controlled by an opposition party. As it was clear that the government and its allies would not be elected to power in the NPC, the government encouraged its Sinhala racist allies to object to elections to the NPC at least until the PCs were stripped of power over police and land and the re-merging of provincial councils was ruled out constitutionally. Some demanded the abolition of PCs by revoking the 13th Amendment under which they were set up.

Police and land powers were not the real issues in the question of NPC elections since the government has not allowed these powers to the PCs for 25 years and could continue to do so. Also, given its massive parliamentary majority, the government could at any time take away more of the limited powers of the PCs as it did by passing the Divi Neguma Bill earlier this year to hijack much of the financial powers of the PCs. Meanwhile, the campaign by the five-party Tamil National Alliance (TNA) that if elected it will press its demands for police and land powers gave further ammunition to the chauvinists who claimed that the TNA was working on a secessionist agenda.

The government eventually yielded, apparently under Indian pressure, and held elections for the NPC as well as the North Western and Central Provincial Councils. Chauvinist threats against holding the elections persisted and harassment of the TNA and its supporters by the allies of the government failed to intimidate the people of the North. On the contrary, the turnout rate for the polls was higher than in earlier elections to parliament and local bodies. Also the government and especially its key ally in the North, the EPDP, were badly humiliated.

The vote distribution also showed that voters, especially outside the Jaffna Peninsula, preferred candidates known for their community work to those promoted by the leadership. The TNA by pledging that it will secure the national rights of the Tamil people if elected has painted itself into a corner. Meantime the bitter post poll infighting among TNA politicians following the nomination of ministers for the NPC was to the glee of the chauvinists and the government who were stunned by the overwhelming verdict of the electorate.

International Affairs

Remembering Nelson Mandela

Tributes to Nelson Mandela have dominated the media for weeks since his demise, and the theme was invariably his 27-year imprisonment and his "willingness to forgive". That is the image of Mandela that the imperialists like to project to posterity, a Mandela who was not only willing to forgive imperialism but also prepared to be a partner in "development".

It will be well to remember in this context the Freedom Charter adopted in June 1955 by the South African Congress Alliance, which included the African National Congress. The Charter with its most inspiring opening pledge "The People Shall Govern!" became the ANC programme in April 1956, and remained the platform of the ANC. It contained important democratic principles such as "Land to be given to all landless people", "Living wages and shorter hours of work" and "Free and compulsory education, irrespective of colour, race or nationality".

In January 1990, a month before his release, Mandela wrote in a note to his supporters: "The nationalisation of the mines, banks and monopoly industries is the policy of the ANC, and the change or modification of our views in this regard is inconceivable. Black economic empowerment is a goal we fully support and encourage, but in our situation state control of certain sectors of the economy is unavoidable." (Source: <http://www.naomiklein.org/articles/2011/02/democracy-born-chains.>)

Mandela was freed in February 1990 and the ANC was elected to power in May 1994. While the text of the new Constitution of South Africa included many of the demands in the Charter including equality of race and language, it had nothing about nationalization of industry or redistribution of land, both clearly outlined in the charter. To the dismay of many who looked forward to a progressive post-apartheid social order, South Africa took the route declared as "inconceivable" by Mandela.

While world attention was focussed on the talks between Mandela and de Klerk, leader of the ruling National Party, the less noticed economic negotiations between the ANC and the government was a sell-out by the ANC. The ANC won the political debate against the racist regime, but the racist old order stole the economic debate. John Pilger noted that "The most important 'historic compromise' was made not with the apartheid regime, but with the forces of Western and white South African capital, which changed their allegiance from FW de Klerk to Nelson Mandela on condition that their multinational corporations would not be obstructed ... and that the ANC would drop the 'foolish promises' in its Freedom Charter about equity and the country's natural resources 'belonging to the people'." (Cited from "The View from Dimbaza" in *Hidden Agendas*, 1998 in [http://www.southerntimesafrica.com/news_article.php?id=8366&title=SA's Unbalanced Economic Order](http://www.southerntimesafrica.com/news_article.php?id=8366&title=SA's%20Unbalanced%20Economic%20Order))

Control of key sectors of economic decision making was left with IMF and the World Bank officials while a constitutional clause protecting private property rendered land reform virtually impossible. Mandela's ANC went further and opted for the neoliberal recipe of privatization including that of the South African Central Bank, cutting back government spending, slackening control of money flow, weakening labour laws, and selling off state-owned business to service debt. It is debatable whether these constituted conscious betrayal by the ANC negotiators. But the white racist government backed by the imperialist and global financial establishments proved too cunning for the ANC negotiators.

The ANC secured political successes at the cost of economic ruin for the vast majority of South Africa, which is now among the most unequal societies in the world. Now there is growing public disaffection with not only the ANC but also its allies including the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Public anger has risen following their callous response to the notorious Marikana Massacre of August 2012.

Post-apartheid South Africa is a matter of shame for Mandela and the ANC. Every reason why the Western media and leaders of imperialist powers praise Mandela is a reason for progressive minded people to question Mandela's post-apartheid role. Post-apartheid South Africa has made no difference to the lives of black Africans except for a tiny majority including key personalities of the ANC and COSATU who are now junior capitalist partners of the white capitalist establishment.

Imperialism wants the world to remember just one aspect of Mandela, that which is willing to forget oppression and forgive the oppressor and seeks peaceful coexistence even when nothing has really changed for the oppressed. Mandela, as an individual, has the right to forget his sufferings and forgive his tormentors. But neither he nor anyone else has the right to ask the oppressed to do the same, until they can live as equals with their former oppressors and all what has been stolen from them has been duly restored to them.

Mandela was a brave leader and fighter against apartheid and a genuine friend of the left movement. He was also a great inspiration to the freedom loving people of the world. He believed in armed struggle against oppression and practiced it in the struggle of the ANC, which eventually brought an end to apartheid. Although things have gone wrong since, there was much of the old militant left in post-apartheid Mandela, who never forgot the world leaders who stood by the struggle against apartheid. Much to the irritation of the imperialists, he openly endorsed Fidel Castro, Yasser Arafat and Muammer Gaddafi. Even as late as 1993, while addressing the Special Congress of COSATU, he said: "You must support the African National Congress only so far as it delivers the goods, if the ANC government does not deliver the goods, you must do to it what you have done to the apartheid regime".

That is the Mandela for us to remember forever and draw inspiration from, and not the helpless victim of imperialist conspiracy.

The Arab World

Revolt and Revolution: Missing the Link?

Preamble

Upheavals in the Arab World in 2011 surprised many but shocked only a few. Responses varied with class, ideology and political stand of individuals and organizations. When the pattern of popular revolt that shook Tunisia recurred in Egypt, the US and West European governments took serious note of this seemingly contagious social disorder which, if allowed to spread could destabilize friendly governments in the Middle East and thereby hurt strategic interests in the Middle East and beyond. Pleas were made to the repressive Egyptian state and protesters alike to prevent the escalation of the conflict in order that compromise could be reached, meaning that the old order would still stand despite a transfer of power. Ben Ali of Tunisia yielded to the protests more readily than Hosni Mubarak of Egypt. As a desperate dictator overly reliant on the armed forces and US imperialist support, Mubarak was blind to reality and held on to power for too long so that he could not flee to safety like the Shah of Iran did in a far more difficult situation 32 years earlier.

Imperialism does not concede defeat even after it is humiliated and will try its very best to restore the status quo. We see it in Iran, where the US has relentlessly, but thus far unsuccessfully, tried everything possible to subvert the Iranian state. Today, defiance of US imperialism and resilience against US-induced external and internal subversion is perhaps the only salvaging features of the Islamic revolution which has not altered the class society in Iran but only altered slightly the composition of the economic and political elite, especially the sections relating to state power. The anti-US imperialism of the Iranian Islamist regime is the consequence of the flawed US policy in the region and is

not against the imperialist or capitalist systems. It resents the location of Iran relative to the system of global imperialist domination, but not the system itself. Thus the Iranian revolution has been flawed from the time that the Islamist leadership took control of the revolution and the state. With or without accommodation with the US, revolution as a means of achieving a fundamental social change will remain incomplete in Iran for the foreseeable future.

Egypt

The US has, however, at least partly succeeded in Egypt and in Tunisia in reversing the gains of the mass uprisings of 2011. But the situation is volatile in both countries. In Egypt the US was able to make a deal with the Islamists who reaped the benefit of the mass uprisings as well as to broker an understanding between the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) and President Morsi. The over-ambitious Morsi regime misjudged its strength and the fragility of its popular support base. By insensitively pushing its Islamist political agenda without addressing the economic and other issues that were at the root of mass anger against the Hosni Mubarak regime and thus antagonizing a large section of the population, it played into the hands of the military which was only waiting for an opportunity.

The Morsi regime was undoubtedly a reactionary regime that would make a deal with US imperialism, and US imperialism knew that. The military was always suspicious of the Islamists and uneasy about sharing power with them as there were unresolved issues based on which the Islamists could further erode its power. The army took advantage of the popular protests against Morsi to stage a coup which was, very unwisely, supported by not only by the religious minority leaders but also leading left and progressive elements who allowed their anger, however justified, against the Morsi regime get the better of political wisdom. Today the coup government in Egypt while openly persecuting Islamist protesters is also imposing severe restrictions on all forms of democratic protest.

Tunisia

Unlike in Egypt, Islamic fundamentalists were not a major political force in Tunisia. The un-elected government of el Sebsi which succeeded the dictator Ben Ali regime ran the country from late February to late December 2011. It adopted a pro-imperialist policy of implementing 'reforms' dictated by the World Bank and the IMF, although it was popular anger against a pro-imperialist dictatorship that led to the overthrow of Ben Ali. This pro-imperialist policy continued under the three-party coalition with the 'moderate Islamist' Ennahda as the main component that came to power after the elections in late October 2011.

Although Ennahda's alliance with the fundamentalist Salafis increased the influence of the latter in Tunisia, the Salafis became a major liability to the Ennahda this year. Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali was forced to step down following the killing of Chokri Belaïd, the leader of the secular and anti-imperialist Popular Front in February. The incumbent Ali Laarayedh has been under pressure to step down since the killing of the leader of the leftist Popular Current party Mohamed Brahmi in July.

Tunisia has a better organized trade union movement (UGTT) and a stronger left movement than in Egypt, with the Popular Front, now a significant third political force in the country, but a long way from becoming the alternative to the Islamist Ennahda and the neoliberal Nidaa Tunes Party. It appears that both the UGTT and the Popular Front are snared by the prospect of forming a government after the election due in early 2014, and a deal is being brokered on the initiative of the UGTT, whereby the Ennahda will step down once the Ennahda and the opposition agree on a prime minister to finalize the new constitution and fix a date for elections in 2014.

Bahrain

The popular uprising in Bahrain in 2011 was suppressed by the armed forces of Saudi Arabia. There were systematic attempts by mass media to oversimplify the popular uprising as a Sunni-Shiite conflict, because

the predominantly Shiite Muslim Bahrain is ruled by a Sunni Muslim Sheik. What was deliberately been ignored by the pro-imperialist media was the fact was that the Shiite minority protesting against oppression by the Sunni dictator did not make religious difference an issue in their protests. But even an imaginary Sunni-Shiite rift serves well the US and Saudi purposes of exercising hegemony in the peninsula, and misinterpret any popular mass protest in Bahrain as mischievous Iranian interference in the Arab World.

Yemen

In Yemen, the only republic in the Arabian Peninsula, it took a prolonged struggle by protesting masses in 2011 to be rid of the autocratic President Ali Abdullah Saleh after 33 years in power, but only to replace Saleh by his deputy, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi. The transition produced no tangible change for the better and Yemen remains poor, unstable and plagued by lawlessness. The US backs its client administration and continues its drone strikes in Yemen's rural areas, despite many reported civilian casualties, and plans to strengthen its military presence in Yemen.

Libya

Besides imperialists, there have been several on the 'left' who interpreted the armed conflicts in Libya and Syria as outcomes of popular dissent. In both cases, small groups of dissidents were made use of to escalate the conflict. Certain a small section of the population in western Libya was inspired by the events in Tunisia and Egypt and there were mass protests, but the protests were a long way from anything like what happened in either Tunisia or Egypt.

The West, the US and French imperialists in particular, grabbed the opportunity to escalate the protests into armed conflict, create a bogus pretext for armed intervention to protect civilians from armed attack by the Libyan state. The 'civil war' against the Gaddafi regime was in reality a war waged by US and France using Islamist proxies and other

opportunists whom they armed heavily to fight Gaddafi on land while the imperialist powers caused most of the damage by aerial bombing.

While the West achieved its true purpose of deposing Gaddafi, its declared purpose of bringing democracy to Libya has not only failed but also proved to be a tragic false promise. Events since 2011 September have highlighted the Washington-installed government's political isolation, its inability to control the hundreds of armed militias, and mounting political and economic problems on all fronts. The post-Gaddafi tragedy of Libya is mostly the result of funding of anti-Gaddafi Islamist militias by Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States and the West which has saturated the country with weapons and heavily armed militias. The situation has been further aggravated by a government with little credibility inside Libya, lacking a credible army, and unable to control its borders, now open to criminal gangs and desperate African migrants seeking sanctuary in Europe. Libya is now a base for regional terrorist groups and export of arms and mercenaries to Syria. Since last year, it is also a sanctuary for Al Qaeda-linked forces fleeing French occupied Mali. The government also faces a financial crisis besides a severe unemployment problem, a refugee problem and ethnic strife.

To add to the misery of the government, Benghazi, the centre of the oil industry, is now inaccessible to the US, Britain and France following the assassination of US Ambassador Chris Stevens in September 2012, and has set up an autonomous regional government and formed its own petroleum marketing company, Libya Oil and Gas Corporation, bypassing the Libyan government.

The growing public anger has, however, been largely about extortion, killings, kidnappings and torture by the former Islamist proxies of the US. The events of November this year in the capital Tripoli which experienced the bloodiest fighting since the overthrow of Gaddafi are symbolic of the growing public anger and the state of lawlessness in Libya. As businesses, schools and public sector workers went on strike demanding the expulsion of the militias from the city, 43 demonstrators

were killed and over 500 wounded in mortar attacks by the Misrata militia. While the government remained an impotent observer, clashes between rival militias led to further killings and injuries.

The Ali Zeidan government, charged with drafting a new constitution before its term ends on 7th February 2014, faces a hostile General National Council, which is boycotted by the Muslim Brotherhood dominated opposition as well as by several legislators from minority nationalities, over disagreements regarding the constitution. A serious concern is that the crisis could risk intervention by foreign forces in the name of the Right-to-Protect (R2P), the very basis on which NATO intervened in Libya three years ago.

Syria

The problem in Syria is the outcome of the US seeking to rerun in Syria its adventure of regime change in Libya. The Syrian regime of Basher Hafez al-Assad may in several ways have been more unpopular than that of Gaddafi in Libya, but conditions did not exist within Syria for an armed uprising. Also, unlike in the countries where "Arab Spring" uprisings occurred, mass protests in Syria occurred far from the main urban centres in a small town adjoining Jordan. Also, unlike other Arab dictators who faced popular uprisings, Assad had, sincerely or otherwise, shown willingness to compromise on constitutional reforms. The opposition demand for his resignation was not just unrealistic but designed to escalate conflict.

There are genuine left, progressive and democratic forces in Syria who have opposed the dictatorial regime of Bashar al-Assad and continue to do so. Several of them were inspired by the build up of opposition to Assad, without realizing the motivation, and were encouraged by the success of the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen, but ignoring the experiences of Libya. The response of the Assad regime to the uprisings was violent, but not entirely unprovoked. It took a long time for the left and secular opponents of Assad and some of the well-meaning but not

worldly wise international leftists to realize that the 'democratic opposition' to Assad had even less to do with democracy than the forces which toppled Gaddafi. While the Libyan 'resistance' was backed by the finance of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States and fire power of NATO, an even stranger alliance of forces came together against Assad. Besides Saudi Arabia and Qatar arming and funding Islamist mercenaries, Turkey and Israel too came out in support of a 'jihad' by Sunni Muslim extremists. This unholy alliance of right wing Arab states, Turkey, Zionist Israel and Islamic extremists is further evidence that Islamic fundamentalism has little to do with Islam and even less the welfare of Muslims.

The Assad regime which, despite its many faults, has been one of the few secular regimes in the Arab World. The Sunni-Shiite rift which has been systematically cultivated by the US in collusion with Saudi Arabia since the defeat of the brutal dictatorship of Shah Reza Pahlavi in the overwhelmingly Shiite Muslim Iran has been put to full use to divide the Syrian people along religious lines. It was long after Syria was plunged into a war driven by the US through Saudi Arabia and Qatar that the left and secular opposition to Assad realized that they had been taken advantage of by the US-backed factions and the Islamic extremists, and indicated willingness to negotiate a settlement.

It was, however, only after Russia signalled its firm support for Syria in the event of war and US President Obama failed in his effort to browbeat Russian President Putin at the G-20 Meeting in September 2013 in St Petersburg that Obama beat a retreat from his war threat. The Russians helped Obama, however, to save face through their proposal to remove chemical weaponry from Syria.

This humiliation in the wake of the exposure of US spying by Edward Snowden put paid to US arrogance and added to the embarrassment of President Obama. It certainly contributed to Obama's favourable response to gestures from Iran, and the agreement of US-backed Free Syrian Army

to talk to Assad after two years of fighting, leaving the Islamic extremists high and dry.

It is, nevertheless, dangerous to assume that the US is on the retreat. Its plans for a 'regime change' in Syria are still alive. It has extracted a number of concessions from Iran in return for a small concession by way of unfreezing a small fraction of the Iranian assets and a promise of sorts to desist from further sanctions against Iran. The US needs a breathing space before it comes up with its next scheme to free the Middle East of unfriendly governments. The people of the Middle East therefore need to be all the more vigilant.

Other Arab Countries

Protests of varying intensity took place across many Arab countries in 2011 with some leading to minor concessions by the state as in the case of Morocco where some political reforms were pledged, Algeria where a 19-year-old state of emergency was lifted, Jordan where the monarch dismissed the Prime Minister and the Cabinet and promised some reforms, Oman where ministers were dismissed and the legislature was granted lawmaking powers, and the predominantly Shiite Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia where some economic concessions were granted. There were also instances where the protests were mercilessly crushed as in the case of Djibouti.

The concessions extracted from the rulers have been marginal to the core democratic and economic issues which led to the protests. In reality, a change of government occurred in Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen as a direct result of mass uprisings and in Libya as a result of foreign meddling. A civil war has been stirred in Syria with grave implications for peace in the region and leading to a rise in global tension. All else have been of little global or regional significance.

Lessons for the left

Protests express public discontent but do not, by themselves, constitute the seeds of revolution. Massive protests have occurred across Europe in the past few years but with little impact on government policy, despite

change of government. Events in Greece hold some promise but it is still a long way to go before a mass organization emerges that can challenge the ruling classes and take on the capitalist state apparatus to achieve social change. Protest movements in South America have, however, in their course created conditions that have brought about tangible, but not revolutionary, changes in some countries, and certainly not "Socialism in the 21st Century".

As protests comprise assertion of democratic rights and since revolutionary struggles are essentially struggles for democracy from a Marxist perspective, a Marxist has to adopt a positive approach towards mass protests. Thus the challenge facing Marxists is to make protest movements part of the revolutionary struggle.

While public discontent manifests itself as protests, protest is not the monopoly of the left and not all protest movements are progressive in substance. Besides, mass discontent has been taken advantage of by the reactionaries and even fascists; and mass discontent has been manufactured to serve reaction or even fascism in times of political and economic crises. Where the left and progressive forces are weak or not well organized, reactionaries mobilize the masses to serve their agenda. Fascists have done it in 20th Century Europe. Manufactured dissent has been used to oust left-leaning governments as in the case of Chile and is being tried out in Venezuela.

Thus, while Marxist and progressive forces need to stand on the side of the oppressed masses and support struggles for social, political and economic rights, they need to be aware of the total reality of the protests. Where protests based on genuine grievances of the people are hijacked by reactionary forces, a Marxist has to draw distinction between the case for the protest and the course of the protest movement. It is thus a matter of recognizing the contradiction, identifying it as friendly or hostile, and adopting the correct strategy to address it in its specific context.

Where many left parties, especially Trotskyites, failed in the context of Libya and Syria was that, while they rightly identified Gaddafi and Assad as reactionary oppressors, they missed the main contradiction in the conflict and the real forces behind the "opposition". Some leftists made similar mistakes in denouncing Milosevic as the sole villain when Yugoslavia was broken up by imperialist intrigue and again when Serbia was further fragmented. They found themselves on the same side as the imperialists and even spoke the same language as the imperialists.

While there were no left forces in the opposition to Gaddafi, several international left groups were unwittingly supporting the imperialist proxy war in Libya. In Syria, it took a while for the left and progressive forces that to realize that US imperialism and reactionary Arab states had an agenda that ran contrary to what they had in mind.

It was most tragic in Egypt with the main left fully endorsing the military coup that deposed Morsi. The Morsi regime was not anti-imperialist; its repressive Islamist agenda was unacceptable; and it failed to act to fulfil its pledges to the people. Hence there was widespread mass anger. But it was unwise to demand the resignation of an elected leader when the SCAF was waiting for an opportunity to wrest back power from the elected government. The demands could have been for Morsi to fulfil his pledges and for him to retract all undemocratic legislation. Sustained protests on such basis would have forced him to either respect the wishes of the people or to compromise with the SCAF, and thereby fully isolate himself and his Islamist alliance from the people. What has been achieved instead is that, besides restoration of total power to the SCAF which has clamped down on all dissent, the left and progressive forces have discredited themselves in the eyes of the people. They have thus, by default, assigned the Islamist alliance the role of sole opposition to military rule and injected new life and fresh credibility to a force which was fast losing public trust.

In Syria, much of the left again saw itself on the side of imperialism and, strangely, some international anti-imperialist groups too thought

it fit to side with the opposition to the dictatorial and oppressive Assad regime. It was only after realizing that in the course of the armed campaign the left and democratic forces have been totally sidelined by Islamic fundamentalists and proxies of the US competing for dominance that the left and democratic forces realized the need to redefine their position. It is, however, a welcome realization that they decided to distance themselves from both imperialism and fundamentalism.

The left is a significant force in some Arab countries, but it is not as strong as it was in the 1960s and needs allies to make political headway. It is true that religious and sectarian politics are serious threats to democracy, socialism and anti-imperialism; and the left and progressive forces have to resist these harmful tendencies. It is true that an overwhelming number of Arab states are utterly repressive and antidemocratic. They need to be defeated for democracy to be established before advancing to socialism. But what is important to learn is that the overthrow of any authoritarian regime with the help of imperialism will not lead to democracy but in fact add to the burden of the struggle for liberation.

The left needs to take a long term view of problems and should not lose track of who the principal enemy is. Uniting the many against the few is a strategy essential to the victory the revolution. Whenever the left aligned with the long term enemy in order to overcome the short-term enemy it has paid dearly for its short-sightedness.

It is thus the responsibility of genuine international left parties and alliances to persuade all left and progressive elements in the Arab World that, while they preserve their independence and stand with the people against repression, they also do not lose sight of the reality that imperialism is still strong and remains the principal enemy of the people of the world.

NDMLP Diary

NDMLP Statement to the Media

18th December 2013

Reject the Plan for Multi-Storey Apartment Blocks

Comrade V Mahendran, National Organizer of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued the following statement on aspects of the Budget that affect the interests of the Hill Country Tamil people.

A budget has been presented in Parliament with no consideration for the uplift of the livelihood of the workers, peasants and other ordinary toiling masses or for the development of the local economy. It should be said that what has been presented is, in sum, an anti-people anti-democratic budget. As before, this budget too has no proposal for the social and economic welfare the Hill Country Tamils. At the same time, the demand for land and houses by the Hill Country Tamils who have propped up the economic structure of the country throughout their history has been blatantly denied.

It is proposed in this budget to build 50,000 housing units in multi-storey blocks. This is yet another historic betrayal of these people. It has been welcomed by political and trade union leaders attached to the government. The Party totally rejects this sly scheme that seeks to deny the basic right to livelihood of a nationality of the country and maroon it in a modern version of 'line rooms'. The Party strongly condemns this betrayal of a community that has been consistently ignored economically, politically, socially and culturally.

The Mahinda Chinthana government that presides over chauvinistic state power has, in the name of law, been denying the aspirations and right to land of other nationalities of this country as well. Meanwhile, the President speaking from the election campaign platforms of the CWC and NUW — which contested the provincial council elections as partners of the government — pledged among a host of promises that land will

be granted, houses built and village structures established for the Hill Country Tamils.

But the Hill Country Tamils have been continuously deceived by racist perversion through the denial of basic rights to livelihood and rejection of their aspirations as a nationality. Racist hooliganism and aggression of the land that provides their livelihood also have been freely practiced by the two chauvinistic parties that have been ruling the country in alternation. It is as a sequel to this practice that the right of this people to land and houses is being undermined in the name of the 50,000 housing units plan. It is against this background that the call for a plan for individual housing should be continuously emphasized on their behalf.

According to government statistics 37,000 hectares remain uncultivated in the plantations in the hill country. Hence a plan to provide individual houses with 20 perches of land is easily implementable. Under these conditions, the plan for multi-storey blocks should be totally rejected. At the same time, there is pressing need for a united programme stressing the building of individual houses for the Hill Country Tamils and the establishment of village structures in the hill country.

Various views have been expressed within and outside parliament on the proposed housing units in multi-storey blocks. But they will wind up as mere statements and empty talk. In the past too we have witnessed such statements and empty talk on various issues including the question of wage increases for plantation workers.

The Party calls upon political and trade union organizations of the Hill Country and all left and democratic forces who care for Hill Country Tamils to come forward to transcend considerations of posts and political self interest and launch a mass struggle to reject the proposed plan for housing units and to secure a plan for individual houses with right to the land.

Ragala V Mahendran
National Organizer

NDMLP Statement to the Media

26th November 2013

A Budget with Nothing for the People

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued the following statement on behalf of the Party Politburo on the Government Budget.

During the year all the people of the country have faced severe hardships and problems as a result of continuing price increases of essential food items and other consumer goods and by the rising cost of living. The ninth budget of the Mahinda Chinthana government does not offer any relief or consolation to the toiling masses facing a daily struggle for survival. At the same time, the budget has opened up avenues for big capitalists, investors, foreign multinational big businesses and gambling moguls to make easy money. It has also given priority to carrying forward national oppression with military might. Thus it is an entirely anti-people budget.

Severe economic burdens have been heaped on the country's toiling masses comprising workers, peasants, fisher folk, and state and private sector employees, the plantation workers in particular. There is a danger of direct and indirect taxation thrusting the daily living conditions of the people into an abyss. The demand by the trade unions for a wage increase of 10,000 rupees has not been taken note of while announcing a measly sum of 1200 rupees to government employees as cost of living allowance. With bread priced at 60 rupees (400 gram loaf) and coconut between 50 and 60 rupees a nut, the announced 1200 rupee rise in cost of living allowance is inadequate to meet even part of the price increase of the food items. Private sector employees do not receive even this benefit. This budget has further affirmed the treatment of plantation workers as bonded slaves by the private sector companies.

As in previous budgets, the highest budget allocations are for defence and urban development. There is a huge allocation of funds for the

President and ministries that come under the President. Around 46% of the budgetary allocation is for departments under the control of the President, his brothers and relations. Meanwhile allocations for the sectors that concern the livelihood of the people such as industry, agriculture, fisheries and self-employment have received minimal allocations. Pension for peasants over 63 years of age is like pale porridge for an old man in his deathbed. The allocation for health and education is only marginally above that in the past year and reflects the intention to run these sectors down in the process of their privatization.

In short, this budget has been drafted with the advice and blessings of the IMF which is pushing for a neoliberal economy. It was for that reason that the Deputy Managing Director of the IMF has commended it as a satisfactory budget. The presence of the Resident Representative of the IMF in Parliament during the presentation of the budget and his participation in the tea party afterwards made clear the background to the budget.

Further, the pledge to build 50,000 units in apartment blocks for the plantation workers represent the abandoning of earlier pledges to offer the plantation workers land and houses. This is based on the ulterior motive of denying to the Hill Country Tamils their fundamental right to survive and develop as a nationality. The budget is indicative of the chauvinist capitalist intention to undermine the ethno-religious existence of the Tamils and Muslims of the North-East and to wreck the distinctive national identity of the Hill Country Tamils to retain them merely as labour force.

Hence the Party assesses this ninth Mahinda Chinthana budget as an anti-people budget that oppresses the entire toiling masses as a class and the people of the North-East and the Hill Country as nationalities.

SK Senthivel
General Secretary

NDMLP Statement to the Media

12th November 2013

A Waste of Resources and Burden on People

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued the following statement on behalf of the Party Politburo on the forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting to be held on the 15th, 16th and 17th of November in Colombo.

There will be no benefit for any of the people of the country from the forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) to be held on the 15th, 16th and 17th of November in Colombo organized by President Mahinda Rajapaksa and the government of the Rajapaksa brothers. In particular, there will be no benefit for the workers, peasants and other toiling masses who are tortured and tormented by the surging cost of living. Likewise, there will be no benefit for the Tamil people or other nationalities who are subjected to chauvinistic military oppression. This conference which is held at the cost of several billions of rupees of money drawn from the revenue paid by the people will only benefit the sustenance and prolongation of the regime of the Rajapaksa brothers and not the people. Hence, it will be meaningless for the toiling masses and oppressed nationalities to show interest in this conference or express support for it.

The CHOGM is a biennial event involving the successors to the British colonial masters and their slavish loyalists who comprise the ruling elite classes of countries freed of direct colonial rule. There will be neither salvation nor liberation for the people of the backward countries of Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and other former colonies from the resolutions to be adopted collectively by the fifty or so heads and representatives of governments. Six decades of the Commonwealth has amply borne this out. At the same time, the aim of this body is to ensure the implementation of the policies of the neoliberal political programme of imperialist globalization through neo-colonialism. The President and his

government hope that they could attenuate the intensity of the charges levelled against them in the international arena or even deflect the charges by conducting the twenty third CHOGM in Sri Lanka and securing the chair of the organization for two years.

The charge levelled by international human rights organizations is that, four and a half years since the end of the war, due inquiries have not been conducted about war crimes, human rights violations and other injustices committed. While the accusations conceal ulterior motives of the West, the regime in Sri Lanka is in a state of chauvinist arrogance that prevents it from responding adequately or taking appropriate steps.

What answer President Mahinda Rajapaksa will offer the leaders participating in the conference to the charges is awaited with interest. We could expect that, as on earlier occasions, there will be sham excuses and evasive comments. Thus, the burden of the expenditure of several billion rupees on this meaningless exercise will be imposed on the people. This burden will add to the burdens waiting to be imposed on the people in the forthcoming budget. The regime of the Rajapaksa brothers is not in the least bothered by that.

Until the people dare to oppose the present state of affairs, the dangerous situation will prevail where further burdens will be heaped upon the people. Hence that Party on the occasion of this exercise in waste of public funds draws the attention of the people to the need to oppose such burdens.

SK Senthivel
General Secretary

NDMLP Statement to the Media

8th November 2013

Denounce Wanton Destruction

Comrade K Selvam Kadirgamanathan, Northern Regional Secretary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued the following

statement on the destruction of houses by the armed forces in army occupied parts of Valikamam North.

The destruction of houses under military control in the pretext of their being in a High Security Zone is with the intention of making permanent the stationing of troops and the expansion of occupied territory. Several tens of thousands of people who were driven out of Valikamam North in the 1990's and prevented from returning to their own lands are living a life of misery. It is one part of the homes of these people that is being demolished by the Army. The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party strongly denounces the denial of the fundamental right of these people to life and livelihood through the demolition of these houses. The Government should stop this cruel act. The only way before the people is to mobilize and carry forward mass struggles. The Party expresses its fullest support to the activities of the Valikamam North Resettlement Committee that has come forward to mobilize the people.

The peasants, workers, fisher folk and craftsmen who have been driven away from their work places in Valikamam North as a result of military activities and war have still not been able to fully return to their own places of abode. People have been allowed to enter only certain specific areas of Valikamam North. Members of 7500 families are still living amid sorrow and pain in thirty refugee camps and at the mercy of relatives and friends scattered among many towns and villages.

To be prevented from returning to the lands they own even after four years since the end of the war is like being under foreign military occupation. This cannot be overcome by marking a cross on a ballot paper. The stand of the Party is that the people have no way other than to go further to mobilize their strength and launch mass struggles.

K Selvam Kadirgamanathan
Northern Regional Secretary

NDMLP Statement to the Media

23rd September 2013

A Powerful Verdict

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

The Tamil people have at the election to the Northern Provincial Council expressed their firm opposition to the chauvinistic oppression against them, the continuing military interference in the North-East, denial of democracy and interference with their return to normal life. They have also through their voting stated their unwillingness to forfeit a political solution for them and their fundamental right to livelihood. Therefore the regime of the Rajapaksa brothers guided by Mahinda Chinthana should acknowledge this electoral mandate delivered by the people and show the courage to put forward a just political solution. If the President and the United People's Freedom Alliance government fail to come forward with a solution and continue to pursue their chauvinist military oppression, that would once again put the country on the path to destruction.

During the four years since the end of the war, the Tamil people have been in a state of political frustration as a result of the losses and misery suffered by them. As a result, their participation in earlier elections was minimal. Meanwhile military intimidation persisted at various levels. Consequently, awareness campaigns and protest demonstrations on the streets protesting military activities, denial of democracy, land grab, prison killings and prolonged political detentions. The Tamil National People's Front, the Tamil National Alliance, the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party and the Nava Samasamaja Party and public organizations came together to boldly carry forward these struggles. During the past two years, such mass struggles gradually built confidence among a people who were politically frustrated. The need for mobilizing the power of the masses was impressed upon the people.

It is as a sequel to these events that the Tamil people have registered their strong protest through their bold casting of ballots. The people have at the same time delivered their firm rebuttal of the arrogance of the ruling party which sought to secure votes of the people by deceiving them through development concessions and using military threat.

If the Tamil National Alliance would equate this overwhelming two-third majority vote to the victory at the 1977 parliamentary general elections and continue with incorrect policies and wrong political approaches, it will once again bring destruction and misery to the Tamil people.

Hence, Tamil political parties and the progressive, democratic and left parties should come forward to join hands to advance on the basis of a common programme that approaches the electoral success soberly, incorporates the problems of the broad Tamil masses and includes genuine political forces. Without it, there is the risk of taking the wrong direction based on the electoral victories as in the past only to be back at square one. Hence the Tamil people should not stop with having voted but be on the vigil and be willing to take the correct political path.

SK Senthivel
General Secretary

Support Democratic Progressive and Pro-People Candidates Against National and Class Oppression

The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued a leaflet on 10th September with the following appeal to voters in the forthcoming elections for the Northern, Central and North Western Provincial Councils.

Elections for the Northern, Central and North Western Provincial Councils are to be held on the 21st of September. The government is conducting these elections under a dictatorship of executive power, using state power, financial power and undemocratic methods. Meanwhile,

ruling party candidates are using generous offers of development, concessions and financial inducements to secure votes. The government is intent on continuing with heaping severe economic burdens on the people and chauvinist oppression of the minority nationalities by showing that victory in these elections is a mandate and endorsement from the people for the government.

Meanwhile, the parties of the opposition are contesting these elections without any policy or programme to address the class and national oppression faced by the toiling masses and the minority nationalities. They participate in the elections with the narrow objective of securing posts in the Provincial Councils or becoming partners of government. Tamil political parties are contesting as a group with the same old conservative elitist political approach, with no fresh policy or programme that takes into account the experiences with chauvinist oppression or suited to current reality.

Nothing is said of the everyday problems of the people such as rising prices of consumer goods, increasing cost of living and unemployment and the sufferings faced by workers, peasants, fisher folk, working women, other toiling masses and oppressed people in their election propaganda. This is a renewal of the old status of retaining the Tamil people as mere voting machines by deflecting them away from getting politically awakened and mobilising along the correct political path.

As participation in elections in this environment is meaningless and fruitless, the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party had already decided not to participate in the elections. However, since, amid the intensification of the election campaign, individuals who had in campaigned in support of the Party in the past and the people who voted for the Party have sought the advice of the Party on the stand that they should adopt in these elections.

Hence the Party asks those who intend to vote not to cast their votes for any reason for the ruling faction that carries out comprador-capitalist

chauvinist oppression and denies a solution to the national question or for opposition parties with similar political positions or for conservatives who are against the toiling masses.

Thus the position of the Party is that people may vote for any candidate who they identify as opposed to chauvinist oppression, stands for the toiling masses, and supportive of democratic, progressive and leftist positions.

NDMLP Statement to the Media

31st August 2013

Hill Country Trade Union Confrontations

Comrade R Mahendran, National Organizer of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party issued the following statement denouncing the clashes and the use of violence by two leading trade union organizations in the Hill Country.

The rivalry between the leaders of the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) and the National Union of Workers (NWU) has everything to do with their trade union political interests and dominance, and nothing to do with the interests or needs of the people of the Hill Country or the rights of the plantation workers. The recent clashes and the use of violence during confrontations between the two sides in areas such as Kotagala, Hatton and Bogowanthalawa are not things that should have been taken into the plantations and among workers. The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party strongly condemns such clashes and incidents of violence that tend to divide the people and make them clash among themselves. It is important that the people of the Hill Country do not lend support to any force that seeks to establish its political dominance by inducing clashes and divisions among the Hill Country people and plantation workers.

The clashes have taken place against a background of the friction that developed a result of CWC Member of Parliament P Rajadurai

resigning from the CWC and joining the NUW at a time when Provincial Council elections are due in the Central Province. The conflict started in Kotagala and spread as far as Bogowanthalawa with violence committed by both sides. What have been behind the clashes are trade union political interests and the desire to enlarge the vote bank.

P Rajadurai's joining the NUW — which is seeking to establish another kind of trade union domination — following his resignation from the CWC, denouncing the family politics and trade union politics of the CWC, will not bring any benefit to the people of the Hill Country or to the ordinary people at the base level whom he is referring to.

The reason is that both parties are partners and supporters of the chauvinist Mahinda Chinthana regime that carries forward today's ethnic and class oppression. It is by using their likes that the President, the UPFA government and the plantation management have been able to deny the basic rights to livelihood and wage increases of the people of the Hill Country and the plantation workers.

Hence, the Party points out that it is important for the people of the Hill Country to be vigilant against those who in order to preserve their own interests and gain political and trade union dominance are trying to create conflicts and clashes and caste-based divisions among a people who need to be united to struggle together for their class and national rights.

Ragala V Mahendran
National Organizer

Remembering Comrade Maniam

Public meetings were held in Colombo and in Jaffna to commemorate the late Comrade KA Subramaniam.

The meeting in Colombo was held at the Kailasapathy Auditorium of the Deshiya Kalai Ilakkiyap Peravai, Colombo 6. Comrade Sanjai Singhvi of the Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist) addressed the gathering on the theme "Imperialism and the Left Movement in South

Asia". Comrades S Thevarajah and SK Senthivel of the NDMLP also addressed the meeting chaired by Dr S Sivasegaram. Comrade V Mahendran delivered the vote of thanks.

The meeting in Jaffna was held as a seminar and public discussion at the Office of the Party. Comrade A Seevaratnam addressed the gathering on the theme "Need and Necessity for the Communist Movement" and Comrade T Sri Prakash on the theme "Working in the Public Sphere".

Mass Meeting to Mark 35th Anniversary of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party

A mass meeting was held on 7th October 2013 in Vavuniya to mark the 35th Anniversary of the Party. The meeting organized by the Vavuniya Branch of the Northern Regional Party highlighted the following demands:

Arrest immediately the increase in prices of essential goods

Stop immediately the abuse of women and children.

Put forward a political solution for the national question based on the right to self determination.

Fully implement the 13th Amendment to the Constitution.

Public Seminar of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party

The Northern Regional New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party organized a public seminar on 18th September 2013 at the Putthur Kalaimathi People's Auditorium on the subject of "The Provincial Council Elections and Problems of the People".

The seminar was chaired by Comrade K Jeyakumar and addressed by Comrades SK Senthivel, K Thanikasalam, K Kadirgamanathan, S Thevarajah and T Sri Prakash.

I Come and Stand at Every Door

Nâzım Hikmet Ran

I come and stand at every door
But no one hears my silent tread
I knock and yet remain unseen
For I am dead, for I am dead.

I'm only seven although I died
In Hiroshima long ago
I'm seven now as I was then
When children die they do not grow.

My hair was scorched by swirling flame
My eyes grew dim, my eyes grew blind
Death came and turned my bones to dust
And that was scattered by the wind.

I need no fruit, I need no rice I
need no sweet, nor even bread
I ask for nothing for myself
For I am dead, for I am dead.

All that I ask is that for peace
You fight today, you fight today
So that the children of this world
May live and grow and laugh and play.

I'm not saying anything against Alexander

Bertolt Brecht

*Timur, I hear, took the trouble to conquer the earth.
I don't understand him.
With a bit of hard liquor you can forget the earth.*

*I'm not saying anything against Alexander,
Only I have seen people who were remarkable,
Highly deserving of your admiration
For the fact that they were alive at all.*

*Great men generate too much sweat.
In all of this I see just a proof that
They couldn't stand being on their own
And smoking and drinking and the like.
And they must be too mean-spirited to get
Contentment from sitting by a woman.*

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